The concept of man has been dealt with by almost all existentialist thinkers. For, the philosophy of Existentialism is marked by its emphasis on the manifold aspects of human life. All existentialist thinkers make a sincere endeavour to understand man, and seek to know the problems of human existence. They do not reduce man to the level of objects: rather, they attribute a dignified status to man. In this chapter an attempt is made to explain the concept of man as developed by the existentialist thinkers, Soren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger and Jean-paul Sartre.

Kierkegaard is a personalist thinker in the sense that his reflections spring from his personal experiences. He is concerned with problems in which he feels himself to be personally involved. Modern man, he feels, possesses the highest reasoning faculty. The
stock of knowledge he has, with regard to life, society, etc., is of great significance in the sense that it promotes human development and progress. The search for the meaning of life and existence of man is very important. Science to a great extent, also helps man to deal with the material world. When we want to deal with the problems connected with the personal experiences of man, the existentialist approach is of great help. It rightly emphasises the fact that philosophy should be related to the individual's own life and experience. "The existentialist philosopher insists that what I really know is not the external world as such, but my own experience; for him the personal is the real. Philosophy, therefore, should start from one's own experience, one's own inner knowledge, which should be qualified, enlarged and in this way enriched".¹ Kierkegaard points out that philosophy should not be abstract, but must be based on the personal experience of man. For this, he

¹ Paul Roubiczek, Existentialism For And Against. (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1964) pp. 10-11
insists on understanding what faith means in terms of personal experience. Kierkegaard, hence, feels the necessity of making an analysis of man-his 'ethical self'-in his philosophy.

Man is really a moral being. To Kierkegaard, man's innermost nature is his ethical self. He believes that man has understood the meaning of life in its various dimensions, but, he does not know how to live it. Kierkegaard tries to eliminate certain illusions and prejudices that are deep-rooted in man. He is concerned only with human existence. He gives significance to human subjectivity and emphasises that it is the standard by which the existence of the individual could be determined. All existential philosophers accept Kierkegaard's principle that 'truth is subjectivity' and that is authenticity. The individual has to perform certain activities for his very existence. He is a man determined and conditioned by the biological environment. His social relationship also, to a very great extent, influences him. A man may devote his life to the reformation of society or
the welfare of humanity in general. But the astonishing factor, Kierkegaard notices is that in any of these activities, man cannot have a passionate commitment. Kierkegaard remarks passion as a mark of insistence. In his view, Hegel has failed to value the individual human existence abstracted from the 'crowd'. Kierkegaard holds that man cannot be reduced to an abstract idea of logic. He makes it clear that human subjectivity would be the basis of individual existence. Contemporary existentialists evolved a philosophy of being on the foundation laid down by Kierkegaard in the 19th century. Their approach differs from Kierkegaard in the sense that they do not accept Kierkegaard's approach of calling subjectivity as the centre of human existence.

Kierkegaard approaches the concrete life in a realistic manner and hence he is labelled as an existential pragmatist. He is of the opinion that in each man's soul the elements of the three fundamental values of truth, beauty and goodness are deep-rooted. "The true is not higher than the good and the beautiful, but the true and the beautiful belong
essentially to every human existence, and are unified for an existing individual not in thought, but in existence".  

Kierkegaard feels the importance of life. To be lived, to be practically experienced, we should realise the importance of practical life. "The most important things for a man are 'how to live' and 'what to do".  

Thus, philosophy, according to Kierkegaard, is mainly concerned with the individual's way of life. Man exists and has all his social relations as a moral agent. Kierkegaard is of the opinion that individuals should become aware of the ideas they advance in life itself. He points out that this is something which several philosophers failed to do. Philosophical systems claim that they solve the secrets of existence by speculation. Of course they have not done full justice in solving this problem. Kierkegaard's main interest lies in fighting against the claims put forward by the philosophical systems. This is what fetched him increasing international influence. He insists that philosophy should be practically applied in the real life of man.

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Kierkegaard gives significance to the 'ethical self' of man. "Morality can only be absolute because it is so deeply ingrained in man that it must be considered as characteristic of his true nature. Man is not, as some Existentialists claim, an undefined being who can be transformed at will, but a moral being".\(^4\)

Though Kierkegaard emphasises the personal aspect of philosophy, there are several universal truths found in his philosophy. The point he emphasises is that the universal or objective truths found in western philosophy do not include everything 'personal' or subjective. He argues that the important philosophical problems discussed in the objective philosophy of Hegel etc. cannot be solved in an objective way. The truth that the human soul has its root in God can be determined only by the 'Subjective thinker' - man. Hence he gives importance to man by emphasising the point that ultimate, appropriate answer to philosophical problems can be settled clear only by the individual thinker.

\(^4\) Paul Roubiczek, *Existentialism For And Against* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1964) p. 64
"To Kierkegaard, faith is everything."\(^5\) To understand the real meaning of life, man should realize the fact that faith is an important factor, which gives him tremendous force and strength to move forward to face the harsh realities of life. But we have to note that Kierkegaard stresses the importance of the bitterness of life also. "Every man who has not tasted the bitterness of despair has missed the significance of life, however beautiful and joyous his life might be".\(^6\)

The doctrine of the three spheres of existence

The three spheres of existence of man may also be called the three views of life—or stages in life's way namely, the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious. These three stages mark a growth in the


personality of the individual.

"In general each of the three stages is a certain manner of human existence characterised by a certain attitude towards life and its purpose. The first stage is the aesthetic stage of pleasure which culminates in perdition. The second stage is the ethical stage; its focal point is action which brings forth victory. The third stage is the religious stage. Its focal point is simply suffering".7

As in Hegel's historical dialectic, the stages in life, according to Kierkegaard, are in many ways identical with the forms of 'consciousness' (see Hegel's phenomenology of the spirit). "Both consist of opposed conceptions of life, of oneself and of different systems of development of human spirit in Hegel's Philosophy".8

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7 Fredrick Patka, Existentialist Thinkers and Thought. (New York: Philosophical Library, 1962) p. 78

The religious stage is accepted as the ultimate stage in man's choice. Kierkegaard says that the religious stage of existence possesses the ethical stage and an individual must pass through the ethical in order to arrive at the religious.

The Aesthetic Stage

According to Kierkegaard, the aesthetic mode of existence is the life of pure "immediacy". In "immediacy", the falsest and the truest things are equally true. The question of what is true and what is false does not exist. In the aesthetic stage, it is the 'pleasure principle' that governs one's life and not the reality principle. Duty, self-discipline, obligation, etc., do not operate at this stage. The aesthetic stage may be unreflective. But it can also be a stage of refinement in which we often find men of creative talents creation of poetry, philosophy, music etc. emerge, though these may be purely for their immediate satisfaction.

Man by nature is egoistic, and as such, it is a
fact that he becomes a victim to the aesthetic stage of life. But it is also to be observed that man, in the aesthetic stage, gets monotonous and bored, and tries to find the means to escape from this situation. The immediate craving in him makes him have a desire for new experiences in life. He understands that the attempts at the immediate satisfaction of the spirit are futile; it never gives man lasting happiness. He feels that the momentary pleasures are meaningless. He becomes alert and dynamic and makes an attempt to discover continuous novel experiences. But the logical reflection in man destroys this attempt. The man in the aesthetic stage becomes sceptical and at last the desires themselves are rejected. "One who lives in the aesthetic, plays emotionally and imaginatively with all possibilities, renounces nothing, commits himself as little as possible in vocation, marriage, belief, enjoys a literary interest in all faiths and customs and relationships, comes and goes in his wishes and desires of the moment, and is subject to fortune and misfortune. One who lives in the intellectual stage, claims to rise above the world of change and chance, to
regard and judge everything from the point of view of the eternal, with detachment, to put everything in its place in the system, co-ordinated and understood. One does not live any more, one does not act, one does not believe; but one knows what love and faith are, and it only remains to determine their place in the System".  

The ethical stage

The fundamental principle of the ethical life is Universality. That is, the ethical principles that are applicable to one person in the society are found to be applicable to all persons without exception. Kierkegaard agrees with Kant in accepting the autonomy of the moral life. The moral life has a value for the community. Kierkegaard accepts Socrates as an ideal for the moral life. The moral life of socrates is a guiding principle to all mankind. This is because he actually practised the moral principles in real

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concrete life situations. He proved that man is the crown of creation and man has the highest value. According to him, the love of man is the ultimate good. Kierkegaard makes a distinction between the life and principles of Socrates, and his justification of these principles.

Kierkegaard considers marriage as of great importance to the moral life, because the important demands of morality such as acceptance of duty and obligation, commitment to others etc., are present in this institution of marriage. The man who is presented in the social circle, finds it necessary to sacrifice his personal interest for the interest of the community. To build up a stable community, man has to play an important role, in the sense that he should first of all aim at the stability of the family.

A reflection of the ethical life shows us the meaninglessness of the aesthetic life. In the ethical stage, man gets an opportunity to evaluate the relative importance of the moral principles which are good for society.
The Religious Stage

Kierkegaard's purpose of introducing a religious sphere is to instil a religious view of life in human beings. His individual is completely religious. This is a sphere in which the individual is said to be related to God. God, according to Kierkegaard, is not immanence, but transcendence. God is incomprehensible. Kant also postulates the existence of God upon grounds of faith. Kierkegaard speaks of the ethical life as rational-'a life of reason'; but the religious life is the 'unreasonable life of faith'. Kierkegaard also mentions about two grades of religious stage. (A) The general religious stage. (B) The religiousness of hidden passion, which Kierkegaard labels as the mystic attitude.

Kierkegaard's concept of self-realisation is purely subjective. Man's highest form of self-realisation as spirit is his self-relating to the personal Absolute. "Existence is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite".\textsuperscript{10} Saying that the existing is

infinite is not identifying man with God. It only means that man's becoming is a constant striving towards God. "Existence itself, the act of existing, is a striving, and is both pathetic and comic in the same degree. It is pathetic because the striving is infinite". It is comic, for, this striving towards God includes self contradiction. Kierkegaard makes it clear and says: "Existence is the child that is born of the infinite and the finite, the eternal and the temporal, and is therefore a constant striving".

The goal-directed activity of a human being consists in the eternal search for the knowledge of God. According to Kierkegaard, there are two modes of being—that is, God and the existing individual. Kierkegaard is of the opinion that God can be approached only in the inwardness of subjectivity. The subjective way is the most suitable one and the importance of this lies in bringing God by virtue of the infinite passion of inwardness. Kierkegaard

11 Ibid., p. 84
12 Ibid., p. 85
believes that God is also a subject. "The individual who chooses the subjective way apprehends the entire dialectical difficulty in finding God objectively. He feels this dialectical difficulty in all its painfulness. The only way in which an individual comes into relation with God is when the dialectical contradiction brings his passion to the point of despair. It helps him to embrace God with the 'category of despair'. In that situation the existing of individual's postulation of God is necessity".

God's being is infinite, eternal and absolutely free, whereas the being of the existing individuals is finite. God is changeless, the individual is subjected to change and variation. "The absolute difference between God and man consists precisely in this that man is a particular existing being (which is just as much true of the most gifted human being as it is of the

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most stupid), whose essential task cannot be to think sub specie aeterni, since as long as he exists he is, though eternal, essentially an existing individual whose essential task is to concentrate upon inwardness in existing; while God is infinite and eternal".14

Kierkegaard points out that the infinite nature of God cannot be adequately comprehended by the intellect. God is pure being. Subjectivity is revealed by Kierkegaard only in the region of religious stage. "Subjectivity can be truly subjective only in confrontation of the individual with God, since only the absolute is completely indescribable, completely beyond the inroads of abstraction and objectivity only before God is a man, really himself, because it is only before God that he is finally and irretrievably alone".15

"To Kierkegaard, an individual is only really

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himself when he is before God, but he is before God only when he is most alone, and even then he is conscious of his human emptiness and nothingness and of his infinite distance from God. It is true that only in turning from others to total isolation that one finds out who he really is. Must one forsake all causes and all friends to find himself? 16

Kierkegaard stresses the importance of man to be 'a single person'. The individual, as we know, possesses a group mentality in the presence of a group or when he is having some involvement with the group. According to Kierkegaard, to have a firm determination in one's mind to become single, it is essential that one should become a Christian. Kierkegaard tries his best to highlight this aspect. He observes: "Christianity always challenges the individual to become a single person to deal with God. This indeed, is a venture, which needs the courage of despair and the greatest of all efforts". 17

16 Ibid., p. 143

To attain salvation, Kierkegaard believes that it is necessary to become this 'Single one'. The effort to try to become the 'Single one' creates great tension. The individual hence finds means to escape from this by associating himself with a group. This concept of 'Single one' does not mean that Kierkegaard glorifies the individual person as a single individual apart from the community. But, on the other hand, he is only emphasising the importance of the individual against mass-society.

Having given importance to the Single person, Kierkegaard points out the significance of love. His 'Works of Love', is a fine meditation on interpersonal love in the context of divine love. He emphasises the point that such interpersonal love is not a mere external manifestation of love, but it has hidden inward depths which cannot be measured. The intensity of such a love can be understood only through consequents. It is an intense and profound experience which is inexplicable.
We should love others in the society also "only when it is duty to love; only then is love eternally secured against every change, eternally made free in blessed independence, eternally and happily secured against despair". Kierkegaard next points out that a heart which is pure and noble alone can have a concern of God. He is of opinion that true love is self-renunciation. "Besides, it cannot look for comparison, since no man has accomplished the utmost in love; it is always a new task".

True love, Kierkegaard says, is always unselfish. Relational qualifications of 'mine' and 'yours' vanish in true love. A true lover performs his duties by taking into consideration the welfare of others in the society also. A true lover also forgives the shortcomings of others. He doesn't analyse and find fault with others. A true lover promotes the

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19. Ibid., p. 153
other persons and encourages them, covering and hiding the faults of others. That shows the greatness of his heart.

The attainment of 'Single oneness' is really a continuous struggle. A deep concentration and single-minded devotion to the Absolute alone can make it possible to realize this. Kierkegaard holds the view that there exists a discontinuity, or a 'break' between the "transcendental absolute" and finite "human life"; the theoretical and practical problems of man remain unsolved. Man, in everyday life, is confronted with ever so many possibilities, and he is forced to choose one course of action. Man is a moral agent and he is free to choose a 'situation' from the number of possibilities in front. This freedom is really limited. Kierkegaard's analysis of the individual's relationship to the society is a limited one. He says "No individual is indifferent to the history of the race, any more than is the race to that of any individual.... The History of the Individual and the race is the same".20 It may be noted that Kierkegaard

wants to maintain a balance between the individual and society. His emphasis on the 'Single person' places him on the side of the individual. Thus Kierkegaard attributes a dignified status to the Individual.

Heidegger

Martin Heidegger delineates human existence as 'Dasein'. This term is a combination of 'Da' which means 'there', and 'Sein' which means 'Being'. Heidegger's work 'Sein und Zeit' or 'Being and Time' contains his views on various structures of Dasein essential to its Being. 'Man', says Heidegger, is a being-in-the-world who lives with other people. Essentially, he is an open being, in the sense that he is open to other people and other things; above all, man is open to Being itself.

In Heidegger's view, the nature of human existence is to be sought in a context that is particularly ontological. Here, Heidegger brings in the question of Dasein, the answer to which directs one towards Being. To him, the question of Being indeed admits the need for other non-Being oriented enquiries,
as these are, in one way or another, related to the question of Being; that is, man first of all simply is. It is only later that he is treated as theological man, psychological man, economic man, etc. That is to say, to possess any kind of property, it is necessary that men exist. Hence Heidegger's primary concern is with the being or the existence of man. According to him, the analysis of man as 'Dasein' is tantamount to the analysis of man as the structure of existence making possible the specific way of being human. "The term 'Da-Sein' explicitly emphasizes this dual involvement of being in human nature, and at the same time, the involvement of man in Being as the open place where Being can be".21

The word 'Dasein', thus, signifies the human being-in-the world in whom the Being is revealed. In questioning about Being, man paves the way that transcendentally grounds all other realms of inquiry. "A key move in Heidegger's Dasein analysis lies in his argument that only man is an 'existential' being; all

other beings merely "are" in the way objects merely are".22 This concept of existence indicates the Being of human beings. Existence in human beings is said to be ek-static or standing beyond the static. These ek-static beings are capable of asking the question: "What is the meaning of Being, of my own Being"?23 Thus, the term 'Dasein' isolates for analysis this specific aspect of man - as the questioner of Being. So, according to Heidegger existence of man shows that man is the being whose Being is marked by his openness to Being. Man, Heidegger holds, is in quest of his own Being. To him, a being must be either a 'Dasein' or a 'mere thing'. That is, as different from Dasein, the Being of mere things is considered as a defacto achievement, that is, a Being whereby nothing is left outstanding.

This is something opposed to man. It is in man's possibilities that the essence of his Being lies. In his book 'Being and Time', Heidegger points out: "In each case Dasein is (his) possibility, and (he)
'has' this possibility but not just as a property (eigenschaftlich), as something present-at-hand would'. The Being of man, as Heidegger would put it is ek-static. All other beings except Dasein are static. So, to analyse man as Dasein means to analyse him as that structure of existence which makes possible any particular way of being human.

Again the term 'Dasein' indicates the worldly human opening in which Being is revealed. "One cannot remind oneself too often that 'man' is a term that carries a heavy historical accretion of meanings. For many of us and not only philosophers - man is a 'subject' in a world of 'objects', where 'subject' and 'object' refer to kinds of beings that are in principle definable without reference to each other because each 'exists' independently of the other. Or, it is maintained, alternatively, that 'subject' and 'object' are indeed to be defined relative to each other, but nevertheless in such a way that their relation is, that

24 Ibid., p. 213
of mutual exclusion: Subject is non-objet, and 'object' is non-subject. But Heidegger warns that 'subject and object do not coincide with Dasein and the world'.

In this context, we have also to note that philosophy, for Heidegger, is "a Universal ontology". He calls man Dasein. As verb, 'Dasein' means 'to be there in the world', but ordinarily it means 'existence'. According to him, man is never a 'what'. His essence lies in his very existence. Man's existence cannot be explained by any 'whatness' and the word 'man' is not adequate. The being in which each man understands himself is his own being. The class name 'Man' is only the name of a species of living things or beings. But class cannot be a case of the species Man.

"The preparatory Analysis of the Dasein" which is the first of the two sections of "Being and Time" begins by analysing the real situation of Dasein as

'Being-in-the world'. Here the inauthentic and 'authentic' aspects of Dasein's existence are clearly brought out. It also brings out the various realities that Dasein has to face in this world. While analysing the concept of Being-in-the world three obvious components are yielded. They are the world, the being who is in the world, and the relation of being-in-itself. According to Heidegger, what constitutes the essential structure of Dasein is the world. But he makes it clear that the objects of the world are not to be considered as Dasein's essential structure or existentialia. Four different meanings are attributed to the term 'world' by Heidegger: "(a) as the totality of beings that are encountered by Dasein within the world, (b) as the Being of this totality of beings other than Dasein; (c) as a complex which is not opposed to Dasein wherein it lives; and (d) as the Being of this 'wherein'".26

'Being-in-the world' means the way in which a person is seen in the world. This characteristic of

Being-in-the world constitutes the innermost essence of man. It is to the world that Dasein transcends in order to be what it is. The essence of Dasein consists in its being, or, in other words, in its existence. Heidegger conceives Dasein as having a past and future of its own. For this reason he characterises Dasein by openness and not by closure. Heidegger does not accept the idea of a transcendental subject. To him, Dasein is the real self. The essential nature of Dasein is ontological and not empirical. This implies that Dasein is neither subject nor natural subject.

Heidegger employs the method of existential phenomenology to arrive at the meaning of Being and Existence. Man is really in the world: he has complete involvement in the world. Man can be understood only in relation to the world and the world gets significance through man. It may be noted that Sartre also points out this reciprocal relation between the self and the world, when he says, "Without the world there is no selfness, no person; without selfness, without the person, there is no world".27

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In the phenomenological sense, the world is the sphere in which man has his total concern. Without man, the world has no existence. Man performs all his activities, intellectual, aesthetic, emotional, religious, political, etc., in the world itself: that is, he has to do something, produce something, accomplish something. Also, he neglects something, and renounces something else. By his very nature, man exists in the world.

Man is not a separate phenomenon simply observing the world around him. Man's care (concern) is the inherent unitary principle that determines the world. The relation between man and the world cannot be termed as merely spatial relation. It cannot also be called a subject-object relation. Man really feels very much or he has a care for the world in the sense that he is identifying himself with other objects, things, persons, etc., of the world. 'Dasein' and 'Being-in-the world' are not two separate phenomena. The relation between the world and Dasein is so intimate that an understanding of the world means an understanding of the self of man. Both types of
understanding are inseparably linked together. The active participation of Dasein in the world includes the different kinds of activities performed by Dasein with a view to introducing changes in the world. His planning, calculation, mathematical precision, scientific bent of mind, etc., becomes prominent in it.

Man becomes conscious of himself in and through social relationship. He understands that society recognises his place in it. The recognition, appreciation, acceptance, etc., he receives from society promote the further development of the individual. Man is first of all a being in the society. The different types of bondage he has to society are really a problem.

Heidegger may be labelled as a systematic individual thinker, in the sense that he is concerned with the most abstract, theoretical and practical problems of man at one and the same time. He wants to clarify the concept of 'world' as it is elucidated by the philosophers of the past. This he does by making an analysis of the objects of the world. A person who is constantly dealing with the world has an impression
in his mind that it is the various objects of the world that constitute the world. According to Heidegger, it is the world that really gives an explanation of the objects. The isolated and independent entities of the world cannot be understood clearly unless an idea of the world is already framed. This idea makes it possible to know the objects with reference to one another. In fact, it is the idea of the world that is the central point to which all other things are referred.

Dasein, in its everyday existence, is absorbed in various types of activities, and is not conscious of the world. What Dasein becomes conscious of is only the environmental world in which it is placed. The things placed in the environment have a utilitarian value to Dasein. According to Heidegger, man is ontologically related to other men and to non-human beings. Man is always in the world. "Being in the world is an ontological field, and the elements of this field can be operated from it only analytically". ²⁸

To Heidegger, the world means a field of significance. He says that there are different worlds, and 'different world's means different systems of meanings. The term 'world' does not denote a group of things in nature. Different worlds signify the world of science, the world of art and literature, the world of the psychotic, etc. Man is intimately related to the world, in the sense that he is establishing various types of relations and associations in the world. Man has to fulfil various purposes and tasks according to his needs and demands, and naturally he finds unique significance in a particular world which serves a definite purpose for his own objective. The world has a definite structure and it is really a system of significance.

According to Heidegger, man has different functions and operations in the world. Heidegger defines the world in terms of the tools which man uses in a field of action. He uses the term "Beings ready to hand" to characterise tools. It is this particular character of beings ready-to hand that shows the unique
meaning in which both man and tools are said to be in the world. The world, no doubt, possesses a meaning, and the tools lead men towards the meaning. "The world is that wherein man relates himself to beings and it is a necessary and a priori horizon of Dasein's existential structure."29

In essence, man is a being in the world. A man may be aesthetically involved in the world or he may be exposed to a scientific world. That is, it is not possible for a man to be in the very same world throughout. A person may, for some time, be in a world of boredom; it does not mean that he experiences boredom always.

'Being-in-the-world' means being in a unity of significant references. Man has to adopt certain conditions of life without choice. The reciprocal relations of different types occur in the world and that is a necessary pre-condition of human existence. Man has relation with other men in society. He has also relations to other things. The difference lies in the particular way in which he considers them.

29 Ibid., p. 92
"Man has concern (Be-Sorgen) for things, but solicitude (Fur-Sorger) for his fellows". Concern for things shows the various types of man's involvement with things. Solicitude for other men points out the empathetic concern. It is observed that man feels sympathy with other human beings and it is impossible for him not to have the empathetic concern. Man automatically and naturally becomes empathetic. Heidegger has pointed out the case as the foundation for the possibility of all relationships within a world.

When a man is engaged in any work, very often he ignores his own self and his world. When every thing goes smooth, he never notices his tools, his self or co-workers. But, suppose something goes wrong, his attention is directed towards these things. Man also comes across situations in which he may find himself involved with other persons in different types of relation as co-worker, as buyer, as seller, etc.

The Being of man is always a being with other persons. This is really an a priori fact, neither an

30 Ibid., p. 157
empirical nor a social fact. Within this a priori condition, an indefinite of world styles can be noted. The two opposite styles noted are: (1) the one in which the problematic nature of Being is emphasised, and (2) the one which denies the fact that man is essentially a problematic being. In the first, the thought of being is made a possibility. In the second, man's possibility to be completely Dasein is totally rejected.

When Heidegger speaks of man as a being-in-the-world, he is not positively stating that man is a this-worldly being in the metaphysical sense. The word does not mean "this world" in contrast with the other world. On the other hand, it only means that man is open hand, it only means that man is open to being.

Man really stands out from the background of Nature. Man has an innate power, potentially present which makes him have an openness to Being.

There exists an essential relation between Dasein and the world, but no such relation exists between Dasein and the entities of the world. We come
across different types of entities in the world. The subject-object relation can be referred to only in terms of entities, and not in terms of the world. Traditional philosophy recognises the relationship between Dasein and particular entities as one of knowing, and the entities known are designated as object. Heidegger uses the word "presence-at-hand" to denote the mode in which the entities are regarded as things. In our practical life situations, we are not conscious of the things of the world. Only when some changes occur we become aware of them, e.g., we are not conscious of the colour of the pen while we are writing, but the very moment we lose it we become aware of the various details of colour, etc. of the pen. The entities assume the character of a thing. Actually, the entities and things are the same, but they appear differently in different situations. That is, we come across the entity character and thing character, and understand them both in theoretical and practical situations. Heidegger thus indicates the peculiar way in which Dasein continues to have relation in the world.

Heidegger establishes the fact that the essence
of Dasein is its existence. It may be noted here that he does not accept the Sartrean dictum, 'existence precedes essence'. According to Heidegger, Sartre uses the idea of existence in the traditional sense in which it applies to objects. But, to Heidegger, the existence of man is his essence. This is an analytic truth. Heidegger gives an ontological interpretation of this relation.

It is consciousness that distinguishes man and places him in the topmost rank of evolution. According to Heidegger, the basic categories of existence are feeling, understanding and speech. Dasein is being there, and as such it is ontological.

The problem of Being

Heidegger's endeavour to revive the problem of Being, resulted in his work entitled "Being and Time". He was mainly concerned with the phenomenon of Dasein. This book is the result of his attempt to give an account of the 'existentialistic' structure of Dasein. An inquiry into the question of 'being' generally ends
in an understanding of the 'is'. But this understanding is not all that clear. Here the term Being is not treated as an entity. Hence it must be sought in its own way. Heidegger points out that the meaning of the term, 'Being' can be discerned only in an entity like the human being, namely, Dasein.

Usually, the two words 'Dasein' and 'human life' are used synonymously. But, Heidegger points out that they are not the same; for, they differ ontologically. Heidegger uses the terms, 'Vorhanden' and 'Vorhandenheit' which mean 'before one's hand' to refer to all those objects which are not essentially Dasein. He makes this clear by saying: "The being of the kind of "Dasein" is in its Being concerned about its Being and behaves towards its Being as towards its own possibility. It chooses and decides, and it may gain or may lose itself, in as far as its Being is concerned. All this cannot be said of the things that are "Vorhanden"."31 In indicating the difference
between 'Vorhanden' and Dasein, Heidegger points out that the 'essence' of the 'Vorhanden' is determinable whereas Dasein is characterised not by qualities, but by 'Being'. That is, the term 'Dasein' does not refer to qualities, but to Being. Moreover, Heidegger assigns the term 'existence' exclusively to Dasein. The word Heidegger uses to refer to this characteristic feature of Dasein is 'existentialia'.

In order to undertake his philosophic purpose, he adopts Husserl's method of phenomenology. He wanted to deal in detail with the phenomena of existence from the standpoint of transcendental subjectivity. That is, he wanted to transcend the attitude of subjectivity. Man is really man only when he understands Being. Being is hidden from man; but when he strives hard to understand, Being comes out of its concealed form and reveals itself. The relation of Being and man is so close that one is not conceivable without the other. According to Heidegger, revelation of Being is Truth. He also emphasises that Da-sein is the seat of Truth where Being reveals itself. The very fact that Being is concealed, implies the possibility
of 'openness' or revealment. It is man alone who is
gifted with the ability to apply reason and liberate
Being from its concealment. Man, thus is related to
Being and is essentially related to Nothing.

In this context Heidegger specially mentions the
importance of thinking. Being is expressed through
thinking. Language helps beings to establish
relationships with each other. Heidegger is of the
opinion that the truth of Being becomes clear only in
thinking. The truth of Being is traced out through
the thinking process. Heidegger remarks that it is in
the process of thinking that the being of Being shines
forth. In a sense, thinking fulfils an essential
function: it establishes the relationship between man
and Being. Hence, thinking is fundamentally
significant.

To have a clear notion of Being, it is necessary
to go back to trace the history of Being. Heidegger is
aware of the fact that pre-socratics possess an awareness
of the truth of Being. Plato and Aristotle wanted to
solve the mystery of Being. Aristotle discovered the
mystery of Being. He discovered this in a higher Being, an idea of Good. For Plato, Being was Idea: Luminosity is the nature of Idea. The very reality illumined is Idea. It is self-shining. In the Middle Ages, this Idea of Plato was taken up and formulated in an accurate form. Descartes, among the modern philosophers, wanted to formulate clear and distinct ideas, for the sake of clarity of thinking in the realm of philosophy. For Hegel, the Absolute spirit was nothing but the Being of beings. Nietzsche explained Reality not in the will of the Absolute Spirit but in the Will to Power.

A Classical Problem

The problem of the meaning of Being is a classical problem. It is, of course, man who raises the problem of Being and man is capable of doing so, as he stands in a peculiar position with regard to the problem of Being. The problem is not really a problem of Ultimate Reality. It is not something that we are contemplating in the sense of an Almighty Power, God,
or a Transcendent Being. The problem which we are considering is that of a being of beings. As far as Heidegger is concerned, to a certain extent, this is really a logical problem. Heidegger's Being is not a Person which is capable of having knowledge of itself. What actually happens is that only through the thinking process it reveals its own self. Heidegger conceives Being as essentially temporal. The reason behind such a conception is that it is the Being which is given in the event of creation.

Thus, to Heidegger, 'Dasein' implies having the potentiality of Being. For Dasein, or for any thing that is 'Vorhanden', 'potentiality' has a different interpretation. It means what is not yet real and therefore not at all essential. It is only probable, and is less than reality. Dasein is placed in life. To some extent, Dasein knows its own potentiality of Being. This knowledge consists in understanding one's own potentialities, has a wide meaning.

'Project' is a term used as the counter phenomenon to the 'thrownness of Dasein'. The Project
of understanding is related with potentialities in all possible ways. Dasein always projects the various potentialities it owns. We get an understanding of Dasein from the world where it is thrown. Speech is another existentialia of in-Being. Here 'speech' is not used in the sense of voice and sound. Dasein also possesses the potentialities of listening and speech. Dasein is totally immersed in the world of its care. It is observed that Dasein loses itself in the publicity of 'one like many' and in the world which belongs to its being. A state of self-estrangement arises in the everydayness of Dasein. The innermost potentialities of Dasein are hidden in this state. Also, it is observed that in this state of self-estrangement, it is possible for Dasein to lose its authenticity. This is an inner movement which Heidegger terms 'Fall'. The fall of Dasein is from itself to itself, i.e., to the unauthentic 'everydayness'.

Heidegger points out three structures of the being of man which make 'care'. The first is existence; man is not complete. 'Existenz', means
'projection of possibilities' or 'self-projection'. Man as an ethical agent exercises his freedom. The fact that he realizes this constitutes the essence. In other words, the essence of Dasein consists of its existence. Heidegger observes that Dasein is, in each case, its own possibility. It brings out the truth that we do not anticipate the same kind of capacities for all human beings; because human beings differ in their interests, tastes, aptitudes, dispositions etc. Man has an idea of the world in which he lives. He has an idea of his own self. Both are inseparable. These conceptions are, in other words, the possibilities of Dasein. Dasein always intends to execute plans and implement the possible changes in the world. Both Kant and Hegel attribute the very same meaning to the concept of "understanding" in their philosophy.

The second existential structure, 'facticity', refers to the awareness of Dasein to exist in a particular world. An individual, definitely, has a past—it is his facticity. The physical constitution is also a facticity. We are imprisoned in a body. But we can very well choose to leave the place where we
live. Man has a particular attitude towards the world. That is termed as 'mood'. Different types of mood can be noted. Sometimes utter monotony is felt; at other times the extreme point of joy may be experienced, for the most important mood is Dread or Anguish.

Man is busily engaged in so many activities and hence finds very little time to be aware of his Existenz. Very often he may become a victim of Fallenness—the third existential structure of Dasein. The nature of man to neglect his existence is the cause of inauthenticity. Heidegger is of the opinion that man is fundamentally a social being. Man, he says, becomes conscious of himself in the midst of the community, where a reciprocal recognition exists. The different forms of obligation man has towards others pose a problem—rather a tie. Heidegger makes an attempt to solve this problem. At least, some of the social ties are to be broken. For that man has to find his 'authentic self', which involves first his understanding of the existence of others. The awareness of our own existence is not a prime factor in
this context. We establish the various types of relation with others, sometimes in the form of request, demand, etc. That the knowledge of the existence of ourself leads to the knowledge of the existence of others, is denied by Heidegger.

"Care is the fundamental structure of man (of him who exists as self-projection in a world in which he finds himelf as thrown and in which he is entangled through his preoccupations), it follows that man is temporal in structure. My being is a flight from nothingness to nothingness in which, as accepting and willing my throwness into the world and my relations in the world, I constitute past and present as I reach out to the future". 32 The essence of man is the central point in the new direction of Being. Heidegger remarks that man cannot be conceived apart from Being. This close association between man and Being points out the relation between man and nothing. Being can be demonstrated only through Nothing. The man who knows

Being should necessarily come across Nothing. Nothing, in Heidegger, has an affirmative function. Nothing really belongs to Being and only through the experience of Nothing can man come to Being. It may be observed that Heidegger does not identify Nothing with Being.

The Being of beings postulates a priori and posibilizing ground. Every being is in its Being made out of Nothing, rather than out of another thing. The Being of beings can be spoken of only in relation to Dasein. The ground of beings is finite and temporal; it is the clearing of Dasein. Heidegger's argument is opposed to the viewpoint of tradition. Heidegger remarks that Being is to be found beyond beings. Where beings are not found, there is nothing. It is the being that is present in the place of nothing and Dasein stands out or projected into this nothing.

This interpretation of Heidegger may appear to be a philosophy of Nihilism. But we cannot call it Nihilism; it positively signifies the fact that beings are already significant. The Universe present countless phenomena, and, to Heidegger these do not
actually reveal themselves as they are in themselves. They reveal themselves within a concernful referential totality. They get totally liberated from concern and from the referential totality. Nothing in its real essence is indefinable. According to Heidegger Being is intelligible only through nothing. Non-human beings are ontic in nature. In expressing his views about human condition in the world, Heidegger says that man is different from the physical object, though he is directly presented to the world. Man has an inseparable relationship to the world, because he is a being destined to live in it. Man is necessarily in the world; but he should not get lost in the world and sink to the level of an ontic being. While living in this world, man or Dasein has the privilege of approaching Being. That is, Dasein is capable of understanding being in its Being by relating itself to the Being of beings. An understanding of the Being of beings brings the Being out of its concealment. As Heidegger points out it is Dasein's duty to dwell by this truth. For, it is the essence of his Ek-sistence which is nothing other than Being-in-the-world.
Sartre's existentialism rests on the assertion that man can be explained only in terms of existence. Sartre's philosophy has its focus on the concept of man's subjective nature, and rejects all references to objectivism. According to Sartre, man has to be given a holistic account. That is, man has to be explained with reference to his Psychological aspect and Physiological aspect. Sartre says that man becomes conscious of his being, i.e., his existential nature, only through some immediate access, like boredom, nausea, etc.

As an existentialist, Sartre thinks that man is not born with any essence. The primacy of existence as against essence is emphasised by Sartre, thus: "Man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world and defines himself afterwards. Man is not definable because he is nothing. He will not be anything until later; and then he will be what he makes of himself".  

33 Jean-Paul Sartre, _Existentialism and Humanism_. Trans. Philip Mairet. (Brooklyn: Haskell House Publishers, 1948) p. 28
For Sartre man simply is. Man is what he wills. Sartre is of the view that the principle of subjectivity makes human life possible. That is, man is nothing but that which he makes of himself. The principle of subjectivity makes a man a 'project'. Sartre observes, "Before that projection of the self, nothing exists, not even in the heaven of intelligence; man will attain existence when he is what he proposes to be".  

Ontology describes the phenomenon of being as itself without any intermediary. Here Sartre raises the question whether the phenomenon of being is the same as the particular object. He seems to accept Husserl's standpoint. According to Husserl, by an eidetic reduction it is possible to go beyond the concrete object towards its being. In the same way, Heidegger regards human reality as ontic-ontological, implying the possibility of going beyond the phenomenon to its essence. It is said that "the passage from the particular object to the essence is a passage from homogeneous to homogeneous". The same is the passage

34 Ibid., p. 28
35 Being and Nothingness. Trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1943) p. xlviii
between the particular object and the phenomenon of being. Sartre then proceeds to explain this point further by saying that particular objects are distinguished from one another on the basis of qualities like colour, odour, etc., which determine their essence. A particular object is a totality of the object-essence. Sartre says, "The essence is not in the object; it is the meaning of the object, the principle of the series of appearances which disclose it". 36 Here he makes it clear that being is different from the qualities or the meaning of the object. It is not possessed by the object. It is not a hidden quality. But it is being equally present in all the appearances which constitute the existent which is a phenomenon. He says, "Being is simply the condition of all revelation. It is being-for-revealing (être-pour-dévoiler) and not revealed being (être dévoilé)". 37 In his book, 'Being and Nothingness' Sartre presents his peculiar philosophical ideas and anlayses the nature of man saying that the constitution of man is analysed into three parts. They are

36 Ibid., p. X|ix
37 Ibid., p. X|ix
being-in-itself (en-soi), being-for-itself (pour-soi) and being-for-others (pour-autrui). Being-for-others is relevant only with reference to ethical studies. Hence, here we consider only the first two aspects being-in-itself and being-for-itself.

**Being-in-itself**

Sartre's analysis of man is quite novel. From the ontological point of view, Sartre is a dualist. He is often compared to Descartes as he tries to explain man in terms of ensoi and pour-soi. Being-in-itself and being-for-itself can be clearly understood only by knowing their relation with the notion of being in general and the relations by which they are united. Sartre at first was in line with Husserl in holding that intentionality of consciousness pointing to a transcendent object. Later, he turned his attention to man's being-in-the-world and the existence of the being-in-itself which is apart from consciousness. "If we ask what Being-in-itself is, as revealing itself to consciousness, Sartre's answer recalls to our mind the philosophy of Parmenides: 'Being is. Being is in
itself. Being is what it is". The table, for example, is in itself as distinguished from other objects. And when it is presented to the consciousness, it makes itself appear as the table itself as it has a certain meaning or significance in its relation to consciousness. It is not created by the consciousness, but it is or it exists. Sartre posits the being-in-itself before not being and does not equate with it. It is the consciousness that differentiates the table from its background. Differentiation is impossible without consciousness. The world appears as an intelligible system of inter-related things to the consciousness. Apart from making the world appear, consciousness remains as being-in-itself.

In the Sartre's conception, being-in-itself is devoid of reason, cause and necessity. The being-in-itself is the collection of non-conscious beings. He says "Being-in-itself has no within, which is opposed to a without and which is analogous to a

judgment, a law, a consciousness of itself. The
in-itself has nothing secret; it is solid (massif).\(^39\)

Hence the being-in-itself is incapable of getting
connected with what is not itself. That is, in this
realm, change, transition, or becoming cannot be
thought of.

According to Sartre, "Being-in-itself is never
either possible or impossible. It is. This is what
consciousness expresses in anthropomorphic terms by
saying that being is de trop—that is, that
consciousness absolutely cannot derive being from
anything, either from another being, or from a
possibility, or from a necessary law. Uncreated,
without reason for being, without any connection with
another being, being-in-itself is de trop for
eternity".\(^40\) In Sartre's famous novel, *Nausea*, the
main character Roquentin seems to have an impression of
the superfluous character of the being while sitting in

\(^39\) Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*. Trans.
Hazel E. Barnes. (New York: Philosophical Library,
1943) p. \(\text{Xvi}\)

\(^40\) Ibid., p. \(\text{Xvii}\)
the garden. There, Sartre says, "To exist is simply to be there".\footnote{41} Thus being-in-itself, to Sartre, is "What it is-to that which designates the being of consciousness".\footnote{42} That is, what is meant by saying 'being is what it is' is that the fact of their being is a contingent principle of being in itself. That is, it cannot even be what it is not. It gets exhausted in being, implying that it transcends temporality. It is full of positivity rather than negation.

Inertia is the defining characteristic of the being-in-itself. It has no spontaneity, whereas the being-for-itself is active. Passive are those objects on which conscious activity is excercised. According to Sartre, man is active though his means are passive. But the being, since it is self-consistent, is beyond active and passive. What is meant by saying that being-in-itself is, is that the being cannot be derived from a possibility whereas it is the structure of the being-for-itself. But the being-in-itself is

\footnote{41} - - - - - Nausea. Trans. Robert Baldick. (New York: Penguin Books, 1949) p. 188
\footnote{42} - - - - - Being, and Nothingness. Trans. Hazel E. Barnes. (New York: Philosophical Library, 1943) p. |xv
neither possible nor impossible. But it simply is.

**Being-for-itself**

According to Heidegger, human beings are endowed with a self-understanding which he terms as 'ek-static pro-ject'. Sartre does not deny the presence of this project in man. But he asks how there can be an understanding. He further says that, if the human reality does not rise from the consciousness of ek-static, it will come to acquire a thing-like character which is blind in itself. The being of consciousness, to Sartre, is a being whose being is in question in its being. But the being-in-itself is what it is. It is a fulness. Unlike the being-in-itself, consciousness is a de-compression of being. It is a coincidence with itself. The law of being of the for-itself is to be itself in the form of presence to itself. By the presence of being to itself, it is implied that there is a detachment on the part of being in its relation to itself. It shows that it is not wholly itself: presence suppose separation. According to Sartre, what separates the subject from...
himself is a 'nothing'. He says: "Ordinarily what separates is a distance in space, a lapse of time, a psychological difference, or simply the individuality of two co-presents—in short, a qualified reality". 43

To him, it is this nothing that separates the consciousness of belief from belief. Man is always separated from essence by a nothingness. This separation cannot be conceived in isolation. The revelation of it makes it vanish. Sartre says that "This negative which is the nothingness of being and the nihilating power both together, is nothingness". 44

He takes the point further and holds: "The being of consciousness qua consciousness is to exist at a distance from itself as a presence to itself, and this empty distance which being carries in its being is Nothingness". 45 Thus, for a self to exist must have a unity of its being and its own nothingness. The being-for-itself, as it cannot coincide with itself, creates or determines itself. Thus nothingness marks the fall of the in-itself to the self. This fall

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43 Ibid., p. 77
44 Ibid., p. 78
constitutes the for-itself. This act of the in-itself degenerating into presence to itself is termed as an ontological act. Nothingness is nothingness of being which comes into being through a particular being-human reality which is the original project of its own nothingness. "It is an absolute event which comes into being by means of being and which without having being, is perpetually sustained by being. Since being-in-itself is isolated in its being by its total positivity no being can produce being and nothing can happen to being through being-except for nothingness".46

Sartre denies the being-for-itself "as being what it is not and not being what it is".47 The for-itself is not just given; it is active, undertaking its own realisation as a form of being. About facticity, Sartre says: "Facticity is only one indication which I give myself of the being to which I must reunite myself in order to be what I am".48

46 Ibid., p.79
47 Ibid., p. |XV
Facticity is the aspect of the objective world that together with the subject makes up man's situation. The relation of the for-itself to facticity is termed as a factual necessity. It is this factual necessity that provides evidence of the cogito for Descartes and Husserl.

Now, turning his attention to the for-itself and the being of possibilities, Sartre points out that human reality as for-itself lacks certain coincidence with itself—a particular concrete reality which would change the for-itself into itself. It lacks something which is necessary to make it a whole. What the for-itself lacks is the for-itself. The lacking for-itself is nothing but what I am. The for-itself that is I am lacks the for-itself which I am not. Hence the identification of the for-itself with the absent for-itself is what is aimed at. What Sartre means by the possibility of the for-itself is the peculiar lack of each for-itself. Leibniz uses the term 'possible' to refer to an event which is not in the casual series—to an event which is determined—which transcends contradiction both with
itself and with the system. Spinoza uses the term in connection with ignorance which disappears with the removal of ignorance. Each of these views is defective in its own way. The possibility for Sartre rather appears as a property of beings. It cannot be reduced to a subjective reality. It is the concrete property of the existing realities. But the thought of possibilities cannot coincide with the essence of possibility. Possibility comes into the world through a being, which is the possibility of its own, as the being-in-itself cannot have possibilities. Man is the connecting link between the in-itself and the possibilities. But, for possibilities to exist, the human reality must be something other than itself. Sartre says: "This possible is that element of the For-itself which by nature escapes it qua For-itself. The possible is a new aspect of the nihilation of the In-itself in For-itself." The possible is a new aspect of the nihilation of the object. This gap prevents us being-for-itself from becoming one with the object. But it is conscious of consciousness lacks what it is. "The determining

relation of the for-itself to its possibility is a nihilating relaxation of the bond of presence-to-itself". 50 What the For-itself in fact lacks is a presence-to-itself which is not. According to Sartre, this lacking For-itself is the possible. But even after attaining the lacked For-itself, the coincidence with the self will be impossible because, it by itself leads to another horizon of possibilities.

The For-itself or pour-soi has two aspects. One is that it is conscious of itself or that it is intentional. The second aspect is that it is intentional towards an object or that it is conscious of other objects. That is, the pour-soi always thinks of something. But, it can never become one with the object. There is a gap between pour-soi and the object. This gap prevents the being-for-itself from becoming one with the object. But it is conscious of the object. This gap between the pour-soi and the object is termed as nothingness.

**Nothingness**

Sartre believes that negation plays an important role in human life. Mary Warnock observes: "It is

50 
Ibid., p. 100
through the existence of this emptiness, separating a
person from the world of things about him, that the
possibility arises of thinking or acting as one
chooses. There is necessarily, in a conscious being,
an area of free play, as it were between himself and
the world. The emptiness has to be filled and is
filled by whatever he plans to do or to think or to be.
Consciousness, Sartre, says, places itself at a
distance from its objects, and the gap between itself
and its object is identical with the power to confirm
or deny what it chooses. Freedom and consciousness
thus turn out to be the very same thing. They are both
identified with the power to consider things either as
they are or as they are not, to imagine situations
which are different from actual situations obtaining in
the world, and therefore to form plans to change what
there is". 51

Man, by nature, is not complete. Man always
feels that he is not something which he has to be.
Sartre observes that we are placed in a particular

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situation and set-up in life. Naturally, we ask questions about human life. We see that at once it leads to negation. A question implies that something is not known. Sartre says that this something is a phenomenon of negation. He feels the necessity to understand the phenomenon of negation, to know the fundamental fact of human existence. Sartre observes that non-being always occurs within the limits of human expectation. Nothingness comes into the world with man. Man's tendency to question is also to negate.

"The Being by which Nothingness arrives in the world is a being such that in its Being, the Nothingness of its Being is in question. The being by which Nothingness comes to the world must be its own Nothingness".\textsuperscript{52}

According to Sartre, consciousness is the origin of nothingness. Nothingness is not produced by being-in-itself because it is a full positivity.

\textsuperscript{52} Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness. Trans. Hazel E. Barnes. (New York: Philosophical Library, 1943) p. 23.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., p. 22.
Therefore it is Being-for-itself or consciousness that produces the nothingness in the world. This implies that man is the origin of nothingness. While explaining nothingness, Sartre uses three different things—negation, non-being, and being. The first one is negation. It is expressed by the word 'not'.

Negation has its origin and foundation in nothingness. Sartre says, "In order for negation to exist in the world and in order that we may consequently raise questions concerning Being, it is necessary that in some way Nothingness be given". Non-being is simply not to have being. It is the same as 'not to exist', since 'being' means 'to exist'. A round square for example has non-being since it does not exist. But nothingness is not the same as negation or non-being.

According to Hegel, pure being is absolute negation and absolute negation is nothingness. And thus he regards being and nothingness as one and the same. In order to establish the primacy of Being over nothingness, Sartre takes the statement of Spinoza and inverts it and says that every negation is determination. This shows that it is from being that nothingness derives its sustenance. Sartre says: "This is what we mean

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53 Ibid., p. 22
when we say that nothingness haunts being. That means

that being has no need of nothingness in order to be

conceived and that we can examine the idea of it

exhaustively without finding there the least trace of

nothingness. But on the other hand, nothingness, which

is not, can have only a borrowed existence, and it gets

its being from being. Its nothingness of being is

encountered only within the limits of being, and the

total disappearance of being would not be the advent of

the reign of non-being, but on the contrary the

concomitant disappearance of nothingness. Non-being

exists only on the surface of being".54

Negation, Sartre observes, is a refusal of

existence. By means of it a being is posited, then

thrown back to nothingness. Negation is a sudden break

in continuity, which is not a result of affirmation

already exists. It is a new and original event. Here

we are in the realm of consciousness. Consciousness

cannot produce a negation. It only makes us aware of

the fact that there is negation.

Nothingness is not a conceptual negation of

pure Being. In his book, 'what is Metaphysics?',

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Ibid., p. 16.
Heidegger deals with the problem of Nothingness. To him, 'Nothingness' is a personal experience of man in 'dread'. Dread is a state of mind. A person in 'dread' cannot think of anything definite. It is by relegating itself to the vanishing world that "Nothing" emerges. "And this total relegation to the vanishing what-is-in-totality, such being the form in which Nothing crowds round us in dread-is the essence of Nothing: nihilism. Nihilism is neither an annihilation of what is, nor does it spring from negation. Nihilation cannot be reckoned in terms of annihilation or negation at all. Nothing nihilates of itself".  

According to Heidegger, Nothingness is the opposite of the world. Sartre objects to Heidegger's view of nothingness by saying that his nothingness is the nothingness of being other-than-the world. It negates being as part of the world. In this manner it is a composition of negation and world and of negation and being. Sartre says, "Nothingness can be nothingness only by nihilating itself expressly as nothingness of the world, that is, in its nihilation it

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must direct itself expressly, toward this world in order to constitute itself as refusal of the world. Nothingness carries being in its heart". 56

Sartre's second objection against Heidegger's view is that his nothingness cannot explain the appearance of non-being in the midst of the world. Sartre maintains that "Nothingness can be nihilated only on the foundation of being; if nothingness can be given, it is neither before nor after being, nor in a general way outside of being. Nothingness lies coiled in the heart of being-like worm". 57 Nothingness, for Sartre, dwells in the midst of being though not as a part, for being is a full positivity. About the origin of nothingness, Sartre says, "If we can speak of it, it is only because it possesses an appearance of being, a borrowed being as we have noted above. Nothingness is not. Nothingness is-made-to-be, Nothingness does not nihilate itself; Nothingness is nihilated. It follows


57 Ibid., p. 21
therefore that there must exist a Being (this cannot be the-in-itself) of which the property is to nihilate Nothingness, to support it in its being, to sustain it perpetually in its very existence, a being by which nothingness comes to things". To him nothingness is projected into the world by human beings who contain nothingness. Though man contains nothingness, he is not subject to the causal chain of being-in-itself. And this accounts for the freedom of man. Thus Sartre connects nothingness in human beings with their freedom. He says, "For man to put a particular existent out of circuit is to put himself out of circuit in relation to that existent. In this case he is not subject to it; he is out of reach; it cannot act on him, for he has retired beyond a nothingness. Descartes following the Stoics has given a name to this possibility which human reality has to secrete a nothingness which isolates it—it is freedom". The theory of man presented by Sartre establishes the fact that man is indefinable. Man is what he makes of himself. He is not only responsible for himself, but for all men. The harsh experiences Sartre had in his

58 Ibid., p. 22
59 Ibid., p. 24
life revealed to him the truth that man is a wolf unto himself. He was always pessimistic about positive human relationships. This aspect of Sartre is reflected in all the characters of his plays and other works. Though Sartre when viewed from this aspect seems to be passive, in his personal life he was very sensitive and did not want his fellowmen to trail and toil. To epitomise, we can say that Sartre's emphasis on the negative is intended to make man fight against and denounce the existence of injustice, rather than making a compromise with it.

While encountering the harsh realities of life, man comes to understand that it is not the pleasure-principle alone that governs his life. There is also a reality-principle which he has to face. The reality that he confronts in everyday life makes his life miserable and monotonous. Knowing that life is in the midst of such miseries and hardships as meaningless, he rushes towards freedom, which seems to make his life meaningful and worthy. He also discovers that the world in which he is placed is a limited world. He feels the necessity to realise a higher