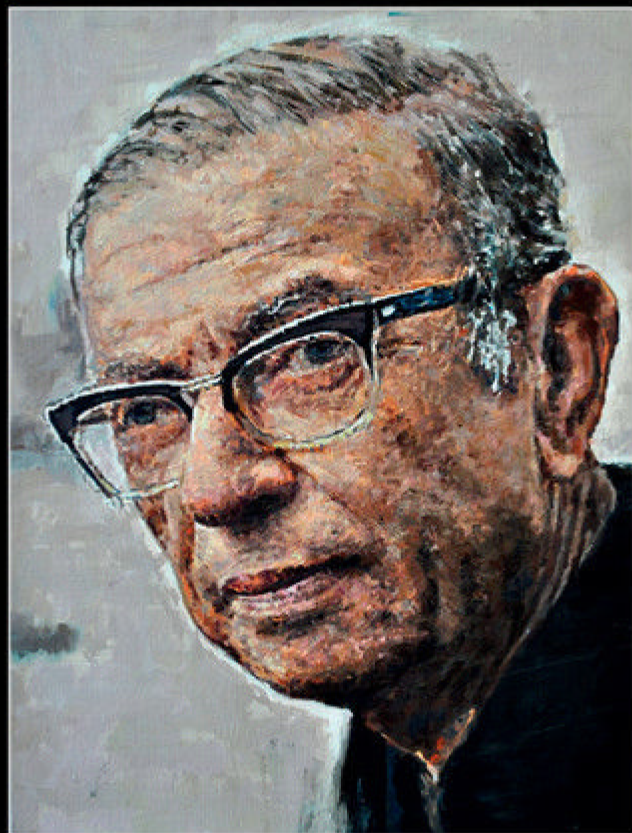
SARTRE

A Philosophical Biography



THOMAS R. FLYNN

SARTRE: A PHILOSOPHICAL BIOGRAPHY

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) was one of the most influential thinkers of the twentieth century. Regarded as the father of existentialist philosophy, he was also a political critic, moralist, playwright, novelist, and author of biographies and short stories. Thomas R. Flynn provides the first book-length account of Sartre as a philosopher of the imaginary, mapping the intellectual development of his ideas throughout his life, and building a narrative that is not only philosophical but also attentive to the political and literary dimensions of his work. Exploring Sartre's existentialism, politics, ethics, and ontology, this book illuminates the defining ideas of Sartre's oeuvre: the literary and the philosophical, the imaginary and the conceptual, his descriptive phenomenology and his phenomenological concept of intentionality, and his conjunction of ethics and politics with an "egoless" consciousness. It will appeal to all who are interested in Sartre's philosophy and its relation to his life.

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Thomas R. Flynn

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For my extended family

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Preface

On the evening of October 29, 1945, Jean-Paul Sartre delivered a much-anticipated lecture, advertised as "Existentialism is a Humanism," to an overflow crowd in the Salle des Centraux on the Parisian Right Bank. As he was already well known for his novels *Nausea* and the recently published *The Age of Reason* and *The Reprieve*, his plays, *The Flies* and *No Exit*, and his philosophical essays, especially the daunting masterpiece *Being and Nothingness*, his talk was seen as the manifesto for this rapidly spreading style of thought. It is still the philosophical essay that people read when they seek an introduction to his work and to this movement in general. Yet it is the only piece that he openly regretted having published.

In what follows I shall survey the intellectual path that led Sartre to this juncture, the turn that it presaged, and the resultant works and deeds that came to define him as "Sartre." This is a biography, the story of a life. But it is a philosophical biography, an account of the development of the thought and works of arguably the most famous philosopher of the twentieth century.

Renown is not the same as admiration. Sartre is famous for his theory of ethico-political commitment. As Spinoza reminds us, decision inevitably implies exclusion. But, in Sartre's case, the ethical and the political usually went together. And this commitment involved polemics. One is often better known by the nature of one's enemies than by the number of one's friends. Though it would be futile to weigh the respective numbers in either camp, as we progress I shall consider Sartre's friends, his opponents and, tellingly, his several estrangements from former friends such as Raymond Aron, Albert Camus and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

To clarify the nature of this project at the outset, let me repeat that it is a survey of Sartre's life and works and of their relation, but not the

usual chronicle of the details of his childhood and lineage. Others have done that for us. Nor is it limited to a study of his philosophical publications, though these play the major role because of their increasing centrality throughout his career. One must certainly consider his literary works. He was offered the Nobel Prize for literature, which he declined – a phenomenon that itself calls for explanation. What makes a philosophical biography of Sartre especially challenging is not only the quantity of his work – he admitted to writing for several hours every day, even while on holiday – but its variety: plays, novels, short stories, literary, aesthetic and political criticism, numerous prefaces to other people's works, and insightful philosophical studies, not to mention the founding and editing of a major journal of opinion and critique, *Les Temps Modernes*, that has appeared regularly since its first issue, October 1, 1945. Rather than charting the curve of productivity along parallel, genre-specific lines, I intend to read his writings as expressions of a profound but sometimes "metastable" commitment, as he would say, to the conceptual and the imaginary, to the philosophical and the literary, broadly speaking, to Spinoza and Stendhal. For the basic thesis of this study, its leitmotif, is that Sartre was chiefly a philosopher of the imaginary and that this accounts in large part for both his penchant for the literary and his ready acceptance of Husserlian phenomenology, with its "imagistic" arguments, which he is alleged to have discovered in the early 1930s. Even when he finally abandons imaginative literature in favor of political commitment, I shall argue, it is in the service of an egalitarian *ideal* – what he calls "socialism and freedom" or the "city of ends." Indeed, he signals his adieu with a "novel that is true," his autobiographical *Words*, while continuing to labor on his massive existential biography of Gustave Flaubert, another "novel that is true." So the imaginary, with its promise and its limits, its inspiration and its ambiguities, will bookend this study, as it did Sartre's life from childhood to final years.

Acknowledgments

It is perilous to begin a list of individuals and organizations to whom appreciation for this undertaking should be directed. The risk multiplies as the years of my research on this volume have mounted. In terms of organizations, the members of the North American Sartre Society and the Groupe d'Études Sartriennes continue to foster my research and that of many others by providing a forum for discussion and a source for valuable publications. I am grateful for the good fortune to have been present at the origin of both groups. I thankfully acknowledge support from Emory University and its Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry, as well as for a recent sabbatical leave that afforded me the leisure to pursue and complete this project. Regarding individuals, I wish to thank Michel Rybalka and his dynamic wife, Maya, for hospitality shown me in their home in the Basque country as I did research for early portions of this book, and to Jean Bourgault for numerous discussions during my visits to Paris over the years. Across the Channel, but still in the Gallic embrace, I must acknowledge the friendship and intellectual stimulation of many visits with Christina and Bernard Howells. They personify for me the joy and the depth of the intellectual life. As for the States, among colleagues and friends, I have been especially blessed by the support of Joseph Catalano, William McBride and Ronald Santoni, who discussed this manuscript at the Sartre Circle during a meeting of the American Philosophical Association. Too many others deserve mention that space will not allow, but such is the price of existential finitude. They will see their work mentioned in the book. I must acknowledge the inspiration and encouragement of the late Hazel E. Barnes, who had been a faithful friend *ab initio.* For technical support I wish to thank Larry Coty, a former student and long-time friend, and Michael Hodgin of the philosophy staff at Emory, who bridged the gap between written work and

digital availability. But most of all I owe a debt of gratitude to Hilary Gaskin of Cambridge University Press. Her patience with my hedgehog-like ways is surpassed only by her ability to transfer plodding academic writing into viable, if not deathless, prose. The dedication to my extended family is in joyous celebration of numerous expressions of loving care: Collitons, Flynns and Martins, *in caritate non ficta*.

Abbreviations

AD	*Adventures of the Dialectic* (Merleau-Ponty)
B	*Baudelaire*
Bauer	*Sartre and the Artist*
BEM	*Between Existentialism and Marxism*
BN	*Being and Nothingness* (*EN*)
BT	*Being and Time*
Centenary	*Sartre Today: A Centenary Celebration* (Bowman and Stone in Van den Hoven and Leak [eds.])
CDG	*Carnets de la drôle de guerre* (1st edn.) (*WD*)
CDG-F	*Carnets de la drôle de guerre* (2nd edn., rev.)
CDR	*Critique of Dialectical Reason* (2 vols.) (*CRD*)
CDS	"Conscience de soi et connaissance de soi" (CSKS)
Cér	*La Céremonie des adieux, suivi de entretiens avec Jean-Paul Sartre* (De Beauvoir)
CF	"Cartesian Freedom," *LPE*
CF-F	CF, in *Situations* vol. 1
CHR	*Conférence à la Lyre havraise nov. 1932–mars 1933* (Études Sartriennes)
CM	*Cahiers pour une morale* (*NE*)
Condemned	*The Condemned of Altona*
CP	*The Communists and Peace* and *A Reply to Claude Lefort*
Contat and Rybalka	*The Writings of Jean-Paul Sartre* (2 vols.)
CRD	*Critique de la raison dialectique* (*CDR*)
CSC	"Autour des conférences de Sartre à Cornell," *Sur les écrits posthumes de Sartre*
CSKS	"Consciousness of Self and Knowledge of Self" ("CDS")
DE	"Dialectical Ethics"
DES	Diplôme d'Études Supérieures
EB	*Sartre's Existential Biographies* (Scriven)
EN	*L'Être et le néant* (*BN*)
EH	*Existentialism is a Humanism*

EHist	*The Ethics of History* (Carr et al.)
EJ	*Écrits de jeunesse*
Emotions	*The Emotions, Outline of a Theory* (Frechtman)
ES	Études sartriennes nos. 1–16
EW	*Essential Works of Foucault* (ed. Rabinow)
"L'Exigence"	"De l'aliénation morale à l'exigence éthique," *LTM*, *Témoins de Sartre*
FI	*The Family Idiot* (5 vols.)
Film	*Sartre: un film*
Flies	*The Flies*
Génération	*Génération intellectuelle: Khâgneux et Normaliens dans l'entre-deux-guerres*
HDV	*History and the Dialectic of Violence* (Aron)
HF	*Heidegger en France*, vol. II (Janicaud)
Hope	*Hope Now: The 1980 Interviews*
Ideas	*Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology – Book* I (Husserl)
IF	*L'Idiot de la famille*
Imaginary	*The Imaginary*
Ion	*L'Imagination*
IPH	*Introducion to the Philosophy of History* (Aron)
Ire	*L'Imaginaire*
LaC	*Lettres au Castor et à quelques autres, 1926–1939*
Lectures	*Lectures de Sartre* (Burgelin)
Life	*Jean-Paul Sartre. A Life* (Cohen-Solal)
LPE	*Literary and Philosophical Essays*
L/S	"Self-Portrait at Seventy," *Life/Situations*
LS-E	*Letters to Sartre* (Beauvoir)
LTM	*Les Temps Modernes*
M	*Mallarmé, Or the Poet of Nothingness*
MAEA	*Les Mots et autres écrits autobiographiques* (Pléiade)
Mémoires	*Mémoires* (Aron)
MH	"'Morale et Histoire,' the Cornell Lectures," *LTM*
MR	"Materialism and Revolution"
MS	"'Marxisme et Subjectivité,' la Conférence de Rome, 1961," *LTM*
Nausea	*Nausea*
NE	*Notebooks for an Ethics* (*CM*)
*N*G	*La Nausée* (Goldthorpe)
Obliques-Arts	*Sartre et les Arts*, *Obliques*, nos. 24–25
OR	*Œuvres romanesques* (Contat and Rybalka)
ORR	*On a raison de se révolter*
PCF	Parti communiste français
PL	*Pouvoir et liberté. Benny Lévy. Cahiers* (ed. Gilles Hanus)
PPS	*La Première philosophie de Sartre* (Flajoliet)

Prime	*The Prime of Life*
PS	*Pour Sartre*
PSM	*Pourquois et comment Sartre a écrit "les Mots"*
QMW	*Quiet Moments in a War*
RDR	Rassemblement Démocratique Révolutionnaire
SA	*Sartre Alive* (Aronson and Van den Hoven)
SaP	*Sartre avant la Phénoménologie: Autour de "La Nausée" et de la "Légende de la vérité"* (De Coorebyter)
Schilpp	*The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*
SFP	*Sartre face à la phénoménologie. Autour de "L'intentionalité et de "La Transcendence de l'Ego"* (De Coorebyter)
SFHR	*Sartre, Foucault and Historical Reason* (2 vols.) (Flynn)
SG	*Saint Genet: Actor and Martyr*
Sit	*Situations*, vols. I–X
SM	*Search for a Method*
SME	*Sartre and Marxist Existentialism* (Flynn)
ST	*Sartre on Theater*
STE	*Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions* (Mairet)
*ST*G	*Le Siècle traversé* (Gandillac)
TC	*Théâtre complet*
TE	*"La Transcendence de l'ego" et autres textes phénoménologiques: "Conscience de soi et connaissance de soi," précédé de "Une idée fondamentale de la phénoménologie de Husserl"*
WA	*Writing Against. A Biography of Sartre* (Hayman)
WD	*The War Diaries of Jean-Paul Sartre, November 1939–March 1940*
WE	*The Wretched of the Earth* (Fanon, preface by Sartre)
WL	*What is Literature? And Other Essays*
Words-F	*Les Mots*

Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own. The suffixes F and E in an abbreviation indicate that the work is a French or English version of another volume on the list.

I

The childhood of a genius

SARTRE WAS BORN in Paris on June 21, 1905, to Jean-Baptiste and Anne-Marie Sartre. His mother was née Schweitzer, from a prominent, liberal Alsatian family, and through her he was related to Nobel Peace laureate Albert Schweitzer, whom he once described as "my cousin Albert [who] was not bad at the organ."[1] His father, an ensign in the French navy, was on duty overseas at the time of Sartre's birth. On a previous posting he had contracted a fever, and a year after Sartre's birth he died of it, at the age of 30. Rather unsympathetically, Sartre observed that his father had had the good manners to die early in his life, thus leaving him without a superego.[2] Sartre was raised by his mother in her parents' home, for the first five years in the Parisian suburb of Meudon, and from 1911 in their Paris apartment near the Luxembourg Gardens. Except for what he depicts as a rather painful interlude in La Rochelle on the southwest coast of France, where he lived with his mother and her new husband, Joseph Mancy, from the fall of 1917 to the spring of 1920, Sartre was raised and educated in Paris, where he attended two

[1] Jean-Paul Sartre, "Self-Portrait at Seventy," *Life/Situations: Essays Written and Spoken*, trans. Paul Auster and Lydia Davis (New York: Pantheon, 1977), 36; hereafter *L/S* with title of essay and page.

[2] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Words (Les Mots)*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: George Braziller, 1964), 11–12; hereafter *Words* and "F" for the French original (*Words*-F 19). If it is any consolation, Sartre is just as harsh on himself in this brilliant little autobiographical "novel," which he insists is "true." More on this later. It is commonly acknowledged that "Words" is a better rendition of "Les mots" than the published title, which retains the definite article. This work is the object of a detailed "genetic" critique by a team of experts under the direction of Michel Contat of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, subsequently published as *Pourquois et comment Sartre a écrit "les Mots,"* 2nd edn. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997); hereafter *PSM*.

prestigious *lycées* and the exclusive École Normale Supérieure (ENS).[3] In 1915, while he was an extern at the Lycée Henri IV, he met Paul Nizan. Nizan would become one of his closest friends after Sartre's return to the lycée from La Rochelle in 1920, now as a boarder. After finishing their studies at Henri IV, Sartre and Nizan began the two-year course of study at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand (fall 1922–spring 1924) in preparation for the entrance exam to the ENS. Sartre counted his four years at the ENS as being among the happiest of his life. It was there that he befriended Raymond Aron and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, as well as Simone de Beauvoir, who was a student at the Sorbonne, and continued his association with Nizan. In fact, so close was his friendship with Nizan that their fellow Normaliens referred to the pair as "Nitre et Sarzan." Upon his graduation in 1928, Sartre sat for the philosophical *agrégation*, a national exam that qualified candidates to teach in lycées throughout the country. To everyone's amazement, he failed the exam that year, but he emerged first (just ahead of Beauvoir) in the competition the following year. That fall he began an eighteen-month tour of military service as a meteorologist, which he completed in February of 1931. In the spring of 1931 he was appointed to the lycée in Le Havre where, except for a research fellowship in Berlin (1933–1934), he continued to teach until the spring of 1936. As "Bouville" (Mudville), Le Havre became the locus for Sartre's first novel, *Nausea*, which would make him an important figure on the French literary scene after its publication in 1938. In the meantime he taught in lycées in Laon (fall 1936) and in the Parisian suburb of Neuilly (fall 1937) till his call to active duty in September 1939. Such, in brief, is the chronicle of the years before Jean-Paul became "Sartre."

"It all began in childhood"

Like Karl Marx, Sartre is sometimes criticized for treating his subjects as if they were born miniature adults. And yet his several existentialist "biographies," chiefly of literary figures, devote considerable attention to

[3] While living with his grandparents, he briefly attended the Lycée Montaigne, from which his grandfather withdrew him, then a public school in Arachon on the southwest coast (1914) and a semester at the Poupon Academy in Paris from which this time his mother quickly withdrew him. It seems that Poulou was not living up to their expectations. Much of this early schooling took place at home under the tutelage of his grandfather.

their subjects' respective "choices" of the imaginary mode of existence; that is, their youthful opting for creative writing rather than for the banal world of practical concerns. Though Sartre was interested in psychology from the start, in his early works he paid scant attention to childhood development or to the process of what he would later call "personalization." True, in July of 1938 he completed the short story "Childhood of a Leader" ("L'Enfance d'un chef"), which was published the following year. But this was more a study in the *embourgeoisement* of a youth – his coming to realize the "necessity of his existence" and his right to be in charge – themes that Sartre was to elaborate in the late 1940s and 1950s in remarks about bourgeois class consciousness.[4] The philosophical foundation for what he would call "existential psychoanalysis," as we shall see, was laid in his masterful *Being and Nothingness* (1943). After that, he did attend to the fundamental, self-defining projects of his subjects in his increasingly detailed biographies of Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Jean Genet and (at greatest length) Gustave Flaubert, regarding whom, he insists, "everything took place in childhood."[5]

The first eleven years of Sartre's life are recounted in several places, but mainly in his autobiography, *Words*. Although his mother once commented about this work that "Poulou," his childhood nickname, "didn't understand a thing about his childhood,"[6] we get a curiously skewed picture of those early years, where the little boy ensconced in his grandfather's library "plays the part" of the young genius that his mother and grandparents take him to be.[7] He describes his behavior as play-acting – pretending to be a nascent writer and intellectual in order

[4] In a letter to his friend and editor of the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, Jean Paulhan, who had criticized as simplistic his characterization of the French right-wing anti-Republican group, Action Française, in this story, Sartre admits the charge but explains that the point of his tale is simply to show the degree to which a young fellow who is a bit of an onlooker and a real jerk could discover this group in his search for salvation through social issues and alliance with the Right. In similar circumstances, Sartre adds, a more intelligent fellow might have joined the Communist Party. (See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Lettres au Castor et à quelques autres, 1926–1939*, ed. Simone de Beauvoir [Paris: Gallimard, 1983], 218); hereafter *LaC* with page number.

[5] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Vintage, 1968), 59–60; hereafter *SM*.

[6] Annie Cohen-Solal, *Jean-Paul Sartre. A Life* trans. Anna Concogni (New York: New Press, 2005), 40; hereafter *Life*.

[7] Actually, Sartre's assessment of their view seems rather ambiguous. At times, they consider him a genius; at other times, his grandfather and occasionally his grandmother discover he is faking it (see *Words* 21 and 101).

to please his elders, especially his grandfather Schweitzer, whom he termed "God the Father," because of his imperious manner and imposing beard. "Everything took place in my head," he confesses, "imaginary child that I was, I defended myself with my imagination" (*Words* 71). That imagination, in both its creative and its critical functions, was to be Sartre's constant companion throughout his life. His own biography, like that of the other literary figures he would analyze, culminates in his explicit choice of the imaginary that he had implicitly "chosen" long before.

Of course, we should be rather cautious about ascribing to this child the thoughts which Sartre attributes to himself forty-five years later.[8] We shall see how easily they fit the existential psychoanalytic template of the life-orienting fundamental choice that he fashioned toward the end of *Being and Nothingness*. And Sartre would probably not disagree. We shall note his rather lax attitude toward the precise facts gathered in his account of a life-defining experience of the young Jean Genet.[9] In that respect, Sartre seems to admit that the past is never recoverable in any literal sense or, at least, that it is not his aim to reproduce it.[10] So we should be forewarned as we read his autobiography.

How then does *Words* differ from Sartre's other existential biographies that seek to capture that decisive moment when their subject opted for the imaginary? Could he not have admitted – as he did of his multi-volume study of Flaubert – that *Words* too is "a novel which is true" (*un roman vrai*)? After all, Sartre's erstwhile friend Raymond Aron had already introduced this phrase to characterize narrative history in general.[11] Indeed, Sartre does admit as much to Michel Contat when he remarks: "I think that *Words* is no truer than *Nausea* or *The Roads to Freedom*. Not that the facts I report are not true, but *Words* is a kind of

[8] Sartre corrected the proofs for *Words* in April 1963 (Jacqueline Villani, *Leçon littéraire sur Les Mots de Sartre* [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996], 2).

[9] See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Saint Genet: Actor and Martyr*, trans. Bernad Frechtman (New York: George Braziller, 1963), 17; hereafter *SG*.

[10] For Sartre's view of "truth" in history, see my *Sartre, Foucault and Historical Reason*, vol. I, *Toward an Existentialist Theory of History*, and vol. II, *A Poststructuralist Mapping of History* (University of Chicago Press, 1997 and 2005 respectively), 1:148 and 1:173–175; hereafter *SFHR* with volume and page.

[11] Raymond Aron, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, 2nd edn., rev. and trans. George J. Irwin (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1961), 509; see also *Magazine Littéraire*, no. 198 (September 1983): 37.

novel also – a novel that I believe in, but a novel nevertheless."[12] So he seems to be inviting us to read his autobiography as "a novel which is true."

But what does "true" mean in this context? The way it actually happened, to borrow Von Ranke's famous phrase? Not likely, in view of Sartre's rather cavalier dealing with the facts in Genet's life. As we shall see, a likely story (as Aron and many recent historians would claim)? An effective means of reproducing an attitude or a way of "comprehending the comprehension" of the subject in question (as it seems to mean for the later Sartre in his *Critique of Dialectical Reason*)? These uses of "truth" are scarcely incompatible, especially in a life as complex and multifaceted as Sartre's. We must keep this in mind, however, as we examine his account of his early years, culminating in his "choice" of the imaginary.[13]

Still, *Words* is an *auto*biography. Presumably, its author knows its subject better than anyone else. Or does he? The hermeneuticist has long insisted that the ideal of this method of textual interpretation is "to understand a writer better than he understood himself."[14] And, in the case of Sartre's childhood, as his mother insisted, Sartre's interpretation of this period of his life was a misreading.

Perhaps an appeal to the unconscious may resolve the paradox. Could it be that "Poulou" unconsciously grasped the meaning of his actions while remaining explicitly unaware of their significance? To employ a famous expression of the later Sartre, was the little fellow in "bad faith?" Or is it the autobiographer himself who is in bad faith, creating a story by selecting events that support his thesis and omitting contrary evidence? It has been pointed out, for example, that this patron of "transparency" has virtually eliminated any reference to his infantile sexuality

[12] "Self-Portrait at Seventy," *L/S* 17.

[13] Choice of the imaginary is a practical decision that the later Sartre takes for a kind of *conduite d'échec* (*failure behavior*) in the case of his Flaubert biography, *The Family Idiot*. But by that time, with the exception of his Flaubert "novel," he has abandoned imaginative literature for concrete political activism. Sartre seems to have joined Flaubert in accepting the practical limits of the imaginary. This does not mean that he abandoned the imaginary altogether. My general thesis is that this would have required rejecting the political and the ethical imaginary, which Sartre never did. See *Words* 159; F 212 and below Chapter 15 and Conclusion.

[14] This is Friedrich Schleiermacher's ideal of the hermeneutic method (see Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd edn., rev. [London: Continuum, 2004], 191).

in this account.[15] In that case, one might agree with Philippe Lejeune that "autobiography for Sartre is not 'the story of my past' but 'the story of my future'; in other words the reconstruction of the *project*."[16]

Regarding the first means of resolving the paradox of Poulou's self-deception, Sartre is reputed to be a sharp foe of the Freudian unconscious, as we shall see. So, to the extent that the hermeneutic project relies on the superior perspective of Freudian psychoanalysis, Sartre would reject it. Yet there is the alternative of existential psychoanalysis and, though Sartre at the conclusion of *Being and Nothingness* admitted that it had yet to find its Freud, this is what Sartre himself is practicing in his biographies and, arguably, is employing in his autobiography as well. Its aim is to seek the fundamental, life-defining option that is exhibited by the words and deeds of the subject in question. So our second hypothesis reads *Words* as the simple application of the ancient metaphysical principle that "as a thing acts so it is" (*agere squitur esse*).[17] And one might argue – using Sartre's distinction between knowledge (which is reflective and explicit) and comprehension (which is prereflective and implicit), and which will ground both existentialist psychoanalysis and its famous category of bad faith – that this distinction accompanies Sartre's reconstruction of his own childhood experience and serves to validate his account. In other words, granted that the younger Sartre "understood" more than he or his elders knew, it was the older man who would bring this comprehension to reflective articulation. Sartre will place much significance on his claim that Flaubert "understood much more than he knew" (see below, Chapter 15). Until we deal with existential psychoanalysis in detail, let these options suffice.

Four accounts of Sartre's childhood

Sartre describes his early years at greatest length in four published locations: the *War Diaries* (*Carnets*) that he kept during mobilization in

[15] Serge Doubrovsky, "Sartre: retouches à un autoportrait (une autobiographie visqueuse)," *Lectures de Sartre*, ed. Claude Burgelin (Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1986), 113; hereafter *Lectures* with essay title.

[16] See Philippe Lejeune, *Le Pacte autobiographique* (Paris: Seuil, 1975), 237. Translated by Katherine Leary as *On Autobiography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 102.

[17] See Jacques Lecarme, "*Les Mots* de Sartre: un cas limité de l'autobiographie?," *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de France* no. 6 (1975).

the "phoney war" of 1939–40; his autobiography, *Words*, published in 1964; the filmed conversation with Simone de Beauvoir and others (February–March 1972); and his interviews with Beauvoir (August–September 1974).[18] Additional biographical information can be gleaned from his voluminous correspondence, especially with his life-long partner Beauvoir, and from Beauvoir's own multivolume autobiography. If we take each of his accounts as a kind of transparency sheet to be superimposed, as for an overhead projector, what configuration of his early years emerges from this set? What does each account add to the others so as to achieve a more adequate picture of the subject? Minimizing inevitable repetitions in these four accounts, let us examine each version in search of the whole person.

The perspective of a conscript from the Front, 1939–40

While on duty as a meteorologist in Alsace during the "phoney war," Sartre found time to fill fifteen notebooks with his reflections on military life and his relations with his friends back home, interspersed with reports on the progress he was making on his novel, *The Age of Reason*, and pages of insightful articulations of the metaphysical concepts that would form portions of *Being and Nothingness* after his return to civilian life. We must admit at the outset that this does not yield a complete picture. Only five of these notebooks are known to still exist. Further, they were written with eventual publication in mind, so they exhibit a certain self-censorship that is less guarded in his letters to Beauvoir, which accompanied nearly every day's entry.[19] Reading them in tandem enables us to compare the public with the private Sartre, though Beauvoir also did her own editing of the letters she received from Sartre prior to their publication.[20]

[18] For a full list of texts in addition to *Words* that are considered "autobiographical," see the Pléiade critical edition of Sartre, *Les Mots et autres écrits autobiographiques* (Paris: Gallimard, 2010); hereafter *MAEA* with title of entry and page.

[19] As Doubrovsky remarks, "Sartre's references to his own sexuality in the *Carnets* are as remarkable by their absence as they will be in *Words*. And even Sartre's references to his amorous affairs with other women in his letters to Beauvoir seem purged of any aspect that could occasion her jealousy" (*Lectures* 129).

[20] See *Bulletin du Groupe d'Études Sartriennes* 5 (June 1991) 46.

If Sartre viewed his childhood in Paris as play-acting in front of the audience of his mother and grandparents, then this interpretation was expanded and assigned quasi-ontological significance in his war diaries. In the entry for March 9, 1940 we find Henri de Montherlant's remark, concerning the Olympic Games, that "play is the only defensible form of action," and his citation of Schiller, "man is fully a man only when he plays," in support of this view. This elicits Sartre's objection: "Why does [Montherlant] have to add foolishly that this form of action is the only one that can be taken seriously? How can he fail to see that play, by its very nature, excludes the very idea of seriousness?" Anticipating his moral censure of the "spirit of seriousness" in *Being and Nothingness* as a basic form of bad faith, Sartre confesses:

> If there is some unity in my life, that's because I've never wanted to live seriously. I've been able to put on a show – to know pathos, and anguish, and joy – but never, never have I known seriousness. My whole life has been just a game: sometimes long and tedious, sometimes in bad taste – but a game. And this war is just a game for me.

But lest one equate this with simple pretending, Sartre adds that in his dictionary, "'game' . . . is the happy metamorphosis of the contingent into the gratuitous," an implicit reference to the central theme of *Nausea* published two years earlier. He promises to explain later "why the assumption of oneself is itself a game."[21]

Regarding his childhood, Sartre's diaries fill in some of the details of his "exile" in La Rochelle with his mother and stepfather. Indeed, it has been argued that his mother's "betrayal" of his exclusive love by her second marriage marked the first major turning point in his personal life.[22] Sartre once observed that he was anti-bourgeois ever since he met

[21] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Carnets de la drôle de guerre. Septembre 1939–Mars 1940*, new edition with previously unpublished notebook (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), 563; hereafter *CDG. The War Diaries of Jean-Paul Sartre, November 1939–March* 1940, trans. Quintin Hoare without the first notebook in the French edition (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 313–314; hereafter *WD.* We shall return to this topic in our discussion of the Flaubert material in Chapter 15, n. 57.

[22] Indeed, Michel Contat considers her marriage more traumatic and life-changing than Sartre's experience of "society" in the army and subsequent Resistance, which he considers his first "conversion" experience. In fact, he claims that "Sartre's mother was the most important woman in his life: it's not Simone de Beauvoir, like people think – no, no, it was actually Mummy – he lived with Mummy, you know . . ." (Interview on BBC Radio 3 for *The Man with the Golden Brain*, broadcast May 22, 2005, cited by Benedict O'Donohoe, "Living

his future stepfather.[23] It is obvious that the challenge of adolescence and the need to "share" his mother's love with another man, not to mention the demands of fitting into a provincial school with children of a rougher hue, many of whose fathers were away at war, caused him considerable unhappiness. He learned to fight and to join groups of ruffians in self-defense.

Three observations serve to summarize this page of the map of his youth: Sartre's childhood play-acting carried a significance that extended beyond those years; he learned the meaning and exercise of violence while in La Rochelle; and he was left with a lasting hatred of the bourgeois model that his stepfather represented. We shall see how he mined this experience for several autobiographical short stories, including "The Childhood of a Leader."

Sartre in his own Words, *1963*

In *Words*, Sartre describes in considerable detail his life in the home of his patriarchal grandfather, grandmother and widowed mother, whom he considered more of an older sister – a feeling reinforced by the sense she communicated to the little boy that they were not in their own home. The atmosphere Sartre describes is one of middle-class comfort and values, infused with the Schweitzer nostalgia for the lost provinces of Alsace-Lorraine, which the child dreamt of regaining through his own heroic efforts. From the very start, he knew he would be famous. Above all, this was a world of books: the grandfather's library of over a thousand volumes, the children's story books that fed Sartre's imagination, the deference shown by older students to his schoolteacher grandfather.[24]

with Mother: Sartre and the Problem of Maternity," *Sens [public]. International Web Journal*, www.sens-public.org.) After decades, Sartre still recalls his mother's two slaps at his insolent response to his stepfather (*Sartre: un film*, produced by Alexandre Astruc and Michel Contat with participation from Simone de Beauvoir, Jacques-Laurent Bost, André Gorz and Jean Pouillon [Paris: Gallimard, 1977], 17; hereafter *Film*).

[23] His stepfather was a naval engineer and Sartre often cited engineers as a class of people who lacked a sense of playfulness, were imbued with what he called "the sprit of seriousness" and so were consequently strangers to authenticity. (For his detailed discussion of the contrast between the playful and the serious, see *CDG* 326–327.)

[24] After his retirement from the school system, Karl Schweitzer founded the Institute for Living Languages (L'Institute des Langues Vivantes) where he taught French as a foreign language, chiefly to German speakers. Among other things, he also wrote a German

"I began my life as I doubtless shall end it: amidst books" (*Words* 25). The boy was destined for a literary (a)vocation, but one grounded securely in a teacher's life, if his grandfather had his way. In the old man's eyes, the child would never be another Victor Hugo. Far better to set a life plan he could achieve conjoined to one that would pay the bills. "Teaching gave a man leisure" (*Words* 97). It was not until Pathé films offered him a contract in 1943 to write several scenarios for possible production and his second play *No Exit* was produced in 1944 that Sartre abandoned teaching to earn his living entirely by his pen.[25]

If we are to believe the story which Sartre constructs from his memories, his grandfather's opinion was decisive:

> In short, [Karl] drove me into literature by the care he took to divert me from it: to such an extent that even now I sometimes wonder, when I'm in a bad mood, whether I have not consumed so many days and nights, covered so many pages with ink, thrown on the market so many books that nobody wanted, solely in the mad hope of pleasing my grandfather.
>
> (*Words* 101)

The child advanced from pretending to actually reading and soon became the voracious reader that he would remain for the rest of his life. He accomplished this with the use of only one eye, his right eye having been rendered useless through an illness when he was 4 years old. His writing began with plagiarized versions of his favorite swashbucklers; this gave way to stories in which he figured in the third person, and finally to the removal of himself from the plot entirely. "I was being called upon to choose between Corneille and Pardaillan. I dismissed Pardaillan, whom I really and truly loved; out of humility,

grammar for the use of the direct method, which went through annual revised editions (*Words*-F 39).

[25] His first professional play, *The Flies* (*Les Mouches*), appeared on June 2, 1943 at the Théâtre de la Cité. It was directed by the well-known artist Charles Dullin, for whose School of Dramatic Art Sartre had taught a course on the history of theater, focusing on Greek dramaturgy. The name of the theater, originally the Sarah Bernhardt after the distinguished Jewish actress, had been changed by the Nazi occupiers. The censors had to permit the production of Sartre's play. For a thorough exposition of all of Sartre's plays along with the critical apparatus, see Jean-Paul Sartre, *Théâtre complet*, ed. Michel Contat et al., Bibliothèque de le Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 2005); hereafter *TC* with title of play.

I decided in favor of Corneille."[26] Now his goal was to impress rather than to please. Henceforth recollection would do battle with imagination, the real with the imaginary (*Words* 100 and see 92). "At the age of eight . . . I launched out upon a simple and mad operation that shifted the course of my life: I palmed off on the writer the sacred power of the hero" (*Words* 104). But the boy's choice of Corneille was really sleight of hand. He transformed Corneille into Pardaillan, removing from the former his avarice and love of lucre: "I deliberately blended the art of writing and generosity" (*Words* 105). If we are to accept Sartre's reading of this metamorphosis, we are led to believe that his understanding of the artist as the giver of a gift and the presenter of an invitation as the free communication between artist and public is presaged in the 8-year-old.[27]

To deliver the boy from his grandfather's force-feeding with classical nineteenth-century German and French authors, his mother started to let Poulou buy comic books and took him to the silent movies. Sartre quickly became an enthusiast of both genres. In fact, the journal of politics and opinion that he founded with Beauvoir, Merleau-Ponty and others after the war was named "Modern Times," after the movie made famous by his much loved Charlie Chaplin. Sartre claims that what he liked about the movies, "the art of the common man," was, among other things, its egalitarian nature – the contrast of the movie house with the social hierarchy of the theater. The only other time he witnessed "that sense of everyone's direct relationship to everyone else, that waking dream, that dim consciousness of the danger of being a man, was in 1940, in Stalag XII D," where he was a prisoner of war after the fall of France (*Words* 76).

Shifting to the anticipatory mode once more, we shall recognize a similar "waking dream" in Sartre's ideal of the "group in fusion" that will play a pivotal role in the social theory he formulates in *The Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960). There, too, mutually separated and alienated

[26] Le Chevalier de Pardaillan, knight-errant hero of Michael Zévaco's series of cloak-and-dagger novels *Les Pardaillan* inspired by the members of an Armagnac family who served several French kings in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

[27] "I deliberately blended the art of writing with generosity" (*Words* 105). On artistic creativity as an act of generosity and the model of free (nonalienating relations), see Jean-Paul Sartre, *Notebooks for an Ethics*, trans. David Pellauer (University of Chicago Press, 1992), 141 and 281; hereafter *NE*. For the French, see *Cahiers pour une morale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1983); hereafter *CM*. This theme will reappear in *What is Literature?* and *The Family Idiot*.

individuals will experience a kind of social bond, if not community. But the movie audience, unlike the fusing group, is a purely psychological phenomenon. It does not mark their way of existing, their ontology, as he will remark in *Being and Nothingness.*

Then there was the magic. "I was seven and knew how to read; [the movie] was twelve and did not know how to talk." He hoped they would mature together (*Words* 77). Sartre would write a youthful essay on the cinema while at the ENS.[28] His conversion to philosophy had already taken place when he read Bergson while attending the *lycée*. The latter's *Donnée immédiate de la conscience* (*Time and Free Will*) had focused his attention on the paradoxes and ambiguity of time and duration (*la durée*). Henceforth, the "movies" would present an object lesson in these paradoxes. For the young Sartre, they are also a source of his sense of contingency: when the lights went on and he left the theater, he was removed from the inner "necessity" and the absolute world of the actors that was theirs but no longer his: "In the street I found myself superfluous" (*Words* 79).

This is the decisive moment in his young life: "I was beginning to find myself . . . I was escaping from play-acting. I was not yet working, but I had already stopped playing . . . I existed only in order to write" (*Words* 95). "A character neurosis, says an analyst friend of mine. He's right: between the summer of 1914 and autumn of 1916, my mandate became my character; my delirium left my head and flowed into my bones" (*Words* 144). Sartre repeated on several occasions that his neurosis prevented him from leaving a page blank.[29]

[28] "Apologie pour le cinéma. Défense et illustration d'un Art international," in Jean-Paul Sartre, *Écrits de jeunesse*, ed. Michel Contat and Michel Rybalka (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), 388–340; hereafter *EJ* with title of text.

[29] As Sartre will later say in the "Presentation" of the inaugural issue of *Les Temps Modernes* (1945): "One makes oneself bourgeois by once and for all choosing a certain analytic vision of the world which one tries to impose on all people and which excludes the perception of collective realities" (*Situations*, 10 vols. [Paris: Gallimard, 1947–1976], II:19; hereafter *Sit* with volume and page. Analytic reason is atomistic and determinist, atemporal and formal (structural). In the face of historical events, the most analytic reason can offer is statistical generalizations and covering laws. It is the rationality proper to the engineer in *Notebooks for an Ethics* (see *NE* 511). For a discussion of the conflict of rationalities that underlies Sartre's critique of bourgeois culture from this basic perspective, see my *SFHR* 1:99–102. Sartre's humanist grandfather "drove the engineer, the merchant, and probably the officer out of his Republic" (*Words* 36). Sartre will follow suit years later, taking the engineer as the model for calculative, analytic, metrical reasoning and placing himself on a collision course with his stepfather.

Aside from rare reflections on the "might have been" if his father had lived (cf. *Words* 55), there is little discussion of the Sartre side of the family or of the town in southwest France where his father was raised and died. Schweitzer is the dominant gene, and the imposing Alsatian extended family, reinforced by regular visits to the homeland, certainly left its mark on the child, whether by its musical proclivities, its intellectual gifts, or its religious ambiguity. Until the age of 10, Sartre was largely home-schooled. And it was his grandfather more than his mother who set the tone: "A man of the nineteenth century was foisting upon his grandson ideas that had been current under Louis Philippe . . . I started off with a handicap of eighty years" (*Words* 40).[30]

Sartre's original title for his autobiography was "Jean sans Terre" (after the English king, Jean Lackland, who lost most of Aquitaine to Philip II of France). A likely reason for that choice was Sartre's description of his childhood phantasies of heroism: "I became a lonely adult, without father and mother, without home or hearth, almost without a name" (*Words* 72–73). But an equally plausible justification for the title would be the prophetic nature of these remarks. Sartre will never own his own home, either living in hotel rooms or renting apartments or staying with his elderly mother, will never own an automobile or even know how to drive, and will spend his royalties lavishly on friends and travel, with little regard for bourgeois thrift or providence.[31]

Sartre on film, 1972

In February and March 1972 a crew filmed a set of interviews between Sartre and several members of his "family" in the apartment of Simone

[30] The Sartres were Catholic, the Schweitzers Protestant. Sartre's maternal grandmother and two uncles were Catholic as was his mother, who enrolled him in catechism classes. On Sartre's telling, though he sang in the choir for a time as a schoolboy, what kept the women going to church was chiefly the organ music. He rather casually abandoned his faith at the age of 12 while waiting for some companions in La Rochelle: he had "a tiny intuition that God did not exist" (Simone de Beauvoir, *La Céremonie des adieux, suivi de entretiens avec Jean-Paul Sartre, Août–Setembre 1974* [Paris: Gallimard, 1981], 545; hereafter *Cér*). Extinguishing the spirit of his belief, however, was less than casual: "My struggle with atheism was long and difficult. I finally cornered the Holy Ghost in the basement and threw him out the window" (*Words* 158), a remark that gives the "Death of God" a particularly graphic twist.

[31] For the two extant chapters of "Jean Sans Terre" (1955), see Jean-Paul Sartre, *Les Mots et autres écrits autobiographiques*, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 2010), 965–1005: hereafter *MAEA* with title of entry and page.

de Beauvoir.[32] Sartre here revisits many of his recollections from *Words* but with a less harsh view. His stepfather, for example, is now described as "a very good man, indeed he was perfect." Taken ironically, this, of course, could have been his chief flaw in Sartre's eyes, because the engineer felt obliged to take charge of his stepson's education, especially his exposure to the sciences – a dimension neglected by Sartre's humanist grandfather. As he describes one critical instance, he and his stepfather were having a slight altercation regarding a geometrical problem. When Sartre responded insolently, his mother rushed from the kitchen to give him a couple of slaps, which, Sartre insists, shocked his stepfather more than himself. But the event sealed the new order of loyalty that reigned in that house (*Film* 16–17). The result was a significant modification of ties with his mother. Henceforth his relations with her, though always close, would never have the childlike simplicity that he had enjoyed before her remarriage.

The second break in his familial relations occurred with his grandfather, occasioned by Sartre's theft of money from his mother's purse. When the old man visited La Rochelle, Sartre expected an ally in the controversy, but instead he found him joining the others in condemning Sartre's thievery. But it helped to hasten his return to Paris and enrollment in the Lycée Henri IV. Still, his and his family's unqualified mutual trust had been tainted. In sum, Sartre judges his years in La Rochelle the most miserable of his life.[33]

If Sartre encountered violence among his peers in La Rochelle, he also learned solitude and came to recognize his ugliness in the eyes of some students, particularly in the harsh rejection of his advances by a young girl who dismissed him as "an ugly fool" (*vilain sot*) in front of his companions (*Cér* 369). Years earlier, his grandfather, as a surprise to his wife and daughter, had insensitively taken the little boy to have his "lovely ringlets" shorn, the locks that had strategically drawn attention away from his bad eye. Though the source of his mother's shock at the return of grandfather and child was concealed from the boy, in retrospect, Sartre observes: the old man "had been entrusted with her little wonder and had brought back a toad" (*Words* 66). It took a young provincial girl to actually utter the word.

[32] *Sartre: un film.*

[33] See *Cér* 193. Even worse than his months in the German prisoner of war camp, so it seems, which in retrospect were viewed as a period of fraternal comradery.

Still, Pouillon reminds him in this interview, it was *contingency*, not violence, that was the capital experience of Sartre's childhood. Sartre responded that he mentioned the experience of contingency for the first time among his entries in a blank notebook that he discovered in the Metro advertising "Midi Suppositories," probably intended for distribution to doctors. Because the sections of the notebook were alphabetized as in a directory, and perhaps recalling his systematic reading of the Larousse Encyclopedia in his grandfather's library (as well as presaging the project of the self-taught humanist in *Nausea*), the young student systematically arranged his thoughts alphabetically, thus giving us some inkling of the topics that interested him most at the age of 18. Curiously, however, one finds under C no listing of "contingency" but two entries for "cinema," one of which is relatively long and probably provides notes for his essay "Apologie pour le cinéma," written several months later.[34] Sartre may simply have associated the experience of contingency with other entries in this notebook, or, just as plausibly, with his childhood movie-going. Recall that in *Words* he speaks of his love of the cinema and of his mother's taking him to watch silent films. For in his interview with Beauvoir he mentions an entry on contingency in the *Cahiers Midi* and recalls that his first experience of contingency occurred as he left the movie theater with his mother. It was the contrast with the necessity of the unfolding of events in the film that struck him with the contingency of events on the street, including the superfluity of his own existence – shades of Roquentin in *Nausea*. He calls his entry in the *Cahiers* "the beginning of [my] thought about contingency" (*Cér* 181–182 and *Words* 79). "In the streets I found myself superfluous" (*surnuméraire*) (F 108). During his third year at the ENS, Sartre even wrote a "Hymn to Contingency," which began "J'apporte l'oubli et j'apporte l'ennui" (*Cér* 182). In effect, we have uncovered one of the basic insights/themes of the future existentialist.

In the film interview Sartre clarifies the nature of his "neurosis": "the idea that, since the real was given to me by books, I would touch the real and would give a deeper truth to the world if I wrote books myself"

[34] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Écrits de jeunesse*. As the editors of Sartre's *EJ* observe, a portion of the first entry for "Cinema" is missing. It is possible that the entry on "Contingency" was on the missing page (*EJ* 549, note 1 to page 445). On the controverted dating of both the "Midi" and the "Apologie" in *EJ*, see 439 and 385.

(*Film* 24). This reflects the idealism that had plagued him from the start and which he would seek to combat as he articulated his metaphysics.

Sartre's valedictory interview with Beauvoir, August–September 1974

This exchange, given less than six years before his death, offers us a much fuller account of how Sartre saw his life as a writer, philosopher and public intellectual. His life-long partner, who was not above editing their correspondence for public view, admits to having arranged these conversations according to topic and having "suppressed" material that was "without interest." Despite his starting to show his age with occasional lapses in attention, Sartre seems ready to greet her questions with direct and reliable answers.

The material covering the childhood years, including Sartre's "exile" in La Rochelle, is roughly the same as that discussed above. We are reminded of the works Sartre read before returning to Paris and the crucial role played by his young friend Paul Nizan in introducing him to "modern" literature, especially Giraudoux, whose work Nizan admired greatly and whom Sartre learned to like as well. In fact, he wrote an early novel inspired by Giraudoux, *L'Ange du morbide*, at the age of 18, while in his second year of preparation for admission to the ENS.[35]

One senses that, as the end approaches for both of them, Beauvoir wants to sound Sartre out on several issues that she believes he has not discussed adequately in previous interviews or on matters that mean the most to her. A topic that fits both categories well is Sartre's view on the relation between philosophy and literature, between the conceptual and the imaginary. "When I [first] knew you, you told me that you wanted to be both Spinoza and Stendhal" (*Cér* 165–166). Sartre allows that his initial interest in literature was "cultural." But the initial transition, he insists, occurred within his relation to the imaginary itself: the move from childhood "cloak and dagger" tales to literary realism. His initial stories, "Jesus the Owl" and "The Angel of Morbidity" were based on his experiences in La Rochelle and Alsace respectively. What he called his first "novel," *Une Défaite*, though modeled on the triangle of Nietzsche, Wagner and his wife, Cosima, is actually inspired by Sartre's first serious

[35] Ibid., 44–49.

love, Simone Jollivet (called "Toulouse" but known as "Camille" in communication with Beauvoir).

By then, Sartre had been introduced to philosophy. The origin of this interest is somewhat cloudy. It is commonly believed to have resulted from Sartre's encounter with the work of Bergson while at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand, but in this interview Sartre ascribes it to his earlier study under Professor Chabrier at the Lycée Henri IV. It was the comprehensiveness of philosophy that attracted him: "I concluded that if I specialized in philosophy, I would learn about the whole world I was going to talk about in literature" (*Cér* 177). In his assessment of the young student at the end of the term, Chabrier writes: "excellent pupil: intellect already forceful. Adroit in discussing a question but should be a little less self-assured."[36]

Sartre's subsequent "novels," *Er, the Armenian* and *The Legend of Truth*, were philosophical in character despite their narrative form. Sartre admits to Beauvoir that he came to believe that "a writer has to be a philosopher. From the moment that I knew what philosophy was, it seemed normal to require it of a writer" (*Cér* 178). And, of course, there is his "factum" on contingency, later metamorphosed, at Beauvoir's urging, from a philosophical treatise to a philosophical novel and finally baptized "Nausea" by Robert Gallimard and published to considerable acclaim in 1938.

Bringing Sartre back to her original question, Beauvoir asks why, inspired by the Spinoza–Stendhal duality, he did not simply write a parallel set of works, philosophical and literary. Sartre replies simply that, at the time, he did not want to write properly philosophical works like *Being and Nothingness* and the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*: "I preferred that the philosophy I believed in, the truths that I relied on, be expressed in my novel" (*Cér* 184).

The composite picture

What image emerges from these accounts? Despite the fact that they progressively illuminate the same subject across the decades, it is premature to apply to Sartre the method of phenomenological description

[36] Cited by Ronald Hayman, *Writing Against. A Biography of Sartre* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1986), 42.

and historical materialist explanation (the so-called progressive-regressive method) that the later Sartre was to apply to Flaubert.[37] The obviously "bourgeois" and "humanist" nature of his childhood upbringing, his early years in his grandparents' apartment and the major *lycées* that he would attend, the religious and professional conflicts he experience *en famille* (not unlike those ascribed to the Flaubert family in *The Family Idiot*), the allure and power of the imaginary and especially of words in conjunction with the imaginary, the necessary though belated friendships, the various episodes in the "family romance," and so forth – all of these can be distilled from the foregoing, as Sartre remarked that the final volume of his Flaubert study, the capital discussion of *Madame Bovary*, could be written by anyone familiar with the previous volumes. But the point of this initial chapter is to highlight the major formative events in Sartre's life that enable us to comprehend his career as a philosopher, a "committed" man of letters, and an author who "chose" the imaginary as his preferred vehicle of communication.

In the following chapters we shall observe many of these features of Sartre's life and character being played out, not so much as in a film where the inevitability of the ending haunts the apparent freedom of the action, but rather, as in the "game," where the individual is the first origin, the rules are self-ordained, and action is free, that is, "creative." Such is the "existentialist" view of the young soldier near the Front. It fosters "authenticity" and is the polar opposite of the "sincerity" that marked the lives of those around him who lack the courage to "play." Yet Sartre is already coming to realize, as he faces the increasing stakes of this "game" against Nazi battalions just across the Rhine, that this is not a "singles" match; that, despite the ultimacy of his individual effort, this is a team effort. What his experience in the prisoner-of-war camp will soon impress upon him (and what his encounter with Albert Camus and the Resistance will later confirm) is that the model for this life of play is not the boxing contest, despite its inevitable violence and trickery, but the football match, and that one must "play by the rules" or not play at all. And his reading of Heidegger will apprise him that willy-nilly he is "already in the game." But Sartre has yet to break the ontological barriers that blind him to the objective reality of social action. His social consciousness is forming in the

[37] See *SM* 52 n. and 140ff.

late 1930s and 1940s, but it has yet to find its ontological grounding in a sense of a social subject, a "we" that is more than a merely psychological experience. So let us be content with a gathering of qualities and character traits of the child and boy that will continue to reveal themselves in the life and work of the young man and the world-famous author.

We are justified in underscoring the unifying effect of his "vocation" to the life of an author. Though the nature of this authorship will gradually shift from imaginary literature to political polemic, always supported by philosophical reflection, that core project of being an author continues to direct his life. He will be a public figure, armed with his pen, inspired by his powerful imagination, and guided by a sense of justice that defines itself against the values and habits of his own bourgeois class. Except for a few years of "amoralist realism" that color his ties with the French Communist Party from 1952 to 1956,[38] Sartre will remain a moralist throughout his adult life. Indeed, Beauvoir remarked on the intense moralistic spirit that he displayed on his return from the stalag in 1941. At his death, one Parisian publication lamented: "France has lost its conscience."[39]

[38] See Sartre's interview/discussion with Benny Lévy (a.k.a. Pierre Victor) and Philippe Gavi, *On a raison de se révolter* (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), 79; hereafter *ORR*.

[39] *Magazine Littéraire* no. 176 (Septembre 1981): 11, "La Conscience de son temps."

2

An elite education: student, author, soldier, teacher

AFTER A MIXED performance in the public school in La Rochelle,[1] Sartre returned to Paris and the Lycée Henri IV in October of 1920, this time as a boarder, where he rejoined Paul Nizan. Already a voracious reader, and nudged by his friend Nizan, who also nourished literary aspirations, Sartre discovered authors such as Giraudoux, Gide, Paul Morand, Valéry and especially Proust, who would continue to interest and form him in the coming years. He discussed Dostoevsky with his grandmother on home visits and perhaps with her began his reading of Stendhal, who would become his favorite author.[2]

Faced with much stiffer competition, his academic performance grew apace. The following year Sartre received the prize for excellence on the first half of the baccalaureate exams, June 1921, and completed the second half in June1922. While still studying for their baccalaureates, both Sartre and Nizan attended the post-baccalaureate lectures of the renowned, charismatic professor Emile Chartier, known as Alain, whose

[1] The honor rolls for his academic years 1918–1919 and 1919–1920 show him taking first prize in French composition and Latin translation and composition as well as prizes in Greek and mathematics, though not named in several other categories (*Album Jean-Paul Sartre*, iconographie choisie et commentée par Annie Cohen-Solal [Paris: Gallimard, 1991], 31 and Jean-Paul Sartre, *Œuvres romanesques*, ed. Michel Contat and Michel Rybalka, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade [Paris: Gallimard, 1981], chronologie, xxxix; hereafter *OR*). In her interview, de Beauvoir remarks: "You were not always first in the class; when you were in La Rochelle, you didn't have such academic success." Sartre responds by blaming his stepfather, whose idea of success was achievement in the sciences, which Sartre consequently neglected (*Cér* 185–186).

[2] See Michel Contat, "Pourquoi Sartre n'a pas écrit sur son écrivain préféré: Stendhal," *Lectures* 139–160. Why did Sartre not write about his favorite author? Contat's response, in brief, is that "Sartre's strong identification with Stendhal" kept him from doing so" (140). See also Paul Desalmand, *Sartre, Stendhal et la morale* (Paris: Le Publieur, 2002).

pacifism impressed both young men. Sartre would occasionally quote Alain in later years, probably more than any of his other teachers, though not always positively. But when the time came to undertake the two-year preparation for the admission exam to the École Normale Supérieure, called *hypokhâgne* and *khâgne* respectively, Sartre's family saw to it that he transferred to the reputedly more rigorous Lycée Louis-le-Grand.[3] Paul Nizan transferred there as well. They entered in the fall of 1922, Sartre as a day student, living with his mother and stepfather, who had returned to Paris.

That summer, Sartre intensified his literary efforts, writing portions of a novel, "Jesus the Owl, Small-Town Schoolteacher," reminiscent of his student days in La Rochelle, and that fall, a short story, "The Angel of Morbidity." The latter appeared in a student review, *La Revue sans Titre*, January 15, 1923, and the former was serialized in four issues of the same publication that year under the pen-name Jacques Guillemin after Sartre's maternal grandmother. He explained that his reason for the pseudonym was to prevent those familiar with his days at La Rochelle from recognizing the teacher being described, who had ended his life a suicide (*EJ* 51). The summer of 1923 Sartre began to write an autobiographical novel, *La Semance et le scaphandre* (*The Seed and the Aqualung*)

[3] As he admits in an interview with Beauvoir years later, Sartre would have preferred to remain at the Lycée Henri IV for the next two years, working with Alain (see *Cér* 375). At the ENS, Sartre and Nizan identified with the former students of Alain, who were reputed to be a rather rowdy bunch. In that respect, they fit right in. In his *Mémoires*, Raymond Aron wonders why his father did not enroll him in either Henri IV or Louis-le-Grand, since both had a better placement record for the ENS. His conclusion was that the Lycée Condorcet, where he was sent, was closer to the Right Bank train station where he would arrive each day from his home in Versailles (*Mémoires* 27). But Aron too managed to join the Alain alumni by sometimes attending his lectures and occasionally waiting for the master as he left the building after class to accompany him to his residence on the rue de Rennes (*Mémoires* 41). In a note to *EJ*, the editors remark: "[Alain], contrary to a rather widespread story, was never Sartre's professor and had only an indirect influence on him. In his works, Sartre generally levels negative judgments on him" (*EJ* 524, note 1 to page 213). On the other hand, Cohen-Solal writes that Sartre and Nizan managed to get an invitation to attend Alain's class, even though they were not officially enrolled (see *Life* 52). And Jean-François Sirinelli cites approvingly Sartre's remark from *Cérémonie* quoted above (see Jean-François Sirinelli, *Génération intellectuelle: Khâgneux et Normaliens dans l'entre-deux-guerres* [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994], 267; hereafter *Génération*). Perhaps the difference involves what it means to have been Sartre's "professor." Though never officially enrolled, it seems clear that Sartre and Nizan did attend at least some of Alain's lectures and that he had a notable if "indirect" influence on both young men.

based on his intense but mercurial relationship with Nizan, with whom he was having a falling-out. As he would later do with his novels *Nausea* and *The Age of Reason*, Sartre was using his creative imagination to work through emotional crises in his own life.[4] This six-month period of estrangement served to solidify his friendship with classmate René Maheu, who would subsequently introduce Sartre to his friend Simone de Beauvoir. In her memoirs, Beauvoir notes that the three young men "became almost inseparable."[5] While at Louis-le-Grand, Sartre and Nizan, who occasionally referred to themselves as "supermen," considered Maheu from the class behind them to be above the herd though not quite on their level.[6]

Though he had been exposed to philosophy at Henri IV, Sartre's interests at that stage were primarily literary. Philosophy he dismissed as "a stupendous bore" (*un prodige d'ennui*).[7] Not until taking the philosophy class of Professor Colonna d'Istria at Louis-le-Grand did Sartre "discover" philosophy. Like all the *khâgneux*, he was required to study philosophy as well as history, French, Latin and Greek or modern languages in preparation for the entrance exam to the ENS. Sartre's philosophical experience came from reading Bergson's *Les Données immédiates de la conscience* (the immediate givens of consciousness), translated as *Time and Free Will*, at the suggestion of Colonna d'Istria in preparation for an essay on "Consciousness of duration." Time and freedom as well as the "data" of consciousness would continue to be major issues in Sartre's thought thereafter. And if he did not become a disciple of Bergson, who was still a major influence in those years, Sartre would address many Bergsonian theses and themes in his subsequent writings.[8] Years later he would feel the need to combat Bergson in *Being*

[4] See *EJ* 138.

[5] See Simone de Beauvoir, *Mémoires d'une jeune fille ragée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1958), 440–444.

[6] René Maheu would later become the director of UNESCO and headquartered in Paris. From that position he invited Sartre to deliver one of their inaugural lectures in November 1, 1946 on "The Writer's Responsibility." Years later, he delivered another UNESCO lecture (April 1964) this time on "The Living Kierkegaard," published as "Kierkegaard: The Singular Universal," *Between Existentialism and Marxism: Essays and Interviews, 1959–70*, trans. John Mathews (London: New Left Books, 1974), 141–169; hereafter *BEM*.

[7] *OR*, chronologie, xli.

[8] Raymond Aron remarks of his classmates at the ENS: "For a master who would inspire us either to attack or to promote his works, our only choices were Léon Brunschvicg, Alain or Bergson (who had already retired from teaching)" (*Mémoires* 38).

and Nothingness on the nature of time consciousness, as he would Husserl and Heidegger, the next two major influences on his philosophical thought, on the same topic.[9]

Of all the lycées in Paris, Louis-le-Grand had the highest record of graduates who passed the entrance exam to the École Normale Supérieure. Sartre was number seven in the competition. Of the twenty-eight candidates accepted in Sartre's and Nizan's class, half were from Louis-le-Grand.[10] Among others in that stellar class entering in August of 1924 were Raymond Aron, Daniel Lagache and Georges Canguilhem from the less distinguished Lycée Condorcet. They, Sartre and Nizan were the five philosophy students in the class. They saw a good deal of one another during the following years. Pierre Guille, Jean Hyppolite and René Maheu arrived the following year, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty the year after that. It should be noted that the École had accepted its first female student, the mathematician Mme. Flamant (née Parize) in 1917. Another woman was admitted not without difficulty in Merleau-Ponty's year, the mathematician Marie-Louise Dubreil-Jacotin.[11] Two female philosophy students were admitted in 1927 and Simone Weil gained entrance in 1928. According to Maurice de Gandillac, these were the first three women admitted to Philosophy at the ENS.[12] Weil, Merleau-Ponty and Simone de Beauvoir were students at the Sorbonne, but Beauvoir had not applied to the ENS.

Founded by the Convention, October 30, 1794, the École Normale Supérieure is one of the five *grandes écoles* of France. These crown the educational pyramid instituted by the Napoleonic reform and its late nineteenth-century revision. Sartre's father, stepfather and maternal uncle graduated in the same year from one of these institutions, the Polytechnical Institute, which trains engineers. But the ENS was reserved for the *crème de la crème*.

[9] Already in his philosophical "novel," *The Legend of Truth*, Sartre would turn a critical eye toward the theories of time propounded by Bergson and by his respected contemporary, Émile Meyerson (see below).

[10] *Life* 57.

[11] In fact, Mlle. Jacotin, though scoring second highest in the entrance to the ENS, was listed twenty-first (after the males) by the Ministry of Education and hence denied admission. A major protest had to be addressed to the ministry to rectify this injustice. See *Annuaire des Anciens Elèves de l'Ecole Normale Supérieure*, ed. Jean Leray (1974).

[12] Though she was at the Sorbonne with Merleau-Ponty and Beauvoir, Weil entered the ENS in 1928 (see Maurice de Gandillac, *Le Siècle traversé* [Paris: Albin Michel, 1998], 113; hereafter *STG*.

In addition to lectures at the École, the *Normaliens* took classes at the Sorbonne, though Sartre was noticeable by his frequent absence. In fact, the only lectures he regularly attended there were those of Emile Bréhier on the Stoics, a subject that would continue to hold his interest over the years. The Sorbonne faculty at that time tended to favor neo-Kantian idealism or a version of French positivism. But Hegel was scarcely mentioned. In fact, Sartre reports that Jules Lachelier (1832–1918) used to thunder: "There won't be any Hegel [at the university] as long as I'm around."[13] Léon Brunschvicg, whom Aron described as "the mandarin of mandarins" at the Sorbonne (*Mémoires* 38), was an extremely influential professor at the university from 1890 to 1939. He devoted only a few pages to Hegel in his *Le Progrès de la conscience dans la philosophie occidentale* (1927). Ironically, it was Brunschvicg's nephew by marriage, Jean Wahl, who contributed to the Hegelian renaissance with his monograph *The Unhappy Consciousness in Hegel's Philosophy*, which appeared two years later and which both Sartre and Beauvoir appreciated. The professors whom Sartre mentions in his philosophical critique of idealist academic epistemology of the 1930s include Émile Boutroux (1845–1921), Émile Meyerson (1859–1933), who never held an appointment in France, and Léon Brunschvicg (1869–1944).[14] Though defending a realist position in epistemology most of his life, or one that was neither realist nor idealist after he discovered phenomenology, Sartre seemed always to have been tempted by the idealist sirens of his days at the Sorbonne. Even in his last interview with Beauvoir, he asked whether she thought that his *Critique of Dialectical Reason* wasn't somewhat idealist in character. She, of course, responded in the negative. But the sincerity of the question is telling. It suggests that the idealist demon had not been fully exorcized even after so many years (see *Cér* 215). It was Sartre's perception that Husserl's phenomenology had taken an "idealist" turn that had moved him away from it (see *Cér* 234). Still,

[13] *Film* 37.

[14] See Jean-Paul Sartre, "Une Idée fondémentale de la phénomenologie de Husserl: l'intentionalité." There is some dispute about when this short essay was composed, though it was published in 1939. Vincent de Coorebyter mounts a strong case in favor of its having been composed in the early 1930s while Sartre was in Berlin. This would make it contemporaneous with *Transcendence of the Ego*. This would make "Intentionality" "Sartre's first phenomenological writing" (Vincent de Coorebyter, *Sartre face à la phénoménology* [Brussels: Ousia, 2000], 27ff.; hereafter *SFP*).

he continued to employ the method of "eidetic reduction" (the free imaginative variation of examples to arrive at the immediate grasp of an "essence or intelligible contour") in his psychological studies of the emotions and imaging consciousness.[15] In fact, Sartre seems never to have read anything Husserl published after his return from Germany.

Having completed his studies at the ENS and the Sorbonne, Sartre stood for the *agrégation* examination that would enable him to teach in one of the lycées in the country. This difficult exam, which comprised a written and an oral portion, was graded according to the number of positions that were available in the lycées that year. The number of those passing was limited to the number of free slots in their respective fields at the time. In the competition of 1928, Raymond Aron achieved first place while Sartre, to everyone's amazement, failed the written portion of the exam and so was not admitted to the second, oral part. It was rumored that Sartre had used the three essays of the written examination to exposit his own interpretation of the assigned texts, to the dismay of the examiners, who expected something more traditional. Having learned how the game was played, as Aron notes, Sartre came in first the following year with Simone de Beauvoir a close second.[16] By then Sartre and Beauvoir, whom Maheu had introduced in July of that year, had become close friends. It was Maheu who gave her the name "Castor" (Beaver) both because of her industry and because of the similar sound between her family name and the English word. From then on she bore that label among her circle of friends. Sartre often began his numerous

[15] As evidence of his continued interest in Husserlian phenomenology, consider his three studies in phenomenological psychology: *The Imagination* (1936), *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions* (1939), and *The Imaginary* (1940) to be studied in Chapters 4 and 5 below.

[16] *Mémoires* 37. The written portion consisted of three examinations each of seven hours in length. The first was a general philosophical essay, the second an essay on a subject taught in the philosophy programs of a lycée, and the third on a topic in the history of philosophy focusing on one of four philosophers designated in advance. The oral part comprised four examinations: the first was a class lecture (une *leçon*) to be delivered for about an hour before a jury after five hours of preparation; the next three were expositions of texts in Greek, Latin and French on a similar topic and presented for forty-five minutes each after an hour of preparation for each. Interestingly in view of Sartre's philosophical concerns for the next two decades, the topics for the three written exams for 1929, the year where Sartre ranked first, were: "The Ideas of Contingency and Freedom," "The Respective Role of Intuition and Reasoning in the Deductive Method," and "How do the ethical theories of the Stoics and of Kant resemble each other and how do they differ?" (Michel Rybalka, "L'Agrégation de 1929," *L'Annéé Sartrienne* no. 15 [June 2001]: 135–137).

letters to her as "Mon charmant Castor" and dedicated his masterwork, *Being and Nothingness* "au Castor."

As *agrégés*, Sartre and Beauvoir were now eligible for teaching appointments to a public high school (lycée). But Sartre had first to complete his military service. At the suggestion of Raymond Aron, who was already in the Meteorological Corps, he applied to do so as a meteorologist, and was accepted for six months of training at Saint-Cyr near Paris, starting in November of 1929. He then spent twelve months of service at Saint-Symphorien near Tours, where he had the leisure for writing that he would again enjoy nearly a decade later when he held the same position as a draftee in Alsace during the so-called "phoney war." Meanwhile, Beauvoir spent her time tutoring and teaching in Paris, while taking every opportunity to meet Sartre either near his barracks or during his frequent leaves in the city. In 1931 she accepted an appointment to a lycée in Marseilles. Upon completion of his service, Sartre was assigned to teach in a lycée in Le Havre, and in 1932 Beauvoir managed a transfer to a lycée in Rouen, an hour by train from him.

Not long after their initial encounter, the two had decided to commit to each other in a "necessary" relationship that would not exclude the possibility of "contingent" relations with other people. This "open" or "morganatic" marriage, as they sometimes called it, would last for the rest of their lives, despite many "contingent" and one or two more serious challenges from third parties along the way. Among the most serious challengers were two Americans, the author Nelson Algren for Beauvoir and the French-born actress, journalist and poet Dolorès Vanetti in the case of Sartre. Sartre had been deeply involved for a while with a distant cousin, Simone Jollivet, known as "Toulouse" – an early love predating his acquaintance with Beauvoir – and later with the Kosakiewicz sisters, Olga and Wanda. Olga, in particular, formed a kind of triangle with Sartre and Beauvoir, which Beauvoir transposed in her first successful novel, *She Came to Stay* (*L'Invitée*).[17] Sartre's adopted daughter and literary executrix, Arlette Elkaïm-Sartre, notes that "love for Olga haunts the *Carnets* [*War Diaries*]."[18] Sartre usually continued to be friends with his various lovers even to the point of offering them

[17] Simone de Beauvoir, *She Came to Stay* (New York: Norton, 1999); *L'Invitée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1943). It is dedicated to Olga Kosakiewicz.

[18] Arlette Elkaïm in Jean-Paul Sartre, *CDG*-F 276, n. 2.

financial support after they had become simply friends. But he managed to guard a special place in his life for Beauvoir.

Philosophical reflections in a literary mode

A prodigious worker, Sartre continued to pursue his literary vocation while writing his thesis for advanced study (*Diplôme d'études supérieures*), completing his courses at the Sorbonne and the ENS and twice studying for the formidable *agrégation* examination. For someone noted for valuing freedom and spontaneity, we observe that Sartre maintained a strict work schedule for the rest of his life.

During these final years of academic life and military service he produced three works, of which only a portion of the third was published in his lifetime: *A Defeat* (*Une Défaite*, 1927), *Er, the Armenian* (1928),[19] which he showed to Beauvoir soon after they passed their *agrégation* exams, and *The Legend of Truth* (1931) which was probably written or at least substantially revised during his initial military service near Tours.[20] Each reveals a proto-existentialist, quasi-Nietzschean character along with the usual valorization of freedom that was to sustain Sartre's thought in subsequent publications. All three pieces employ a mythical/narrative mode to communicate their philosophical concepts. In view of his classical education, it is surprising that Sartre did not mine Greek mythology to a greater extent than he did in search of vehicles for his philosophical themes. Aside from one major play, *The Flies* (1943) and a couple of short stories and film scenarios, this is the last time

[19] *A Defeat* (*Une Défaite*, 1927) and *Er, the Armenian* (1928) are reprinted in *EJ*. *The Legend of Truth*, a portion of a larger work that was never published, appeared in the review *Bifur* no. 8 (June 1931) along with the French translation of Heidegger's "What is Metaphysics?," which Sartre does not mention at that time but of which de Beauvoir remarks: "Since we could not understand a word of it, we failed to see its interest" (Simone de Beauvoir, *The Prime of Life*, trans. Peter Green [New York: World Publishing Co./Lancer Books, 1966], 92; hereafter *Prime*; *La Force de l'âge*, vol. 1 [Paris: Gallimard, 1960], 84).

[20] In the fragments discovered after its initial publication, which may be additions to or a basic rewriting of the earlier work, see Vincent de Coorebyter, *Sartre avant la Phénoménologie: Autour de "La Nausée" et de la "Légende de la vérité"* (Brussels: Ousia, 2005), 176–177; hereafter *SaP*. Rybalka and Contat date at least the published version from 1929. De Coorebyter hypothesizes that its definitive form dates from 1930–1931 during his military service, which lasted from November 1929 to February 1931 (see *SaP* 176 n. 2 and *Écrits posthumes de Sartre*, intro. Juliette Simont [Paris: Vrin, 2001], II:20 [hereafter *EPS*]).

Sartre would draw on Greek mythology to present his philosophical message.[21] The psychological insights of these works reveal Sartre as a thinker ripe for the descriptive method of Edmund Husserl, whose work he was to study intensely when he exchanged places with Raymond Aron at the French Institute in Berlin for the academic year 1933–1934.[22]

Commenting on Sartre's penchant for discussing philosophical concepts in a narrative manner, Beauvoir observes apropos *The Legend of Truth*:

> Once again he deployed his ideas through the medium of a story. It was almost impossible for him to state them directly: since he placed no faith in universals or generalizations, he denied himself the right even of formulating this repudiation in generalized terms. He had to replace proposition by demonstration. He admired those myths to which Plato, for similar reasons, had had recourse, and did not blush to imitate them . . . He kept his sympathy for those thaumaturgic characters who, shut off from the City with its logic and mathematics, wandered alone in the wilderness and only trusted the evidence of their own eyes as a guide toward knowledge. Thus it was only to the artist, the writer, or the philosopher – those whom he termed the "solitaries" (*Les hommes seules*) – that he granted the privilege of grasping living reality ("*de saisir sur le vif la réalité*").[23]

Beauvoir has underscored several features that are scarcely noticed by any but specialists in Sartre's early thought, yet which uncover an important, if largely unremarked, dimension of his subsequent writing, namely the "thaumaturgic" *solitary men* like artists, writers and philosophers, who are gifted with an immediate grasp of what he will later call "the lived" (*le vécu*).[24]

A Defeat

This is Sartre's initial attempt at composing a philosophical novel. On the pretext of telling the story of the relations between Nietzsche,

[21] I'm discounting *Bariona*, on a biblical theme, but should mention his adaptation of Euripides' *The Trojan Women* in 1965, which expressed a pacifist message for a contemporary audience.

[22] Aron replaced Sartre at the lycée in Le Havre while Sartre was studying in Berlin (*Mémoires* 35).

[23] *Prime* 50; F 54 (see *Cér* 184).

[24] It is worth noting that after the war, in his posthumously published *Notebooks for an Ethics* written in 1947–1948, Sartre cites "the writer, the philosopher, the saint, the prophet, the scholar" as examples of "the true historical agent" who eschews Machiavellian violence in favor of "treating human beings as himself" and thereby fosters a unity that makes history possible. *NE* 21–22; *CM* 27–28; see also *SFHR* 1:75.

Wagner and Wagner's wife, Cosima, during Nietzsche's visit to their Swiss lakeside home at Triebschen, which he had been following in Charles Andler's multivolume biography of Nietzsche,[25] the young Sartre reveals a good deal about his own relations with Simone Jollivet as well as variations of the "family romance" with his mother and grandfather or, again, with her and his stepfather.[26] When a respected older friend, Mme. Morel, to whom he showed the story broke into tears of laughter at the suffering of "poor Frederick," Sartre seems to have realized the work was a failure, and he did not pursue its publication further after it was rejected by Gallimard.[27]

This and the next two "novels" are important not so much for their literary promise as for the image they project of Sartre's philosophical view at that time. Raymond Aron sees this interest in Nietzsche arising from an essay Sartre wrote for Léon Brunschvicg's seminar, where he defended the view that Nietzsche was a philosopher in the full sense rather than simply a literary man, as the professor was inclined to contend.[28] Still, if we can believe his youthful epigram in the *Carnets Midi*, Sartre shared Brunschvicg's ambivalence about Nietzsche as well.[29] More importantly, Aron insists that this is the first time Sartre stated in a systematic manner his own ideas about contingency and articulated his personal *Weltanschauung*.[30]

The protagonist, Frédéric, is depicted as a Normalien hired to give lessons to the couple's children. He gradually loses his original admiration for the "great man" while developing an unrequited love for his wife. The bittersweet ending anticipates a frequent Sartrean theme in his

[25] Charles Andler, *Nietzsche, sa vie et sa pensée*, 6 vols. (Paris: Bossard, 1921–1934), especially volume II, which deals with "L'Idylle de Tribschen" on which Sartre's novel is based. For other possible sources at that time, see *EJ* 193, n. 1.

[26] See *EJ* 198, n. 1.

[27] On Mme Morel, see *Cér* 184.

[28] *Mémoires* 36.

[29] In his *Carnets Midi*, the young Sartre writes: "He [Nietzsche] is a poet who had the bad fortune to be taken for a philosopher" (*EJ* 471). Still, Sartre continued to be interested in Nietzsche, as Contat and Rybalka note: "One of Sartre's most mysterious texts, one that no one seems to have read (to date, it cannot be located and perhaps has been lost) is a long study on Nietzsche undertaken at the time of the *Notebooks for an Ethics* (1947–1948) and which, according to what Sartre told us, was part of his ethical research" (*EJ* 194, n. 1). The narratives in these initial "novels" reveal an approach to moral good and evil that is redolent of both Spinoza and Nietzsche, as we shall see.

[30] *Mémoires* 36.

subsequent plays and novels; in fact it inspires the English title for one of his plays: "Loser Wins."[31] This mantra will echo in later paradoxes such as the claim that in art, one must lie to tell the truth and even in the ontological phenomenon of "counter-finality" in nature, where the intention is foiled by the very achievement of the end.[32] In a sense, these are forms of Nietzschean "inversion" where cause and effect exchange roles. As such, a certain Nietzschean "logic" can be seen at play in this and other Sartrean stories.

The Nietzschean presence in *The Defeat* is enhanced with references to a mystique of "Power" (*la Force*) but associated with the notion of freedom as exhibited in the following excerpts: "Freedom and spring. [Frédéric] lives for freedom spring strikes him as a freedom which he doesn't know how to handle . . . 'Spring,' he muses, 'is an invitation to become aware of oneself; it is an invitation to Power. If one feels free in springtime, it is because nature ceases to be hostile to one's body. It's in equilibrium with spring. Spring is pure power [*la Force*]'" (*EJ* 218–219). Like restless and indomitable Nature, Frédéric "cannot be the disciple of any man" (*EJ* 232). And though Delilah's gentle manipulation in the Samson story, toward which Frédéric's meditation turns, teaches him that "power" is more than simple "force," Samson's self-destructive victory over the Philistines confirms again the thesis that "the loser wins." Sartre has telescoped a series of Nietzschean themes in these lines – power (both subtle and overt), nature, embodiment, freedom and autonomy – without seeking to systematize them any more than did Nietzsche himself.

Punctuated with moments of Proustian description suggestive of what Husserlian phenomenology would later enable Sartre to exploit philosophically, the novel raises issues where psychological and epistemic concerns overlap – as they will do in phenomenological descriptions. Consider Sartre's analysis of Cosima, as being irreparably (*irréparablement*) an other to Frédéric:

[31] Better known as *The Condemned of Altona* (trans. Slyvia and George Leeson [New York: Vintage, 1961]); hereafter *Condemned.*

[32] Sartre's most graphic examples of such counterfinality in the *Critique* are exhibited by the loss of arable land occasioned by floods brought about by the very deforestation intended to increase such land (in vol. I) and by the feints and jabs of the boxing match (in vol. II). See Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Critique of Dialectical Reason*, trans. Alan Sheridan-Smith (London: Verso, 2004), I:161–165 and II:5–6 and 17–50. Hereafter *CDR*.

> If he had been her lover, perhaps he would have suffered less because, happy in so many other ways, he would not have thought about it so much. But this domain would have remained inaccessible. You can possess a body and you can own the deepest region of the soul whether because, unhappy like Frédéric, you search it, "love it," or reconstruct it in yourself or because, among other joys of shared love, you know that at the bottom of this soul there is only a single self with its own image. *But the immense intermediary zone where soul and body unite – that you never possess.*
> (*EJ* 272, emphasis added)

One wonders whether this "immense intermediary zone" may not prove to be the "reduced" world of phenomenological description that Sartre's discovery of Husserl enabled him to "possess."[33] Or perhaps the dimension Sartre would later call "the body as for-itself" (*BN* 306).

Frédéric, the would-be author, confirms Beauvoir's observation about Sartre's marriage of the conceptual and the imaginative in the narrative mode when he avows in response to Organte's (Wagner's) question "What do you want to write?": "Novels. But not like those being written nowadays. They're rubbish. I wish that the reform of the novel make it as difficult as a philosophical work and that it occupy our intellectual life as much as our affective life; that it show a man at work, reasoning" (*EJ* 229).

If this ideal is sketched in the present story and the next,[34] it is more fully realized in "The Legend of Truth" and reaches its paradigm in what Sartre will soon be calling his "factum on contingency," *Nausea*. But that is more than a decade away, and several properly philosophical studies will appear in the meantime.

Still, Frédéric has a awareness of his freedom and, one could say, of his "contingency" via the contrary experience of "fate." Recall Sartre's

[33] See below, Chapter 3.

[34] For example, Frédéric tries to capture what Leibniz calls a "notion" (the complete concept) of Cosima, which he describes as "a kind of concept which would enclose her entire character" (*EJ* 266). One can easily see this as prefiguring what Sartre will later describe as a person's "original life-defining choice" in *Being and Nothingness*. But as Sartre increasingly makes allowances for the social dimension of the situation, this insight broadens into the "singular universal" in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* and *The Family Idiot*. In each instance Sartre is trying to capture the singularity of a life in the generality of its circumstances. As the narrator says of Frédéric: "His systematic spirit leads him to believe that a character is constituted by a basic element of which the actions and the words are only translations" (*EJ* 266). The basic principle of existential psychoanalysis, Sartre will explain toward the end of *Being and Nothingness*, is that "man is a totality and not a collection" (*Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel Barnes [New York: William Morrow, 1974], 568; hereafter *BN*. *L'Être et le néant* [Paris: Gallimard, 1943], 656; hereafter *EN*.)

remark about his childhood experience of the "necessity" of the plot's unfolding in the movie that leads him to realize the "contingence" of the world as he leaves the theater.[35] Years later he will write that "it is not determinism but fatalism that is the inverse of freedom."[36] His explanation remains the common view that determinism is retrospective whereas fate is prospective; the former postdictive, the latter predictive; the one robs us of our past, the other of our future. Freedom and fate will receive considerable attention in his next novel.

We cannot fail to mention a final concern of Sartre's that surfaces in this early work, namely, the conflict of Good and Evil. It will discomfort the moralist throughout his life.[37] Amidst an obscure sense of Evil having assumed substantial character and gathered like a gigantic wave carrying along all the world's suffering, while projecting a weak image of the Good, Frédéric "eagerly pursues this dull pleasure of feeling himself predestined to suffering. 'I have no right to that' he says to himself, 'it's metaphysics.' But on that day [the narrator assures us] he discovered with fright the mystical depth of his nature" (*EJ* 282–283). We are not far from Roquentin's "mystical" insights into his own contingency, as he meditates on the tree root, in that famous passage from *Nausea*.

Er, the Armenian

Written the next year, this was a creative commentary on Plato's "The Myth of Er" (*Republic*, book X) enriched by generous use of the battle of the gods and the giants described in Hesiod's *Theogony.* It too represents

[35] See above, Chapter 1.

[36] *The Imaginary*, trans. Jonathan Webber (London: Routledge, 2004), 47 and 169.

[37] Toward the end of *Transcendence of the Ego*, Sartre defends phenomenology against accusations from the Left of being an idealism that drowns reality in a flood of ideas. He responds: "If idealism is the philosophy without evil of Monsieur Brunschvicg; if it's the philosophy where the effort of spiritual assimilation never encounters any external resistance, where suffering, famine and war are diluted in a slow process of the unification of ideas, then nothing is more unjust than to call phenomenologists idealists" (*"La Transcendence de l'ego" et autres textes phénoménologiques: "Conscience de soi et connaissance de soi," precede de "Une idée fondamentale de la phénoménologie de Husserl"* [Paris: Vrin, 2003], 104/F 130; hereafter *TE* with detail of French original essay where required.) This certainly resonates with Sartre's insistence in *What is Literature?* that "Evil cannot be redeemed" (Jean-Paul Sartre, *What is Literature? And Other Essays*, intro. Steven Ungar [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988], 180; hereafter *WL. Sit* II:248).

Sartre's desire to intertwine philosophy and imaginative literature, in a manner not unlike that of Plato himself. As with many of Sartre's projects, it promises more than it delivers. Of the seven dialogues announced at the outset, each treating a specific philosophical issue, only two actually materialize, namely the dialogue with the Titan on Evil and another, with Apollo, on Art. But as Contat and Rybalka point out, "the problematic that runs throughout 'Er, the Armenian' is that of freedom in its nascent complexity" (*EJ* 291).

The hazard with dialogical discourse, as with pseudonymous writing, is that one cannot be sure which speaker, if any, represents the author's view. Its advantage is that the author is thereby free to voice his own ambiguity on the matter. This is clearly the case with the dialogues, allegories and pseudonymous writings of the proto-existentialists Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche and, of course, with the model of them all, the works of Plato. An additional benefit of these methods is what Kierkegaard called "indirect"or "oblique" communication. It urges the reader to suspend his disbelief, as happens with aesthetic appreciation when we enter the domain of the plot/argument. As Sartre would later reply to those questioning why he stages his plays in the "bourgeois" center of the city rather than in the "red belt" on its outskirts: "No bourgeois can leave a performance of one of my plays without having harbored thoughts traitorous to his class."[38] Sartre is not yet so politicized, but as he once remarked about that early period of his life: "I was apolitical and reluctant to make any commitment, but my heart was on the Left, of course, like everyone else's."[39]

Er, the Armenian is a death and resurrection story; specifically, a tale from beyond the grave. The man is gifted with repeated rebirth if only he will share his post-death experiences with other mortals. We are the audience for the lessons Er has learned in the afterlife. Before hearing the wisdom of the Titan regarding the nature of evil (that it either is nothing or it is our own creation), Er offers some reflections of his own.

[38] See Thomas R. Flynn, "Sartre-Flaubert and the Real/Unreal," in Hugh J. Silverman and Frederick A. Elliston (eds.), *Jean-Paul Sartre. Contemporary Approaches to his Philosophy* (Pittsburgh, PN: Duquesne University Press, 1980), 123.

[39] Jean-Paul Sartre, preface to Paul Nizan, *Aden Arabie*, trans. John Pinkham (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1970), 51; *Sit* IV:182). Allowing for the anachronistic coloring of Sartre's vision in *Words*, one recognizes hints of this distaste in Poulou's remarks about his grandfather's Liberal Socialist leanings.

He seeks to fashion an ethic (*une morale*) for himself, one free from the vain pursuit of happiness (*le bonheur*) and from the many rules and principles that hobble so many moral philosophers. "I worry little about ethics provided it sometimes restrains my passions and allows me enough leisure to discover a goal that by itself will harmonize my faculties. If it can't give me much solace, at least it won't do me any harm." Then he anticipates a famous theme from his post-war humanism lecture when he says to those who appeal to human nature as their criterion for good and evil: "'In which direction should I go?' What will help me decide? Nothing. Good and evil are mingled beyond recognition . . . Principles are powerless and conscience acts like a dead god."[40] Continuing his attack on the abstract principles of ethical humanism, he concludes: "I look into these unappealing mirrors and I see the image of Man, not that of Er the Armenian."[41] Challenged that if he's a man, he should think like one, Er utters a full-throated Nietzschean response: "What does it matter to me to be a man? I wish to be God" (*EJ* 303).[42]

The dialogue on evil presages Sartre's subsequent interest in, if not fixation on, individual responsibility: the claim that it is our actions alone that constitute us as the kind of persons we are (the famous "existence precedes essence" of his vintage existentialist years). The assumption is that we are free in a contra-causal sense, and hence the moral of the story is that there is always a moral to the story. Sartre's task will be to draw that moral, at least implicitly, in every case. But it will always be a function of our radical freedom and the responsibility that it engenders. Freedom is emerging as the prime value to be fostered.

[40] *EJ* 302 and note.

[41] Ibid., 303. One can read this as an anticipation of Roquentin's disgust with "bourgeois" humanism in *Nausea*. What bothers him as it does Er in the present text is the humanistic tendency to "homogenize"; that is, to ignore or even melt individual identities in the noble ideal of "Humanity." See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea*, trans. Lloyd Alexander (New York: New Directions, 1964), 118; hereafter *Nausea*. Also *OR* 140. This is an implicit appeal to the myth of "solitary man" that emerges in *The Legend of Truth*. But it remains a persistent feature of Sartre's critique of a certain kind of "humanism," a feature we shall find him continuing to reject in his attack on "analytic" reasoning both in *Anti-Semite and Jew* and at great length in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* as his moral concerns reveal their epistemic dimension. In effect, this failure to adopt a "spirit of synthesis" blinds Er/Roquentin/Sartre to the social aspect of individuality and of collective identity. Nothing short of the dialectic, with its "singular universal," Sartre seems to believe, will correct this handicap.

[42] The futile desire to be God will make its famous appearance as man's most basic drive toward conscious self-identity in *Being and Nothingness* (*BN* 566; *EN* 653).

When Er finally encounters the Titans (actually, Prometheus is mistaken for one), we find them engaged in the kind of argument which a pair of philosophy students, say Sartre and Nizan (who have been reading Leibniz) might engage in: Does evil exist? What is its relation to the Good? And the traditional problem faced by Leibniz's *Theodicy* – how can one reconcile physical and, especially, moral (what Sartre calls "psychological") evil with the existence of God? After hearing one "solution" to the problem, namely, that it surpasses our understanding (the response of the thinly veiled "Christian" Titan, Ichtyos), Prometheus concludes that the question of good and bad intentions, which has emerged in the discussion, applies less to God than to humans. Their argument, though not the dialogue, concludes when Prometheus shakes his head and proclaims: "When the gods are conquered, evil will cease to exist on the earth," to which Ichtyos responds bitterly, "I doubt it" (*EJ* 322).

Actually, other portions of this fragmented manuscript continue the discussion in terms of "the illusion of Fate" and a suggestive "analogous method" for dealing with the problem of evil, not in terms of God and Theodicy but solely in terms of the Human. Man is subject to his milieu and even to his own character. But if the milieu would limit the effects of an evil action, what about character? Er claims that it is neither good nor evil. Even an egoistic character, if such exists, Er urges, would be a mere fact and hence a phenomenon of the "middle" region that is neither good nor evil.[43] It would seem that Er (Sartre), though sympathetic toward an ethic of intentions, is beginning to face the problem of relating freedom to what Sartre would call "situation" in *Being and Nothingness*. Failure to do so adequately constitutes a major weakness in Sartre's systematic thinking and a barrier to any properly social ontology, much less to an adequate social ethic. Overcoming this weakness and breaking this barrier would be the work of his reflections in the 1950s, culminating in his second major philosophical work, the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*.

The second dialogue takes place with the god Apollo on the nature of Art, though it also manifests a quasi-moral concern. Sartre wrote to Beauvoir at this time that he was close to finishing a "complete aesthetics." This too was to end up among his unfinished works, though he scattered the elements of a complete aesthetic throughout his writings

[43] *EJ* 327–328.

over the years.[44] When Er mentions his interest in formulating an ethics, the god exclaims: "An ethics, what foolishness! But guard the desire to create a work of art." He then counsels Er on how to do so: "Protect yourself from the passions by a more violent desire than all of them, by the mother-passion herself . . . Don't think that I want to make you an aesthete," Apollo warns. "Such a one seeks Art that is already produced: a painting, a sculpture, the plot of a novel" The god enjoins Er to be a patient worker and a martyr. "You will see that nothing is beautiful except what humans make, that everything is to be done, that life itself will teach you nothing, and that you must offer, give, always give to things, to men and that your true goal is the book, the painting, the statue that will come to life at your hands." The god's final advice is to believe in yourself. He assures the hesitant Er, "You have what it takes."

This and the following suggests the kind of "aesthetico-metaphysical idealism" that de Coorebyter attributes to the young Sartre and of which *Nausea* is both the symptom and the antidote.[45] The Nietzschean aspect of this second of three "novels" is becoming increasingly obvious: the courageous individualism, the risky creativity, the overlap of the aesthetic and the moral, the pursuit and embrace of the "mother-passion" and perhaps, at least subtly, the heroic atheism. Which brings us to the central panel in this triptych, itself a narrative in three acts.

The Legend of Truth

The title of this third "novel" is an obvious gloss on Nietzsche's well-known essay "How the 'True World' Finally Became a Fable" and his even more relevant "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense."[46] This

[44] De Coorebyter lists many of those elements in the various aesthetic genres, pointing out that they predate Sartre's immersion in phenomenology in Berlin (see Vincent de Coorbyter, *Sartre avant la Phénoménologie. Autour de "La Nausée" et de la "Legende de la vérité"* [Brussels: Ousia, 2005], 300–301); hereafter *SaP.*

[45] Ibid., 275. The citation is his, the interpretation mine. De Coorebyter places more importance on the *Carnet Dupuis*, despite its staccato and fragmentary nature: "The *Legend* retains relics of Nietzscheanism and lights the last flames of salvation by Art by evoking the production of a work that is necessary both in its origins and in its attributes, whereas the *Dupuis* subjects this phantasm to a critique that, with the help of *Nausea*, almost liquidates it by removing every mystique of the overman from these last two texts, viz. *Er* and the *Legend*" (*SaP* 275–276).

[46] *Twilight of the Idols*, in Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols*, ed. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 171. "Truth and

is the most Nietzschean of Sartre's currently accessible texts, not only in its obvious concern with style but also in its content and form. Its style is relentless in its aggressiveness, biting irony, and cumulative negativity. It is a spirited attack on scientific rationality, on its cousin, abstract philosophy, and on the egalitarian ideals of the common man (for which read "herd"). There were hints of this in the previous story. But what marks the Nietzschean character of the present work most clearly is the genealogical form of its argument.[47] As Nietzsche did in his "On Truth and Lie" fable, Sartre undermines an established philosophical view – in this case the claim that "Truth" is impersonal, timeless and universal – with a fictional, though vaguely possible, account of its historical origin. This does not so much disprove the earlier view as cast suspicion on its plausibility by facing it with another, purportedly historical alternative. Even truth is a confection, we are informed, that bears the marks of its own fabrication.

Clearly, such an account exhibits all the hallmarks of what logicians call the "genetic fallacy," namely, the thesis that one can answer a question by pointing to its origin: for example, when a student fresh from a class in psychology answers your query with "I know why you said that!" They may indeed know why, but that was not the question. Fallacy or not, it is often an effective rhetorical move. As Foucault, who was famous for his "genealogies" and who cited *The Legend of Truth* as evidence of Nietzsche's influence on Sartre,[48] once admitted:

Lie" is a fragment published posthumously. See Walter Kaufmann, ed. and trans., *The Portable Nietzsche* (New York: Viking, 1954), 42–47. Christine Daigle, "Sartre and Nietzsche," *Sartre Studies International* 10, no. 2 (2004): 195–210. See also Jean-François Louette, *Sartre contra Nietzsche: Les Mouches, Huis Clos, Les Mots* (Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1996). Both Sartre and Nietzsche have in mind the challenge of the eighth hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides*, as Pierre Verstraeten points out in his essay "Le Huitième hypothèse du *Parménides*, Genèse du concept de sérialité," in *EPS*, II:59ff. In Sartre's case, this will raise the issue of the "singular universal" that, as we have noted, he will attempt to resolve dialectically in his *Critique of Dialectical Reason* nearly three decades later.

[47] The general model for such argumentation, of course, is Nietzsche's formidable *The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage, 1968). See *SaP* 206.

[48] "Did you know that Sartre's first text – written when he was a young student – was Nietzschean? 'The History of Truth,' a little paper first published in a lycée review around 1925. He began with the same problem [as I]. And it is very odd that his approach should have shifted from the history of truth to phenomenology, while for the next generation – ours – the reverse was true." Michel Foucault, "Structuralism and Post-Structuralism,"

"Experience has taught me that the history of various forms of rationality is sometimes more effective in unsettling our certitudes and dogmatism than is abstract criticism."[49] So Sartre has fashioned a quasi-Nietzschean account of the origin of truth and linked its construction to the economic and scientific interests of the *demos* (a democratic spirit). Of course, given Sartre's subsequent egalitarian spirit, one can question whether his first year of military service had erased all traces of the elitism imbibed during his years at the ENS, despite his friend Nizan's laconic dismissal of the school as "allegedly Normal and supposedly Superior."[50] In fact, it is probably his close association with Nizan, his fellow "superman" during their student days, that encouraged this Nietzschean spirit as much as his reading of the Andler biography mentioned earlier.

Nietzsche's strategy (repeated by Foucault) was to lay bare the lowly origins of our high-minded ideals (*pudenda origo*). Sartre does the same: Truth originates with commerce; its function is to serve as a measure for regulating barter. Gradually, this measure is internalized and man forgets that it was his own creation. But Truth, in this account, assumes three other functions besides that of Measure; namely, Form, Matter, and Relation. Not only does it function as a criterion, it gradually assumes the honorific of essence and substance – which are synonymous with "Being" in classical Greek thought. And when defined as "correspondence" between mind and thing, Truth colonizes common sense and continues to govern it to this day.

Sounding like Nietzsche in his critique of Socratic reason, Sartre marks the next stage in the downward spiral of truth through the introduction of the metaphysical principle of identity: "A thing cannot be itself and something other than itself at the same time and in the same respect" (*Legend of the Truth* 42), from which follow the logical principles of noncontradiction and excluded middle, though they are not

interview with Gérard Raulet, in *Essential Works of Foucault,* 1954–1984, ed. Paul Rabinow, vol. II, *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology* (London and Harmondsworth: Allen Lane and Penguin, 1998); hereafter *EW* with volume, essay title and page.

[49] Michel Foucault, "Omnes et Singulatim: Towards a Criticism of Political Reason," in *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings 1977–1984/Michel Foucault*, ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman (New York: Routledge, 1988), 83.

[50] John Gerassi, *Jean-Paul Sartre: Hated Conscience of his Century* (University of Chicago Press, 1989), 70.

mentioned explicitly. Sartre's point is that henceforth truth is fixed and static. The paradoxes of change and motion are marginalized as such; the fluidity of history itself is excluded from the domain of knowledge and truth. It is banished to the grey areas of probability and opinion. "Historical explanation has been blocked" (42).

"Between the advent of Truth and the reign of Science," Sartre cautions, "there is a missing link . . . Truth, the mythical daughter of commerce, engenders a very real democracy, the original constitution, the only constitution, of which different kinds of government are only passing forms" (*Legend of the Truth* 44). This union of Science and the democratic spirit yields a "freedom" that is nothing other than conformity to (this) Truth; in other words, the recognition of necessity.[51]

Since the original publication of this tale, three fragments have surfaced that are considered to be either enlargements or complete revisions of the earlier piece. Sartre and Beauvoir entitled them respectively "Legend of the Certain," a critique of science and of the universalist democracy that it fosters, "Legend of the Probable," addressing the ideology of the elite of the city, and "Legend of the Solitary Man," concerned with the vagabond thinker who resists the temptations of science and the city, to learn directly from nature. The version published in *Bifur* and discussed so far treats all three topics in one narrative, concluding with the promise of an account of "the birth of the probable, truer than the true, with its cortège of philosophers." The author will "sing the praises of this late-born son of Truth and Boredom" (*Legend of the Truth* 52). This suggests, as Vincent de Coorebyter proposes, that the threefold division and its titles emerged in the course of subsequent revision. Let us examine each "Legend" briefly.

[51] Echoing Nietzsche's critique of Socratic abstractions and the argumentative power it conferred on the "rich young men" who gathered around him (and other "Sophists"), Sartre remarks: "It can be seen from the preceding that this accumulated capital was only an item of barter, precisely because men had put all their effort into detaching their thoughts from themselves, and because this transitory master entrenched in his arsenal of political ideas did not command assent by virtue of his own uniqueness [Er looking into the mirror] but by virtue of a consensus with the common herd which he had sought for and been granted" (*Legend of Truth*, 44–45). On various forms of "necessity," see the so-called *Carnet Dupuis*, a portion of which appeared in *OR*, 1678–1680 but the remainder, containing Sartre's early thoughts on necessity, is published in *Études Sartriennes* no. 8 (Paris: Université Paris X, 2001), 13–21. What Sartre is describing in *Legende* is "general necessity," which is the generalized thinking of the crowd, viz. consensus (13).

"Legend of the Certain"

Textual problems aside, these fragments chiefly elaborate claims made in the original version. We discover from a rather disjointed account in the first fragment, that the sceptics are the "sophistical" vagabonds who turn philosophy toward practical concerns, that an "event" such as the Battle of Waterloo eludes philosophical analysis (though Sartre will devote considerable attention to just such "social phenomena" in his *Critique of Dialectical Reason* years later), and that Bergson and Meyerson fail adequately to describe our experience of temporality.

Regarding this last, Sartre remarks that "we do not perceive the metaphysical present, that is, a temporal point; we perceive a complete articulation of a certain act" (*EPS* 34) – much as the American philosopher Arthur Danto argued thirty years later that "basic action" such as raising your arm (which was Sartre's example as well) is something that one does in order to accomplish something else but is not itself the effect of a prior action. As Sartre insightfully remarks: "So there is an indivisible nature to time that is given all at once. And it is evident that what is most important in this nature is not to last [*durer*] but to have some orientation, some signification. And that is precisely the event" (*EPS* 35). As for what social theorists call a "social fact," Sartre claims that the philosophers fail to ask "What sort of existence should one ascribe to the Battle of Waterloo?" (*EPS* 34). Again, he will answer this question in *CDR*, though by then the storming of the Bastille will have replaced Waterloo as his example.

"Legend of the Probable and of the Philosophers"

De Coorebyter notes how this fragment and the next one, unlike the previous one, do follow on and expand the line of the published essay. Continuing the genetic argument, Sartre ascribes the rise of philosophers to the democratic spirit that fostered scientific associations: "Diligent monades, they are functionaries of the Republic. Doubtless, that's why philosophy counts so few martyrs in its number: just as many, they say, as the Postal service" (*EPS* 38).

But Science remains in power, especially the scientific machine (technology) with its promise of Happiness (*Bonheur*). Er, a herald of the "solitary man," has no interest in an ethic of happiness. Such a Utilitarian model seems more fitting for an industrial society. It becomes

clear that the hereditary enemy of the City, the scientist, is becoming domesticated and thereby conserves a place in the polis so long as he leaves politics to others, offering an impotent unity to the masses under the rubric of "Man" (Er's mirror again). This concept is sufficiently abstract to attract the philosophers as well. Though the progression of the argument in these fragments is more associative than logical, the upshot of this capitulation is that the philosophers end up adopting the maxim "*delenda est Veritas*" ("Truth must be destroyed").[52] After all, they all can agree with the scientific community and the citizens that there is a greater truth than "Truth" (*EPS* 45), namely consensus. Gone is the natural; long live the artificial.[53]

"Legend of the Solitary Man"

We encounter here for the first time what may be called the myth of the "solitary man," which will remain in Sartre's writings in one form or another throughout the 1930s and even longer. The "solitary man" (*l'homme seul*) stands in opposition to the rule of the demos. He is one who withstands the pressure of the many in order "to live without Measure" (*Legend of the Truth* 46); that is, by creating his own "truth." While this Nietzschean figure receives brief consideration in the published version of this tale, it is the third of the recently published fragments of the story, though titled simply "Legend," that addresses this topic at length. This model will be fully realized in two of Sartre's literary figures, Roquentin, the leading protagonist of *Nausea*, and Orestes, the hero of his first major play, *The Flies* (1943). By the time

[52] De Coorebyter, one of the few who have commented on these fragments in detail, reads the maxim "Delenda est veritas" as a caricature of Ernst Mach and empirio-criticism. (See his introduction to Jean-Paul Sartre in *TE* 16.)

[53] Though this genetic argument might suggest an incipient Marxist viewpoint and Beauvoir does refer to the resonance of an ENS "materialism" echoed in Sartre's opposition to Nietzsche's biologism and psychologism (*SaP* 207), de Coorebyter argues that the *Critique de la Raison Dialectique* "systematizes and radicalizes the intuition of the *Legende* (*SaP* 210), which still retains strong indications of Sartre's love–hate relation with philosophical idealism. Still, de Coorebyter admits that "*La Legende* thus constitutes an exception in the work of the young Sartre, since it chooses – on *this* point, for *these* reasons – idealism against realism, constructivism rather than the confidant and unfettered acceptance of the real" (*SaP* 216). "The almost constant position of Sartre is anticonstructivist," he claims, citing Sartre's view on mathematics from the *Critique* as an example (see *SaP* 219–220).

Sartre composes his *War Diaries*, he will have taken steps to free himself of this mythical figure, though not entirely, as the case of Orestes reveals.[54] The "authentic" individual, successor to the solitary man, will emerge as Sartre's ethical ideal till the end of the Second World War. By then, Sartre's experience of war and imprisonment has expanded his sense of the social. We shall see the image of "integral man" augment, if not replace, that of the "authentic" individual in the posthumously published lecture notes for Sartre's second, "dialectical" ethics.[55]

In this fragment the description of the solitary man assumes Stoic proportions. Recall that Bréhier's lectures on Stoicism were among the few that Sartre regularly attended at the Sorbonne. Stoicism, both pro and con, remained a major component of Sartre's ethical view as he tried to contrast it with authenticity.[56] Two Nietzschean features of the solitary man are of particular philosophical interest in this text: his nominalism and his ethical and aesthetic creativity. I almost said "aestheticism" (in the sense of Nietzsche's famous "making your life a work of art"), but Sartre would adamantly deny accusations of aestheticism in his post-war lecture "Existentialism is a Humanism," while nonetheless drawing a positive comparison between the creation of a work of art and the "invention" of an ethical decision.[57] We saw a similar warning by Apollo to Er.

Sartre's "nominalism" is a version of the thesis that abstract and general terms are mere "names" (in Latin, *nomina*) that do not refer to existing items. Only individuals exist in reality. Abstractions like "just-ice" or collective terms like "the Battle of Waterloo" are simply

[54] See *The War Diaries of Jean-Paul Sartre, November 1939–March 1940*, trans. Quintin Hoare (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 76–84 (hereafter *WD*); *CDG* 272, 278, 280–281, 286; and *Cér* 446. De Coorebyter finds traces of this figure throughout Sartre's subsequent writings. In fact, he hazards the hypothesis that "Sartre never really liquidated the ideal of the solitary man" (*SaP* 289). He points out that Sartre adopted a similar posture in *BN* and that his studies of Genet, Mallarmé and Tintoretto constitute variations (on the theme) as do several characters in Sartre's theater such as Bariona, Orestes, Hugo, Goetz, and in his essays, like Freud, Gide, Nizan and Kierkegaard (see *SaP* 289).

[55] See "Morale et Histoire," *LTM* nos. 632, 633, 634 (July–Oct. 2005) (hereafter MH) and below, Chapter 14.

[56] On the relation between Stoicism and authenticity, see *WD* 50–51; *CDR* 69 and below, Chapter 10.

[57] *Existentialism is a Humanism*, trans. Carol Macomber (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 45 (hereafter *EH*) and *WL* 67; *Sit* II:111. "Aestheticism" is the theory that artistic considerations will trump moral concerns whenever they conflict with each other. It is a corollary of the adage "Art for art's sake," a view that Gustave Flaubert held and that Sartre rigorously rejected.

shorthand for individual qualities, agents, actions or events. Nietzsche offered a powerful metaphor to describe the emergence of "general" terms and abstractions (read "essences"). Such words, he claimed, were like coins that had lost their images by being passed from hand to hand until only the abstraction "coin" remained.[58] Sartre proposes a similar account in the present case. But he shifts between a notion of necessity in nature, which science discovers, artificiality in our linguistic domain, and what in aesthetics is called a "type-token" relation between a model and its instantiations; between feeling such pain, for example, and its various dramatizations on stage. Consider the following:

> I compare *l'homme seul* to an actor. The great actors differ from the mediocre ones in that they do not seek clarity in their acting. Rather, they assume a natural ambiguity and raise it to the typical. For example, by the "type" of pain, I do not mean an expression so transparent that it could serve as the canon for posterity but an individual nature, existing by itself and such that it seems to contain in great indistinctness all possible pains and many other feelings . . . So it is with thoughts about solitary man (*l'homme seul*). Thanks to the necessary link that binds their elements, they resemble the limits toward which all the natural thoughts of the same order strive like the innumerable curves of the sand and the waves that strive toward the circle. Again, one must not take literally what I've been saying because, unlike the waves and the circle, the thoughts I've been referring to are inexhaustible.
>
> (*EPS* 50–51)

Sartre finally appeals to art, specifically to those painted figures that "seem to be the completion of so many unfinished faces" – like Filippo Lippi's portrait of a woman whose particular inclination of the head serves as the model for numerous portraits that seek to capture this grace, each in its own way (*EPS* 51). Such are the thoughts of the solitary man: They exist like portraits, like statues, like dances and not like dancers, or animals, or employees of the Republic.[59] The solitary man "scorns the future, security, and consistency; he knows well that thoughts are real risks" (*EPS* 50).

Consistently or not – and Husserlian "essences" or *eidē* will challenge this view – Sartre maintained his nominalism but with one crucial

[58] See Kaufmann, *Portable Nietzsche*, 47. "On Truth and Lie."

[59] Again, Sartre is perhaps unconsciously anticipating a common "solution" to the traditional problem of universals in Anglo-American philosophy when he appeals to the type-token relationship just mentioned. (See Richard Wollheim, *Art and its Objects*, 2nd edn. [Cambridge University Press, 1992].)

modification, namely, what he termed "dialectical" nominalism in the *Critique*. In what sense nominalism can be "dialectical" remains to be seen. But henceforth nominalism as an ontological and an epistemological stance remained an arrow in Sartre's quiver.

If the scientist considers his ideas certain and the philosopher takes his to be probable, how does the solitary man regard his thoughts? Preparing his response, Sartre distinguished ideas and things in a manner that anticipates his basic ontological distinction between being-for-itself and being-in-itself in *Being and Nothingness* more than it resembles the famous Cartesian distinction between mind and matter, thinking things and extended things. "Ideas do not resist the spirit. [Spirit] penetrates them easily, establishes itself at their center, controls all their avenues, inspects the terrain to the very horizon. The air is limpid and fresh there; it fosters the gaze; and finally it easily slides from there into other ideas that are equally open and transparent." Things, on the contrary, "are impenetrable. One must go around them, touch their shell with the hand. One seldom smashes them but, when one does, one finds a dark maze, masses of fallen rock, rubble, a frightful disorder, humid and stale air that clouds the view." And Sartre concludes: "The thoughts of the [solitary] man are a combination of things and ideas" (*EPS* 52).

The thing-like character of his thoughts leads him to reify his ideas into impersonal universals that draw him into the abstractions of the scientist. But their idea-like quality draws him within, to the domain of spontaneous thought, with its transparency and easy communication with other ideas. Now we are describing Descartes' thinking and extended things. The solitary man is satisfied with neither.

At this point we encounter the *event*, that phenomenon which occupies the "between" and which will open the solitary man to historical experience that we saw (in a curiously "historical" argument) was unavailable to either the scientist or the philosopher. It brings him out of the interior domain into a dimension of the world that combines idea and thing into a concrete intelligible individual. In a sense, Sartre will spend the rest of his life trying to relate the universal and the concrete in a historically grounded individual – the singular universal of his *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. But while he shares the spirit of Jean Wahl's *Vers le concret* (*Toward the Concrete*) (1929), which impressed both him and Beauvoir at that time, Sartre has yet to discover Husserlian

"intentionality" that will release him from the inside–outside dichotomy; much less has he discerned the dialectic that will render intelligible this apparently contradictory relation between the singular and the universal. The problem is being framed imagistically, but the conceptual resolutions have not yet emerged.

It is important to note in this rich though scarcely diaphanous text, that Sartre distinguishes the solitary man from the isolated one. Unlike the latter, who does not live in the society of his peers, the solitary man must form a positive idea of his solitude. He defines himself in opposition to the plurality and to the ideas of the many. "So there is a technique of solitude." It is in terms of and in opposition to the "universals" of the scientists and the "natures" of the philosopher that he defines himself. Again, the solitary man is Nietzschean in his inverted Platonism: his downward tumble from the heights; his recognition that impersonal reason is nothing but the viewpoint of others who would have us think democratically as other to each other (what Sartre will call "seriality" in the *Critique*). The physical truths which science would impose are not the fruit of universality but merely "the systematic impoverishment of spontaneous thoughts" (*EPS* 55). Though it is likely that many of the qualities of the solitary man are projections of Sartre's own attitudes and personal phantasies, and commentators are inclined to see him as an approximation of Sartre at that time in his life, we should be cautious about taking this admitted "fable" as simple self-projection. Some of these claims are obviously ironic and others hyperbolic. Again, the hazard of indirect communication.

But what, then, are we to make of Sartre's acknowledgment of this identification in an interview given to Michel Contat and published in 1976?

> Before the war I considered myself simply as an individual. I was not aware of any ties between my individual existence and the society I was living in. At the time I graduated from the École Normale, I had based an entire theory on that feeling. I was the "solitary man" (*l'homme seul*), an individual who opposes society through the independence of his thinking but who owes nothing to society and whom society cannot affect, because he is free.That was the evidence on which I based all that I thought, all that I wrote and all that I lived before 1939.[60]

[60] Jean-Paul Sartre, "Self-Portrait at Seventy," *L/S* 45; see also *Sit* x:176.

Without pursuing any further the twists and turns of Sartre's analytical tale, suffice it to summarize his concept of the solitary man as an anticipation of that synthesis of the abstract universal and the concrete particular that for the moment finds expression in the lived body and the work of art. It will ultimately become "incarnate" (Sartre's term) in the singular universal of dialectical reason brought to full comprehension in the "novel" about the life and times of Gustave Flaubert. Though it is unlikely that Sartre had Flaubert explicitly in mind at this stage of his reflection, its problems as well as some of its tentative hypothesizing are already evident in the present philosophical "novel."

With the acuity of the accomplished philosopher-novelist, Iris Murdoch entitled her excellent little book "*Sartre, Romantic Rationalist*."[61] This captures the ambiguity and the tension of someone who would be true to both genres while intertwining them, if not subsuming them into another realm. One of the theses that emerged from the cooperative work on the "pre-text" of Sartre's autobiography was that modern French literature in general displayed a similar tension between "rationalist clarity" and "the Romantic cult of individualism."[62]

In view of the foregoing, it is understandable that the person who thus far has studied this fragmented text most closely could judge it "the most contemporary work in the Sartrean corpus and the one most committed to the path of deconstructionism."[63] Though that path may have wandered with the passing of Derrida, there is no question of the continued relevance of Sartre's work to the current philosophical scene or of the importance of these early writings for a fuller understanding of his achievement.

[61] Iris Murdoch, *Sartre, Romantic Rationalist* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987).

[62] *SaP* 266 and Jean-François Louette, "Écrire l'universel singulier," in Michel Contat et al., *PSM* 380.

[63] *SaP* 176.

3

Teaching in the lycée, 1931–1939

FROM THE TIME he left the army to replace an ailing instructor in the lycée at Le Havre till September 2, 1939, when he was recalled to active duty during the "phoney war" of 1939–1940, Sartre made his living as a high-school teacher, first in Le Havre, then in Laon, and finally at the Lycée Pasteur in the Parisian suburb of Neuilly. His reputation in the early years was that of a student-friendly, lax disciplinarian who didn't wear the usual necktie, who would invite interested pupils and two or three colleagues to share in amateur boxing practice (he used to box while at the École), and so it was reported, would even join some of the older students in visiting a local bordello. But his students' most memorable impression was of a brilliant mind, anxious to get them to think for themselves as he had done to his own detriment on the first *agrégation* exam, rather than merely to "play the game" that had won him victory in the second. One of these students and fellow pugilists, Jacques Laurent Bost, would become a member of Sartre and Beauvoir's "family," their inner circle of close friends.[1]

Sartre was nothing if not unorthodox. Asked to deliver the lecture for the prize day at the close of his first term in Le Havre, on July 12, 1931, he eschewed the standard praises of a liberal education in favor of an exciting but shocking disquisition on the cinema as a liberal art. This was not what the teachers or parents had expected, since the movies were

[1] For members of the "family," see *WD* xiii, n. 8; *L/S* "Self-Portrait," 64; *Sit* X:196. The "little" Bost was to distinguish him from his much older brother, who worked for Gallimard, went on to have a long-standing affair with Simone de Beauvoir, the early stages of which are recorded in Simone de Beauvoir and Jacques-Laurent Bost, *Correspondance Croisée. 1937–1940*, ed. Sylvie le Bon de Beauvoir (Paris: Gallimard, 2004).

commonly regarded as frivolous entertainment rather than as a genuine art form. But Sartre had something of importance to say on a subject that had fascinated him since childhood, and he said it.[2]

The movies without apologies

As early as 1924, while still a student, Sartre had composed an "Apologie pour la cinéma" (*EJ* 388–404). He defended the union of image and motion in an art form that contradicted Alain's proclamation that "nothing is beautiful but the immobile." Sartre sided with Bergson in this regard; indeed, the latter's philosophy seemed to welcome the speed, the fluidity, and the energy of the motion picture. It shared the dynamic unity of the melody – a favorite analogy of Bergson's that captures duration and mobility. The young student rose to the heights of his synthesis when he concluded, "The film is the poem of modern life" (*EJ* 392) – it revives the metaphors of contemporary life and gives us a sense of the whole (*l'ensemble*). Against those who argue that only the natural is beautiful, Sartre responded that cinema builds the artificial on the True: what we go to see has the charm of the irreal (*EJ* 398). Toward the end of the piece, the 19-year-old author gave a half-bow toward the surrealists, who held considerable interest for him and his friends in the 1920s. "Caligari" escaped the excess of surrealist art, but much of German film, Sartre believed, was spoiled by the association. Finally, he addressed those who criticized the cinematic art on ethical grounds for corrupting the youth – which, of course, placed it in distinguished philosophic company. The very popularity of film, its anti-elitist spirit that even as

[2] Sartre maintained a life-long interest in the fine arts. In a letter to Beauvoir, he commented on developing a "complicated theory about the function of the image in the arts" and on thinking of developing a complete system of aesthetics based on cinematic art (see *LaC* 1:27). Aside from literary and theatrical productions, his interest in the visual and plastic arts was broad, including insightful essays on masters as varied as Titian and Tintoretto up to studies of Mason, Giacometti and Calder, who were personal acquaintances. Calder's mobiles, in Sartre's assessment, managed to exist "halfway between matter and life," while Giacometti confers "absolute distance on his [sculptured] images just as a painter confers absolute distance on the inhabitants of his canvas." With the exception of a preface to René Leibowitz's *The Artist and His Conscience*, Sartre wrote little about music or musicians, though he played duets with his mother and gave piano lessons while at the ENS. Though he preferred the classics, he was familiar with contemporary symphonic music. And he was an avid fan of American jazz.

a child Sartre had appreciated, speaks to its moral duties: the victory of virtue over vice, of heroism and justice over cowardice and villainy. The scenarios resemble some of La Fontaine's fables: the moral is only implicit but even the blind can discern it without effort.

One senses in the spirit of this short essay not only the resonance that Sartre felt for this new art form, but also the great esteem in which he held it. Beauvoir once observed that Sartre considered the seventh art almost on a par with great literature.[3] So it was in the most solid pedagogical spirit (though not without a soupçon of innocent malice) that the junior member of the faculty took it upon himself to deliver his initial major address on the topic of the movies.

Published subsequently as a school brochure, "Motion Picture Art" repeats and develops many of the points made in Sartre's previous essay, but it does so in a spirit of collegiality, even conspiracy with the students in the audience. After conceding that their parents' generation will not appreciate or even experience much of the promise of this lively art, he addressed the students, referring to the films as "your art." It is the very plebeian nature of the movie house – people talk, laugh and eat there – that offends the "refined" classes and, in no small part, attracts Sartre's loyalty. He cited Anatole France, not one of his favorite authors, who was so enamored of the theater, to the effect that "The motion picture materializes the worst ideals of the masses . . . The end of the world is not in the balance, but the end of civilization is."[4]

This and what follows exhibit his basic thought and will figure in his remarks on cinema and theater in later years (see *ST* 58–76). Sartre briefly underscored several points made in the previous essay. The aim of the arts of movement is to enable us to "feel" the irreversibility of time – that same necessity and "free" inevitability that formed the background of Sartre's childhood experience of contingency as he left the theater. Science can conceptualize that experience, Sartre admits, but it cannot reproduce it. And we can barely sustain an extended encounter with the experiences of tragedy or fate. As Sartre reflects: "there is something fatal in melody. The notes composing it crowd in upon and govern one

[3] *Prime* 54.

[4] Michel Contat and Michel Rybalka (eds.), *The Writings of Jean-Paul Sartre*, 2 vols. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974), II:55; hereafter Contat and Rybalka, with volume and page.

another with a strict necessity." But unlike the abstractness of music or even of the theater, the film unveils the humdrum duration of our daily lives, revealing its inhuman necessity. "At the same time, the motion picture is of all the arts the closest to the real world: real men live in real landscapes" (Contat and Rybalka II:58). It is this art that will instruct young people about the beauty of the world in which they live: the poetry of speed, machines, and the inhuman and splendid inevitability of industry – the kind of "wisdom" set forth by Sartre's favorite Charlie Chaplin in *Modern Times*.

Nor was this high-school address his only foray into adult education. While at Le Havre, Sartre gave a series of public talks on major twentieth-century authors such as Faulkner, Dos Pasos, Gide, Conrad, Virginia Woolf, Hemingway and even his friend Nizan. Many of these were eventually published in the prestigious *Nouvelle Revue Française* in the late 1930s. One set has recently come to light.[5]

[5] Some of these were later reprinted in the initial volume of his essays and occasional pieces called *Situations*. Simone de Beauvoir rather unexpectedly phoned Annie Cohen-Solal one morning in 1982 asking her to drop by her apartment for something that would interest her. She presented her with the 313-page manuscript of Sartre's notes for his second set of five "chats" (*causeries*) on *La Technique du roman et les grands courants de pensée contemporaine* (*Technique of the Novel and Major Currents of Contemporary Thought*) delivered at the "Lyre havraise" hall in the winter of 1932/1933. These are now transcribed along with comments by Annie Cohen-Solal, Anne Mathieu and Julien Piat in *Les conférences du Havre sur le roman*, *Études sartriennes* no. 16 (Paris: Ousia, 2013); the essay series is hereafter cited as ES. Sartre's "chats" of the previous year on "L'individu dans la littérature contemporaine" ("The Individual in Contemporary Literature") seem to have been lost. But the "chronology" of *OR* lists Sartre as delivering "lectures on German philosophers and on literary subjects " in the academic years 1931–1932 and 1932–1933. We know that could not have been the case. Of course, if the announced topic for one of these lectures was actually the topic of Aron's lecture in Sartre's absence (1933–1934) or of Sartre's talks after his return the following year, then the link to the Gurvitch book is no indication of Sartre's familiarity with Husserl prior to the "epiphany" over the apricot cocktail. One wonders if a bibliophile like Sartre in preparing his lectures would have read an important work by Georges Gurvitch entitled *Current Tendencies in German Philosophy* (*E. Husserl*, *M. Scheler*, *E. Lask*, *N. Hartmann and M. Heidegger*), published in 1931 by Vrin with a preface by Léon Brunschvicg (see *Mémoires* 40). These were so-called "free lectures" that Gurvitch had delivered at the Sorbonne over three previous years. Aron insists that they preceded Husserl's influential (1929) lectures at the Sorbonne, *Cartesian Meditations*. Though Sartre, unlike Merleau-Ponty, did not attend those lectures, if he did read the Gurvitch book, it seems additional evidence that his introduction to Husserl was not that epiphanic conversation with Aron that Beauvoir says it was. John Gerassi agrees, citing conversations that Sartre had with Fernando (Gerassi's father) "who had been Heidegger's classmate in Husserl's class" (Gerassi, *J-P S. Hated Conscience*, 113). Further evidence comes from the notebooks of a Japanese nobleman, Shūzō Kuki, who visited

A lost treasure

It was during his first year at Le Havre that Sartre jotted down some thoughts in a notebook now known as the *Carnet Dupuis* (1932), after his former student who discovered and donated these pages to the Bibliothèque Nationale. Of its two parts, the second orders Sartre's reflections on themes covered in his three previous "novels," but especially treats topics that will figure in his "factum" on contingency, which he is in the process of writing. Examples of the former are additional thoughts on the difference between historical fact and sociological fact, Waterloo once again being analyzed as an example of the former. But of particular interest to his "factum" on contingency, as the manuscript for *Nausea* was then called, is his rather extended discussion of the nature of the possible, of its relation to contingency and to comprehension.[6]

The possible, he insists, is not a modality (in the Spinozistic sense); only being and existence count as modalities for Sartre. "The possible does not exist in itself. It exists in a thought . . . The possible characterizes nothing but the independence of thought with regard to the real." It is a psychological category. Sartre concludes: "That is what I would call the *contingent*."

Heidegger and Sartre and reports having discussed Husserl and Heidegger with Sartre (see Stephen Light, foreword by Michel Rybalka, *Shūzō Kuki and Jean-Paul Sartre* [Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987]). Though each of these claims is disputed, Rybalka's assessment of the situation seems balanced:

> It is obvious today that the discovery of phenomenology by Sartre is not the simple affair related by Simone de Beauvoir in her memoirs. Much before the famous meeting (in 1932) with Raymond Aron in front of a peach cocktail, Sartre displayed in several of his early writings a strong predisposition for phenomenology and an acute sensitiveness to what will be defined later as "existentialist" themes. (foreword, xi)

6 It was the custom at the École to refer to a work in progress as a "factum." As Rhiannon Goldthorpe points out (supported by the Collins-Robert French dictionary), the term has two senses "which seem to pull against each other. In legal terminology, it is a setting out of the facts of the case, something stated or presented as certain. But it also signifies a polemical or even scurrilous pamphlet." Rhiannon Goldthorpe (*La Nausée* [London: HarperCollins, 2001] 2; hereafter *N*G). The use was common among Sartre, Nizan and their fellow collegians. Sartre had begun the first version of *Nausea* in 1931 (see *OR* 1678–1680). The text of the first part of the *Carnet Dupuis* is reproduced in *OR* 1680–1686. The second part appears in *Recherches interdisciplinaires sur les textes modernes 24*, ES no. 8, 13–21, with an introduction by Vincent de Coorebyter, 7–1. On the first version of Sartre's "factum" on contingency, see *SaP*.

These remarks demand elaboration. Does Sartre mean that contingency is a "purely psychological *Erlebniss*," as he will say of the "we subject" in *Being and Nothingness*, a position he will later reject in the *Critique*? That would seem to fly in the face of the experience of contingency that he is describing in the future *Nausea*. There contingency clearly carries ontological significance. Certainly in *BN* he will list the experience of "nausea" along with "anguish" (*Angst*) among a special class of phenomena, namely *phenomena of being*.[7] As we shall see shortly, the experience of "nausea" is psychological insofar as it is an experience. But as a phenomenon, it is not merely psychological. It carries an ontological significance, namely, as a phenomenon of the *contingency* of being. Despite the present remark, we shall see in *Transcendence of the Ego* that contingency, on Sartre's considered reading, is entirely a property of being, as much as or even more than the "frightful" is a property of the Japanese mask.[8]

As for *comprehension*, a major term in Sartre's emerging epistemology, Sartre mentions briefly two aspects of this form of understanding, namely that it is holistic, relating whole to whole, and that it involves a kind of *sympathy* on our part for such relationships. He concludes this brief reflection with the remark that "it is possible to comprehend contingency, [but] not to explain it. At most one can make it felt" (*OR* 1685). Indeed, one can say that the object of *Nausea*, both the novel itself and the novel within that novel, is precisely to get us to "feel" our

[7] See below, Chapter 8. In this respect, it is worth noting that the subtitle of *Being and Nothingness* is "A Phenomenological *Ontology*" (emphasis added). In his interview with Michel Rybalka et al., for the volume on his thought in the Library of Living Philosophers series, Sartre remarked that what distinguished him from the Marxists was his ongoing concern with questions of Being, "which is wider than class." In effect, Sartre was an ontologist in addition to being a moralist throughout his career ("Interview with Jean-Paul Sartre," in Paul A. Schilpp [ed.], *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre* [Carbondale, IL: Open Court, 1981], 14; hereafter Schilpp). As we shall see, he also remained a metaphysician and respected its difference from ontology, even if he sometimes failed to observe it.

[8] See this example of his analysis of the "intentionality" of consciousness in Chapter 5. Briefly, "intentionality" is the defining feature of consciousness. Every conscious act "intends" or "aims at" an object that is "in the world" and not simply "in" the mind. Sartre's example is the frightful character of a Japanese mask. Because of the intentionality of consciousness, the "frightful" is a feature of the mask itself and not merely the "projection" of our "inner" emotion on a piece of wood. In fact, for Sartre, there is no "inner" life, no "inside/outside" consciousness that would leave us with the skeptical doubt that the inside and the outside "match." This mini-summary must suffice until we deal with phenomenology in detail below in Chapter 5.

contingency the way the movies enabled us to experience the weight of our destiny rather than merely conceive of it in an antiseptic manner.

The first part of the *Carnet Dupuis*, though less organized, is of even greater philosophical significance. It too deals with issues treated in both the published and unpublished versions of *The Legend of Truth*. Of special interest is Sartre's distinction between two kinds of necessity, individual and collective, which we discussed in the previous chapter, as well as another reference to "comprehension" as a mode of inquiry proper to the social sciences. The method of comprehension (*Verstehen*) was developed by Dilthey and Weber as appropriate means of studying the *Geisteswissenschaften*.[9] It was also favored by Karl Jaspers, whose seminal work, *General Psychopathology* (*Algemeine Psychopathologie*), Sartre and Nizan had proofread in its French translation while at the École. Raymond Aron would employ the method when he introduced Weber's *Verstehende Soziologie* into the French intellectual scene with his short volume of German sociology in 1935 and his larger dissertation for the state doctorate in 1938.[10] Sartre will use the method of "comprehension" to access the lived experience of individual agents in his "existential psychoanalyses" of Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Genet, and especially Flaubert, while extending it to historical understanding generally in both the *Critique* and his Flaubert study, *The Family Idiot*.

Though it is commonly accepted that Gabriel Marcel was the first to refer to Sartre's philosophy as "Existentialism," we find Sartre speaking positively of "a philosophy of existence" in the *Carnet Dupuis*. (*ES* VIII:20.) This appears to be a translation of Jaspers's *Existenzphilosophie*, which he had introduced to characterize his philosophy in 1932.[11] Jaspers is

[9] The sciences of the spirit (what the French call *les sciences humaines*) as opposed to the natural sciences. The former are somewhat broader in scope than what counts as "social sciences" in English, since they include psychoanalysis and other "psy" sciences.

[10] Raymond Aron, *German Sociology* trans. Mary and Thomas Bottomore (London: William Heinemann, 1957), and Raymond Aron, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, trans. G. J. Irwin (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1961); hereafter *IPH*. Both volumes were published in France in 1935 and 1938 respectively.

[11] Karl Jaspers, *Existenzphilosophie* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1938). The year Sartre applied for his Berlin fellowship (1932), Jaspers published three major works: *Die geistige Situation der Zeit (Man in the Modern World)* (Berlin: De Gruyter), *Max Weber* (Oldenburg: Stalling) and the three-volume *Philosophie* (Berlin: Springer). By then, "*Existenz*," "*Existenzphilosophie*" and "*Existenzerhellung*" (the method of "unpacking" *Existenz*) were already technical terms in Jaspers's philosophy.

mentioned in Sartre's DES thesis at the École, as well as in *The Legend of Truth*, and is listed in his application letter to the fellowship committee as one of the thinkers whose thought he intended to study in a proposed research year in Berlin.[12] Given Aron's interest in Weber (he introduced Weber's work to the French public in the late 1930s, a task performed by Talcott Parsons for the Americans a decade later), it is likely that he communicated with Sartre about *Verstehen* and *Existenzphilosophie* during his fellowship year in Berlin, which corresponded to Sartre's second full year at Le Havre. Unfortunately, we do not have that correspondence.

Vincent de Coorebyter has argued convincingly that the *Carnet Dupuis* can be read "as an early pre-text to *Nausea*" that pre-dates Sartre's research year in Berlin.[13] The concluding section of the notebook consists of a numbered list of items to be discussed in the novel. De Coorebyter reads it as beginning the task of liquidating Sartre's youthful illusions about the relation between metaphysics and aesthetics that the published version of *Nausea* will complete.[14]

[12] See Alain Flajoliet, *La Première philosophie de Sartre* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2008), 351, n. 76; hereafter *PPS*. He sees the presence of Jaspers chiefly in Sartre's *diplôme* and his *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions* (December 1939). However, in addition to Max Weber and Wilhelm Dilthey, who used the method of "*Verstehen*" (understanding) extensively, we shall observe Sartre's appeal to "comprehension" increase as he turns to social thought and the philosophy of history.

[13] "Un avant-texte précoce de *La Nausée*," *ES* nos. 9, 10. He makes this claim notwithstanding André Dupuis's having found the *Carnet* while Sartre's philosophy student in 1935–1936. Sartre's "factum on contingency" went through several versions, the first of which is dated from 1931 to 1933, viz., during his first two years at Le Havre and perhaps the beginning of his research year in Berlin. De Coorebyter's hypothesis is that the *Carnet Dupuis* served as a resource for this initial version (ES nos. 9, 10) and that the attack on metaphysics that *Nausea* undertakes confidently is anticipated tentatively in this notebook (ES nos. 8, 11). Be that as it may, the discussion we have just summarized is certainly metaphysical and not merely psychological in character. In fact, I shall ague that Sartre never "abandoned" metaphysics, though he occasionally confused it with ontology – the philosophy of being. Consider his approach to literary criticism, for instance, discussed below in Chapter 15.

[14] For a careful discussion of the historical genesis of the text of *Nausea*, relevant documents including the *Cahier Dupuis* and Sartre's "Please Insert" advice attached at the end of the first French edition, samples of early reviews, bibliography of studies, list of secondary sources and a lengthy application of critical apparatus to the text, see *OR* 1657ff., with 1718–1802 (for the "Notes et Variantes"). The editors note the "half-ironic, half-serious tone" of the two paragraphs of the "Prière d'insérer" as if to mark "a compromise between the anecdotal content of the book and its philosophical meaning" (*OR* 1694). As such, it underscores the bifocal character of Sartre's work, balanced between philosophical and the literary values and methods.

We have just noted how in part two the notebook addresses the issue of contingency that had held Sartre's interest since high school. In part one, the *Carnet* does so with three consecutive claims that are more stated than argued and probably served as aides-memoire for the young teacher. First, it urges against Spinoza that "one can sense (*sentir*) contingency as the stuff of our thoughts just where [Spinoza] senses necessity." In other words, we have a pervasive experience of contingency which will surface in Roquentin's feeling of "nausea" at the gratuitous being of the tree root in the novel by that name. Once Sartre is armed with Husserlian "intentionality," it will be difficult to dismiss this experience as a purely psychological *Erlebnis*. Henceforth, it will remain a signature feature of what will be called "existentialist" thought.

A syllogism follows: "If something (abstractly) can be in a contingent manner, then everything is able to be in a contingent manner. But this world is in a contingent manner. Therefore . . ." This is an inversion of the traditional argument from contingency to necessity, namely, that if anything is contingent, something must be necessary because if everything were contingent, nothing would exist at all. Sartre is echoing Russell's witty riposte to the metaphysical question posed by Aquinas, Leibniz and Heidegger, each in his own way, "Why is there anything at all rather than nothing?" with the rather cavalier, "Why not?" Sartre will address this metaphysical issue in *Being and Nothingness*. Unlike Russell, though he agrees that the question is unanswerable, Sartre considers it meaningful. Indeed, it is the metaphysical distillation of the experience of contingency that focused Sartre's thought for most of his life.

Last comes the quasi argument: "Anything could be otherwise. But nature does not vary and always returns to the same forms. Moreover, there are no unrealized possibles (even less so are there compossibles [as Leibniz insisted]) without a consciousness to think them. In effect, 1st, they do not have existence; 2nd, they do not have being because only consciousness gives being" (*ES* VIII:19). Already, Sartre seems to be distinguishing "being" (which he seems to equate with Descartes's "formal essence") from "existence" (which is characteristic of consciousness or "Spirit" or, later, "being-for-itself").[15] This critique of

[15] In part two Sartre explicitly distinguishes existence from being, with the terse remark that "what is does not exist. For example, an idea" and then adds Descartes's famous distinction between formal and objective essence (which the latter introduces to warrant his

"possibles" (as whatever was conceivable as not self-contradictory) was a common argument against "idealist" philosophy over the years. Though Sartre was critical of the idealism of his professors such as Brunschvicg, this last argument betrays a certain ambivalence by claiming that "only consciousness gives being." On the face of it, that is an argument worthy of George Berkeley. Not until Sartre discovers the Husserlian phenomenological "reduction" will he be able to distinguish the "being" that consciousness "gives" as "phenomenal" from the being that resists our consciousness, or the brute fact of being that one encounters in such experiences as Angst or Nausea. Granted, phenomenological consciousness will bring it about that "there is" (*il y a*) being, but it "constitutes" it as phenomena and doesn't "create" it as being. That distinction between constitution and creation is presumed to guard phenomenology from slipping into idealism. Sartre relied on this distinction in his attack on idealism, even as he questioned Husserl's success in avoiding this hazard in *Ideas I*.[16]

A phenomenologist *avant la lettre*?

It is clear that Sartre is raising issues that invite a phenomenological treatment, but doing so prior to any first-hand experience with Husserl's thought. The earliest indication of his awareness of Husserl occurs in his thesis for the *Diplôme d'études supérieures* (DES), written during his final year at the École. He cites approvingly a third-person reference to Husserlian signification or "*Bedeutung*" regarding the cognitive role of "symbolic Schemata" from the work of the German psychologist Auguste Flach.[17] Sartre's thesis, entitled "L'Image dans la vie psychologique, rôle et nature," confirms his early interest in image and the

"ontological" argument for the existence of God as relevant to this claim. A few lines later, Sartre asks "What would it mean to be a possible without formal reality?" and responds, "Nothing. A possible does not exist in itself. It exists in a thought" (*OR* 1685). In effect, it is an idea. If we take these notes to be points for arguments to be introduced in class, it is likely that Sartre has in mind Descartes's *Meditations on First Philosophy*, since this had long been and remains today a standard text for introducing students to philosophy.

[16] See Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book*, trans. F. Kersten (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1983), §§ 48–55; hereafter *Ideas*.

[17] Auguste Flach, "Ueber symbolische Schemata in productiven Denkprozesse," *Archiv fuer die gesamte Psychologie*, vol. LII (1925). See *PPS* 391 and 397, or François Noudelmann,

imaginary. But that same interest supports his ongoing commitment to the imagistic reasoning of his literary arguments, his fascination with the moving images of the cinema and the ease with which he adopts Husserl's "eidetic reduction," which consists of the "free *imaginative* variation of examples" to arrive at an immediate insight into the intelligible contour or essence of a phenomenon. We shall pursue these matters more closely when we address Sartre's explicit adoption of the descriptive method of phenomenology. But one can already sense the affinity between imagistic reasoning, using essential or "typical" examples, and imaginative literature. By his use of the narrative mode in the previous philosophical "novels," Sartre was practicing "phenomenology" *avant la lettre*. He would find in Husserl's method the point of intersection between philosophy and literature that he required but which Husserl had failed to exploit.

Returning to the *Carnet Dupuis*, we find Sartre adopting an example that Berkeley had used to defend an idealist epistemology concerning the relativity of knowledge, namely the flea's view of its world in contrast to our own or that of the giant.[18] Whereas the idealist's interpretation makes these perceptions of size relative to the viewer and the positivist resolves them by measurement, Sartre supports a position that he will later discover is defended by Husserl and Heidegger, namely, that ours is the only "world" and that our perceptual relation to the world is prereflective, pre-metrical and consequently pre-scientific. Moreover, it has neither inside nor outside, a decisively anti-Cartesian claim but one that calls for Husserl's concept of intentionality for its justification – a justification Sartre will expound brilliantly in his little essay "A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology: Intentionality."[19]

Sartre also notes briefly in the *Carnet* a point that will emerge as cardinal to his essay "The Transcendence of the Ego" when he asks: "What is the Ego (*le Moi*) in such a theory of perception? It's the least real of objects, even though it's still real in the manner of objects. It's a relation between different objects. A relation that is only intermittent

L'Incarnation imaginaire (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1996), 220–224. Sartre's use of the "symbolic imagination" à la Flach is discussed in *PPS* 444–453.

[18] See *SaP* 125, n. 7.

[19] *TE*, "L'Intentionnalité," 85–89; see also "Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology," trans. Joseph P. Fell, *Journal for the British Society for Phenomenology* 1, no. 2 (1970): 4–5.

and which, moreover, is not correlative to consciousness because consciousness can exist without an ego (for example, in extreme efforts of attention)" (*ES* VIII:10). Already, Sartre is raising an issue to which philosophers will devote considerable attention later in the century – the notion of nonegological consciousness.[20]

Obviously, what we find in this notebook are insights, sketches of arguments, hypotheses, aides-memoire, and not detailed defenses such as will appear in the published essays of the subsequent years. But they do offer a glimpse at the gestation of Sartre's position, including its affinity to the phenomenology, that was to arrive as its natural ally within the next few months.

The Berlin vacation (September 1933–July 1934)

Raymond Aron always seemed to be at Sartre's service in these early years. He advised him how to "play the winning game" with the examiners for the *agrégation*, encouraged (and possibly aided) his entrance into the Meteorological Corps, suggested that he apply to succeed him for a year of research at La Maison Académique Française in Berlin, and held his place for him at Le Havre while Sartre was in Germany. Philosophically, the most important of these services was introducing Sartre to Husserlian phenomenology – either in an epiphanic moment over a cocktail with Sartre and Beauvoir on a summer evening at "Le Bec de Gaz,"[21] or, less dramatically, by assisting Sartre in applying for the fellowship that Aron had just completed in Berlin. However it occurred, Sartre was at the very least primed for the encounter with Husserl, as we have seen.

Before turning to what Sartre once described as his "vacation in Berlin," let us analyze the description of his proposed research project,

[20] Aron Gurwitsch, *Studies in Phenomenology and Psychology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1966), ch. 11, "A Non-egological Conception of Consciousness."

[21] Beauvoir's dramatic account has triumphed, even though she and Sartre could not agree on whether the drink in question was an apricot cocktail (Beauvoir) or a beer (Sartre) (see *Prime* 162 and *Film* 39). She describes Sartre's enthusiastic search for a bookstore open in the evening to purchase Levinas's *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology* (Paris: Alcan, 1930; Vrin, 1963). He perused the uncut pages as they walked. For *evide*nce that this was scarcely Sartre's first encounter with phenomenology, see above, Chapter 2, and note 5 above.

for his letter indicates how he wished to "market" himself to the fellowship committee and stands in some contrast with what he actually did while in the German capital. His letter of application describes Sartre's intent to study "the relations of the psychic with the psychological in general," especially in the works of Jaspers, Scheler and Husserl.[22] There is no mention of Heidegger and the focus is on the psychic. It is significant that Heidegger is not mentioned in this application, nor does Sartre express his intention to devote a considerable amount of time to the factum on contingency, later called "Melancholia." Of course, Sartre once admitted that in his early work he did not distinguish psychology and philosophy very clearly: "Because, in my mind, philosophy ultimately meant psychology. I got rid of that conception later" (Schilpp 8). And in fact, three of his Husserl-inspired studies written during this highly productive decade, namely *The Imagination* (1936), *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions* (1939) and *The Imaginary* (1940), were essays in philosophical psychology. *The Imagination* and *The Imaginary* were to have been published together in a work to be entitled either "*L'Image*" or "*Les Mondes imaginaires*," which never came to term. Similarly, his study of the emotions was intended as part of a much larger work to be called "*The Psyche*," over four hundred pages of which he had written by the late 1930s but which he abandoned because it was "too Husserlian and not original" (*Cér* 230–231). By that time he claimed to have freed himself from Husserl and been deeply involved with the thought of Heidegger. But we should note that Sartre's initial essays written during his Berlin year, "A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology" and *The Transcendence of the Ego*, are also philosophical studies in psychology and epistemology, as befits phenomenological inquiries.[23]

[22] See "Liste des candidatures à l'Institut Français de Berlin pour 1933–1934," *Arch. Nat.* 61, AJ 202 (cited in Jean-François Sirinelli, *Sartre et Aron, Deux Intellectuels dans le siècle* (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 1995), 117, n. 42.

[23] In his Gifford Lectures, the first volume of which is devoted to *The Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Raymond Aron observes: "Sartre is scarcely troubled by epistemology and perhaps would never have examined the methodology of the social sciences nor written a prolegomena to every future anthropology [*Search for a Method*] had circumstances not forced him into dialogue with Marxism-Leninism" (Raymond Aron, *Histoire et dialectique de la violence* [Paris: Gallimard, 1973], 19; hereafter *HDV. History and the Dialectic of Violence*, trans. Barry Cooper [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975], 5). Contat and Rybalka date both essays to Sartre's German period and de Coorebyter argues convincingly that the intentionality essay was

The overlap of psychology and philosophy was not foreign to Husserlian phenomenology. Indeed, one of the founding traumas in Husserl's philosophical development was a scathing review of his early *The Philosophy of Arithmetic* (1891) by the logician Gottlob Frege, who criticized its argument for being "psychologistic" in nature; that is, for confusing psychological causes for logical reasons, fact with essence.[24] From that moment on, Husserl became the relentless critic of psychologism, and yet his "descriptive method" flirted with this temptation in one form or another for the next decade.

Sartre seems not to have read any of Husserl's works published after his fellowship year in Berlin. Specifically, he is known to have read only the *Logical Investigations*, the 1905 *Lectures on Inner Time Consciousness*, *Ideas I*, *Experience and Judgment* and the *Cartesian Meditations*, which are lectures given by Husserl at the Sorbonne in 1929 and originally published in French. Though Sartre did not attend those lectures himself, it is likely that he would have heard of their content from Merleau-Ponty, who did attend. If this is correct, then it counts as another source of second-hand information on Husserl's thought provided to Sartre prior to his Berlin adventure.[25] Aron's claim about a concrete philosophy may

written first, even though *Transcendence of the Ego* was published in 1936–1937 and the intentionality article did not appear until 1939. See *SFP* 27–29.

[24] "Psychologism" carries a number or meanings but in the dispute between logic and mathematics, to which Frege refers, it reduces mathematical reasoning to psychological phenomena, the a priori to the empirical; in other words, it denies the "autonomy" of mathematical reasoning. As the chastened Husserl would later say, it reduces "essence" to empirical "fact." J. S. Mill is recognized as having defended such a reductionist view of mathematics in his influential *Systems of Logic* (2 vols., 8th edn., London, 1872). Ironically, despite Husserl's apparent volte-face in view of this critique, if Frege was correct, Husserl had abandoned a basic tenet of his Viennese professor, Bernard Bolzano (see below, note 30). Indeed, perhaps this thought motivated Husserl's immediate and chastened reaction.

[25] De Coorebyter cites yet another source, Georges Gurvitch, *Les Tendences actuelles de la philosophie allemande* (*E. Husserl*, *M. Scheler*, *E. Lask*, *N. Hartmann*, *M. Heidegger*), with a preface by Léon Brunschvicg, published by Vrain in 1930 and probably read by Sartre. In his avant-propos, Gurvitch remarks: "The title of the present work is justified by the completely preponderant role that the phenomenological movement plays in contemporary German philosophy" (9). Indeed, he devotes the opening chapter of fifty-five pages to "the founder of phenomenological philosophy," leaving just half that amount to "the new orientation given to phenomenological philosophy by Martin Heidegger: the descriptive analytic of existence" (207). The recently deceased Scheler receives the lion's share of the consideration, eighty-five pages, while Lask and Hartmann are discussed in the same chapter. Clearly, Husserl and Scheler, who is treated as a follower of Husserl despite the fact that they never met, are the

not have been as stunning as Beauvoir described. In fact, Sartre recalls having read Levinas's *The Theory of Intuition in the Phenomenology of Husserl* prior to that encounter with Aron at the café, but this may be attributable to his failing memory.[26] Regardless of the sequence, his reading of Levinas's study of intuition in Husserl was a pivotal moment in Sartre's thinking.

Sartre continued his strict regimen while at the Maison Française. In the mornings he studied Husserl, and, after a walk around the city, afternoons were devoted to his "factum" on contingency. He claims to have read about fifty pages of Heidegger's *Being and Time* toward the end of his stay, but found it too difficult to plow through. Not until Easter of 1939 did he read the entire volume and only while presenting a course on the book to some priests, who were fellow prisoners in a POW camp, did he study it carefully. How much of Jaspers he read while in Berlin is uncertain. Sartre gradually lost interest in Jaspers's work, even as the

stars of the show. Since portions of the Husserl essay had been published previously in Brunschvicg's *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 35, no. 4 (Oct.–Dec. 1928), it is surprising if Sartre was encountering Husserl's thought for the first time in that famous cocktail conversation of 1933. (See Dominique Janicaud, *Heidegger en France*, 2 vols. [Paris: Albain Michel, 2001], 1:25–26, hereafter *HF*; see also *TE* 8, n. 2.) Since Sartre's public lectures at Le Havre were also reported to include discussions of "German Philosophers and literary subjects: 'Inner Monologue: Joyce' and 'Moral Problems of contemporary authors'" (*OR* xlviii), it seems unlikely that he would not have consulted this volume on that very topic available at the time. On the other hand, as noted earlier, that was the title of his lectures given at Le Havre the year after his return from Berlin: "L'Allemagne en 1933–1934" (see ES no. 10, 19–20, n. 4). More important in assessing when Sartre actually "discovered" Husserl and phenomenology, is Janicaud's claim that he certainly must have read A. Bessey's admittedly flawed translation of Heidegger's *Satz vom Grund*, the expression erroneously rendered *Principe de causalité* and the title of the essay as "De la nature de la cause" in *Recherches philosophiques*, ed. Alexander Koyré, H.-C. Puech and A Speier (Paris: Bovin, 1931–1932), 83–124, as well as Jean Wahl's major essay "Heidegger et Kierkegaard. Recherche des éléments originaux de la philosophie de Heidegger" in another issue of the same volume of *Recherches philosophiques*, 349–370 (*HF* 1:39). In fact, Sartre will later refer to the publication of Heidegger's "What is Metaphysics?" – the text de Beauvoir claimed she and Sartre found unintelligible, at least on first reading – as "an historical event" (*CDG*-F 227). For Sartre's remarks about reading this journal see *CDG*-F 228.

[26] See "Une Vie pour la philosophie," discussion with Jean-Paul Sartre, *Magazine Littéraire* no. 384, 2000 (1975): 40–47. He had to be corrected when he attributed to Georges Gurvitch Lavinas's book on *Intuition in the Phenomenology of Husserl* that reportedly introduced Sartre to the German phenomenologist (*Film* 42 n.). On the other hand, this lapsus may have been an admission that it was Gurvitch's book on German philosophers that had introduced him to Husserlian phenomenology prior to the Levinas volume, though it scarcely would have done so with the depth and insight of the Levinas work.

concept of "comprehension" assumed growing importance in his own epistemology. But this could have been due to Heidegger's concept of "preontological understanding," which figures centrally both in *Sein und Zeit* and in *Being and Nothingness*, as we shall see. What he read of Scheler is uncertain, but Merleau-Ponty remarks on his enthusiasm for the "Catholic Nietzsche" after his return from Germany, and Beauvoir remembers how impressed both she and Sartre were by Scheler's *The Essence and the Forms of Sympathy* (2nd edn. 1923). In fact, we have seen Sartre link sympathy with "comprehension" in the *Carnet Dupuis*. We shall underscore an implicit reference to Scheler's value intuitions in Sartre's humanism lecture where he appeals to the "image" of the person one should be that we project in our every moral judgment.[27] This is yet another instance of Sartre's favoring the imaginative mode of reasoning – namely by example. Nonetheless, Beauvoir remarked that "today [1960] we regard Scheler as a fascist lackey."[28]

The first fruit of Sartre's Berlin efforts: two foundational essays

"A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology: Intentionality"

This is among the most accessible philosophical essays that Sartre ever wrote. In its brevity and directness, it is one of his most effective. Written with the enthusiasm of someone whose prayers have just been answered, it uses powerful imagery to attack by name his former teachers while dissolving the famous problem of the "bridge" between mind and reality, between the inside and the outside world bequeathed to us by Descartes and his followers. And all within three densely argued pages!

"They ate it with their eyes"; so begins his assault on the philosophy of knowledge (epistemology) that dominated philosophy in general at that time. The illusion shared by epistemic realism and idealism alike, according to Sartre, is that "to know is to eat." The tables, rocks and trees of our experience are nothing but "contents of consciousness." Common sense looks in vain for something solid but all it gets is "spirit." Academic theories of knowledge have assimilated the objects

27 See the argument of *EH* reconstructed in Chapter 9 below.
28 *Prime* 287.

of the real world by their own transforming power into the sanctuary of our inner life.[29]

On to this sorry scene enters Edmund Husserl. "You see that tree? Well it's really there, just where you see it, next to the road, in the dust, alone and twisted under the scorching heat, twenty yards from the Mediterranean coast," rather than a construction of our senses or a projection of our minds, as the academic philosophers would have it. Away with empirio-criticism, with neo-Kantianism, with psychologism: that tree could never enter "into" our consciousness, for it is irreducibly other than our consciousness. Rather than a juxtaposition of the incongruous, we are dealing with the "genius" of the concept of intentionality.

But Husserl is not a naive realist. In fact, such realism is precisely what he designates as the "natural attitude" from which he will liberate us by the phenomenological "reduction," as we shall see in Sartre's next essay. "Consciousness and world are given at the same time: by its nature exterior to consciousness, the world is essentially relative to consciousness. Because Husserl sees consciousness as an irreducible fact that no physical image can capture, except perhaps," Sartre ventures, "the quick and obscure image of an explosion." Yes, that's it: "To know is to 'burst out towards' . . ." This is Sartre's dramatic rendition of Husserl's famous phrase, "All consciousness is consciousness *of* an other." Husserl calls this feature "intentionality." It has since been taken by many as the defining characteristic of the mental.[30]

[29] All of the citations from are from *TE* 87–89. "Une Ideé fondementale de la phénoménologie de Husserl: L'Intentionalité"; English: "A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology: Intentionality."

[30] Intentionality has a long history dating at least to medieval Schoolmen and revived by Husserl's teacher in Vienna, Franz Brentano, a former Dominican friar, who was schooled in the doctrine of "*esse intentionale*" as the mode of being proper to mental objects ("psychic phenomena" *sic*; Gurvitch, *Tendences actuelle*, 28, n. 1), such as numbers, essences, relations and imaginary objects were traditionally called. (See Franz Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* [1867], ed. Oaker Kraus, trans. Antos C. Rancurello et al. [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973]). According to Georges Gurvitch, when you add the influence of Husserl's other professor in Vienna, the distinguished mathematician and philosopher Bernard Bolzano (who supported the validity of truth ("a proposition in itself") absolutely outside of thought, not only effective thought, as Leibniz held, but all possible thought as well, you discover the two leading influences on Husserl's early thought. As Gurvitch summarizes the matter: Husserl's initial effort was "to achieve a synthesis of Bolzano's conceptions of placing logic completely outside of psychology and those of Brentano, opening new routes in psychology itself that show the way to overcome it" (Gurvitch, *Tendences actuelle*, 28, n. 1).

Gone is the principle of "immanence," the tap-root of idealism, which insists that all knowledge is "immanent" in the knowing subject. On this view, what we know are (at most) representations of the external world, of the tree, for example, not the tree itself in its existential singularity. Hence the problem of the "bridge" and the skepticism which it inevitably engenders. What Husserl is giving us, on Sartre's reading, is a philosophy of "Transcendence" in the sense that the intentional nature of consciousness places us immediately in the realm that is "other" than consciousness; that "transcends" it as does the real tree. In a remark that makes the early dating of this essay problematic, Sartre then quotes Heidegger's analogous contention that Being is "being-in-the-world."[31] But he gives Heidegger's expression a vectorial translation that accords with the dynamic of consciousness just described – when he insists that, thanks to intentionality, our being is "being-*into*-the-world."[32]

By adding this Heideggerian nuance, Sartre is, in fact, repeating a basic objection against Husserlian phenomenology leveled by Heidegger and others: namely, that it conceives of our initial relation to the world in a theoretical rather than a practical manner. Sartre's dynamic "into" seems to respond to this objection in advance. He will raise an analogous objection to Husserl's thought in *Transcendence of the Ego* when he remarks that Husserl fails to give us a motive for performing the phenomenological reduction and will confirm the practical orientation of consciousness a decade later in *Being and Nothingness* when he insists

[31] Heidegger's expression here translated as "*L'Être*" is presumably "*Seiende*," which is a mistranslation that probably comes from Corbin's rendition of Heidegger's lecture "Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique?" There "*Seiende*" is translated both as "*l'existent*" and as "*l'Être* (*ens*)" (*Bifur* no. 8 [July 1931]: 20 and 24 respectively). Recall that this piece appeared in the same issue of *Bifur* that carried Sartre's *The Legend of Truth*. As Janicaud remarks, Corbin does well with the literary portions of Heidegger's lecture but seems overwhelmed by the philosophical technicalities of a language that was unfamiliar to most people at that time (see *HF* 1:42–43; *ET* 31). Another hypothesis is that Sartre takes this mistranslation from A. Bessey's rendition of Heidegger's *Vom Wesen des Grundes*, published in the 1931/1932 volume of *Recherches Philosophiques*, a journal that Sartre regularly followed (see *CDG*-F 407 and *HF* 1:34, n. 34).

[32] What makes the Heidegger inclusion problematic is that it suggests that the essay was written closer to its 1939 publication date, when Heidegger was very much on Sartre's mind, rather than in the Berlin period when he was still a stranger to Sartre. De Coorebyter's explanation is that this represents a later addition, when the essay was revised for publication (see *TE* 7–26).

that "the point of view of pure knowledge is contradictory; there is only committed (*engagée*) knowledge" (*BN* 308).

Two other cardinal features of Sartre's subsequent philosophy make their appearance in this small essay. The first is simply repeated almost as an aside, when Sartre likens the relation between consciousness and world to a "nothingness" (*un néant de monde et de conscience*) and goes on to argue that, if consciousness tried to coincide with itself, it would self-destruct. "If *per impossibile* you tried to enter 'into' a consciousness, you would be grasped by a whirlwind and thrown outside, near the tree and into the dust because consciousness has no 'inside'"(*TE* 88). Anyone familiar with *Being and Nothingness* will recognize these features of self-coincidence and nonself-coincidence as essential characteristics of what Sartre will term being-in-itself and being-for-itself respectively, and the relation between the latter and the former as one of "*neantization*" or "nihilation."[33] These emerge as defining features of Sartre's "vintage" existentialist thought in *BN*.

The second addition is an expansion of intentionality from the purely cognitive to the evaluative and the emotive. We can "intend," that is, be "in the world," in a loving, a fearing or a hating manner and not merely in a cognitive way. The result is that the corresponding object of our "intending" is something lovable, frightful or hateful. It is not simply that we "project" subjective qualities on a neutral object the way a projector casts an image on a blank screen. It is that the object's qualities are in essential relationship to our attitude toward it. Intentionality throws us into a world that is hateful, frightful and lovable. This has implications for Sartre's theory of imaging consciousness, as we shall see. But in the present case, Sartre is describing how Husserl's intentionality accounts for the "objectivity" of values and disvalues without appealing to an inside/outside epistemology. This will prove especially suggestive for his aesthetic and ethical theories. He concludes his brief discussion with an example from each.

"It is a *property* of this Japanese mask to be terrible, an inexhaustible, irreducible property belonging to its very nature – and not the sum of

[33] This is another reason to favor dating this essay closer to the initial reflections in the late 1930s that lead to the composition of *Being and Nothingness*. We shall note similar anticipations of basic theses and themes of *BN* in Sartre's *War Diaries* of 1939 and 1940. Again, this could be just another instance of late additions to an earlier text prior to its publication.

our reactions to a piece of sculpted wood" (*TE* 89). In other words, with intentionality, "Husserl has restored the horror and the charm to things." He has given us back the world of the artist and the prophet: frightful, hostile and dangerous, with its havens of grace and of love. And he has cleared a place for a new treatise on the passions based on this homely truth that "If we love a woman, it is because she is lovable" (*TE* 89). Sartre might well have been thinking of Scheler in this regard, but he likewise offered "paradigm case" arguments in his many ethical remarks, not to mention the basic moral/ethical character of his plays and novels. As Heyden White has observed, "Wherever there is narrative, there is a moral."[34]

Finally, almost as a corollary to his thesis on intentionality, Sartre makes a point that will attract much attention among the structuralists and poststructuralists of the last quarter of the twentieth century: "Everything is external to consciousness, everything, *even ourselves*: outside, in the world, among others." This is yet another point that will assume importance both in the following essay and in *Being and Nothingness.*

Transcendence of the Ego

Of Sartre's philosophical pieces, this is the most highly regarded by philosophers of various schools. Anglo-American philosophers, some of whom expressed suspicion of "French fog," are fulsome in their praise of this original and vigorously written work. And by expounding the "egoless" consciousness just mentioned, it sustains its relevance to recent philosophical discussions on both sides of the Channel.

The critical philosophy of Immanuel Kant left us with the problem of the two egos: the *empirical* ego, which is the object of psychological reflection and scientific examination, and the *transcendental* ego, a properly philosophical concept. Strictly speaking, though Husserl talks of transcendental consciousness and subjectivity, Kant speaks of the "transcendental unity of apperception" and the "I think" that accompanies every conscious process.[35] The empirical ego is the subject of our

[34] See Heyden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 24.

[35] See Eugene Fink's famous essay on the three egos in Husserl's thought: "Die Phänomenologische Philosophie Edmund Husserls in der gegenwärtigen Kritik," *Kant-Studien* 38

common-sense awareness. It is the "I" or the "me" of our scientific experiments and our everyday experience – what Husserl calls the "natural attitude."

The transcendental "Ego" or "consciousness," on Kant's view, is the subject that cannot be objectified because it is the condition of the possibility of every conscious act.[36] It is the "I think," as Kant says, that accompanies our awareness but is not the object of any awareness itself. We must conclude to its existence by "transcendental" (or "regressive") argument from fact to the condition of its possibility. Sartre adds the "ought to" (*doit pouvoir*) accompany all of our representations in Kant's formulation because he is going to insist that it doesn't always do so; that our conscious acts are for the most part "*pre*reflective" and hence "egoless." The empirical ego, the only one Sartre admits, makes its appearance only when we reflect. In fact, such reflection "constitutes" that ego, either as subject ("I") or as object ("me"), depending on the circumstance. In effect, this is how Sartre understands phenomenology as a *descriptive* and not a deductive science; as a kind of broad empiricism, one that allows for the intuition of essences.

The genius of the "transcendental turn" that Kant and his heirs effected is that it seems to short-circuit the skeptical doubt that has plagued philosophy since the ancient Greeks and which assumed particular virulence with David Hume in the eighteenth century. In fact both Kant and Husserl reckon Hume a critical force to be dealt with. Counterintuitively, the transcendental turn concedes that such fundamental principles as "the principle of causality" or basic concepts like that of a "substantial self" cannot be known in themselves. This appears at first to be a total capitulation to the skeptics such as Hume, who question our ability to know cause and effect, for example, as features of the world as it is "in itself," independent of our awareness of it, or to

(1933): 319–383 as well as his observation that "Husserl's concept of transcendental ego is identical with Criticism's [neoKantian] concept of 'transcendental apperception'" (Eugene Fink, "Husserl's Philosophy and Contemporary Criticism," in Roy O. Elvelton [ed.], *The Phenomenology of Husserl* [Chicago, IL: Quadrangle, 1970], 90). Husserl endorsed this essay by his assistant in a prefatory statement.

[36] Kant speaks of the "transcendental unity of apperception" but not of "transcendental Ego" or "transcendental consciousness or subjectivity" as does Husserl (see Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith [New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965], §16 B, 131–132; *TE* 177, n. 5).

grasp the self as more than a mere bundle of sense impressions. Admitting that we do not know the world as it is "in itself," the defenders of the transcendental turn argue that such naive belief is unnecessary to justify our everyday experiences, much less to account for our scientific knowledge of the world. In fact, such an uncritical stance, they argue, leaves us vulnerable to the skeptical objections of Hume and others. For Husserl, this transcendental turn becomes synonymous with doing philosophy itself. And this, we shall see, generated considerable ambiguity both on his part and especially on that of Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty with regard to the so-called transcendental "reduction."

Though Husserl accepts the transcendental turn precisely for its presumed ability to warrant our scientific knowledge, *pace* Kant, he does not confine us to a world that only allows sense perception (even when enlightened by our mental categories) to increase our knowledge.[37] In other words, Husserl admits our capacity to achieve intellectual intuitions; that is, the kind of "aha" experiences or insights that scientists and others look for but which, for Kant, only a Divine mind enjoys. Recall that it was Levinas's book on the concept of intuition in Husserl's philosophy that reportedly drew Sartre into phenomenology. As he defines it in *Transcendence of the Ego*, "intuition, according to Husserl, puts us in the presence of *the thing*" (*TE* 95). Indeed, Husserl's motto was "to the things themselves" (*zu den Sachen selbst*). The immediate (that is, intuitive) grasp of the object as it presents itself is the terminus of a phenomenological description. So phenomenology is a kind of empiricism, one that accepts and seeks intuitive knowledge.[38]

[37] This is a reference to Kant's famous claim that "thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind" (ibid., A51/B75.).

[38] Sartre wants to stress this point by claiming that phenomenology is concerned with facts, though he admits in a note that Husserl calls it a "science of essences." Sartre rather boldly asserts that "from the viewpoint that we are now assuming, that comes down to the same thing" (*TE* 95, n. b). That is a curious equivalency in view of Husserl's unqualified commitment to the distinction between essence and fact (the a priori and the empirical). On the other hand, it does resonate with Sartre's "nominalism" for which he was noted at the École and which slips into his understanding of "essence" as "the principle of the series of manifestations of an object" (*BN* xlvi; *EN* 12) and "the synthetic connection of the appearances" (Jean-Paul Sartre, "Consciousness of Self and Knowledge of Self," trans. Mary Ellen and Nathaniel Lawrence, in *Readings in Existential Phenomenology*, ed. Nathaniel Lawrence and Daniel O'Connor [Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967], 120; hereafter CSKS; *TE* 245). But even granting Sartre's stipulation in the present essay and respecting the strategic function of this remark, one must point out that Husserl insists in *Ideas* that

Sartre, whom we saw praise "intentionality" for restoring our physical and cultural worlds with their properties and values, now finds in Husserl's attenuated version of the transcendental turn a concession to idealism that he had opposed since his studies with Brunschvicg and others. Hence the title of his essay: "Transcendence of the Ego." It plays on the double genitive: objective and subjective. The "transcendental" Ego bequeathed to us by Kant and retained by Husserl as the "subject that cannot be an object" is "transcended" in the sense that we have moved beyond it, while the "empirical Ego" is rendered other than or "transcendent" to consciousness – as we already saw sketched in the *Carnet Dupuis*. The transcendental Ego is "transcended" (rendered unnecessary) and the empirical Ego is affirmed as heterogeneous (transcendent) to consciousness. In sum, there is only one Ego and it is an object "in the world" (almost) like other things. I caution "almost" because we shall witness Sartre pulling his punches toward the end of the essay when he concedes that we are "more intimate" with our own egos than with those of others. We shall consider what Sartre means by "intimate" in this context as we now study the entire text.

Its subtitle is "Sketch for a Phenomenological Description." In addition to *intentionality*, which Sartre praises for offering a third alternative to epistemological realism and idealism, it is the *descriptive force* of the method that attracts him. Indeed, his "factum" on contingency is a kind of prolonged phenomenological description of our experience of the contingency of our existence. The present work constitutes a close reading of a second principle of Husserlian phenomenology in addition to "intentionality," namely, the phenomenological "reduction" to a transcendental consciousness or ego.

phenomenology is *not* a science of facts but one of essences and that he distinguishes fact as contingent from essence as a priori and necessary (see *Ideas* §8). Indeed, Husserl's early opposition to the "psychologism" of neo-Kantian philosophers and others centered on the irreducibility of an a priori science to an empirical one (a science of "essences" like logic or mathematics to a science of "facts" like empirical psychology). One can sense already an impending parting of the ways between Husserl and the "existential" phenomenologists on the critical issue of the existing individual, the *existent*. Can its existence be captured in a "reduction"? Or does it slip through the net, leaving it disqualified for "scientific" study and mired in the vulnerabilities of the "natural attitude"? This is a question that must be properly formulated and its elements sorted out as phenomenological description becomes existential analysis with Heidegger and existential psychoanalysis with Sartre.

"Reduction" denotes a suspension of belief (in Greek, *epochē*), a withholding of judgment. It resembles the attitude of the ancient Skeptics as well as Cartesian doubt. But in Husserl's usage, it "brackets" the naive belief in the "out there now real" character of our everyday knowledge. In effect, it suspends the "Being" question that had haunted metaphysics from its birth. Since it is a methodical "purification" of the mass of uncritical beliefs harbored in our "natural attitude," reduction is not the definitive doubt of the Pyrrhonian Skeptics but resembles more closely the "universal methodic doubt" of Descartes. Yet it seeks to radicalize Descartes's doubt by "reducing" even the empirical ego, as Sartre observed in the *Carnet Dupuis*. Moreover, it does so with help from Husserl's phenomenological analysis of time consciousness, which was missing in Descartes and, on Husserl's view, not adequately analyzed by Kant.

Sartre's thesis is that the reduction to a transcendental ego *à la* Husserl and Kant compromises the "purity" of consciousness by positing a "subject" within it which eludes consciousness itself. Furthermore, the transcendental ego is unnecessary since its "unifying" function in our experience is adequately served by intentionality and the objects it intends. Finally, as a concluding gesture but one typically rich with moral consequences, the transcendental ego cannot account for the motivation to avoid the transcendental reduction; that is, it cannot explain our reluctance to suspend our naive confidence in the "external" world. Though this major essay would easily reward a lengthy discussion, it will have to suffice to consider these three objections to the concept of a transcendental ego. We shall review these and related issues later in Chapter 8, when we discuss Sartre's first masterwork, *Being and Nothingness*.

A threefold attack on the transcendental ego

The purity of consciousness

We have noted along the way that Sartre avoids appeal to an unconscious as incompatible with the spontaneity and evident lucidity of our awareness (in *BN* he will specifically reject the Freudian unconscious as incompatible with freedom). To appeal to a transcendental ego, he believes, is to posit a "substance" in the midst of the clarity of our thought. Consciousness, Sartre claims and will repeat in *BN*, is a "nonsubstantial absolute"; its "to be" is "to be aware" (*TE* 98).

Introduction of a substance into consciousness, Sartre believes, is an invitation either to theorize an "unconscious," that is, a shadowy realm unavailable to our critical reflection, or to slide into an endless series of reflections on reflections *à la* Spinoza (an argument Sartre will develop in *BN*). To avoid that potentially infinite regress of reflections on reflections, Sartre employs an argument that was used by Fichte against Kant in a similar context, namely, the thesis that consciousness insofar as it is explicitly aware of an other (as "intentional") is implicitly self-aware.[39] Sartre adopts the Husserlian terms "positional" ("thetic") and "nonpositional" ("nonthetic") for what I have called "explicit" and "implicit" awareness respectively. In a phrase central to *Being and Nothingness*, he insists that "every positional awareness of an object is nonpositional awareness (of) itself" (*BN* liii). Sartre introduces the parenthesis to exclude any reflective self-awareness, which would indeed generate the regress. Without the parenthesis, the French "conscience de soi" would invite such a move.

In place of the transcendental ego, Sartre points to a "prereflective" consciousness that enjoys the immediacy, clarity and indubitability of our lived awareness (which he will later call *le vécu*). Such awareness is "impersonal" or "prepersonal" in the sense that it is free of the subject–object distinction that emerges with reflection, and thus is unencumbered by an empirical ego. Already in *The Legend of Truth*, Sartre had cited our "deep engagement in some problem" as an example of egoless consciousness. Prereflective consciousness is the awareness that we enjoy before we reflect on the fact that we are (have been) aware. It is unfettered conscious involvement (into) the world. For example, it is the "bus to be caught" or the "task being performed." But it is not unconscious like, say, the condition of someone undergoing an operation under total anaesthetic. In the latter case, we saw there was nothing to be reflected on, which is the point of giving the anaesthetic. The prereflective, on the contrary, is fully conscious and so can sustain subsequent reflection that

[39] Johann Fichte *Introduction to the Wissenschaftslehre*, trans. and ed. Daniel Breazeale (Indianapolis, MA: Hackett, 1994), 20. This can be taken as an instance of what philosophers call the "Ubiquity Thesis," which claims that "an awareness of self accompanies all conscious states, at least those through which one refers to something." It is ascribed to Manfred Frank and Dieter Henrich in their respective versions and certainly applies to Sartre. (See Tomis Kaptan, "The Ubiquity of Self-Awareness," *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 57 [1999]: 17.)

now ascribes the action to an empirical ego: "*I* missed that bus!" or "That's happening to *me*."

Yet this prereflective awareness is not totally impersonal. It is *mine*, after all. That "myness," which Heidegger calls "*jemeinichkeit*" and which Sartre translates with the neologism "*moiïté*,"[40] is "in the wings," as it were, waiting to come on stage with reflection. And it is in this respect that Sartre can speak of the "intimacy" we enjoy with the ego we call "I" or "me" depending on its function as subject or object of actions or events. But if the empirical ego is a thing in the world like (almost) any other, it is no more certain than any object. Sartre calls it a "psychic" object. Though it is not identical with the body, he insists that "the psycho-physical self (*moi*) is a synthetic enrichment of the psychic Ego . . . that can certainly exist in a free state." For example, "when one says 'I am indecisive,' one is not directly referring to the psycho-physical self" (*TE* 114). By distinguishing these two aspects of the empirical ego, Sartre places more emphasis on the "psyche" than on the physical body at this stage of his argument, but without slipping into mind–body dualism. He will see this "synthetic enrichment" as a kind of "compromising" of the purity of consciousness that the phenomenological reduction preserves, but at too high a price.[41] In other words, can one "purify" consciousness from its "inner life," as intentionality claims, without appealing to a transcendental ego to hold the experience together? Sartre's response to both Kant and Husserl is an unqualified yes.

The unity of consciousness

The (transcendental) ego is accredited for the unity of our experiences.[42] It seems that the "I think" that accompanies our conscious acts is the functional equivalent of Bergson's "deep subject" of those thoughts and actions. Without such a unifying subject, it is asserted, we would be devoid of the identity that gives order to our lives and anchors our responsibility. Questioning this thesis, Sartre asks: "The Ego (*Je*) which we encounter in

[40] It seems that the neologism *moiïté* was coined by Swiss psychologist Éduard Claparède (1873–1940) (see below, Chapter 8, note 56).

[41] In the following chapter we shall witness Sartre's characterization of emotional and imaging consciousness as a "degraded" form, but as consciousness (intentional) nonetheless.

[42] See *TE* 96–98.

our consciousness, is it made possible by the synthetic unity of our representations or rather is it the Ego that unifies these representations among themselves?" (*TE* 95). He reverses the usual response by supporting the former. Consciousness sustains its unity from two sources, the identity of the objects that it "intends" (the "synthetic unity of its representations") and the temporal flow of consciousness itself.

Consider a melody. It has a unity that is not attributable to a substance (for example Descartes's "thinking *thing*"), but that which comes from within: "from the absolute indissolubility of its elements" (*TE* 114–115).[43] Just as the world is the infinite synthetic totality – the "horizon," as Husserl says, of everything the prereflective consciousness can intend – so, Sartre argues, the ego is the horizon of all our psychic states, qualities and actions. "The Ego is to psychic objects what the World is to things" (*TE* 115).

Mention of a melody evokes temporality, one of Husserl's most original phenomenological analyses. We have observed Sartre's life-long interest in time, dating from his encounter with Bergson's theory while in the lycée and his not uncritical acceptance of the same in the following years. Sartre's reading of Husserl's lectures on internal time consciousness left him with another perspective on temporality to be adopted and critically adapted as he had done with Bergson's perspective (and later Heidegger's).[44] Husserl describes our experience of the temporal "flow" as a series of overlapping waves of "protentions" of the futural

[43] In a footnote, Sartre mentions Husserl's "remarkable study" of synthetic totality in his discussion of wholes and parts in his third *Logical Investigation* §§ 17 and 18 (see *TE* 190, n. 64). The analogy of the flowing unity of time with that of a melody has been a favored image among philosophers for comprehending the paradoxical nature of both. An amateur musician, as we have seen, Sartre made occasional reference to the musical line and the ebb and flow of narrative in the authors he discussed in his Le Havre lectures (1932–1933), especially the works of Virginia Woolf. Regarding her novel *Mrs. Dalloway*, for example, he observes: "It is striking that Virginia Woolf seems to direct herself toward a musical conception of the technique of the novel. Following Gide, Huxley and Joyce himself, she seems in a sense to be telling us: 'Here music is called for . . . some symphony with its chords, its dissonances and its modulations, with its intricate base below, each of the instruments be they violin, flute, trumpet or whatever, would play its melody" (ES 16, 112).

[44] See Edmund Husserl, *Lectures on Internal Time Consciousness*, trans. and ed. John B. Brough (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991). This is a later version from the *Gesamtausgabe* to which Sartre would not have had access. His reference is to what is translated by James F. Churchill as *The Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964 [Marburg, 1928]). For Sartre's critique of Bergson, Husserl and Heidegger on temporality, see below, Chapter 7 and *BN* 107–170; *EN* 150–218.

dimension and "retentions" of its antecedents. Husserl confirms Sartre's opinion that time consciousness is a "whole" that cannot be analyzed into discrete "moments" (a view already criticized in Arisotle's *Physics*). But what Husserl adds is reference to time-*consciousness* and hence to "intentionality." Specifically, he speaks of "longitudinal" intentionalities (protentions and retentions) by which consciousness unifies itself, and he makes no mention of a transcendental ego performing that function.[45]

The "reduction" reveals temporality as the horizon for our every conscious act, not unlike the "I think" of transcendental consciousness. But this leads Sartre to see it both as ego-free and as serving a complementary unifying function with regard to our empirical ego as that played by the "synthetic unity of our representations." In other words, where the Kantian transcendental consciousness was a "formal" or "*de jure*" or "logical" condition, the "reduced" consciousness, in Sartre's words, is "existential" (*TE* 95). It is a real, not an ideal, consciousness available to anyone who performs the "reduction." Free of a transcendental Ego, this reduced consciousness "constitutes" our empirical consciousness, our conscious being-in-the world with its psychic and psycho-physical self (*moi*) (*TE* 95).

Sartre summarizes this point briefly: "the phenomenological conception of consciousness renders the unifying and individualizing role of the Ego (*Je*) completely useless. It is consciousness, on the contrary, that makes possible the unity and the personality of my Ego. So in effect, the transcendental Ego has no *raison d'être*" (*TE* 97).

The motivation of the reduction

One of the most remarkable claims of this small study occurs in its concluding pages. It criticizes Husserlian phenomenology for failing to offer a motive for performing the phenomenological reduction. In a move that will open the door to properly existentialist categories, Sartre

[45] Actually, Sartre confuses Husserl's "transverse" intentions, mentioned in *TE*, with "longitudinal" intentions, which Sartre is actually describing. The longitudinal intentionality accounts for the auto-unification of the flux of consciousness whereas transverse intentionality constitutes the unity of temporal objects. De Coorebyter points this out in *TE* 175, n. 15; (see Husserl, *Internal Time Consciousness*, §39). He also remarks Sartre's failure to elaborate on "protentions" in this work but allows that Sartre does discuss this dimension of temporal consciousness in *The Imaginary (L'Imaginaire* [Paris: Gallimard/Collection folio, 2005], 149–150; hereafter *Ire*). Given that *Internal Time Consciousness* is not even mentioned in Sartre's discussion and critique of Husserl in *BN*, De Coorebyter takes Sartre to be favoring Kant's approach to time in this respect.

characterizes that reduction as an act of *freedom* and concludes that the resistance to performing it stems from a "fear" of that very freedom. The empirical ego, in effect, is a life jacket that keeps us from sinking into the depths of our own possibility – what Kierkegaard called "the possibility of possibility," the consciousness of which is *Angst*. In a form of self-deception that he would famously term "bad faith" in *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre claims that we resist the evidence that our ego is an object (almost) like any other psychical object. It offers a haven of identity from the storms of our own piercing consciousness, but at the price of blocking or distracting the consciousness that constitutes and sustains it. As Nietzsche reversed the cause–effect relation in order to obviate the substantial self or responsible subject, so Husserl, on Sartre's reading, is inverting the relation between consciousness and ego that offers false comfort to us in the natural attitude. The ego is constituted by the reflective consciousness, not vice versa.

A major corollary is that the "essential function of the Ego is not so much theoretical as practical" (*TE* 128). Rather than serving chiefly as a unifying ideal, Sartre suggests, "perhaps the essential role [of the empirical ego] is to conceal from consciousness its proper spontaneity." And since one cannot distinguish voluntary from involuntary spontaneity, he insists, "everything occurs as if consciousness constituted the Ego as a false representation of itself" (*TE* 129). And where Husserl (or his student Eugen Fink) appeals to the "miracle" of transcendental reduction, Sartre sees the *epochē* as a courageous and hence relatively rare act of freedom that after the war he will describe in his *Notebooks for an Ethics* as the willingness to "live without the Ego" and endorse as "authenticity" (*NE* 414).

Anyone familiar with the work of Husserl will realize immediately that Sartre, despite the admiration which he held for Husserl's writings up to the time he stopped following them, was not a slavish commentator. In fact, his startling failure in the first part of the *agrégation* exam revealed his independence of thought (and perhaps originality) even *in extremis*. And when he believed he was being true to the spirit of Husserl's position, Sartre was nonetheless reading these texts in his own way. He was to do the same with Heidegger as he would with most every major thinker he encountered. If we date the composition of the *Transcendence of the Ego* to 1934, then the "existential" character of Sartrean phenomenology has revealed itself a full decade ahead of *Being and Nothingness.*

4

First triumph: *The Imagination*

Sartre is a philosopher of the imaginary. In an interview late in life, he admitted: "I believe the greatest difficulty [encountered in my research for my Flaubert study] was introducing the idea of the imaginary as the central determining factor in a person."[1] If one takes "imaginary" in the broad sense we have been using it, namely, as the locus of possibility, negativity and lack, articulated in creative freedom, this can be taken for an autobiographical remark as well. The tension between creative literature and philosophy, between image and concept, that he experienced as a lycée student was symptomatic of this basic feature of his thought. But that tension abated, though it did not disappear, when he turned his philosophical attention to the imagination and his literary undertakings to philosophical themes, as we noticed in Chapter 2. Recall Sartre's remark that at this early stage he scarcely distinguished between psychology and philosophy.[2] Though noted for his absence from classes at the Sorbonne, Sartre joined Nizan, Aron and

[1] Interview with Michel Contat and Michel Rybalka, published in *Le Monde*, May 14, 1971, reprinted in *L/S* 119 substituting "imaginary" for "imagination."

[2] "In my mind, philosophy ultimately meant psychology. I got rid of that conception later" (Schilpp, "Interview with Jean-Paul Sartre," 8). Philosophical psychology had long been a division of philosophy in general. As Arlette Elkaïm-Sartre points out, "French school students were introduced to the four classical fields of philosophy: general psychology (later called 'theoretical psychology'), metaphysics, morals and logic. Imagination belonged to the area of psychology that Sartre taught his pupils, along with perception, memory, attention, the association of ideas, the emotions, etc." She quotes an official handbook of psychology defining psychology as the "positive science of psychic facts and the laws governing them," but cautions that "*facts* as Sartre understands them [in *The Imaginary*] and consequently *laws*, will not have the same meaning as in [that handbook]" (*The Imaginary*, Historical Introduction, vii).

Daniel Lagache to follow the lectures of psychologist Georges Dumas at the psychiatric hospital of Sainte-Anne. In fact, his graduation thesis for the DES was written under the direction of a distinguished professor of psychology, Henri Delacroix. His director later invited Sartre to submit a version of the text for the series he was editing for the Presses Universitaires de France. This short work, *L'Imagination*, became Sartre's first book-length publication (1936). Unlike the DES thesis, where the lone reference to Hüsserl (*sic*) is second-hand, *The Imagination* awards Husserl's thought pride of place. He is reserved for the final chapter where most, if not all, of the errors and inadequacies of the previously discussed philosophers and psychologists are set aright. This is clearly a Husserlian book, but one that bears the usual Sartrean qualifiers.

The Imagination

Between the DES thesis and the published book came the Berlin experience as well as nearly a decade of philosophical "novels" that, as we have remarked, anticipated several of the distinguishing aspects of *Being and Nothingness.* One can observe these and others presenting themselves in the course of Sartre's book – which, like the next two, would be a study in philosophical psychology.

If Sartre's initial book-length publication was the outgrowth of his DES thesis, it was scarcely a reproduction of it. Though there is considerable overlap in the citations from several psychologists, both experimental and philosophical, in each work, either Sartre himself or his editor, who had been his thesis director almost a decade earlier, insisted that the published book be purged of the tables and graphs as well as the numerous references to and surveys of then current literature that gave the work its "thesis" style.

The Imagination is the first part of a larger project that was to have been entitled either "*The Image*" or "*Imaginary Worlds*" but that failed to materialize. An even shorter work, *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions* (1939), as we remarked earlier, was excerpted from another unpublished project of some four hundred written pages, to be entitled *The Psyche*.[3]

[3] Regarding translations of Sartre's *Esquisse d'une théorie des emotions* (Paris: Gallimard / Poche, 2000 [1939]), I draw on the better-known *The Emotions: Outline of a Theory*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948) (hereafter *Emotions*) for titles of relevant

These two short works serve as insightful introductions to phenomenological psychology with a characteristically Sartrean twist.

As we should expect from the author of *Transcendence of the Ego*, the emphasis is on the "intentionality" of consciousness (its being-into-the-world), the power of descriptive arguments ("eidetic reductions," which we shall explain shortly), and the analysis of consciousness without appeal to an overarching "Ego" but with sensitivity to its "liberating" or "nihilating" character. Except for rejecting the transcendental "ego," these are Husserlian concepts as well and we shall examine them explicitly when discussing the concluding chapter of Sartre's first little book. But these claims ground and permeate his criticism of the metaphysical, the contemporary and the classical psychological views of the imagination in the three respective chapters that follow his introduction.

In this brief introduction, Sartre betrays a remnant of his early Bergsonian sympathy when he describes consciousness, now called "being for itself" (*être pour soi*) as "spontaneity" and the nonconscious or what he now terms "in itself" (*en soi*) as "inertia." Consciousness, he explains at the outset, is "pure spontaneity" whereas "the world of things" is "pure inertia." These "two forms of existence" enable Sartre to preserve his epistemological "realism," that is, the independence of "things" from our consciousness of them (what he called their "transcendence" in *TE*) while enlisting intentionality to eliminate the so-called "gap" between the two. These are claims that he will develop at length in *Being and Nothingness* where the in-itself and for-itself emerge with "being-for-others" as the three fundamental forms of being. But the dichotomy *spontaneity–inertia* will continue to mark Sartre's thought long after he has laid aside his Cartesian "philosophy of consciousness."[4]

sections of the book. But most of the citations in English are taken from *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions*, trans. Philip Mairet (London: Routledge Classics, 2008) (hereafter *STE*).

[4] "My early work," Sartre admits somewhat apologetically in an interview in 1969, "was a rationalist philosophy of consciousness" (*BEM* 41). Though the terminology of *Being and Nothingness*, especially the concepts of being "in-itself" and "for-itself," is set aside in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* in favor of "practico-inert" and "praxis" respectively, the fundamental dichotomy of "spontaneity" and "inertia" remain fully in force. Not until his massive Flaubert study, *The Family Idiot* (1971–1972), does he bring these two discourses of praxis and consciousness together.

Eidetic reduction

Before continuing, let us pause to describe the process that Husserl called an "eidetic reduction" from fact to essence, for it will figure implicitly and occasionally explicitly in Sartre's subsequent works. When people refer to phenomenological descriptions or "arguments," it is frequently the eidetic reduction that they have in mind. Sartre is using this method, usually without the term, throughout his three studies in phenomenological psychology, *The Imagination*, *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions* (1939) and *The Imaginary* (1940).

Recall the "transcendental" or "phenomenological" reduction that bracketed or suspended the naive and skeptically vulnerable beliefs of the natural attitude in order to focus on the objects of consciousness as "phenomena." By this reductive move – the "suspension" or *epochē* of our belief in the being-status of the objects of consciousness; that is, by withholding our judgment as to whether or not the objects of consciousness are "out there now real in themselves" – we achieve a level of invulnerability that Husserl believed yielded certitude and supported the kind of "absolute science" that Humean doubt had jeopardized. This "reduction" did not deprive us of the world of our experience, Husserl insisted, but simply rendered that world a source of dependable knowledge via our shift of attitude. In other words, the melody is the same, only the key has changed.

Even in his enthusiastic adoption of the "intentionality" thesis, a position he never relinquished, Sartre could not accept what he took to be the "idealist" implications of the transcendental Ego. His courting of an egoless "transcendental subjectivity" in *TE* and the "phenomenological reduction" in *The Emotions*[5] could be seen as a concession that would be retracted if the evidence required it. The evidence of contingency that haunted him since childhood, motivated his "existential" phenomenology and made its dramatic appearance in *Nausea*, did seem to require abandoning the

[5] Toward the conclusion of his *Emotions*, *Outline of a Theory*, Sartre relates, if not identifies, "purifying reflection" and the phenomenological reduction: "The purifying reflection of the phenomenological reduction can perceive the emotion insofar as it constitutes the world in a magical form. 'I find it hateful *because* I am angry'" (*Emotions* 91; F 62) Purifying reflection or in *BN* "nonaccessory reflection," of which Sartre once admitted he had said very little, assumed a moral function that Sartre had already assigned to the transcendental reduction in *TE*. See *L/S* 121–122.

phenomenological reduction, even though it is explicitly employed in *The Imaginary* (1940). This existential turn was facilitated by Sartre's realization that *epochē* and "transcendental reduction" were not one and the same and that one could pursue an eidetic reduction even in the so-called natural attitude.[6] Moreover, he continued to employ the expression "purifying reflection" (notice the participle) in *Being and Nothingness*, which denotes the "moral" use of phenomenological reduction, even if it is not precisely equivalent to that reduction itself. What the early Husserl called "phenomenological psychology" managed to pursue an "eidetic" science without benefit (or burden) of the transcendental reduction, which he introduced later. We shall observe this "sorting out" process of *epochē* and transcendental reduction in *The Imaginary* and especially in *Being and Nothingness*, where it comes to fruition. But it must be admitted that Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, other "existential" phenomenologists and perhaps even the later Husserl himself, so it seems, set aside the world-constituting transcendental phenomenological reduction while focusing on intentionality and intentional analyses of the "life world."[7]

[6] The relation between transcendental phenomenological reduction and the *epochē* has been a matter of much dispute among Husserlians. An example of the latter is Herbert Spiegelberg's essays on that topic in volume 5 of the *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* (1973): 3–15 and (1974): 256–261, or his survey of Sartre's position in his *The Phenomenological Movement*, 2 vols., 2nd edn. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965), especially II:476ff. Also see note 9 below. In his summary of Sartre's relation to the transcendental reduction, Spiegelberg remarks:

> Sartre has never explicitly repudiated the doctrine of the transcendental realm. It merely seems to be withering away in the further development of his own phenomenology, first psychological and later ontological . . . Sartre's actual phenomenology establishes itself completely on the level of human existence. It is this tacit dropping out of the transcendental dimension and the implied humanization or "mundanization" of consciousness which constitutes the most significant change in Sartre's version of Husserlian phenomenology.
>
> (II:481)

If Sartre's commitment to Husserlian transcendental phenomenology "withered," it was due to Sartre's perception that, whereas intentionality saved us from philosophical idealism, Husserl's implicit appeal to the "principle of immanence" as exhibited in his understanding of imaging consciousness betrayed a basic idealist penchant. Of course, several famous remarks in *Ideas* may have removed all doubt (see *Ideas* §§ 49–50). Years later, he explained to Beauvoir that it was the idealist character of phenomenology that separated him from Husserl in particular and from phenomenology in general (*Cér* 234). Still, he never abandoned phenomenology, not even in the *Critique* (see Schilpp 24).

[7] See the important essays "World" by Donn Welton in *Encyclopedia of Phenomenology*, ed. Lester Embree et al. (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1997), 736–743 (double columns) and

What Husserl calls the "eidetic" reduction is much closer to what Aristotle called "abstraction," notwithstanding Husserl's rejection of the Stagirite's substantialist metaphysics, the source of "many prejudices" (*Ion* 142). For example, Aristotle claims that one should produce "well formed phantasms" in order to facilitate insight into the essence of an object. Indeed, it was the gifted teacher, he remarked, who could hasten such insights by means of powerful examples. Eidetic reduction is a method of gaining a direct or intuitive grasp of an intelligible contour or "eidos" or essence of an object by the "free imaginative variation of examples." Like Molière's Monsieur Jordain, the philosophical novelist Sartre had been anticipating eidetic reduction without knowing it, which is probably what made his encounter with phenomenology in his cocktail conversation with Aron so dramatic. Thus if someone wanted to grasp the essential feature of our perception of a material object such as a cube (Husserl's example), by imaginatively adding and subtracting alternative descriptions one could arrive at the insight that a material object "must present itself to perception in profiles." One cannot perceive all its sides at once. In other words, one simply "sees" that this is not only how it happens to be at the moment until one can get a better view, but how it *has to be*, in the case of perceiving material objects. That is what moves the inquiry from fact to essence, from "the probability that it will repeat itself next time" to the insight that this is in the nature of the case and not simply an empirical, datable fact. The insight is "a priori" in the transcendental sense of "necessarily and universally" valid. For this reason, despite appearances, eidetic reduction is not similar to what empiricists call "inductive generalization." Reduction is not induction; optimally, it does not settle for a degree of probability.[8]

Of course, this sounds like mathematics (Husserl's doctorate was in mathematics), and eidetic insights are most comfortably illustrated by geometrical examples such as our perception of the cube. Descriptive geometry offers us examples of relationships that are both necessary and universal. But similarly, a careful description of our imaging consciousness such as we shall witness Sartre undertaking in *The Imaginary* will

Lester Embree, "Constitutive Phenomenology and the Natural Attitude," *Encyclopedia of Phenomenology*, 114–116, as well as Spiegelberg, *Phenomenological Movement* II:479–497.

[8] For Sartre's thoughts on this distinction in Husserl's thought, see *L'Imagination* (1936) (Paris: PUF/Quadrige, 2003), 140; hereafter *Ion*.

reveal both the "certain" and the "probable" conclusions about the nature of the image that a careful eidetic reduction will warrant. While the descriptive analyses in *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions* are less protracted, they too exemplify successful eidetic reductions. *The Imagination* also makes extensive use of counterexamples and arguments from experience that question the adequacy of classical and contemporary theories about the nature of the image. These could be labeled incipient or informal eidetic reductions, though they do not explicitly claim the features of certainty and probability championed in *The Imaginary* and *Emotions*. In *The Imagination* (*Ion*), the eidetic method is not expressly adopted. But it is the start of a mode of argument via example that benefits greatly from Sartre's exceptional descriptive (and literary) powers.

Nowhere does the relation between philosophy and literature come more clearly into focus than in the eidetic reduction. Arguments of great literature often fashion moral paradigms, which resemble eidetic reductions by their imaginative construction and contrast with other models that lead the viewer to say, if only to himself, "That's how it is alright." In the book that reportedly introduced Sartre to Husserlian phenomenology, Emmanuel Levinas quotes Husserl as saying: "'Feigning [Fiktion] makes up the vital element of phenomenology as of every other eidetic science; . . . feigning is the source from which the cognition of 'eternal truths' is fed."[9] Roquentin's experience of contingency in *Nausea* is described with a precision and emotional bite that, when successful, leaves the reader with the uncomfortable sense of his own chance existence.[10]

[9] *Ideas* §79, 160. Cited in Emmanuel Levinas, *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*, trans. André Orianne (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 140, using the earlier W. R. Boyce Gibson translation (New York: Macmillan, 1931).

[10] Already in the 1920s, Sartre was aware of the need to complement a sterile conceptualism with appeal to the "feelings" (*sentiments*). In his first published "philosophical" essay, "The Theory of the State in Modern French Thought," (January 1927), he contrasted "realist" with "idealist" approaches to issues of sovereignty and respect for rights in terms of an exclusively "factual" argument versus one that regarded "the national feelings (*sentiments*) aroused by the Great War." His conclusion suggests sympathy with the latter even as he recognizes the current victory of the former: "And so it seems that the future lies with those who will resign themselves in these matters to expecting only realistic consequences from realist methods, and who will recognize that he who sets out from facts will never end up with anything but facts" (Contat and Rybalka II:36).

The psychologists address the problem of the image

Because they are captivated by what Sartre calls (and in various contexts will continue to designate) the "spirit of analysis," philosophers like Descartes, Leibniz and Hume, he argues, see no essential difference between sensation and image. Differences of degree, yes, but not of kind. Philosophical psychologists like Taine and Maine de Biran shared this opinion as well. In Sartre's view, this analytic spirit fostered "associationism" in psychology and mechanism in metaphysics.[11] The spirit of synthesis, on the other hand, which Sartre links to nineteenth-century romanticism is nonreductionist and holistic in its psychology and organic or vitalist in its metaphysics.[12]

This contrast between the cluster of terms analytic-atomistic-associative-mechanistic, on the one side, and synthetic-holistic-nonreductionist-organic (or sometimes -vitalist), on the other, will function as recurrent, critical instruments in these psychological texts of the 1930s while assuming ethical and political significance for Sartre in the following decades. They are a permanent acquisition in his critical vocabulary. At this stage, however, Sartre's targets are psychologists like the members of the Würzburg school who insist on "imageless thought" or the philosophical psychologists who acknowledge only a difference of degree between sensations and images. In view of his well-known rejection of the Freudian unconscious, it is significant that Sartre finds these "analytic" thinkers forced by the data of our conscious life and their

[11] "Associationism" is a kind of atomistic approach to memory that Hume considered his chief contribution to the field, though in fact it already occurs in Aristotle.

[12] This connection of the spirit of synthesis with Romanticism is a noteworthy relationship, given Sartre's subsequent espousal of that spirit after the war (see, for example *Anti-Semite and Jew* [1948], trans. George J. Becker [New York: Shocken, 1995], 59). Philosophers have pointed out amazing parallels between Sartre's existential philosophy and the transcendental idealism of German philosopher Johann Fichte (1762–1814). See, for example Dorothea Wildenburg, *Ist der Existentialismus ein Idealismus?* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2003); Lucia Theresia Heumann, *Ethik und Aesthtik bei Fichte und Sartre* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009); and the volume on Fichte and Sartre edited by Violet Weibel and Peter Kampits (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, forthcoming).Though arguably not a "Romantic" himself, but certainly a major influence on several of the leading German Romantics in the last decade of the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century, it is not inappropriate to apply to Fichte the paradoxical label "Romantic Rationalist" that we observed British philosopher-novelist Iris Murdoch attach to Sartre in her insightful book with that title, *Sartre. Romantic Rationalist*.

erroneous initial positions into accepting some form of psychological unconscious – a stance he considers the equivalent of a "reduction to the absurd."

Sartre cites Bergson's publications of the late 1800s, including the one that reportedly led him into philosophy in the first place, as effecting a kind of revolution in its rejection of associationism and its corresponding insistence that "consciousness is entirely synthesis, that synthesis is the very mode of psychic existence" (*Ion* 41–42). But, despite its new vocabulary, Sartre claims that Bergson's thought remains wedded to the classical problem of the image and in the final analysis offers nothing new in response (*Ion* 42). The culprit is Bergson's metaphysics, which leaves the image an ambiguous and unstable hybrid of thing and recollection. In Sartre's Husserlian view, Bergson conceives of the image as "impressing itself on the spirit like a content in the receptacle of memory rather than as a living moment of spiritual activity," as Husserl might conceptualize it (*Ion* 49). When this is translated into the vocabulary of intentional analysis,[13] Sartre claims that Bergson continuously confuses the *noema* with the *noesis* and so is led to confer on this synthetic reality, which he calls *image*, sometimes the value of a noema (the object of our intending: for example, the tree as imagined) and other times that of a noesis (our manner of intending the object: our imaging the tree).

[13] If all consciousness is "intentional" in nature, then its character as intentional is bipolar: the subject pole and the object pole; object intended (technically the *noema*, the tree as seen, for example) and the act of intending that object (the noetic act, the seeing of the tree). Given that all consciousness is intentional, that is, consciousness *of* an other, Husserl mines this rich field of intentionality for descriptions of the phenomena that intentionality presents. Specifically, one can describe either of the two poles of our consciousness, namely, the object-as-intended or the act of intending the object, for distinctive characteristics. In the case of someone perceiving or imagining a tree, for example, one can focus on the various features of the tree *as* perceived or imagined, or alternatively attend to our perceiving or imagining the tree. Intentional analysis will "fine tune" these alternative descriptions so that, while remaining within the realm of phenomena, one can come to see the essential difference between perceiving and imagining an object. We shall observe Sartre employing this intentional analysis and its "eidetic" reductions of the experience in his masterful description of "imaging consciousness" in *The Imaginary*. But, though the two poles (act and object) can be distinguished, they cannot be separated because there is no intending without an object nor any object without an intending act. That is the significance of the intentional character of consciousness. As we noted earlier, intentional analyses can be carried out within the sphere of the natural attitude as the essays cited in note 7 above attest.

In the final analysis, Sartre insists, the problem is the incompatibility of Bergson's biologistic psychology with his spiritualist metaphysics. The latter, Sartre concedes, does indeed distinguish essentially between image and perception whereas Bergson's psychology, despite his claims, is shown to allow for only a difference of degree as do Hume and the empiricists with whom Bergson is taking issue (*Ion* 57).[14]

Sartre ends this chapter with a criticism of "Bergsonians," who apply a modified version of Bergson's thought to the problem of the image–perception relation. He insists that this merely underscores the inadequacies of the Bergsonian metaphysics and the psychology it engenders.

But it is worth recalling here Sartre's Kantian respect for "schemas" that he had exhibited in his positive reference to a major essay by psychologist Auguste Fach in his DES thesis.[15] While admitting that an interest in schemata is hardly limited to Bergsonians, Sartre now sees these schemata as playing an intermediary role between the "pure sensible individual and pure thought" (*Ion* 66) that finds a welcome home in Bergson's approach. But displaying his major concern and the motive that led him to phenomenology in the first place, Sartre asks: "This relaxing of the image, creation of the schema, does it signify progress toward the concrete?" He responds with a resounding no. It's just another version of the associationist error, rendered more dangerous by its seeming advance. The Bergsonian image retains its thinglike character, its inertia, and as such is just another "thing" in consciousness to be observed and deciphered: "In a word, it *teaches* us something at every moment" just like a sensation (*Ion* 69, emphasis his). This last remark might seem superfluous were it not for the fact that it denies a

[14] In his chiefly laudatory review of *L'Imagination* in *Journal de Psychologie Normale et Pathologique* 33, nos. 9–10 (Nov.–Dec. 1936), Sartre's friend and fellow Normalien, Merleau-Ponty observes that Sartre is unfair in his critique of Bergson on images: "you can find a more profound meaning of 'images' in [Bergson's] *Matter and Memory* than Sartre allows. One can read Bergson's account of world as an ensemble of 'images' as suggesting that the 'thing' should not be resolved into 'states of consciousness' nor [lie] hidden in a substantial reality beyond our perception. Phrased more precisely, this would be an anticipation of Husserlian *noema*." Moreover, Merleau-Ponty chides Sartre for his severity in rejecting the matter–form distinction applied by psychologists to images while readily adopting Husserl's much disputed distinction between "*hylē*" (matter) and "*morphē*" (form), p. 761.

[15] Auguste Flach, "Über symbolische Schemata in produktiven Denkenprozesses," *Archiv für die gesamte Psychologie* 52 (1925): 369–441. Much of this analysis is drawn from *PPS* 75ff.

corollary to one of the essential features of the image that Sartre's eidetic reduction in *The Imaginary* will reveal, namely, that "the image teaches us nothing." On Sartre's reading, the image contains nothing more than what we have placed there. Appeal to schemata, whether Kantian or Bergsonian, Sartre concludes, is a ploy (*un truc*) to join the activity and the unity of thought with the inert multiplicity of sensation in a vain effort to reach concrete reality, whereas a careful appeal to the intentionality of consciousness will suffice, as his major work *The Imaginary* will explain in detail. Sartre's search for warranted experience of concrete reality, can be taken henceforth as a leitmotif in his thought

"The Contradictions of the Classical Conception"

The point of this chapter of Sartre's book is to reveal the inadequacy of attempts by then recent authors to deal with the limitations of associationism by simply combining image and thought into an image-sign. In Sartre's mind, that simply covers over the problems rather than facing them. For Sartre's operative thesis throughout this discussion remains the claim that the basic identity of image and perception follows on from a metaphysics which generates the problems that he has been discussing.

Given the identity claim of their metaphysics, these theorists must account for the commonly acknowledged distinction between perception and image at the psychological level. A familiar solution explains the image as a "false" perception. But this raises the question of a "true" image. After reviewing the respective responses of Hume, Taine and Spaier, whom he sees progressively backing away from their stated mechanistic and physiological theories toward a quasi-mentalistic (that is, judgment-oriented) account under pressure of contrary evidence, Sartre remarks that the resultant criterion of "truth" for the image is not a realist correspondence with the perceptual world but a coherence among the images/signs themselves. In other words, this trio has set aside a naive realism in order to sustain the identity of image and perception. While admitting that his account of Spaier's position may not be completely accurate, Sartre insists that he is describing "a direction and an attitude that is generally accepted today" (*Ion* 103 n.) And we should not forget that after a year of study in Berlin, Sartre is in the process of establishing the case for a phenomenological solution to these inadequacies.

In the course of his arguments, Sartre is careful to insist on the epistemological primacy of perception. In this he agrees with "the Germans" that perception is "the original presentational intuition" (*originär gebende Anschauung*) (*Ion* 107). And while perception usually guides our imaginations and granted that we can have partial and incomplete perception of objects, Sartre claims that "no image is ever intermixed with real [perceptual] objects" (*Ion* 113). We shall see if he can maintain this sharp dichotomy in his discussion of aesthetic objects discussed in *The Imaginary.*

Before turning to Sartre's explicit exposition of Husserl's account in the final chapter, let us observe his Husserlian clarification of the distinction between image and perception as a critique of "the common opinion" among his contemporaries. Again, this argument is a corollary to what we have been calling Sartre's fundamental dichotomy between spontaneity (consciousness) and inertia ("things"). Accepting Husserl's view that the connection among the contents of our sense perception is the result of "passive syntheses" ordered by the flow of internal time consciousness, the defenders of image as a content in consciousness must either accept it as an inert "thing" similar to perception, or admit that "consciousness is an organization, a systematization [and] that the stream [*écoulement*] of psychic facts is guided by directive themes: so in this case the image can no longer be likened to a content of receptive opacity." The psychological champions of synthesis, Sartre urges, have not chosen. Rather, they lived with this ambiguity, occasionally making implicit appeal to the unconscious to resolve the contradiction. What they fail to recognize is that "if the image is conscious, it is pure spontaneity . . . [For] it is an ontological law that there are only two types of existence [again Sartre's mantra]: existence as thing in the world and existence as consciousness." And "spontaneity," as Sartre will explain in *Being and Nothingness*, is "self consciousness, transparency for itself and existence only in so far as it knows itself (*se connaît*)" (*Ion* 126), a strong claim he will refine in the later work.

After a critique of Alain's theory of "imagination without images," appealing to the same principles enunciated above, Sartre summarizes his understanding of Husserl's position in a tightly reasoned concluding chapter. It would serve as a useful prelude to *Being and Nothingness.*

The Husserlian solution

In light of hints dropped along the way, it should come as no surprise that Sartre describes the publication of the first volume of Husserl's *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy* (1913) as "the great event of prewar philosophy" (*Ion* 139).

Sartre is careful to mention Husserl's respect for empirical psychology and the supportive role that he assigned to a "phenomenological psychology" which, though eidetic, did not employ the transcendental reduction (*Ion* 143). But his remark which brings this short volume into focus even as it gestures toward his major study, *The Imaginary*, is that "one finds in *Ideas* the bases of an entirely new theory of images." And as if he had sketched the argument of that latter work at this stage, Sartre proposes what such a study of the image should entail:

> One should seek to establish an eidetic of the image; that is to say, to fix and to describe the essence of that psychological structure such as it appears to reflexive intuition. Then, once one has determined the set of conditions that a psychological state must necessarily fulfill to realize an image, only then can one move from the certain to the probable and ask of experience what it can teach us about images as they present themselves in a present-day human consciousness.
>
> (*Ion* 143)

Notwithstanding the originality of his thesis, Sartre informs us that Husserl did not pursue the matter of the image at any length and adds that he is not entirely in agreement with what Husserl has to say on this topic.[16] By now, we would not have expected that he would be. In fact, true to character, sixteen years later Sartre will assure us that, if he agrees

[16] We should remember that Sartre seems not to have read anything that Husserl published after his return from Germany in 1934. On the other hand, Husserl's writings on the imagination were never published in his lifetime and he died in 1938. Among his posthumous publications were texts on the imagination, image consciousness and memory, material relevant to the very topics that Sartre was discussing in *The Imaginary* and earlier (see Edmund Husserl, *Phantasie, Bildbewusstsein, Erinnerung, 1898–1925*, ed. Eduard Marbach, *Husserliana* vol. XXIII [The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1980]). For an informed account of how these later Husserlian texts correct Sartre's reading of the earlier ones, see Andrea Smeranda Aldea, "Phantasie and Phenomenological Inquiry – Thinking with Edmund Husserl," doctoral dissertation, Emory University, 2011.

with the stand of the French Communist Party on a particular issue at that time, he is "reasoning from [his own] principles and not theirs."[17]

Let us conclude this analysis of *The Imagination* with an example of a "creative" interpretation of a Husserlian concept, the problematic "*hylé*" or "stuff" to be informed by the intention. Without getting into the disputes among Husserlians, let us merely note that in *Ideas I* Husserl introduces this well-known Aristotelian terminology of "matter and form" (the determinable and the determining features of an object respectively).[18] But this relationship concerns our "sensuous" intuitions: they can be analyzed into a material and a formal component. It is the nature of this material component, the hylé or "stuff," that is at issue. What I wish to underscore is that Sartre interprets it as serving an "analogical" role in sense perception. Thus in *The Imagination* he claims that our perception of a red object, when subjected to an intentional analysis, yields a determinable subjective element, the hylé, that can be considered a "quasi-object" in that it is the "by means of which" we perceive the red object that is the "object" of our perceptual awareness properly speaking. The reason for this appeal to what medieval scholastics called the "*objectum formale quo*"[19] was to account for the functional differences between our imagining and our perceiving while continuing to sustain a realist position in epistemology.

Sartre is clear that Husserl's chief contribution in this regard was his application of the theory of intentionality to our imaging consciousness. Just as intentionality freed us from the "inner world" with regard to perception, so it does, perhaps counterintuitively, with regard to our images. They are not miniatures or simulacra "inside" our

[17] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Communists and Peace* with *A Reply to Claude Lefort* trans. Martha H. Fletcher and Philip R. Berk respectively (New York: George Braziller, 1968), 68 (hereafter *CP*), and *Lefort*; *Les Communistes et la Paix* (*Sit* VI:80–384, 168) and *Réponse à Claude Lefort* (*Sit* VII:7–93).

[18] As noted earlier, Sartre was unfamiliar with volumes II or III of Husserl's *Ideas* Both were published posthumously. Merleau-Ponty had traveled to Louvain in April of 1939 to consult the manuscript of *Ideas* II, which offered a fuller view of Husserl's theory of social subjects ("subjects of a higher order") as well as *Experience and Judgment* and §§ 28–72 of the *Crisis*. But Sartre seems to have lost interest in Husserlian exegesis by then and is not known to have viewed the manuscripts even after copies were transported to the Sorbonne in 1958.

[19] The "objectum formale *quo*" is the formal object "*by means of which*" we perceive an object as distinct from the "objectum quod" which we actually perceive as a transcendent phenomenon. Metaphorically, it is the window, not the landscape.

consciousness, as popularly conceived, for consciousness has no "inside," as we have seen. Rather, the image is a way of being "in the world" but in a manner distinct from perception. My image of Pierre "intends" the Pierre of flesh and blood, but in a manner different from my perceiving him. The challenge, which Sartre takes up at length in *The Imaginary*, is to determine what that specific difference is. And when the object imagined is purely imaginative, say a centaur playing a flute, that object is likewise not "inside" the mind but is the pole of our act of imagining and so "transcendent" in its very intentional existence, its inexistence (as Brentano will say) or, as Sartre will state in *The Imaginary*, in its very "irreality." And it seems that the function of the "hylé," on Sartre's reading, is to unify and individualize this transcendent object whose form or signification is being conferred by the intending (noetic) act. Thus the hylé could remain the same (one and the same physical tree, for example) and only the meaning-giving intentional form, in this case, would distinguish its resultant object as either perceived or imagined (see *Ion* 150–151).

Sartre believes that Husserl should have extended his suggestions to material images such as pictures, designs and photos. It is these that psychologism tends to distinguish from the so-called mental image which it claims that material images are said to evoke by association. The physical portrait of your mother, for example, merely evokes her "mental" image with its attendant emotional qualities. In other words, for psychologism, the link between mental and material image is only associative. Drawing the contrary implications of the Husserlian tack, Sartre argues that "if the image becomes a certain way of animating a hylétic content intentionally, one can easily liken the grasp of a picture *as image* to the intentional grasp of a 'psychological' content. It would simply be a case of two different species of 'imaging' consciousnesses" (*Ion* 149).

Betraying his proclivity for the power of the negative, Sartre restates the general intentional analysis of imaging consciousness as follows: "So the noema is a nothingness (*un néant*) that has only an ideal existence, the kind of existence ascribed to the Stoic *lekton*.[20] It is only the necessary correlative to the noesis. 'The eidos of the noema points to the eidos of

[20] *Lekton* is the Stoic term for the sense (meaning) of a formula.

the noetic consciousness; identically, they are mutually referential.'"[21] But Sartre reads this as sliding Husserl back into the "classical" problem of failing to respect the essential difference between image and perception, for it leaves the noema of the tree, for example, with the same ideal existence as that of the centaur.

And whence comes the distinction between images and perceptions? On Sartre's reading of Husserl, the difference arises solely from the respective noetic acts that constitute them. And this is what leads him to question whether the noema as an "ideal" entity is purely passive, whether it can be animated at will by any noesis whatsoever, again seemingly like Aristotle's "prime matter."

Whether his understanding of Husserl's theory is accurate or not, and Sartre admits that it may not be,[22] this is our first encounter with a problem that will plague Sartre's thought under different formulations for the rest of his life: the problem of distinguishing between the "given" and the "taken" in our conscious life. In *Being and Nothingness* it will recur as the relation between "facticity" and "transcendence" in our situational existence, and in the *Critique* it appears as the ambiguous relation between praxis and the practico-inert, whereas it insinuates itself ethically in his inability to reconcile "fraternity" and "violence" in his later writings.[23]

To illustrate the point, Sartre cites Husserl's well-known example of Dürer's engraving *Knight, Death and the Devil*. The set can be perceived as physical marks on a piece of paper. But imaging consciousness will intend the objects imaginatively *as* "Knight," "Death," and "Devil." Our consciousness may assume an "aesthetic" manner of intending these figures, in which case it "neutralizes" its attitude toward these figures, intending them in a "disinterested" manner, as Kant said in his *Critique of Judgment*. Sartre's point is that the matter (hylé) alone would not suffice to distinguish image from perception, since it can be the same for both, as in the case of the physical drawing of the knight and the mental image of the knight. We should note that Sartre in *The Imaginary* will

[21] *Ion* 154. See *Ideas* 241.

[22] "We are presenting in a very rough manner (*très grossièrement*) a very nuanced theory, but one whose details do not concern us directly" (*Ion* 153 n.).

[23] These are obviously quite distinct matters, but their functional similarity should be kept in mind as we move through the stages of Sartre's intellectual development.

not accept Husserl's position as explained here, when it comes to the "matter" of mental images.[24]

Husserl responds that one must look to the "motivations" of the one intending the object. Thus someone motivated to examine the Dürer engraving for its physical features will intend the hylé in one way, whereas someone wishing to view it aesthetically will "inform" the hylé in another way. But in both cases, the image depends on extrinsic considerations (*motifs*). And this, Sartre argues, repeats the problem about the "true" image raised in the previous chapter. This time it is the "motifs" that are in question: "In the earlier case, we responded that if the psychological contents are equivalent, there is no way to determine the true image. Now one must reply: if the stuff (*matières*) is of the same nature, one cannot find any valuable reason (*motif*) there" (*Ion* 156). Still, Sartre concedes that Husserl offers the beginning of an answer by distinguishing the "necessarily spontaneous" nature of the imaging act with the passive syntheses of perceptual consciousness that are subject to the flow of time. "So every fiction would be an active synthesis whereas every perception is a purely passive synthesis. The difference between image-fiction and perception would then come from the deep structure of the intentional syntheses" (*Ion* 157).

To this, Sartre remarks, "we subscribe completely to this explanation. But it still remains quite incomplete" (*Ion* 157). He then proceeds to raise objections that we will find him elaborating in *The Imaginary*. First, he questions whether the hylé is in any way changed by spontaneous imaging consciousness or consists of a mere addition of elements (of a horse and a man, as in the case of the Centaur, according to Descartes and Spinoza). In the latter case, we are faced with the seeming incompatibility of the impressed stuff (*la matière impressionnelle*) of perception with the intentional mode of the image-fiction. We shall see Sartre dealing with this issue in his aesthetics of paintings and theater performances in *The Imaginary*. And however one deals with this incompatibility, one must still face the radical severance of the image-fiction from the image-memory, because Husserl, by defending the neutrality or indifference of the hylé, does not seem able to deal with the numerous intermediary forms between fiction and memory. Either he must make both syntheses (of perception and image) passive – which revives problems of

[24] See *Ire* 45, 54, 102 and below, page 116.

the classical understanding – or he must make them both active at the expense of his concept of "presentification" (as explained in his *Lectures on Internal Time Consciousness*).[25] So we are again faced with the question whether the distinction between mental image and perception is solely a function of alternative intentions. Sartre's thesis is that such intentions are a necessary but not a sufficient condition for their respective outcomes. He believes that mental image and perception must differ with respect to hylé as well, and he suggests the possibility that "the stuff" (*matière*) of the mental image may itself be spontaneous, "though a spontaneity of a lesser type" (*Ion* 158). He concedes that his inquiry into the proper "hylé" of the mental image may require that he leave the domain of eidetic psychology and return to inductive reasoning, but he believes that Husserl has saved us from the errors and inadequacies of philosophical psychology as set forth in this small volume.[26]

What makes this a promising interpretation for Sartre, if not for Husserl, is that the aesthetic object, in the theory Sartre will fashion in *The Imaginary*, makes use of the physical object such as the statue, the painting, the performance of the music and the physical inscription or verbal utterance of the written or spoken narrative – to each of which he ascribes the status of *analogon* when it is perceived in the aesthetic mode. In other words, Sartre is fashioning a powerful tool out of the epistemologically questionable concept of the "stuff" in Husserl's phenomenology.

An unfortunate foray into experimental psychology

We just noted Sartre proposing a possible "return to inductive reasoning." He may have had a particular "experiment/experience" in mind when he made that observation. In the course of his criticism of psychological theories of the image, Sartre referred to "the interesting

[25] Edmund Husserl, *Lectures on Internal Time Consciousness*, trans. James S. Churchill (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964).

[26] For a discussion of Sartre's ambiguity regarding the "*hylé*," see M. M. Saraiva, *L'Imagination selon Husserl* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), 134, n. Note Sartre's distinction between "eidetic psychology" and "inductive reasoning." They differ as do "essence" and "fact," so sharply differentiated by Husserl. Whether "eidetic psychology" necessarily requires a "transcendental reduction" is being worked out in Sartre's next two studies. It finds its culmination in the "phenomenological ontology" of *Being and Nothingness*. See Embree, *Encyclopedia of Phenomenology*, 278b.

observations of Lagache on the role of respiratory rhythm in auditory hallucinations" (*Ion* 105 n.). It was to his former classmate at the ENS, Daniel Lagache, that Sartre turned for a drug-induced experience to further his inquiry into imaging consciousness. In January 1935, at Sartre's request, his psychiatrist friend injected him with the hallucinogen mescaline. The result was a "bad trip." For the next six months, Sartre suffered from depression as well as the delusion that, among other things, he was being pursued by large crustaceans. This condition came abruptly to an end, as Beauvoir recounts, when he declared that he was "tired of being crazy." That remark betrays a voluntarist strain in Sartre's thought that recurs at various junctures, as when, for instance, he insisted that people simply let themselves become seasick.

This experience came in the midst of a period of self-doubt and fatigue. Soon to celebrate his thirtieth birthday, Sartre, who at age 22 had recorded in his diary that if a person is not famous by 28 he never will be,[27] was still relatively unknown. Mescaline aside, his depression was intensified by a very complex romantic entanglement, lasting for several years, with a former student of Beauvoir's in Rouen, Olga Kosakiewiecz. Olga's stormy relationship with both Beauvoir and Sartre was recounted in Beauvoir's first successful novel, *She Came to Stay* (1943). Sartre's connection with Olga was of sufficient intensity to cause Beauvoir to feel her own relationship with him threatened. Even during the war years, whether writing from the Front or visiting Paris on leave, Sartre would not always inform the one woman what he was writing to the other or let them both know precisely when he was in town. As Annie Cohen-Solal observes, "Olga remains one of the two or three passions of Sartre's life."[28] His adopted daughter, Arlette, admits that his "love for Olga haunts the *War Diaries* [*Carnets*]" (*CDG*-F, 276 n.).

But in the midst of this emotional turmoil and perhaps as a way of taming it, Sartre managed to work on his "factum" on contingency and,

[27] He was quoting the Swiss aesthetician Rodolphe Töpffer: "I can appreciate the extent of my disappointment [with my writing] today, when I recall that at twenty-two I'd noted down in my diary this dictum from Töpffer, which had made my heart beat faster: 'Whoever is not famous at twenty-eight must renounce glory forever.' A totally absurd dictum, of course, but one which threw me into agonies. Well, at twenty-eight, I was unknown. I'd written nothing good, and if I wanted ever to write anything worth reading I had my work cut out for me" (*CDG*-E 76–77).

[28] *Life* 106.

more immediately, on his psychological studies of the emotions and the imaginary realm.

Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions

In Sartre's valedictory interview with Beauvoir (1974) we find the following exchange:

B. Was there a relation between *Transcendence of the Ego* and *The Psyché*?
S. Yes. It was in terms of *Transcendence of the Ego* that I conceived *The Psyché*. *The Psyché* was the description of what is called the "psychological." Philosophically speaking, how does one manage to live subjectivity? That was explained there along with the emotions, the sentiments . . .
B. You made them psychological objects situated outside of consciousness [like the ego]. That was your great idea . . . It was a rather large essay that covered the entire psychological domain.
S. It would have been as important a work as *Being and Nothingness*.
B. And didn't *The Theory of the Emotions* form part of *The Psyché*?
S. Yes, it was a part of it.
B. Then why did you keep *The Theory of the Emotions* – which you were right to preserve; it's very good – and did not save the rest of *The Psyché*?
S. Because the remainder of *The Psyché* repeated Husserl's ideas that I had already assimilated, which I have expressed in another style, but which were nonetheless pure Husserl; it wasn't original. I kept *The Emotions* for their originality. It was a good study of certain *Erlebnisse* [experiences] that can be called emotions; I showed that they were not isolated givens but were relative to consciousness.
B. That they were animated by intentionality.
S. Yes. That's an idea that I still retain. Though it's not originally mine, it is one that I continue to find necessary.

(*Cér*, 230–231)

Half the size of *The Imaginary*, this brief "sketch" offers a brilliant challenge to the psychological theories of the emotions current at the time. It is another study in phenomenological psychology whose originality lies in its unstinting application of Husserl's theory of

intentionality to emotional consciousness. But now it is reenforced by Heideggerian concepts of "being-in-the-world," "human reality" (*Dasein*) and "situation."[29] As in his previous study, Sartre draws both on "classical" authors in this field, such as William James, Pierre Janet and the followers of Wolfgang Köhler: Kurt Lewin and Tamara Dembo.

At the outset, he is careful to insist that psychology begins with the study of empirical facts, citing American pragmatist Charles Sanders Peirce: "the idea of man could only be the sum of the facts which it unifies" (*STE* 3). In preparation for the phenomenological approach, Sartre concludes: "In short, psychologists do not notice, indeed, that it is just as impossible to attain the essence by heaping up the accidents as it is to reach unity by the indefinite addition of figures to the right of 0.99." In other words, the analytic method of the natural sciences cannot yield the *eidos*/essence of Husserlian eidetic reduction, which separates fact from essence. As Husserl realized: "that there is an incommensurability between essences and facts and that whoever begins his researches with facts will never attain to essences" (*STE* 7). But Sartre now grants that empirical psychology is equally unable to discover "the meaning of the synthetic totality which one calls *world*. But *man*," he continues, "is a being of the same type as the *world*; it is even possible, that, as Heidegger believes, the notions of world and of 'human reality' (*Dasein*) are inseparable" (*STE* 5). Sartre is mounting his attack on the myopic view that positive psychological science takes on the emotions, reducing them to physiological and chemical changes and/or marginalizing their importance.

In addition to the "eidetic intuition," which Sartre insists must take into account "the experience of essences and values," he remains

[29] Sartre takes the translation of Heidegger's *Dasein* as "human reality" from Henri Corbin's translation of a collection of Heidegger's works that included *What is Metaphysics?* (the title essay) along with excerpts from *Being and Time* and a conference on Hölderlin (Paris: Gallimard, 1938). Recall that an earlier version of Corbin's translation of the title essay had appeared in the same issue of *Bifur* in which a portion of Sartre's *The Legend of Truth* was published. But the translation of *Dasein* as "human reality" appears to come from the portion of *Sein und Zeit* published in this later collection entitled *Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique?* Sartre's critics, including Heidegger himself, regarded his adoption of "human reality" for *Dasein* both in *The Emotions* and thereafter, especially in *Being and Nothingness*, as evidence that Sartre had exchanged the ontological significance of Heidegger's work for a psychological and ethical interpretation. In effect, Sartre had employed the expression in a "humanist" sense (see *HF* 1:40–45).

loyal to "the transcendental and constitutive consciousness that we attain through a 'phenomenological reduction' or 'putting the world in brackets.'"[30] In fact, he relates the two reductions in orthodox fashion by insisting that a phenomenology of emotion, "after having put the world in brackets, will study emotion as a pure transcendental phenomenon, not considering particular emotions but seeking to attain and elucidate the transcendental essence of emotion as an organized type of consciousness" (*STE* 8). What Heidegger adds to this approach, Sartre will remark from now on, is the insight that what distinguishes human reality from the object of other inquiries is the fact that "human reality is ourselves." Quoting *Sein und Zeit*, Sartre explains: "the existent which we must analyse . . . is our self. The being of this existent is *mine*."[31] This elicits the following "proto-existentialist" reflections:

> And it is no negligible matter that this human reality should be myself. Because it is precisely for the human reality that to exist is always to *assume* its being, that is, to be responsible for it instead of receiving it from the outside like a pebble does. And since "human reality" is essentially its own possibility, this existent can "choose" what it will be, achieve itself – or lose itself.[32]

Moving now into the Heideggerian camp of "hermeneutical" phenomenology, Sartre explains that the "assumption" of self which characterizes human reality implies an understanding of human reality, however obscure, as its precondition. And this "hermeneutic of existence," as Sartre will later employ the Heideggerian term in *BN*, "will be sufficient foundation for an anthropology," and this anthropology "will serve as the basis for all psychology" (*STE* 9). This "translation" of Heidegger's project of a "fundamental ontology" into an anthropology and a philosophical psychology is doubtless the epitome of the kind of misreading of *Being and Time* that Heidegger himself and many of his followers have decried over the years. But our point here as elsewhere is not the accuracy of Sartre's reading of these authors, but to understand what he makes of his interpretation. It is there that his originality will appear. At this stage and in this little text, Sartre is defending the

30 *STE* 8.

31 Ibid. See Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Elfte, unveränderte Auflage (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1967 [1927]), 41.

32 *STE* 9. See *Sein und Zeit*, 41.

approach to psychological phenomena that begins with the synthetic totality of human reality "in situation" as opposed to the analytic approach of empirical psychology.

But Sartre is doing his best to avoid choosing between Husserl and Heidegger in this regard. He will never abandon the intentional nature of consciousness, whereas "consciousness" is conspicuous by its absence in Heidegger's major work. But he seems to read the Heideggerian concepts of world and human reality as more synthetic and totalizing than the Husserlian view. Thus he quotes Heidegger to the effect that "in every human attitude – in emotion, for example, since we have been been speaking of that – we can rediscover the whole of human reality, for emotion is the human reality assuming itself and 'emotionally directing' itself toward the world."[33] Yet Sartre continues to stress the methodological primacy of Husserlian phenomenology when he admits that any analysis of "man in situations" must be subordinated to phenomenology, "since a truly positive study of man in situation would have first to have elucidated the notions of man, of the world, of being-in-the-world, and of situation" (*STE* 12–13). Phenomenology, he cautions, is still in its infancy. Sartre regards this sketch as "an *experiment* in phenomenological psychology. We shall try to place ourselves on the level of signification," he explains, "and treat emotion as a *phenomenon*" (*STE* 14; *STE*-F 30).

In his critique of the "classical" theories of William James and Pierre Janet, therefore, Sartre agrees with Janet against James that a

[33] *STE* 10 (*Sein und Zeit*, 35–36). In his seminal study, *Le Problème morale et la pensée de Sartre* (Paris: Seuil, 1965), Francis Jeanson points to a continuous tension between *Emotions* and *Being and Nothingness*: the former prepares an ontology of the psychological (*le psychique*) for which it uncovers the essential structures of consciousness, while the latter elaborates the existential comprehension of human reality by itself insofar as it exists. Jeanson seeks to resolve the tension, at least in *Emotions*, by distinguishing the *method* of investigation, which is Husserl's contribution, from the *object* of the inquiry, which is Heidegger's (see 111). As Jeanson summarizes the issue:

> The idea here is that ontology must be *total*; that is to say, that one must not lose sight of the fact that its object is double or, better, *ambiguous*. One must not take it for an "essential" ontology or let it disappear from the start into an "existential" analysis: in both cases it lacks its object which is the very relation of essences to existence, of the intentions of consciousness to their motivations. In brief, ontology can only have as its object that freedom (*liberté*) that is revealed in affirming itself when intentions give a meaning (*sens*) to motivations, but also in renouncing itself when [motivations] tend to become the *causes* of the meanings.
>
> (112)

physiological disturbance of whatever nature cannot account for the "organized character of emotion." We saw the famous "James-Lang" theory that Sartre calls the "peripheric theory" of the emotions, which insists that emotion is the felt awareness of reverberations of the "bodily sounding-board." This leads to the startling conclusion that emotions are the effects rather than the causes of these bodily reactions: "we feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble" and not the reverse.[34]

If Janet makes implicit appeal to a finality in emotional behavior for which his quasi-behaviorist position cannot account, then Sartre believes that the psychologists of form (*Gestalt*) such as Kurt Lewin and Tamara Dembo, though they correctly describe emotional reactions such as anger, for example, as the "transformation" of one form for another, as a kind of "weakening the barriers between the real and the unreal," fail to recognize the essential role of consciousness in this purposive break and reconstitution of forms.[35] "As soon as it is a question of setting up a connection from the world to the self, we can no longer be content with a psychology of form. We must evidently have recourse to consciousness" (*STE* 27–28). Or to the unconscious.

In view of Sartre's ambiguous relation to the Freudian unconscious, which we shall discuss at length later, it is curious that he devotes only a few pages to the psychoanalytic theory of the emotions and that without even a mention of Freud. He credits this theory with grasping the signifying character of psychic facts, their nature as pointing beyond themselves to another phenomenon that is being concealed. But Sartre questions "the very principle of psychoanalytic explanation," namely, that the conscious phenomenon is "the symbolic realization of a desire repressed by the censor" (*STE* 30; *STE*-F 61). For he sees this in effect as reducing the nature of consciousness to that of a thing related externally to another thing, the object signified, whereas the *Cogito* has revealed that "consciousness is itself the *fact*, the *signification* and the *thing signified*" (*STE* 32). The bond among these features of consciousness leads Sartre to argue that any remnant of positivism in psychoanalytic theory is

[34] See William James, "What is an Emotion?," *Mind* 9 (1884): 190.

[35] In his careful study, *Emotion in the Thought of Sartre* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), Joseph Fell points out that Sartre's "very large assumption" that the perceptual field is *either* a real Gestalt *or* an unreal Gestalt is decisive for the character of his theory (123).

"interstructural," not causal. Because of what he will later call the "translucency" of consciousness, he will point out that "there is an immanent bond of *comprehension* between the symbolization and the symbol."[36]

In an aside that could open the door for more degrees and modes of consciousness and responsibility than Sartre will ever explicitly recognize, he remarks: "This does not at all mean that this signification has to be perfectly explicit. Many degrees of condensation and clarity are possible" (*STE* 32). Aside from the distinctions between thetic and nonthetic consciousness and the prereflective and the reflective, Sartre will consistently reject talk of "degrees" of consciousness and hence of responsibility, as we shall see.

Now the intentionality of emotive consciousness such as Sartre adapts from Husserl is clearly cognitivist; it points to an object in the world. As Sartre puts it, it is a matter of *belief*. But it is not "intellectualist," that is, it is not a "theoretical" way of relating to the world. Emotional consciousness is a way of being-in-the-world that synthesizes bodily change, behavior and knowledge. In an expression that will henceforth be a staple in Sartre's vocabulary, finding particular use in his massive Flaubert study, emotion is *conduite d'échec* (setback behavior). As intentional, it is purposeful and does constitute an object; as behavior, it is a practical orientation toward the world; as setback behavior, emotional consciousness employs a kind of "magical" transformation of the subject's body in order to conjure up, as if by magic, a change in the world that allows it to deal with a challenging situation: one struggles against the ropes, one gets hypertensive, one faints.

Two examples of such "setback behavior" will illustrate Sartre's account. A golfer who lands in a sand trap and, despite repeated swings, fails to extricate himself, starts to perspire, may get red in the face and

[36] *STE* 32. In March 1940, a few months after the publication of this book (December 1939), Sartre will argue in his *War Diaries* for "an inner relation of comprehension" between Kaiser Wilhelm's withered arm and imperial German foreign policy toward England (*WD* 301; F 366). This hypothesis advances Sartre's theory of history which is starting to take shape in response to Raymond Aron's brilliant defense of his studies in the philosophy of history for his *doctorat d'état* in 1938. In fact, I have argued elsewhere that "prereflective awareness," "comprehension" and "lived experience" (*le vécu*) are functional equivalents of the classical unconscious (see *SFHR* 1:206 and 307, n. 6; and *L/S* 127–128). Sartre will later describe comprehension as the "self-awareness of praxis."

possibly utter remarks indicative of frustration and anger with every futile move. Sartre reads this as the subject's way of conjuring up an alternative "world" in which the problem is resolved by these bodily changes as if by magic. Sartre's point is that there is a finality to emotional consciousness as there is to all consciousness. But emotions exploit "the twofold character of the body as both an object in the world and as something directly *lived* by consciousness" (*STE* 50–51). And here is where the cognitive dimension enters the scene: emotion is a phenomenon of belief. This, Sartre thinks, is the essential point.

Another example seems especially prescient in view of the famous film of Hitler's little "jig" performed under the Arc de Triomphe during the Nazi occupation of Paris. Sartre describes someone who literally "jumps for joy" in a quasi-magical attempt to possess "all at once" the desired object that of its nature requires a temporal unfolding.[37] Such emotions, Sartre summarizes, "are tantamount to setting up a magical world by using the body as a means of incantation" (*STE* 47). But he warns that there are more than the four major types of emotion (fear, joy, sadness and anger) that he sketches here. To grasp the significance and the finality of each, one would have to analyze each particular situation. "It is only when he has been convinced of the functional structure of emotion that one will come to understand the infinite variety of emotional consciousness" (*STE* 47).

Toward a phenomenological theory

Sartre's common criticism of most psychological theories is that they treat emotional consciousness as if it were primarily a feature of reflective consciousness. This would mean that fear, for example, would be originally consciousness *of* being afraid rather than our prereflective (what here he calls *irréfléchie*) awareness of a fearful situation as the phenomenologists insist. This is the significance of emotional consciousness understood as originally a manner of being "in the world" rather than as a second-order awareness of the complex, fear-object. Again, Sartre is synthesizing Husserlian intentionality with Heideggerian being-in-the-world so as to avoid the recurrent problem of an inside-outside

[37] See *STE* 35–36, 39–41 and especially 45–47.

psychology that leads psychologists toward either materialism or idealism. That strategy will be abundantly clear in his next book, *The Imaginary.*

This concept of the unreflective/prereflective/*conscience irréfléchie* remains a basic in Sartrean psychology and epistemology. We shall see how it also permeates his ethics, especially in the famous concept of "bad faith" developed in *Being and Nothingness.*[38] Without appeal to the unconscious, Sartre will underscore the unblinking eye of prereflective consciousness to sustain his ascriptions of moral responsibility and self-deception (bad faith) throughout his subsequent work. In fact, we shall see him emphasizing "comprehension" in a function analogous to that of prereflective awareness, as his thought turns from consciousness to praxis as its explanatory vehicle in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* and *The Family Idiot*.

Sartre makes some interesting observations about first-person and second-person relations to the act of writing that could be expanded into a broader theory of creativity. As I engage in writing, I am unreflectively (*irréfléchie*) aware of the words issuing *ex nihilo*, as he puts it, from my pen. I experience them as *exigencies* called for by the words that preceded them. Sartre describes my attitude as "a special state of attention, creative attention, for the next word" (*STE* 37). This does seem also to capture the attitude of the individual who is improvising on a musical instrument. The pianist or guitarist could be described as someone "thinking with her fingers." As Sartre explains: "The very way I perceive [my words] through my creative activity constitutes them as such; they appear as potentialities *having to be realized*. Not having to be realized *by me*. The *I* does not appear here at all. I simply sense the traction which they exert. I feel their exigence objectively" (*STE* 37–38). But the difference from our awareness of another's improvising, Sartre suggests, is the difference between the certitude of my intuitive perception of the flow of my words and the "probable evidence" of the sequence of words at the hand of another. This distinction between the certain and the probable, between the indubitable realm of the *Cogito* and the probably field of the empirical, which we have observed Sartre employ elsewhere, will play a major role in *The Imaginary.*

[38] Actually, he introduces the term "bad faith" (*mauvaise foi*) in *STE* (30; F 61) in a manner that anticipates his discussion of bad faith and the cynical lie in *BN*.

Emotional consciousness, in Sartre's seemingly deprecatory term, is a "degradation" of consciousness in which consciousness believes. It is unreflectively aware of this degradation into the magical relation to the world and it is positionally aware of its noematic correlate, the "magical" world. But, as such, it is capable of escaping this trap that it has laid for itself either by a change in this situation to which it is reacting (for example, the golfer finally escapes the sand trap) or by "the purifying reflection of the phenomenological reduction" by which the emotion is perceived insofar as it constitutes the world as magical: "I find it hateful *because* I am angry." But Sartre admits that "this relation is rare and necessitates special motivations," which, as we saw in *Transcendence of the Ego*, he believes Husserl fails to provide (*STE* 61). This liberating move resembles Spinoza's famous counsel to reflect on our emotional state rather than on its object and we shall overcome its power.

Sartre finishes this sketch by appealing to the regressive and progressive methods that he will modify and elaborate in his essay *Search for a Method* nearly twenty years later. Here he relates the methods to phenomenological psychology and pure phenomenology respectively. His growing sense of the distinction and likely mutual exclusion of the existential with its contingency and facticity, and the pure phenomenological with its transcendental suspension of belief in the existential, is articulated by way of conclusion: "The various disciplines of phenomenological psychology are *regressive*, and yet the term of their regression is *for them* a pure ideal. Those of pure phenomenology are, on the contrary, progressive." The two must complement each other because, while pure phenomenology can show that emotion is essentially a realization of human-reality insofar as it is *affection*, it cannot show that human reality must necessarily manifest itself in *such* emotions. "That there are such and such emotions, and only these, manifests without any doubt the *facticity* of human existence. It is this facticity which makes necessary a regular recourse to the empirical; it is this which, in all likelihood, will prevent psychological regression and phenomenological progression from ever coming together" (*STE* 64).

5

Consciousness as imagination

The Imaginary

In many respects this book summarizes and expands the arguments and applications of the previous two. As such, it is the apex of Sartre's phenomenological psychology. If one excludes his increasingly extended studies in "existential psychoanalysis," never again will he treat a major issue in psychology at such length or in such depth. In the "Philosophical Introduction" to his excellent translation of *L'Imaginaire*, Jonathan Webber judges it "the most sustained and detailed account of the nature of imagination in Western philosophical literature."[1] In view of Sartre's attention to imaging consciousness heretofore, it can be read as a compendium of his early philosophy and a gateway to the properly "ontological" phase of his concerns in *Being and Nothingness*. He alludes to that "existential" opening when he claims that "imagination is . . . the whole of consciousness as it realizes its freedom" (*Ire* 186). In this sense, it also previews his multivolume study of Flaubert's life and time, which he once described as its sequel.[2]

[1] *Imaginary* xiii.

[2] "As it now stands, the book [*The Family Idiot*] is connected in a certain way with *The Imaginary* (*L'Imaginaire*) which I wrote before the war" (*Sit* x:101; *L/S* 119, where it is mistranslated as *Imagination*). But he goes on to justify his claim elsewhere that *The Family Idiot* was a sequel to *Search for a Method* (see *The Family Idiot*, trans. Carol Cosman, 5 vols. [University of Chicago Press, 1981–1993], 1:ix; hereafter *FI*) when he continues the above quotation: "But what I tried to do with the *Flaubert* is also to use the methods of historical materialism, so that when I speak of words I am referring to their materiality. I consider speaking a material fact as is thinking" (*Sit* x:101–102; *L/S* 119). These claims of precedence are not mutually exclusive, as our study of *Search for a Method* in Chapter 12 will reveal.

As we suggested above, Sartre divides parts one and two of his work into the "Certain" and the "Probable," according to the Husserlian differentiation between the data of reflection that are grasped immediately at the end of an eidetic reduction, in this case the "essential structure" of the image, and the probable conclusions hypothesized on the basis of inductive claims about that essential structure. He will then address our understanding of the "psychic life" and our imaginary life in terms of this structure and these probabilities. Sartre's concluding observations about the role of imaging consciousness in the aesthetic realm serve to synthesize his ongoing interest in the imaginary and the conceptual in our aesthetic consciousness of the work of art.

"Part I: The Certain"

"The Intentional Structure of the Image"

Sartre points out that our reductive analysis of the image, a reflective or second-order act, yields four characteristics of its essential structure. These features will guide his discussion for the remainder of the work.

First, the image is a *consciousness*. It is a way of constituting an object, a manner of being "in the world." As with emotional consciousness, this follows from the basic insight that all consciousness is intentional in nature. Contrary to popular opinion, the image is neither a "weak" perception nor a "miniature" of the external world lodged inside our minds. Sartre's powerful essay on intentionality revealed that consciousness has no "inside"; it is centrifugal in nature, casting us out into the world with its facticity and its contingency.

Our habit of thinking in space and in terms of space, Sartre calls "the illusion of immanence." This is what leads us to conceive of the image as a reproduction or portrait of what is in the world. Sartre accuses Husserl of a certain failure of nerve because of his unwillingness to pursue the intentionality of imaging consciousness to its logical conclusion. On Sartre's reading, Husserl, by retaining a certain "mental" status for the image, leaves it hostage to the principle of immanence, an ingredient in epistemic idealism and the object of Sartre's realist animus.[3] But Sartre

[3] Later, citing Husserl's claim that an empty consciousness of the word "swallow" can be fulfilled with an image that can be the "intuitive fulfillment of the signification [in the absence of perception]," Sartre points out that the image does not "fulfill an empty consciousness: it is

insists that the image is nothing other than a relation. Rather than an object itself, despite the substantive, what we call the "image" is a way of relating to an object as is any act of consciousness.

The second characteristic of imaging consciousness Sartre calls the phenomenon of *quasi-observation*. He distinguishes three contrasting ways of relating to the same object, namely, to conceive, to perceive or to imagine. Using Husserl's cube as an example of perception, he notes that it must give itself to perceptual consciousness in a series of profiles. Indeed, what indicates its physical presence is the infinity of its possible profiles. Courting the kind of phenomenalism of which he will accuse Husserl in *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre claims that "the object itself is the synthesis of all these appearances" (*Ire* 8).[4]

What Sartre calls our "concrete concept" of that cube is an immediate grasp of its sides and angles simultaneously as if from inside, without profiles.[5] Unlike the perceived object, I do not have to "make a tour" of the object to accumulate its aspects – a potentially infinite task for perception as we noted. Sartre has always drawn a sharp distinction between perception and thought "*la pensée*." We can never perceive a thought or think a perception: "They are radically distinct phenomena" (*Imaginary* 8).

So where does this leave imagining? We find features of both perception (the object presents itself in profiles; we can "make its tour" in a

itself consciousness. It seems that here Husserl was the dupe of the illusion of immanence" (*Imaginary* 59. For his reference to Husserl's *Logical Investigations*, see 199, n. 2.)

[4] Robert Sokolowski points out that what saves Husserl from phenomenalism (the thesis that the object is simply the sum of its actual and potential appearances/profiles, a view held by John Stuart Mill and the positivists) is an additional "judgment of identity" made at least implicitly by the perceiver that ascribes these appearances to "one and the same" object (see Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology* [Cambridge University Press, 2000], 20–21). In Sartre's defense, we must acknowledge that this apparently "phenomenalist" account of the physical object is corrected or completed a few pages later when Sartre adds:

> To produce in me the image consciousness of Pierre is to make an intentional synthesis that gathers in itself a host of past moments, *which assert the identity of Pierre across these diverse appearances* and which give this same object under a certain aspect (in profile, in three-quarters, full size, head and shoulders, etc.). This aspect is necessarily an intuitive aspect: what my present intention aims at is Pierre in his corporeality [*leibhaftigkeit*], the Pierre that I can see, touch, hear, were I to see him, touch him, hear him.
>
> (*Imaginary* 15, emphasis added)

[5] He admits that the existence of such concepts has often been denied. "However, perception and imagery presuppose a concrete knowledge without image and without words" (*Imaginary* 197, n. 6).

manner that seems observational) and concept (we grasp the definition immediately). How do we reconcile these seemingly contradictory features of the image, its support of a mental "tour" and the immediacy of its presence/absence? By what Sartre calls the phenomenon of *quasi*-observation. As we examine our imagined object, he insists, we are producing, not discovering, its features in our tour. "One can never learn from an image what one does not already know"; the imagined object "teaches us nothing" (*Imaginary* 10). Recall Alain's remark about counting the number of columns in the pediment of the Pantheon in your imagination.[6] In perception, knowledge is formed slowly as if by gradually confirmed hypotheses; in the image, knowledge is immediate. When I say that I'm perceiving a cube, subsequent observation may prove me wrong. But when I say I'm imagining a cube, assuming I know the meaning of the word, I cannot be mistaken. It is an example of what Leibniz would call a "self-presenting state." It is infallible but, in the case of the image, at least, its certainty is purchased at the cost of its "essential poverty." I can keep an image before me as long as I wish; I shall never find anything that I did not place there.[7]

This feature of quasi-observation does strike one as incompatible with the profoundly temporal dimension of our consciousness as set forth by Husserl in his influential lectures on *Internal Time Consciousness*, lectures to which Sartre makes positive reference in each of these three studies.[8] It lends credibility to Merleau-Ponty's observation about the "pointillism" of Sartrean consciousness.[9] In fact, Sartre's notion of quasi-

[6] See *Imaginary* 87–88 and Alain (Émile Auguste Chartier), *Système des beaux-arts*, new edn. (Paris: Éditions de Nouvelle Revue Française, 1920), 342.

[7] Sartre addresses the counterexample of memory images by explaining that the image, while grasped completely in itself, does contain a cognitive component that could account for its relation to the past: "In the very act that gives me the object as imaged is included the knowledge (*connaissance*) of what it is" (*Imaginary* 10). He will treat this component as well as an emotive dimension of imaging consciousness when he discusses the aesthetic object toward the end of the book. In other words, at this stage we are dealing with the "pure" image, not its concrete instantiation which would include both cognitive and emotive aspects.

[8] For example, see *L'Imagination* 139, *Emotions* 105, and *L'Imaginaire* 146. As we noted earlier regarding Husserl's writings on the imagination, the entirety of Husserl's writing on time consciousness was not available to Sartre at this stage.

[9] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Adventures of the Dialectic*, trans. Joseph Bien (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 105 on S's philosophy of time; hereafter *AD*. Ironically, it is Sartre who speaks of Husserl's "Pointillism of essences" (cited in Spiegelberg, *Phenomenological Movement*, II:478).

observation approximates with what he will later criticize as the structuralist (in that instance, Foucauldian) approach to history: history calls for the metaphor of cinema, Sartre believes, whereas Foucault offers us a slideshow.[10]

Thirdly, imaging consciousness posits its object as a *nothingness*. We have noted Sartre's introduction of "nothingness" (*néant*) into his discussion of the Husserlian "noema."[11] But now it serves to contrast with perception and the *concrete concept*. Searching for that additional feature that distinguishes imaging from perceiving or conceptualizing, he finds it in the "irreality" (*irréalité*), not the "unreality," of the manner in which its object presents itself. I posit or "intend" the object, not as present (as in my perception of Pierre) or as an essence or nature that need not be instantiated (as in the "concrete concept" of Pierre), but as existing elsewhere or in a neutral mode that abstains from considering its mode of existence at all.[12] It is this negative aspect of imaging that Sartre wishes to underscore: "To say 'I have an image of Pierre' is equivalent to saying not only 'I do not see Pierre' but also 'I do not see anything at all'" (*Imaginary* 13). The imaging consciousness aims at Pierre in his "corporeality," again, his *Leibhaftigkeit*–the individual that I could see, touch, and so forth were he physically present and were I in the perceptive mode. In sum, the imagined object presents itself as "intuitive-absent," as "present-absent," as "out of reach." These are so many ways of

[10] "What Foucault offers us is . . . [not an archaeology but] a geology: the series of successive levels that form our 'ground' . . . But Foucault doesn't tell us what would be the most interesting, namely, how each thought is constructed from these conditions or how men move from one thought to another. For that he would have to allow praxis and thus history to intervene, and that is precisely what he refuses to do. To be sure, his perspective remains historical. He distinguishes epochs, a before and an after. But he replaces the movie with the magic lantern, movement with a succession of immobilities" ("Jean-Paul Sartre répond," *L'Arc* 30 [1966]: 87).

[11] See above, Chapter 3, note 22.

[12] "The positing of absence or of nonexistence can occur only where *quasi-observation* is concerned. On the one hand, indeed, perception posits the existence of its object; on the other hand, concepts and knowledge posit the existence of *natures* (universal essences) constituted by relations and are indifferent to the "flesh and blood" existence of objects . . . To think of Pierre by a concrete concept is only to think of a collection of relations. Among these relations can be found determinations of place (Pierre is on a trip to Berlin, is a lawyer in Rabat, etc.). But these determinations add a positive element to the concrete nature 'Pierre'; they never have that privative, negative character of the positional acts of the image" (*Imaginary* 13).

denoting "the immediate consciousness of [the object's] nothingness" (*Imaginary* 14).

This brings us to its final characteristic: imaging consciousness of an object entails a nonthetic awareness of itself "as a *spontaneity* that produces and conserves the object as imagined. It is a kind of indefinable counterpart to the fact that the object gives itself as a nothingness" (*Imaginary* 14).[13] We have already encountered Sartre's distinction between thetic or explicit self-consciousness, and nonthetic or what we've been calling "implicit" self-consciousness. In the case of the image, this implicit awareness entails a sense of creativity that permeates the imaging act without explicitly attaching to its object.[14] The image is "shot through with a flow of creative will" (*Imaginary* 15) a claim repeated in *What is Literature?* a decade later.

So much for what Sartre calls the "statics of the image," the image considered as an isolated phenomenon. Let us now turn to the much longer portion of his book, the application of these structures to the empirical world of our imaginative life.

"The Image Family" (Image as a functional attitude)

In a brief survey of varieties of what are called "images," from portraits and caricatures, through schematic drawings, faces seen in flames, and the like, as well as hypnagogic and oneiric images to the "mental images" that, though their existence has been contested, Sartre considers crucial to his theory, he draws the implications of the "essence" of the image just analyzed. This chapter attends to the "matter" as distinct from the animating "form" of the image, to borrow the famous Aristotelian distinction that Husserl applied to objects of consciousness. The formal

[13] Sartre will expand this feature of imaging to consciousness in general when he characterizes consciousness in *Being and Nothingness*, as "nihilating" its objects (see below, Chapter 8).

[14] In a major essay "Cartesian Freedom," published soon after the war, Sartre, perhaps for the last time, will draw a parallel between Descartes's view of divine creation, conservation and freedom vis-à-vis the world, on the one hand, and the meaning-giving character of Sartrean consciousness (being-for-itself) that in turn resembles the "constitution" of Husserlian meaning-giving consciousness, on the other (see "Cartesian Freedom," *Literary and Philosophical Essays*, trans. Annette Michelson [New York: Crowell-Collier, 1962], 180–197, 190–196; hereafter CF; *Sit* 1:300–308; hereafter CF-F). The point of mentioning this similarity here is to alert us to the close relationship between imaging consciousness, as Sartre describes it in this book and being-for-itself or roughly consciousness as described in *Being and Nothingness*.

dimension of each type of image (its "essence" as image) remains the same, justifying our referring to each as a type of image rather than as a perception or a concept. It is the "material" aspect of images that varies from class to class.[15]

In the course of moving from my mental image of Pierre to his photograph and then to his caricature, Sartre describes a process of what we may call *increased concretization*. It is the last instance that has "life." With the caricature "I regain Pierre" (*Imaginary* 17). The material object functions as an *analogon* when it is viewed imaginatively. Simply perceived, the caricature is a set of lines on a sheet of paper. Viewed imaginatively (or "aesthetically," as will be said of artworks), the lines serve as vehicles to suggest Pierre's face. They function as an analogon just so long as they are regarded in the imaginary attitude. With that attitude removed, they return to their "real," that is perceptual, state. As we shift from portraits to oneiric to mental images, the search for the "material" component becomes increasingly difficult. But Sartre assigns a "material" element even to the mental image. What makes this move difficult is the fact that the portrait and the caricature are perceptual objects prior to having been "irrealized" by the imaginative intention. Not so the mental image: "A mental image gives itself immediately as an image. This is because the existence of a psychic phenomenon and the meaning that it has for consciousness are one" (*Imaginary* 19). He immediately explains in a note: "I am not ignoring the fact that these observations oblige me to deny entirely the existence of the unconscious." But he adds: "Here is not the place to discuss this." That discussion will take place in *Being and Nothingness*.[16]

Sartre summarizes the foregoing in the following definition of "image":

[15] Still, we should caution at the outset that imaging consciousness is seldom if ever pure. In its lived occurrence, it is a synthesis of information drawn from perception and reflection directly or from memory that in turn incorporates conceptual and emotional dimensions. Thus, my imagined friend or enemy, for example, though it may ideally be "value neutral," by the very choice of the term, carries a "pro" or "con" attitude. To say that we must distinguish each component of that synthesis is obvious. That is what Sartre is doing here and in *The Emotions*. But as one moves from the abstract "toward the concrete," these components coalesce into the image of "this" person.

[16] *Imaginary* 197, n. 13.

> An act that aims in its corporality at an absent or nonexistent object, through a physical or psychic content that is given not as itself but in the capacity of an "analogical *representative*" of the object aimed at.
>
> (*Imaginary* 20, repeated on 52)

Since it is the matter, not the form, that specifies the images, Sartre can distinguish images that borrow their matter from material things (illustrations, photos, caricatures, actors' imitations, and the like) from those whose matter is borrowed from the mental world (consciousness of movements, feelings, etc.). And he acknowledges intermediary types that synthesize the external and the psychic such as a face in the flame or the case of hypnagogic images, which, he will explain, are based on "entropic lights" (*Imaginary* 20).

Moving through these various forms, and reserving extended discussion for the aesthetic object, let us note a couple of distinctions Sartre introduces that refine his remarks about the analogon and the image in general.

First, he distinguishes between the portrait and the *sign* on three counts. Citing Hume as an example, Sartre insists that classical psychology often confuses sign and image. But the matter of the sign, of the word, for example, he claims is completely indifferent to the object signified. He seems to be agreeing with structural linguistics that the meaning of verbal signs is arbitrary. But then he adds that the matter of the physical image *resemble*s it. He slips into the metaphorical mode of which he is a master when he describes my relation to a portrait of someone I know: "The person in the painting *solicits* me to take him for a man. Likewise, if I know (*connais*) the subject of the portrait, the portrait will have, before any interpretation, a real force, a resemblance." As he explains, "The portrait has a *tendency* to give itself as Pierre in person. The portrait acts upon us – almost – like Pierre in person and, because of this fact, solicits us to make a perceptual synthesis: Pierre of flesh and blood." In such a case, one has to resist that tendency in order not to see Pierre's portrait but simply a physical object.

Next, whereas the word functions as a milestone (*jalon*), "it awakens a signification and that signification never returns to it but goes to the thing and drops the word. In the case of the image with a physical base, "intentionality constantly returns to the image-portrait" that enriches it. This contrast between the word-sign as transparent window

and word-image as object and source of enrichment anticipates and parallels Sartre's famous distinction between "prose" and "poetry" introduced in a series of essays published in *Les Temps Modernes* (1947) and gathered into a single volume as *What is Literature?* (1964). On this later account, "prose" can be politically committed because of its self-effacing, instrumental character. It grants us immediate access to the world without blocking our way. On the contrary, what he calls "poetry," which would include nonverbal forms of expression as well, cannot be politically committed. It captures our attention and holds it, turning our attention back to ourselves and again toward itself for enrichment, much as the image-portrait does in the present example.[17]

Thirdly, our consciousness of the sign "as such" is not explicit. Once adept at reading signs, as is someone who has mastered a language, we are scarcely aware of their status as signs. "The sign consciousness as such is not positional." We see through it, as it were, to the object. On the other hand, in every image, regardless of its content, there is always a positional determination. But the situation with the image-portrait is more complex. The image-portrait of Charles VIII in the Uffizi Gallery – a favorite example of Sartre's – places us in the presence of the emperor via the painted image taken aesthetically as an analagon of the individual of flesh and blood. Of course, that individual is long deceased and the image will render him "irreal," not unreal; that is, present-absent; present in the imaginary mode. Sartre admits that this is "an irrational synthesis difficult to explain." His fine-tuned analysis is an attempt to account for a common imaginative experience. As with emotional consciousness, we are again dealing with what Sartre calls a "magical" situation. But this time it is not so much a case of changing our bodies so as to conjure up a world where the limits of space, time and causality do not apply, as it is a matter of "derealizing" a perceptual object with the help of a similar "pre-logical" world.[18] Sartre believes that this "primitive" mode of sense-making, which gave us cave paintings of wounded bison to ensure a successful hunt and voodoo dolls to transmit

[17] As we shall see, Sartre will revise his contrast in the face of black African poets who employ the colonial language against colonialism (see Sartre's *Black Orpheus*, trans. John MacCombie, in *WL* 289–330).

[18] See *Imaginary* 23. Sartre occasionally employs the term "prelogical" to denote the "mythical" consciousness of "primitive" peoples. The expression comes from anthropologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, whom Sartre will occasionally mention in this regard.

a physical pain, continues to exhibit its effects in our emotional and imaging consciousnesses.

The final and most significant contrast between sign and image, Sartre believes, lies in the fact that, as modes of intending the world, sign consciousness is "empty"; it points toward an object that may never present itself, as when one is searching for something that cannot be found. But when it is found, the sign remains a sign, now joined to its object by a judgment of identification: "That's it!" Imaging consciousness, he argues, is never empty; it is always "filled." Complete in itself, this is why the image teaches us nothing. If one imagined an object and then perceived it, the image would disappear. You cannot both see and imagine the same object at the same time. This does not exclude a perceptual component from the imagining synthesis. In fact, it usually serves to "enlighten and guide" the imaging act, as the phenomenon of imitation exhibits.

From sign to image: consciousness of imitations

Before discussing the admittedly difficult case of the mental image, let us pause to consider a striking example of aesthetic imaging: an imitation of Maurice Chevalier by the music-hall artist Franconay. This performance combines the cognitive (a sign stating the subject and the theatrical context), certain perceptual objects associated with the actor (straw hat and cane) and the voice and motions that suggest the star lead us to "derealize" the short stout female impersonator in order to make present-absent the lanky male actor.

Sartre emphasizes a certain "emotional" resonance which spells the success of the performance. In doing so he introduces what will become a major term in his subsequent writings, namely "*sens*" as distinct from "signification." The distinction just made between word as sign and image, despite its regrettable translation into the prose–poetry distinction, bears another important Sartrean distinction. The sign carries a *signification* that is conceptual, impersonal, and we might say "antiseptic." It can be easily translated without major loss into synonyms or other languages, including digital languages. The image expresses a *sens* (meaning or direction in French) which is a hybrid of abstract and concrete components, including spatiotemporal considerations and emotional resonance. The correlate of *sens* is "presence." Three examples may serve to illustrate the *sens* of an imaging act.

Consider the caricature of Pierre. What it added to the concept and the photograph was a dimension that yielded "Pierre in flesh and blood." That was the *sens* of Sartre's friend; it expressed his "presence." But Sartre nuances this account when he later distinguishes "*Pierre in general*, a prototype that acts as a thematic unity of all the individual appearance of Pierre" from the unrepeatable Pierre "at that time and place." This is still Peter "in the flesh," but generalized as to specifics of his datable appearance. This introduction of "prototype" resembles what the young Sartre called "typical" in *The Legend of Truth* and the problematic "concrete concept" that he insists is so essential to phenomenological description.[19]

Likewise, what makes Franconay's performance successful is her conveying a certain "affective reaction" that one experiences in the *presence* of Chevalier. It renders him present as if "in flesh and blood." Her imitation "projects on the physiognomy of Maurice Chevalier a certain indefinable quality that we can call his 'sense' (*sens*)" (*Imaginary* 28). Grounding this account is Sartre's claim that "all perception is accompanied by an affective reaction" (*Imaginary* 28). He explains this most perceptively in his essay on the face, published shortly before *The Imaginary*.[20]

The third example of the relation between *sens* and *presence* comes from Sartre's art criticism. In an essay published in 1961, he contrasts the realist paintings of Venice by Giovanni Canaletto, which Sartre dismisses as "mere identity cards," with the renderings of the same subject by Francesco Guardi: "Venice is *present* in each of [Guardi's] canvases, as we have all *experienced* but as no one has seen." It is the *sens* of Venice that Guardi captures and the Canaletto misses.[21] But by then Sartre is clarifying the distinction: "a *sens* is not a sign; it is not a symbol – and not even an image" (*Sit* IV:371–372). Sens seems to be the noema of an imaging consciousness in which the "presence" of an

[19] *Imaginary* 50.

[20] "Visages" was first published in *Verve* nos. 5–6 (1939): 43–44. An English translation by Anne P. Jones is reprinted in Contat and Rybalka II:67–71. "Things are piled up in the present, shivering but never budging from their place; the face projects itself ahead of itself in space and time. If we call 'transcendence' the mind's property of going beyond itself and all things – of breaking free from itself in order to go lose itself, no matter where but elsewhere – then the meaning of a face is to be *visible* transcendence" (71).

[21] Sartre, "Le Peintre sans privilége," *Sit* IV:371–372.

aesthetic object, a person or a historical period in its totality is rendered "incarnate." Thus, he will say that the entire Renaissance is present in Michelangelo's *David* and in the Mona Lisa's smile (see *Sit* IV:31).

Consider the following:

> I shall say that an object has *sens* when it is the incarnation of a reality which surpasses it but which cannot be grasped aside from it, and whose infinity does not allow adequate expression in any system of signs; it is always a matter of a totality: totality of a person, a milieu, an epoch or the human condition.
>
> (*Sit* IV:30)

Sartre will extend this distinction between *sens* and *signification*, now enriched by his use of "incarnation," to his theory of the singular universal in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, especially volume II.[22]

Accelerating through the family of images that Sartre discusses, suffice it to say that each variety, whether schematic drawing (which he locates as midway between sign and image), faces in flames or clouds (that underscore the creative and sustaining power of our imaging action since they disappear when we cease to "see them as such") or hypnagogic images (that bespeak a "fascinated" consciousness) – each meets Sartre's four conditions for membership in the family. Close to the last example are the images in dreams. Like the person under hypnosis, the dreamer experiences a "chained consciousness." "The essential character of the chained consciousness seems to be fatality." In a particularly perceptive remark that will be echoed in *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre observes:

> Determinism – which could in no way apply to the facts of consciousness – posits that, such phenomenon being given, such other must necessarily follow. Fatalism posits that such event must happen and that it is that future event that determines the series that will lead up to it. *It is not determinism but fatalism that is the inverse of freedom*. One might even say that fatality, incomprehensible in the physical world, is, on the other hand, perfectly in its place in the world of consciousness.
>
> (*Imaginary* 47, emphasis added)

[22] On "incarnation" or "embodiment" in some translations, see *CDR* I:622–623, 631, 681 n. 94, 702; *CRD* I:598, 599, 605 and 662 as well as in *TE* 133–165. "Incarnation" figures centrally in *The Family Idiot* as well (see below, Chapter 15). The term Sartre uses is "singular universal" ("l'universel singulier") and he often identifies it with *sens* (see, for example, *Sit* VIII:445–446, 449–450, and IX:178 as well as my "Role of the Image in Sartre's Aesthetic," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 33 (1975): 441, n. 44.

The dreamer is someone who lives as if there were no world – nothing to be irrealized. "A consciousness that dreams is always nonthetic consciousness of itself as being fascinated by the dream, but it has lost its being-in-the-world and recovers it only on awakening" (*Imaginary* 170). His captivity is complete (*Imaginary* 49).

The mental image

As Sartre repeats later on: "The essential characteristic of the mental image: it is a certain way that an object has of being absent within its very presence" (*Imaginary* 72–73). Does the matter–form duality continue in the case of the mental image? Sartre doggedly insists that it does, but with this qualification: as mental, its "material" component is purely psychic. When one ceases to function in this mode, there is no material residue available to perception as was the case for the photograph. His argument seems to turn on the "essential necessity" for an analogon here as with the other images. If consciousness merely faced its "external" object directly, we would be dealing with perception. Were it to aim emptily toward a thing, it would be sign consciousness. He posits the analogon as what he describes as a "transcendent" representative of the object.[23] His point is to distinguish imaging from perceiving and image from sign without falling back into the illusion of immanence. That is why he assures us that the "transcendence" of the analogon does not mean its "externality." But this leaves us without any "object" for reflective examination, since the psychic datum disappears as soon as we cease from the imaging. The upshot is that we cannot hope to grasp this content by introspection. "If we wish to determine more clearly the nature and the components of this datum, we are reduced to conjectures."[24] This means we must leave the domain of phenomenological description and turn to experimental psychology. We must enter the realm of the probable.

"Part II: The Probable"

"The Analagon in the Mental Image"

"In imaging consciousness," Sartre insists, "one can distinguish knowledge and intention only by abstraction ... Knowledge is the active

[23] He seems to mean what Husserl called "transcendence within immanence" of a "reduced" world, though Sartre does not use this expression.

[24] *Imaginary* 53.

structure of the image" (57). He repeats his critique of Bergsonism in *The Imagination* that the root of his approach to mental phenomena is the ambiguity of his ontology; in this case "the constant ambiguity of Bergsonian dynamism: melodic syntheses – without a synthetic act; organizations without an organizing power" (*Imaginary* 60). In Sartre's view, the famous philosopher has reified an act. He too is a victim of the illusion of immanence.

We know that in his DES dissertation Sartre had cited approvingly the psychologist Auguste Flach's reference to the "symbolic schema" in a context that mentioned Husserl for the first time. Flach reappears in *The Imaginary.* Indeed he is mentioned more frequently than Husserl. Since Flack was an experimentalist, his name appears in the empirical portion of the book. But it is the symbolic schemas "that manifest in their primary wholeness a mass of things that discursive thought must analyze and juxtapose" which still attract Sartre,[25] though he now prefers psychologist Albert Spaier's "dawn of images' to Flach's "symbolic schema" to express what he calls "imaging knowledge" (*Imaginary* 67).

Sartre describes the act of reading a book as an act of signifying knowledge, doubtless with a certain imaging element present, which explains our emotive reactions. But when the book is a novel, the situation changes fundamentally. As we now expect, the words become analoga for an "irrealized" or "irreal" world in which the characters move and the events occur. But knowledge is essential to this phenomenon as well.[26]

In addition to the knowledge dimension of imaging, Sartre underscores the affective aspect. We observed it figure decisively in the "presence" of the depicted subject. Sartre cites Brentano, Husserl and Scheler as thinkers whom French theorists of "feeling" would do well to read because, in his view, "on the subject of affectivity, French

[25] He quotes from the same essay by Flach that he had cited in his DES, "Über symbolische Schemata im produktiven Denkprozess" (correcting the title cited in the French edition and repeated in the English translation).

[26] For example, it contributes to what Roland Barthes called the "reality effect" by suggesting more than could possibly be captured in the image (the extent of the crowd, the other side of the tree, and the like), it brings the information from the previous chapters to bear on the text, not to mention the life experience of the reader that fosters what philosopher John Hospers calls the "thick aesthetic values" of the work.

psychology remains contemporary with Théodule Redul."[27] Sartre views the emotions in French literature in the same light. The relation between my love and the loved person for Proust and his disciples is fundamentally just a link of contiguity. For psychologist and novelist alike, we are left with "a sort of solipsism of affectivity." In both cases, the reason is the same: both groups overlook the intentional nature of all conscious acts; feeling has been isolated from its signification (*Imaginary* 68).

The synthetic act of imaging includes kinaesthetic sensations as an essential aspect. Sartre's description of the act of inscribing the figure 8 imaginatively with the motion of the finger brings this aspect to the fore. Appealing to Husserl's theses of "protention" and "retention" in his analysis of internal time consciousness mentioned earlier, Sartre carries out his description within the conditions of imaging consciousness set forth at the outset. Again, this places him at odds with his contemporaries, who argue, for example, that the physical movement of the finger "evokes" the image of the figure. Without pursuing his nuanced analysis of how the same kinaesthetic sensations direct the perceived and the imagined figure, let it suffice to summarize with Sartre: "Movement can play the role of an analogon for an imaging consciousness. This is because when a movement is given by a sense other than sight, the consciousness that apprehends it has an imaging structure and not a perceptual one" (*Imaginary* 80). So there can be "two analogical matters for an imaging consciousness: the kinaesthetic impression, with its cortège of protentions and retentions, and the affective object . . . These two types of analogon can therefore very well exist concurrently as correlates of the same act of consciousness" (*Imaginary* 81).

After distinguishing the mental image from the word (sign), Sartre concludes the second part of his study with further reflections on the phenomenon of belief or positional consciousness as an ingredient in our imaging act. It is at the reflective consciousness that another kind of belief appears, belief in the existence of the image. The cognitive dimension of an imaging consciousness is *belief*; the affective aspect is *presence*.

[27] A psychologist who published on the emotions in the late 1800s (*Imaginary* 68). On the philosophical role of "feeling" in Sartre's first philosophical publication (1927), see "The Theory of the State in Modern French Thought" (Contat and Rybalka II:22–26).

These two can sometimes come into conflict with regard to "the same" object, as when Peter, whom you know is facing you, is irrealized as being in Berlin. This leads Sartre to claim that the object of the image does not obey the principle of individuation. In turn, he is prompted to consider the object of imaging consciousness as an exception to another metaphysical principle: the object of the image does not necessarily appear as obeying the principle of identity. "The knowledge aims at a certain object; affectivity can provide an analogon for several objects" (*Imaginary* 91). I can imagine an object that is the "contamination" of several previously perceived objects, or imagine an object in the observational mode that could not possibly be perceived in that manner. We should recall this metaphysical exception when Sartre, in *Being and Nothingness*, makes a similar claim in favor of consciousness in general: it is an exception to the principle of identity.

Admitting that he is not trying to reduce the image to the simple sum of the foregoing factors, Sartre insists that, despite the demise of a psychology of faculties, "imagination" has gained in importance as certainly "one of the four or five great psychic functions" (*Imaginary* 93). He will discuss that function in part III.

"Part III: The Image in Psychic Life"

Sartre now turns to several features of our psychic life that exhibit the interrelation between image, thought and emotion. As we should expect, he will parse each of these topics in terms of the essential aspects of imaging consciousness uncovered at the start. Above all, he is drawing the implications of the claim that the image is a form of conscious act that incorporates cognitive and affective dimensions while guarding its proper nature. Its function is to "irrealize" the perceptual object, whether actual or possible, constituting it specifically as "irreal," though not unreal.[28] So the judgments ingredient in the imaging act, for example, are of a special type that Sartre calls "imaging assertions" (*Imaginary* 97). In this part of his book Sartre considers at greater length the relation between the cognizing and the imaging. In effect, he is

[28] "In [the] imaging attitude we find ourselves in the presence of an object that is given as analogous to that which can appear to us in perception" (*Imaginary* 117).

taking stock of his oeuvre and that tension between image and concept that has marked his work up to this point.

He first considers symbols and symbolic schemas as possibly mediating this distance between image and sign noted earlier. But in fact, the heterogeneity between pure thought (judgment) and image is reaffirmed and the image itself is assigned symbolic status. Witnessing his commitment to epistemic realism, Sartre explains that thought or the act of judging registers its object but does not produce it.[29] The image, on the other hand,

> is a consciousness that aims at producing its object. It is therefore constituted by a certain way of judging and feeling of which we do not become conscious as such but we apprehend *on* the intentional object as this or that of its qualities. This can be expressed in a word: the function of the image is *symbolic*.
>
> (*Imaginary* 97)

So Sartre is drawing a sharp distinction between image and sign or illustration: "The image is symbolic in essence and in its very structure. One cannot remove the symbolic function of an image without making the image itself vanish" (*Imaginary* 98). He turns to "the remarkable and too little known work of Flach on 'symbolic schemas in the process of ideation,'" cited in his DES, to support this claim.[30] But he then goes beyond Flach to address the philosophical issues of the whence and the why of the appearance of these schemas in conjunction with certain forms of understanding.[31] He resists any appeal to associationism, as he always has, because of his insistence that the image is a consciousness,

[29] He still accepts the Husserlian thesis that consciousness does "constitute" its object; that is, it brings it about that "there is" (*il y a*) an object in the sense of being the term of an "intentional" relation. The distinction between "production" and "constitution" is what saves Sartre and Husserl from epistemic idealism. The later Sartre seems to doubt that it is enough to preserve his robust sense of the real as he moves from a philosophy of consciousness to one of praxis (human action in its socioeconomic condition).

[30] On the last paragraph of page 93, Sartre appeals to quasi-observation and the illusion of immanence to "correct" Flach's interpretation of his experiments regarding the relation between comprehension and the image: "The comprehending consciousness can in certain cases adopt the imaging structure. The image-object appears in that case as the simple intentional correlate of the very act of comprehension" (*Imaginary* 103–104).

[31] Sartre cites August Messer's experiments to show that comprehension can occur without either images or words (*Imaginary* 101).

thus rendering association superfluous. Consciousness is moved by motives, not causes, a remark he will repeat in *Being and Nothingness*.[32]

Sartre reveals a keen awareness of the insufficiency of imagistic thinking if it resists the inclination to move "beyond" image to concept, where such is possible; that is, the refusal to shift from idea as image (the prereflective) to idea as idea (reflective consciousness). He calls this *warped thought*: "Here the thought is enclosed in the image and the image is given as adequate to the thought." In such stilted thinking, what he terms the "ideal sense" or structure of the image is absorbed in, if not subordinated to, its material structure, losing sight of the inadequacy of the latter.

> In the vast majority of cases the material structure is given as *being* the ideal structure and the development of the figure, of the schema, in its spatial nature is given as strictly identical with the development of the idea. One can see the danger; a slight preference is enough, it is enough to momentarily consider the spatial relations of the schema for themselves and to let them be affirmed or modified in accordance with the laws proper to spatiality [since all images, he insists, are spatial in character]: the thought is irremediably warped, we no longer follow the idea directly, we think by analogy.
>
> (*Imaginary* 117)

This evokes the warning: "It appears to me that this insensible degradation of thought is one of the most frequent causes of error, particularly in philosophy and psychology" (*Imaginary* 117). In other words, the error comes from refusing to understand the image as a consciousness distinct from and heterogeneous to the perceptual and conceptual consciousness.

Concluding this third part of his study, Sartre suggests lines of further experimentation and the methods that might fruitfully foster it. Regarding the problem of why perception includes more and otherwise than what we see, for instance, he suggests that we would advance in its

[32] See *BN* 435–347; *EN* 510–511. See Fell, *Emotion in the Thought of Sartre*, 84, and Mary Warnock, *The Philosophy of Sartre* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1967), 114, where it is remarked that Sartre does not distinguish between cause and motive. But he clearly distinguishes *motif* (reason) and *mobile* (motive); see *BN* 445–446; *EN* 522. And, as Fell points out, Sartre never uses the French *cause* to refer to conscious activities. I discuss this in a lengthy note in *Sartre and Marxist Existentialism* (University of Chicago Press, 1984), 211–212, n. 16; hereafter *SME*.

solution if we would "once and for all, renounce that being of reason that is pure sensation" (*Imaginary* 121). Among these lines and methods are the work of the Berlin (which Sartre calls the Würzburg) school of Gestalt psychologists: Köhler, Wertheimer, and Koffka, much favored by phenomenologists. It is worth noting that Aron Gurwitsch, who had lectured on Gestalt psychology at the Sorbonne in the 1930s, and Sartre's friend Merleau-Ponty were pursuing such lines of research at about the time that *The Imaginary* was being written, though neither is cited in this work.[33]

"Part IV: The Imaginary Life"

Having reflected on the role of the image as symbol in relation to the two other functions of our psychological life, namely perception and conceptualization, Sartre is ready to examine that realm of the "irreal" that he calls our imaginary life. This includes pathologies of the imagination such as hallucination and our normal dream states as well as our aesthetic experiences, which will continue to figure in his subsequent writings on the fine arts. *The Imaginary* continues to make its presence felt in many of his subsequent works, and not only in those that deal explicitly with art criticism. We shall discover clones of the "derealizing" function entering into consciousness itself under the rubric of "nihilation" (*néantisation*) in *Being and Nothingness*, for example, and in the various "choices" of the imaginary on the part of those literary figures whose "biographies" he examines at increasing length. In one way or another, these are glosses on the reflections enunciated in the chapters of this book, especially its remarks on the imaginary "life."

As an introduction to that life, Sartre reminds us that "generally, it is not only the very matter of the object that is irreal: all the spatial and temporal determinations to which it is subjected participate in this irreality" (*Imaginary* 127). Clearly, the space of the image is not that of perception. But the time? It would seem that our conscious life, whether

[33] Merleau-Ponty's first major philosophical work, *The Structure of Behavior*, was written in 1938 but not published until 1942. Aron Gurwitsch, who developed a "Gestalt Phenomenology" and studied with Husserl, should not be confused with Georges Gurvitch, whose lectures on recent German Philosophy were mentioned in Chapter 2 above. Both men had lectured at the Sorbonne.

perceptual or imaging, is subject to the same principle of "inner time consciousness" that Husserl expounded and Sartre has adopted. Appealing to his basic principle that "the object of consciousness differs in nature from the consciousness of which it is the correlate" (*Imaginary* 129), he distinguishes between the temporal flow of the image consciousness and the time of the imaged object. His argument turns on the evident contrast between atemporal objects like centaurs, objects that contain a sort of timeless synthesis of particular durations (like Pierre's smile), or objects that flow more quickly than consciousness (as occurs in our dreams). The duration of irreal objects is a correlate of our act of belief (a positional act): "I join present scenes with past scenes by means of empty intentions accompanying positional acts" (*Imaginary* 131). So whatever duration these objects present is assigned by my "belief" rather than discovered as in perceptual acts. We have noted that such belief is accompanied by an unreflective awareness of the sustaining power of consciousness and its corresponding freedom. Sartre will parse this experience for its moral significance as he elaborates the "existential" character of consciousness in general in *Being and Nothingness* and thereafter.

Sartre insists that irreal duration, like irreal space, is "without parts." This again follows from the phenomenon of quasi-observation. And he assures us that, rather than approximating to Bergson's famous *durée*, such irreal duration is closer to the spatialized time that Bergson describes in his *Time and Free Will*. Such is the time of the image. Such too is the imaginary "world"; since it is isolated from the real world, the only way I can enter it is by "irrealizing" myself, as Sartre will illustrate with his example of an actor playing a role.

In fact there is no "world" of irreal objects for the simple reason that a "world," in Sartre's understanding, is an dependent whole in which each object has its determinate place and maintains relations with other objects: "they must be strictly individuated; they must be balanced with an environment ... [and] no irreal object fulfills this double condition" (*Imaginary* 132). This is why images offer us an escape from all the constraints of the world. Despite Sartre's admission in a note that every image must be constituted on the ground of the world [Heidegger's *in-der-Welt-sein*], "they seem to be presented as a negation of the condition of *being in the world*, as an anti-world" (*Imaginary* 136 and 201, n. 7).

"Conduct in the Face of the Irreal"

Sartre's previous treatment of emotional consciousness should temper any lingering Cartesian inclinations in his discussion of the psychological. So he now distinguishes two layers of a complete imaging attitude to account for our "real" reactions to irreal objects: the primary or constituent and the secondary or "reactive" layers. The former denotes the real elements that, in consciousness, exactly correspond to the irreal objects. These include "intentions, movements, feelings, pieces of knowledge that represent our more or less spontaneous reactions to the irreal. [They] are not *free*; they obey a directing form, a primary intention and are absorbed in the constitution of the irreal object." As examples of such, Sartre mentions vomiting, nausea, reflexes of ocular convergence as well as our experiences of fright or joy, or of physical arousal at erotic images. It is improper to list them as "reactions" to images, he insists, since they are ingredients in that very image itself.

Reactions to the imaged object on the secondary layer, he points out, are properly so called because their object is the irreal object as remembered, for example, but not constituted as such. Sartre believes that memory can confuse or conflate the imagined and the perceived objects since both share the quality of pastness as remembered. He refuses to distinguish image and perception in terms of relative "vivacity," as do Hume and the associationists. An irreal object cannot have force since it does not act. As he remarks: "the irreal always receives and never gives"; again, it teaches us nothing.

As his careful phenomenological description and analysis of our "reactions" to images continues, Sartre examines the way feelings can "pass though" the imaging state, in a reciprocal movement of consciousness that, while remaining spontaneous, is subordinate to the development of its real correlate. "Each affective quality is so deeply incorporated in the object that it is impossible to distinguish between what is felt and what is perceived" (*Imaginary* 139).[34] It is in this context that Sartre speaks of a kind of "affective dialectic." But he warns that, unlike the relation to an object in perception, experience of the irreal object involves a certain sense of freedom just mentioned, as well as a "quality of *nothingness* (*néant*) that characterizes the whole process" (*Imaginary* 140).

[34] Consider the fearful quality of the Japanese mask to which Sartre referred in his essay on intentionality in Husserl (see above, Chapter 2).

What he calls our "conduct" in the face of the irreal, therefore, is entirely the reaction of our perceptual or emotional consciousness to the imaged object. Though this will strike many as counterintuitive, our attempt to regain a certain feeling we previously felt in relation to a previous image, he insists, is simply our decision to reproduce a similar feeling in the face of a similar object. But that object cannot be the "cause" of the reaction. To borrow from another vocabulary, one might see it as the "occasion" at best. This quasi-voluntarist position ("I must determine myself to be tender in the face of [the irreal object]") underscores Sartre's unalterable commitment to the essential features of imaging consciousness as exposited at the start, even to the point of asserting that "I will affirm that the irreal object acts on me, while being immediately conscious that there is not, that there cannot be, real action and that I contort myself in order to mime this action" (*Imaginary* 142). Still, Sartre admits to having come to accept the existence of "affective memory" and "affective imagination" such that we can re-present a previous gesture "suffused with affectivity" and react to it anew (see *Imaginary* 202, n. 10). In sum, there is a difference in nature between feelings in the face of the real and feelings in the face of the imaginary. Imaginary feelings are not themselves irreal, but Sartre views them as "essentially *degraded*, poor, jerky, spasmodic, schematic and needing non-being in order to exist" (*Imaginary* 145).

Accordingly, there are two kinds of person in us: "The imaginary me and the real me." There are imaginary sadists and masochists, violent in imagination. But "at each moment, at contact with reality, our imaginary me shatters and disappears, ceding its place to the real me. For the real and the imaginary, by reason of their essences, cannot coexist. It is a case of two entirely irreducible types of objects, feelings and conducts" (*Imaginary* 146).

Diagnosing the character of someone who chooses to live the imaginary over the real, Sartre sets the stage for the analysis of Gustave Flaubert that he will undertake two decades later:

> To prefer the imaginary is not only to prefer a richness, a beauty, a luxury as imagined to the present mediocrity *despite* their irreal character. It is also to adopt "imaginary" feelings and conduct *because* of their imaginary character. One does not only choose this or that image, one chooses the imaginary *state* with all that it brings with it; one not only flees the content of the real (poverty, disappointed love, business failure, etc.), one flees the very form of the real, its character of *presence*, the type of

> reaction that it demands of us . . . An abyss separates the real from the imaginary . . . The present requires an adaptation that the morbid dreamer is no longer capable of supplying; it even needs a kind of indetermination of our feelings, a real plasticity: because the real is always new, always *unforeseeable*.
>
> (*Imaginary* 147)

Of course, this is a far cry from the "choice" of the imaginary as a profession, much less as a way of life where that decision is motivated by political and moral undermining of the bourgeoisie – a stance that Sartre will subsequently ascribe to several of the authors (Jean Genet and Gustave Flaubert, for example) whose "biographies" he produces.

"Pathology of the Imagination"

Insisting that "the Cartesian *cogito* retains its rights even with psychopaths," Sartre must account for the implication that the hallucinator "believes" or "posits" as real what he is aware is irreal. In other words, since the spontaneity of consciousness is one with the consciousness of that spontaneity – a thesis Sartre will repeat on several occasions in his subsequent work – he must explain "how the patient can believe in the reality of an image that is essentially given as an irreality" (*Imaginary* 151).

Referring to his own experience mentioned earlier, Sartre remarks: "I was able to observe a short hallucinatory phenomenon when I had administered myself an injection of mescaline." He proceeds to confirm the continued presence of the intuition of spontaneity amidst slight and rapid alterations of the personality. These were accompanied by lateral, marginal spontaneities that disappeared when he tried to grasp them but their memory remained immediately afterwards as something "inconsistent and mysterious" (*Imaginary* 156–157). This disintegration of personality is more thoroughgoing in "genuine hallucinations." The result is a kind of "twilight life," wherein "a diffuse and degraded connection by participation [that is, what he calls "the sudden formation of a partial and absurd psychic system"] is substituted for the synthetic connection by concentration" that is our normal conscious life. "There is no longer a center of consciousness, nor a thematic unity, and it is precisely *for this reason* that the system occurs" (*Imaginary* 157).

Sartre is aware that such talk of "twilight zones" might be misconstrued as admitting the existence of an unconscious. But he assures us

that these absurd partial systems are the result of a "leveling-down of our normal consciousness rendered momentarily incapable of concentration:

> It is a case of an imaging symbolic system that has for its correlate an irreal object – absurd phrase, pun, inopportune appearance. It appears and is given as spontaneity but, above all, as impersonal spontaneity. To tell the truth, we are very far from the distinction between subjective and objective. These two worlds have collapsed: we are dealing here with a third type of existence that we lack the words to characterize. The simplest can perhaps be named lateral irreal apparitions, correlates of an impersonal consciousness.
>
> (*Imaginary* 158)

This is what Sartre calls the *pure event* of hallucination. Indicative of the care with which he describes the phenomenon, he points out that what was just described must be the "memory" of the experience of the event, since every experience implies the existence of a thematic consciousness with a personal unity. In fact, "the hallucination implies a sudden reaction of consciousness to the partial system with sudden reappearance of thematic unity." It is this sudden appearance to our immediate memory that gives the hallucination its distinctive characteristics as external to current personal consciousness, as unforeseeable and as not able to be produced at will. In other words, the hallucination presents itself as approximating an object in the real world. And yet the object retains the characteristics of spontaneity: it appears as capricious, furtive and full of mystery. But if the object gives itself to memory as non-thetically conscious of its irreality, explicitly, Sartre surmises, the hallucinatory object retains a neutral character in memory.[35]

"The Dream"

If the hallucination poses a major objection to Sartre's theory of the image, then our common experience of dreaming seems even more problematic. Is not this, at least, a case where the production of an image is not accompanied by nonthetic consciousness of imaging spontaneity?

Sartre offers several considerations in response. First, the dream always appears to us with a character of *fragility* that cannot belong to

[35] Remember his claim that if the original awareness of the object were neither explicitly perceptual nor imaginary, its characteristic in memory could be neutral in that regard, despite the nonthetic consciousness of its original irreality.

perception. If I reflect on my perceiving, that perception is reenforced by the implicit comparison "and not dreaming." But if I say to myself in a dream "thank heavens it's only a dream," Sartre insists, the implicit contrast "and not perceiving" means that I have momentarily awakened, if only to be quickly reabsorbed in the "enslaved" realm of the dream with its inevitabilities, its "belief" as opposed to knowledge, and its incompatibility with the evidence of perceptual consciousness. As Sartre will remark in *Being and Nothingness* apropos of his famous category of "bad faith": "One puts oneself in bad faith as one goes to sleep and one is in bad faith as one dreams" (*BN* 68).

Still, the problem of believing in the reality of the image in a dream when you are aware of its irreality remains unanswered. Sartre returns to the hypnagogic image for an illuminating parallel and contrast. Both kinds of imaging involve physical analoga such as phosphemes, muscular contractions and inner speech. But the oneiric image cannot be taken for "real," Sartre insists, because what characterizes the consciousness that dreams is that "it has lost the very notion of reality"; it is what he calls a "closed consciousness" – one on which it is impossible to take an external point of view:

> This is the genuine explanation of oneiric symbolism: if consciousness can never grasp its own worries, its own desires except in the form of symbols, this is not, as Freud believed, because of a repression that obliges it to disguise them: it is because it is incapable of grasping what is real in the form of reality. It has entirely lost the function of the real and everything that it feels, everything that it thinks, it cannot feel otherwise than in the imaged form.
>
> (*Imaginary* 168)

So "it is not that the nonthetic consciousness of imagining ceases to grasp itself as spontaneity, but that it grasps itself as spellbound. This is what gives the dream its nuance of fate." In other words, "a consciousness that dreams is always nonthetic consciousness of itself as being fascinated by the dream, but it has lost its being-in-the-world and recovers it only on awakening."[36]

In sum, "the dream is not a fiction taken for reality, it is the odyssey of a consciousness dedicated by itself and in spite of itself to building only

[36] "So, contrary to what one might believe, the imaginary world is given as a world without freedom, it is the inverse of freedom, it is fatal" (*Imaginary* 169; see also 47).

an irreal world. The dream is a privileged experience that can help us to conceive what a consciousness would be like that had lost its "being-in-the-world" and had, at the same time, been deprived of the category of the real" (*Imaginary* 175).

Conclusion

Let us bring to a close our discussion of *The Imaginary* and this chapter with some thoughts on Sartre's concluding reflections on his seminal study. If he published nothing of *The Psyche* but his little book on the emotions because he considered the rest too Husserlian and unoriginal, the Heideggerian presence in the conclusion to *The Imaginary* is evident. For the first time in this text, he speaks of "human reality," the French translation of Heidegger's *Dasein*, which we have already noted in the previous chapter. And we observed him adopting Heidegger's "Being-in-the-world" as a basic category and repeating Heidegger's insistence that every image must be constituted on "the ground of the world." Sartre mentions in his *War Diaries* that he read *Sein und Zeit* in April 1939, and it is not surprising that this major work cast its shadow over the later portions of the book, most notably the first section of its conclusion, entitled "Consciousness and Imagination."[37]

"Consciousness and Imagination"

In the particularly revealing initial paragraph, Sartre raises what he takes to be the metaphysical question haunting the entire book: "What are the characteristics that can be attributed to consciousness on the basis of the fact that it is consciousness capable of imagining?" While conceding that the question could be posed from the Kantian perspective that would be better understood by his contemporaries, namely, what must consciousness in general be if it is true that the constitution of an image is always possible, Sartre insists that "the deepest sense of the problem can be grasped only from a phenomenological point of view" (*Imaginary* 179).

[37] Though Sartre had already read several of Heidegger's shorter works before 1939, it is likely that his recent reading of *Sein und Zeit* also left its mark on *Emotions*, published in December of 1939.

It is significant that Sartre distinguishes two distinct methods for relating consciousness and imagination: the phenomenological, which entails the "phenomenological reduction" to "transcendental consciousness" and its eidetic reductions to the essence of consciousness, on the one hand, and what he calls the "oblique" or "regressive" method of reasoning from the fact to the foundations of its possibility, on the other. As a concession to his audience steeped in the neo-Kantian philosophy of the academy, for whom "the idea of an eidetic intuition is still repugnant," he proposes to employ the latter method. In fact, he undertakes a comparative study of each method to see the advantage of the phenomenological descriptive analysis in revealing the necessary connection between consciousness and the ability to "irrealize" objects over the "regressive" argument of the neo-Kantians.

He asserts that, because of their succumbing to the "illusion of immanence" discussed throughout the book, the neo-Kantians have no problem with the existence of an image. Images like the objects of perception, on their view, are simply weaker but no less real things amongst things. The limits of this position have been charted earlier in his book. But if one understands imaging consciousness as Sartre has described it, "the existential problem" of the image can no longer be pushed aside. Consciousness entails a *thesis* or "positing of existence" for every object. But the thesis of an imaging consciousness is radically different from that of a realizing consciousness. As we know, the "type of existence" of the object as imagined is "irreal"; that is, present-absent, as Sartre paradoxically phrases it. "This fundamental absence, this essential nothingness of the imaged object, suffices to differentiate it from the objects of perception." So the initial questions can now be rephrased: "What therefore must a consciousness be in order that it can successively posit *real* objects and *imaged* objects?" (*Imaginary* 181). He summarizes this position by insisting that "the imaginative act is at once *constituting*, *isolating*, and *annihilating* (*annéantisant*)."[38] It is constitutive of its object as is any conscious act; it isolates its object from the larger field of the real from which it detaches it; and it "annihilates" it in the sense of conferring on it its existence as "irreal."

[38] He describes consciousness generally in *Being and Nothingness* as "nihilating" (*Néantissant*). We have noted his use of "nothingness" (*le néant*) to distinguish consciousness in the present chapter. "Annihilating," in this context, is closer to the "irrealizing" charter of imaging consciousness.

Sartre distinguishes imaging from memory and from anticipation. Memory, he explains, gives us access to a real object but as past. The remembered object is "brought out of retirement," as it were; it is revived with its real status as past.[39] To exist past, Sartre assures us, "is one mode of existence among others" (*Imaginary* 181). Unfortunately, he fails to distinguish between the lived and the distant past as he will do for the future. Perhaps he doesn't employ this parallel lest he slip into the "illusion of immanence" himself, by speaking of the "imagined" past. His descriptive analysis of the past could have used some fine tuning, which he never provides either here or elsewhere.

As for anticipation, Sartre distinguished the lived future from the imagined future. The former is the lived ground on which my present perception develops, the latter is "posited for itself but as *that which is not yet*." It too seems to be a form of the real as is the past. "All real existence is given with present, past, and future structures, therefore the past and the future as essential structures of the real are equally real, which is to say correlates of a realizing thesis" (*Imaginary* 182). The imagined future retains the features of imaging consciousness in that it presents itself as "not yet, which is to say as absent or if one prefers as a nothingness." If it seems difficult to understand why one can "annihilate" a future situation by "presentifying it as a nothingness" in the image but cannot do the same for the past situation, one must recognize that Sartre will later locate the past event or state of affairs in the category of the "in-itself" and grant it an "absolute" character.[40] He will claim that our recollections are often accompanied by images but that they are not themselves images.

Regarding the relation between consciousness and imagination, Sartre can now conclude that "the essential condition for a consciousness to be able to *image*: it must have the possibility of positing a thesis

[39] Sartre would have benefitted from Heidegger's distinction between the past-as-present (*die Gewesenheit*) and the present-as-past (*die Vergangenheit*) (see Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson [New York: Harper & Row, 1962], 373, n. 4).

[40] That is, recognize that one cannot change the past "event" even though its interpretation remains liable to constant revision (see *NE* 73; *WL* 158 n.). I develop this aspect of Sartre's theory of history in my *Sartre, Foucault and Historical Reason,* vol. 1, *Toward an Existentialist Theory of History* (University of Chicago Press, 1997), "The Ambiguous Historical Event" and "The Absolute Event," 25–32 *et passim*.

of irreality" (*Imaginary* 183). But this thesis, he insists, in turn requires placing the irrealized object "on the margin of the totality of the real," which is what we mean by "world." So there is a double condition for consciousness to be able to imagine: "It must be able to posit the world in its synthetic totality and, at the same time, it must be able to posit the imagined object as out of reach in relation to that synthetic whole, which is to say posit the world as a nothingness in relation to the image" (*Imaginary* 184).

What this is leading to is the claim, which has been stated briefly earlier, that a consciousness stuck in the world like a thing-among-things is precisely what psychological determinism offers us. Sartre now repeats a leitmotif of his work since *Transcendence of the Ego*, as the conclusion of a regressive argument: "For consciousness to be able to imagine, it must be able to escape from the world by its very nature, it must be able to stand back from the world by its own efforts. In a word, it must be free" (*Imaginary* 183).

At this point Heidegger makes another appearance. Sartre associates what he understands as Heidegger's ascription of "nothingness" with the constitutive structure of the existent, as being precisely this "surpassing of the real" that constitutes it as a world. "The nihilation of the real is always implied by its constitution as a world" (*Imaginary* 184). Sartre seems to have overlooked the fact that Heidegger decidedly avoids appeal to "consciousness" in *Being and Time*, while he himself is fashioning his ontology on that very concept as will emerge with Cartesian clarity in *Being and Nothingness*. Still, we must not overlook Sartre's admission that "there are, for consciousness, many other ways to surpass the real in order to make a world of it: the surpassing can and should be made at first by affectivity or by action" (*Imaginary* 185). Already formulating concepts that will figure centrally in his so-called "existentialist" writings of the 1940s, he adds: "I will call the different immediate modes of apprehension of the real as a world 'situations.' We can then say that the essential condition for a consciousness to imagine is that it be 'situated in the world' or more briefly that it 'be-in-the-world' [in Heidegger's canonical phrase]" (*Imaginary* 185). It is the "situation-in-the-world" that motivates and directs the constitution of a particular imaginary. Just as Husserl was criticized in *Transcendence of the Ego* for failing to address the motivation of the phenomenological reduction (see above, Chapter 2), so Sartre sees the weakness of the

Kantian "regressive" argument as failing to address the concrete, "existential" character of the imaging act.[41]

Revealing that Sartre has been reading Heidegger's major text in his own manner, he now asks in telescopic fashion: "Is not the very first condition of the *cogito* doubt, which is to say the constitution of the real as a world at the same time as its nihilation from this same point of view, and does not the reflective grasp of doubt as doubt coincide with the apodictic intuition of freedom?" (*Imaginary* 186). He concludes that imagination is thus not an empirical power added to consciousness, but is "the whole of consciousness as it realizes its freedom." In sum, "it is because we are transcendentally free that we can imagine" (*Imaginary* 186). But he reverses the relationship and extends the claim: "The nihilating function belonging to consciousness – which Heidegger calls *surpassing – can be manifested only in an imaging act*" (*Imaginary* 186–187, emphasis added).

Sartre is marshaling his earlier remarks on nothingness, throughout these three psychological studies and even from his earlier works, to undertake a creative dialogue with the Heidegger of *Being and Time*. Not that Heidegger inspired the idea – we have noted its presence at work even before Sartre's "Berlin vacation" – but that German masterwork certainly challenged an equivalent response, the initial elements of which are sketched in this portion of Sartre's concluding remarks. We glimpse what will be a basic claim of *Being and Nothingness*, namely, that human reality is being-in-situation; that "situation" is an ambiguous relation of facticity (the real world) and transcendence (the surpassing of that real toward the irreal or imaginary).

So the imaginary is that concrete "something" towards which the existent is surpassed. As soon as a person apprehends his or her existence as "in-situation," Sartre is claiming, they surpass it toward that in relation to which the person exists *as lack* – their possibilities: goals, values, as ifs. But the locus of that lack is the imaginary. In effect, "The imaginary represents at each moment the implicit sense (*sens* [meaning/direction]) of the real" (*Imaginary* 188; F 360).

Continuing this quasi-apotheosis of the imaginary, Sartre urges that "the object of a negation must be posited as imaginary," adding that "this is true

[41] It is worth noting that a similar inadequacy of the regressive method in his *Question of Method* years later will lead him to complement it with a "progressive" movement that concretized the abstract premises arrived at by the regressive method. But by then praxis has supplanted consciousness and dialectic is in full force (see the first chapter of *Question of Method*).

for the logical forms of negation (doubt, restriction, etc.) as for its affective and active forms (prohibition, consciousness of impotence, lack, etc.) . . . There can be no realizing consciousness," he assures us, "without imaging consciousness, and vice versa. Thus imagination . . . is disclosed as an essential and transcendental condition of consciousness. It is as absurd to conceive of a consciousness that does not imagine as it is to conceive of a consciousness that cannot effect the *cogito*" (*Imaginary* 188). We must conclude *that imaging consciousness is the locus of negativity, possibility and lack* – features that Sartre will attribute to consciousness in general in *Being and Nothingness*. The imagination has reached its high point in Sartre's philosophy. Henceforth, there will be a gradual reduction of its explicit role in his thought until we encounter it *in extremis* in the replay of the imaginary and the real in the life and work of Gustave Flaubert.

"The Work of Art"

If the previous part of this conclusion forms an interlude, indicating a reading of Heidegger's masterwork, this part is more a resumption of Sartre's earlier application of his theory of the imagination, the analogon and the rest, to the work of art.

It is common to distinguish the aesthetic object from the physical artifact. We observed Sartre respect this distinction in his discussion of the portrait of Charles VIII. The physical object, the painted canvas, for example, functions as an analogon when viewed aesthetically. Sartre's approach to the work of art relies heavily on the Husserlian theory of intentionality and especially on his theory of imaging consciousness. This issues in his initial "principle": the work of art is an irreality. The aesthetic object, Charles VIII, "appears the moment that consciousness, effecting a radical conversion that requires the nihilation of the world, constitutes itself as imaging" (*Imaginary* 189). The depicted Charles VIII is simply the necessary correlate of the intentional act of an imaging consciousness. Insofar as the artifact is intended imaginatively, it serves as an analogon for the aesthetic object. We are familiar with this feature of Sartre's theory and will encounter it often in his analyses of artworks throughout his career.[42]

[42] Sartre has adapted the problematic concept of "*hylē*" (stuff, matter) from Husserl's phenomenology to his "analogon," with the possibilities as well as the limits that this transformation entails. Both terms are heir to the ancient Aristotelian metaphysics of matter/

But he now corrects the mistaken conception of the creative act that sees the artist imposing his mental image on the physical material to produce the aesthetic object. Such a notion of the passage from the imaginary to the real, Sartre implies, is another error entailed by the illusion of immanence. The mental image, he assures us, is incommunicable. What is real is the artifact; what is beautiful is "a being that cannot be given to perception and that, in its very nature, is isolated from the universe." What the artist produced was the object that can serve as an analogon for whoever "grasps the image," that is, the one who adopts the aesthetic attitude in its regard.

Sartre extends this analysis to abstract art, where the beauty continues to derive from real figures, colors and relations grasped by an imaging consciousness that confers on them the role of analogon; that posits them as irreal. And *mutatis mutandis* this same process applies to other genres. Beethoven's *Symphony No. 7*, for example, is not "in time," though it has its own internal time, which flows from the first note of the allegro to the last note of the finale. It too escapes the real: "It is given *in person*, but as absent, as being out of reach" (*Imaginary* 192). Its performance is an analogon. Similarly, the novelist, the poet, the dramatist constitute irreal objects through verbal analoga: "So it is not that the character is *realized* in the actor, but that the actor is *irrealized* in the character" (*Imaginary* 191).[43] Sartre captures his aesthetic theory in a poetic metaphor:

form. And they likewise inherit the problem of accounting for the "qualities" of that "determinable" object without turning it into another determinate "thing," which simply repeats the question that generated the matter–form distinction in the first place. In Sartre's case, the problem turns on the specificity of the "invitation" that the physical object poses to the prospective viewer to see this material object as Charles VIII, for example. Sartre will claim that it "directs" as well as "invites" by virtue of its resemblance. But this becomes interesting as well as problematic when the resultant aesthetic object is "the Charles of flesh-and-blood," "the presence of Maurice Chevalier" or "the Venice that no one has ever seen but which we all have experienced."

[43] This is thematized in Sartre's play *Kean*, an adaptation of Alexander Dumas's play *Kean ou Désordre et génie*, dealing among other things, with what Denis Diderot in the late eighteenth century called the "paradox of the actor" in an essay by that title published posthumously. Apropos of *Kean*, Sartre observed: "Diderot is right that the actor does not really experience his characters feelings; but it would be wrong to suppose that he is expressing them quite coldly, for the truth is that he experiences them unreally" (Michel Contat and Michel Rybalka [eds.], *Sartre on Theater*, trans. Frank Jellinek [New York: Pantheon, 1976], 163). See below, Chapter 15, note 57, where this is developed.

"Aesthetic contemplation is an induced dream and the passage to the real is an authentic awakening" (*Imaginary* 193).

In a concluding remark that addresses a problem that is common but especially pressing for a philosopher of the imaginary who is also a moralist, Sartre underscores the sharp distinction between the aesthetic and the moral. The aesthetic is a matter of the imaginary, the irreal, whereas the moral is solidly attached to our real world, with its pervasive contingency and ultimate absurdity. The issue is not settled so quickly, of course, as Sartre's subsequent likening of moral choice to artistic creativity in his lecture "Existentialism is a Humanism" (1945) attests. Still, this allusion to our contingent and absurd world resonates clearly with the basic theme of his "factum on contingency," *Nausea*, published two years earlier.

6

The necessity of contingency: *Nausea*

WE HAVE WITNESSED Sartre's initial encounter with and subsequent haunting by the problem of contingency. Years later he will insist that "the essential nature of faticity is for each individual *the necessity of his* contingency.[1] If we can rely on Sartre's memory, he first experienced this phenomenon as a child when leaving the movie theater where he had witnessed the "necessity" of a narrative contained in the spool of film on the projector's wheel. The contrast with the randomness and unpredictability of the world to which he returned on leaving the theater shocked him profoundly. He carried the effects of this experience in his "factum" (as the Normaliens used to call their polemical pamphlets) on contingency for the next two decades, depositing them in the novel that made his reputation.[2]

One of the few works by which Sartre would later admit he hoped to be remembered,[3] *Nausea* is the paradigm of a philosophical novel. It embodies the tension between philosophy and literature, concept and image, life and art, that marked much of his public life. It was Beauvoir who convinced him to transform his projected theoretical treatise on

[1] *CDR* II:204.

[2] Regarding the "factum," aside from definitions found in the Collins-Robert French dictionary that carry a polemical, even violent tone, Michel Contat observes: "Sartre and Nizan used to call *factums* [sic] the literary works that they were considering writing and publishing" (Michel Contat, *Pour Sartre* [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2008], 103, n. 3; hereafter *PS*).

[3] After naming *Situations*, *Saint Genet*, the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* and *The Devil and the Good Lord* as the works he hopes to see the new generation take up and read, Sartre adds "and then *Nausea* too, since from a purely literary point of view, I think it's the best thing I have done" (interview with Michel Contat, "Self-Portrait at Seventy," *L/S* 24). In the view of many, it counts among "the major literary productions of the twentieth century" (*OR* 1658).

contingency into a novel.[4] Sartre had been working on the second version of his "factum" while in Berlin, balancing his morning study of Husserl's *Ideas I* with reflections on contingency later in the day. Commentators differ as to whether the relation between Husserlian phenomenology and the novel is one of "influence" or rather "convergence" in the sense that both contribute to Sartre's plan to articulate the metaphysical experience of contingency. Those in favor of the convergence hypothesis cite the fact that Sartre's "factum" on contingency predates his famous encounter with Aron in the café that supposedly introduced him to phenomenology.[5] In any case, the seepage of the former into the latter is obvious in his precise and arresting "phenomenological descriptions" throughout the novel, his attention to consciousness as "in-the-world," and the like. Recall Sartre's remark in his appeal to the principle of intentionality that we are now delivered from the interior life, that we are "freed from Proust."[6] Contat and Rybalka point this out quite well:

> That there may however have been a certain *osmosis* between the philosophical work and the novel, that the latter benefitted from the discovery of phenomenology, notably by the acquisition of a more precise philosophical formulation is beyond doubt in view of the final text: *Nausea* is clearly a phenomenological novel. It is so by virtue of the status of the consciousness that it establishes in the person of Roquentin; by the dissolution of the subject that it effects; by its refusal of psychology: Roquentin has no "character," no substantial ego; he is pure consciousness *of* the world; his experience is not a voyage into the depths of interiority; on the contrary, it is a bursting out toward things [in the manner of Sartre's essay on Husserl's "intentionality"]. Everything is outside: Nausea is not *in* Roquentin; he's the one who is dissolved in it.
>
> (*OR* 1664)

[4] See MS cited in *Sartre*, ed. Mauricette Berne (Paris: BNF/Gallimard, 2005), 42.

[5] This is the argument of Vincent de Coorebyter in his masterful *Sartre face à la Phénoménologie* (*SFP* 142). He quotes Contat and Rybalka in support:

> As we know, Sartre worked on the second version of his book in addition to reading Husserl's *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie* in 1933–1934, while on a fellowship at the French Institute in Berlin. It is difficult to determine the contribution of this study to *Nausea*, given that we do not have the earlier version of the text. Sartre himself has assured us that it was not decisive, that his attention to "the things themselves" [Husserl's motto] preceded his contact with Husserlian phenomenology.
>
> (OR 1664)

[6] See above, Chapter 3. Yet it seems that Sartre had not "freed" himself from Proust so fully. Contat and Rybalka note that "the Proustian work [*Recherche du temps perdu*] is probably the most profound influence that one can detect in *Nausea*" (*OR* 1665).

Sartre presented the completed second version of the factum for Beauvoir's assessment since mutual critique had become a common practice between them. Seeing that it was already conceived as a diary, her advice was to refashion the treatise into novelistic form. Opting for its imaginative expression, he revised "Melancholia," its initial title inspired by the Dürer woodcut,[7] a third time and submitted it to the renowned publishing house, Gallimard. All this labor on a topic that clearly was life-defining for Sartre, made its rejection in the spring of 1936 all the more painful. But thanks to the influence of close friends, Gaston Gallimard read the rejected manuscript himself and declared it "splendid."[8] Fortunately, Monsieur Gallimard did suggest that its title be changed to *Nausea* and so it was. That was in May 1937. The work appeared to general acclaim the following year. Meanwhile, Sartre had also submitted his short story about the Spanish Civil War, "The Wall," to Gallimard and it was immediately accepted for publication. It appeared a few months before *Nausea* in the firm's prestigious *Nouvelle Revue Française*. André Gide reportedly declared the short story a masterpiece and asked the editors: "Who is this new Jean-Paul? ... I think we can expect a great deal from him."[9] In a letter to Beauvoir, Sartre quotes an appreciative card from Nobel laureate Roger Martin du Gard, who had just read the novel: "How to write to you after reading you? One would be too afraid of sounding like the *Self-Taught Man* ... or, worse still, being pigeonholed with the bastards. All the same, it's truly splendid, your book. And I'm happy that you *exist*."[10] Henceforth, Sartre would publish several essays and reviews in that journal. Its

[7] Husserl analyzes that woodcut in his *Ideas I*, §111, the book that Sartre studied assiduously in Berlin and which he takes as the model for analyzing the work of art (for Sartre's initial mention, see *Ion* 149; he develops his analysis in *Imaginary* 20, 24 and 49). For a close reading of this problematic text in the context of Husserl's theory of the imagination along with critical remarks about Sartre's interpretation of this passage, see Saraiva, *Imagination selon Husserl*, 227–235. The artwork aside, "Melancholia" is an apt title for a malady that we saw overtake Sartre and continue for some months following his experiment with mescalin in 1935.

[8] Hazel Rowley, *Tête-à-Tête: Simone de Beauvoir and Jean Paul Sartre* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 360, n. 2.

[9] Quoted by Cohen-Solal (*Life* 120).

[10] Dated July 1938. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Witness to My Life. The Letters of Jean-Paul Sartre to Simone de Beauvoir, 1926–1939*, ed. Simone de Beauvoir (New York: Scribner's, 1992), 154.

editor, Jean Paulhan, even awarded him a contract for monthly essays on whatever topic interested him.[11] His literary career was launched.

The Diary of Antoine Roquentin

This was one of the suggested titles for Sartre's novel in French and was used for its British publication.[12] Though scarcely arresting, it does describe the format of the work: the intimate revelations of a biographer and world traveler who finds himself mired in the provincial banalities of Bouville (Mudville), a thinly disguised depiction of the port of Le Havre, where Sartre held his first teaching assignment.[13]

We have already encountered the "solitary man" in *The Legend of Truth*. Sartre's excessively individualist neurosis would be cured with his mobilization in 1939. As he observed on several occasions, his participation in the war, including imprisonment in a stalag, marked a major break in his life. He had "discovered" society.[14]

[11] Among the topics that interested him were the subjects of public lectures he had delivered while in Le Havre on contemporary French, British and American authors such as Giraudoux, Mauriac, Dos Passos, Faulkner and his friend Nizan. Essays on each soon began to appear in the *Nouvelle Revue Française* beginning in February of 1938. They were later reprinted in the first volume of *Situations*. For notes on his second set of lectures at Le Havre on the contemporary novel, dealing with André Gide, Aldous Huxley, James Joyce, Jules Romains, Virginia Woolf, and briefly, John Dos Passos, see *Conférence de la Lyre havraise novembre 1932–mars 1933*, ed. Annie Cohen-Solal and Gilles Philippe with collaboration from Grégory Cormann and Vincent de Coorebyter, *Études Sartriennes* no. 16 (Brussels: Ousia, 2012), 35–162; hereafter *CHR*.

[12] See Contat and Rybalka 1:52.

[13] Cohen-Solal points out certain similarities with the home town of the Sartre family, Thiviers in the Dordogne, southwest France. "Along with Jean-Baptiste and Annie [Simone Jollivet, to whom the book is dedicated], Thiviers lurks everywhere throughout *Nausea*" (*Life* 90).

[14] See *L/S* 44; *Sit* X:176. Curiously, his "fraternal" relations as a Normalien, though occurring during what he declared were the happiest years of his life, did not evince this experience of the "social." Perhaps this was because of the socioeconomic homogeneity of the student population, its competitiveness, and its unabashed elitism. In what could easily be taken as a parody of Roquentin as well as of the "solitary individual," Paul Nizan took Sartre as the model for the character Lange in his novel *Trojan Horse*: "Lange was alone with the town. It was his fate to be alone in towns, to walk among stones which were as paralyzed as he was, who had no more communion among themselves than he had with his fellows" (*Trojan Horse*, trans. Charles Ashleigh [New York: Howard Fertig, 1975], 125). Nizan claimed that he was depicting Brice Parain, a philosopher friend and reader at Gallimard, but Sartre did not believe a word of it (see *OR* 1658, n. 4).

If what he would later call the "myth" of *l'homme seul* guided his life as a Normalien, its influence continued in his *The Legend of Truth* and reached its creative climax in *Nausea*. Sartre identifies with Roquentin as he will later do with another solitary man, Matthew Delarue, the leading protagonist of his next novelistic undertaking, a set of novels, *The Roads to Freedom*.[15]

To say that the myth of solitary man disappears with Sartre's experience of the war is inexact. One continues to sense its presence in several characters of his novels and plays in the 1940s and 1950s. In fact, the idea of the solitary individual reflects the ideal of the individual as championed by proto-existentialists, Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche, both of whom had introduced the "existentialist" theme of "becoming an individual" by embracing the responsibility that both produces and defines it. Kierkegaard, for example, was reputed to have wished for "That Single Individual" as the epitaph on his tombstone.[16] And Nietzsche wrote eloquently about the loneliness of the individual who rises above the herd.[17] Sartre was familiar with the work of Nietzsche, though perhaps not yet with that of Kierkegaard, when he was fashioning this "myth" as a Normalien.[18]

[15] In his *War Diaries*, Sartre muses: "Why is it that Antoine Roquentin and Mathieu, who are *me*, are indeed so gloomy – whereas, Heavens! life for me isn't all that bad? I think it's because they're homonculi. In reality, they are *me*, *stripped of the living principle*. The essential difference between Roquentin and me is that, for my part, I write the story of Antoine Roquentin ... That's what I did: I stripped my characters of my obsessive passion for writing, my pride, my faith in my destiny, my metaphysical optimism – and thereby provoked in them a gloomy pullulation" (*WD* 338–339). Elsewhere Sartre speaks of his next novel, *The Age of Reason*, as a sequel to *Nausea* and of Mathieu, its chief protagonist, as a "continuation" of Roquentin (Sartre's first recorded interview, given to Claudine Chonez [1938] and cited in Contat and Rybalka 1:114).

[16] Joakim Garff, *Søren Kierkegaard. A Biography* trans. Bruce H. Kirmmse (Princeton University Press, 2005), 812.

[17] "Today ... when only the herd animal is honored" (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke*, 3 vols., vol. II, ed. Karl Schlechte [Munich and Vienna, 1977],. 678; see Thomas R. Flynn, *Existentialism: A Very Short Introduction* [Oxford University Press, 2006], 25).

[18] Given his high regard for Jean Wahl's *Vers le concret* (1932), which includes references to Heidegger and Kierkegaard, it is possible that Sartre would have read Jean Wahl's essay "Heidegger et Kierkegaard," published in *Recherches Philosophiques* 2 (1932–33): 349–370. In his *War Diaries*, December 1939, Sartre does cite Wahl's *Études Kierkegaardiennes*, published in 1938, though by then *Nausea* was in print. He also lists Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Dread* (*Angst*) among the books he had recently read (*WD*-E 139). And his interest in the

Anton Roquentin is such an individual who surveys, analyzes and records in a detached, phenomenological manner the actions, events and surroundings of his world, as if they were happening to him and not the result of his own actions. His medium is the diary – the vehicle of a solitary man. He remarks a certain sickness – perhaps a "mental" illness – that has plagued him throughout his travels before reaching Bouville. "I think I am cured," he records hopefully in the undated first sheet of the papers that constitute the published work. "I'm cured. I'll give up writing my daily impressions" (*N* 9). Apparently keeping such a diary was either a way of preserving the memory of experiences subsequently to be related to an analyst or a friend or, more likely, a form of self-medication for the malady that afflicts him. But that hope of a cure was unfounded, as his first dated entry attests: "Something has happened to me, I can't doubt it any more. It came as an illness does, not like an ordinary certainty, not like anything evident. It came cunningly, little by little" (*Nausea* 11).

Ontological sickness and its aesthetic cure

Early in the book, the order of necessity and contingency experienced by the child Sartre is reversed. The protagonist realizes the unpredictability

work of Karl Jaspers for whom Kierkegaard and Nietzsche were major influences, and whom Sartre named on his application for the Berlin fellowship as one of the figures he wished to study, may have brought him into contact with Kierkegaardian thought as well. Recall that he and Nizan helped with the French translation of Jaspers's *Allgemeine Psychopathologie* [Berlin: Springer, 1923] that contains twelve references to Kierkegaard, including several quotations. The same, of course, should be said of Heidegger's use of "Angst," a Kierkegaardian hallmark with which Sartre was familiar. In the absence of direct references, of course, claims of Sartre's familiarity with Kierkegaard's thought prior to the composition of *Nausea* remain hypothetical. In the *War Diaries*, however, he relates Nausea and Anguish: "The existential grasping of our facticity is Nausea, and the existential apprehension of our freedom is Anguish" (*WD*-E 133). And in *Nausea* itself the atmosphere of *l'ennui* (boredom) is pervasive. These "probabilities" weaken in the face of Sartre's direct denial. Asked in an interview for the Schilpp volume when he discovered Kierkegaard, he responded: "Around 1939–1940. Before then I knew he existed, but he was only a name. Because of the double *a*, I think ... That kept me from reading him" (Schilpp 12). Of course, one should recall Sartre's similar categorical denial of any dialectic in *BN* or earlier, contrary to the claims of essays in that same volume by Robert D. Cumming and Klaus Hartmann (see Schilpp 18f.). In *War Diaries* he recounts having received a copy of *The Concept of Dread* (*Angst*) from Beauvoir at his request (*WD*-E 139) and in a letter to her he remarks: "I also found a theory of nothingness while reading Kierkegaard" (Dec. 21, 1939; *Witness to My Life*, 420).

of his life: “I am subject to these sudden transformations . . . This is what has given my life such a jerky, incoherent aspect . . . Shall I go off again, leaving my research, my book and everything else unfinished?” (*Nausea* 12–13). The option to reject this project that has defined him up to this point, the stark realization that the necessities of his life are contingent on his ongoing commitment – the nauseous sense of his own possibilities is starting to dawn on him again. Such “transformations” or, as Sartre will say in later works, “conversions,” though rare, accompany our freedom the way that possible annihilation of the world accompanies the sustaining power of Descartes’s creating and conserving God.[19] But where Descartes finds salvation from the contingency of his existence in Providence – the belief that the Universe cares – the refuge of Sartre’s antihero is art.[20]

Soon this attack is followed by Roquentin’s asking the waitress to play his favorite tune, “Some of these Days,” on the phonograph. Like his childhood experience of the necessity of the story rolled into the spool on the projector, here the “band of steel” conceals the inevitability of the song it contains: “A few seconds more and the negress will sing.[21] It seems inevitable so strong is the necessity of this music: nothing can interrupt it, nothing which comes from this time in which the world has fallen” (*Nausea* 34). As the music fades, the speaker senses that “something has happened . . . The Nausea has disappeared” (*Nausea* 34). A recurrence of this feeling of the sheer contingency of existence, after reaching its dramatic climax in the famous meditation on a tree root halfway through the story, is again alleviated by the same recording. Liberation from the nauseous experience of the contingency of our temporal existence seems achievable by appeal to the experience of the necessity unfolded in the “other” temporality of art.

The story from beginning to end is plagued with the nauseating experience of contingency and its possible relief, if not cure, by appeal to aesthetic temporality. In *The Imaginary*, with which this work stands in dialogue, Sartre had distinguished the time of the imaginary from the

[19] See “Cartesian Freedom,” in Jean-Paul Sartre, *Literary and Philosophical Essays*, trans. Annette Michelson (New York: Crowell-Collier, 1962), 180–197; hereafter *LPE*.

[20] According to Georges Poulet, Sartre “conceived his novel as a parody on the *Discourse on Method*” (*Le Point de départ* [Paris: Plon, 1964], 227).

[21] Actually, the woman associated with this song, Sophie Tucker, is white. For the likely explanation for Sartre’s error, see *OR* 1747.

transcendental protentions and retentions of Husserl's inner time consciousness, the awareness that conditions and orders our perceptual world. Sartre will refer to his former confidence in salvation through art when he announces later in life having abandoned the belief in salvation altogether.[22] Part of this is doubtless due to his first-hand and vicarious experience of killing and torture during the war and the Resistance. This led him to associate the philosophical idealism of his professors, for example Léon Brunschwicg, with the volatilization of evil into the high atmosphere of abstraction and to insist emphatically: "Evil cannot be redeemed."[23] But at this stage, he seems to believe the nauseous experience and perhaps even its ontological source might be "redeemed," at least in the aesthetic realm.[24]

Nausea is the archetypical philosophical novel. In the hands of a less gifted author, it would have worn its conceptual weave on its sleeve. Though it began as a metaphysical treatise, its command of image and situation draws us into the experience of what Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* will call a "phenomenon of Being."[25] In an "insert" for the first edition, Sartre remarks: "Nausea is Existence revealing itself – and

[22] In *War Diaries* Sartre reminisces less than two years after the publication of *Nausea*: "After this [his bout with depression and break-up with Olga in the mid 1930s], I devoted myself to writing with a kind of fury. The sole purpose of an absurd existence was indefinitely to produce works of art which at once escaped it . . . It was really *a morality of salvation through art*." But his passion in the eyes of Beauvoir who was critical of this idea, led to his starting "to have doubts about salvation through art" (*WD* 77–78, Dec. 1, 1939, emphasis added). With the acceptance of "The Wall" and of *Nausea* by Gallimard, as well as an appointment to a teaching position in Paris, Sartre's life turned upward: "And this time life won out over art" (*WD* 78). But the victory was neither easy nor definitive: an aesthetic morality spread a patena of futile hope over his existence. "Henceforth, man himself was an absurd creature, lacking any *raison d'être*; and the big question posed was that of his *justification* . . . Only the work of art could give man that justification, for the work of art is a metaphysical absolute. So, lo and behold!, the absolute is restored – but *outside* man. Man is worth nothing." Reflecting his view in *Nausea*, Sartre admits: "It's at about this moment that my theoretical opposition to humanism was strongest" (*CDG* 87).

[23] The war experience and occupation faced Sartre with the reality of pain and moral evil. Shortly after the war, he concluded: "Evil cannot be redeemed" (*WL* 180; *Sit* II:248).

[24] That problem never left him. Consider his reference to "that strange hell of beauty" in *St. Genet* Book III (355ff.) and to the "kights of nothingness" in *L'Idiot*. In a sense, the entire Sartrean philosophical and literary corpus can be read as a kind of theodicy (Leibniz's attempt to justify the ways of God to man) – a failed theodicy, no doubt, but a kind of theodicy nonetheless. This is one of the reasons why he can insist that even "if God did exist, it wouldn't make any difference" (*EH* 53).

[25] *BN* xlviii.

Existence is not pleasant to see" (Contat and Rybalka 1:53 and *OR* 1695). As Sartre gradually moved away from any pretense of a "transcendental reduction" that would "bracket" the being-question, he remained committed to our immediate access to being that was not an essence to be conceptualized but the terminus of an experience to be shared. Kierkegaard had called "oblique communication" his poetic method of inviting the reader to "suspend disbelief" in order to experience as one's own what was described either as another's or as anyone's limiting circumstance. Of the many situations portrayed in this story, four bear particular significance for the philosophy that Sartre is in the process of formulating: the nature of the subject, the relation between art and life, the problem of humanism and, of course, the experience of nausea itself.

The spectator self

Again, the novel springs from the young Sartre's experience of contingency, love of the cinema, penchant for the imaginary, and desire to reach the concrete rather than floating above it in academic idealist fashion. Its second version, completed in Berlin, reflects his balance between Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology, though the tilt at this stage is toward Husserl. It is a diary that at first blush suggests the product of an ego, the kind of Cartesian relation that "constitutes" what it observes. But as the story unfolds, it is the diarist who seems to be "constituted" by the diary, not the reverse. As the author of *Transcendence of the Ego*, Sartre is exhibiting the possibility of achieving a unity without appeal to a unifying subject. But at the same time, he is diagnosing a (moral) malady which he will subsequently name "inauthenticity."

The tracing of a "non-egological" consciousness of a failing author over a month in his life anticipates a major thesis of *Being and Nothingness*, already on Sartre's mind and the innovative character of *Nausea* itself[26] – Sartre's proposal of a consciousness free of an ego in his early *Transcendence of the Ego*. Now we observe it concretized in the neurotic behavior of the failing author.

[26] For the chronology of Roquentin's stay in Bouville as recounted in *Nausea*, see *OR* 1724–1725. The entire experience recorded in the diary spans four weeks and two days.

We discussed Sartre's view of the key concept of Husserlian phenomenology, "intentionality," as the defining feature of consciousness that launches us into the world with its objective qualities. Because consciousness is entirely "in the world," it has no "inner life." Sartre assures us, we are "saved from Proust."[27] So Roquentin is not in search of "lost time," despite his alleged pursuit of a biography of a prominent figure. Indeed his time is focused decidedly on the present. Neither is he trapped in some inner dialogue, though that may seem to be the case.[28] Rather, he is in "dialogue" with the world: the world of the provincial sea port; the world of the academic on whom the futility of his life is dawning. Not unlike Camus' Mersault in *The Stranger*, Roquentin is *l'homme seul* who manages to be alone with others.[29] This sharpens his descriptive skills even as it dulls his power to act. He seems struck by a kind of Kierkegaardian boredom that afflicts the individual mired in the indecisiveness of the "aesthetic" stage of existence.[30] But in Roquentin's case, as we have just witnessed, it is the aesthetic that promises deliverance.

As for the author himself, the tension remains. As Beauvoir observed: "Sartre loved Stendhal as much as Spinoza and refused to separate philosophy from literature."[31] And despite Sartre's hyperbolic claim that Hussserlian intentionality has saved us from Proust, Contat and Rybalka point out that "the Proustian oeuvre is probably the most profound influence that one can discern in *Nausea*" (*OR* 1663).

Art and life

In what he claims was the first interview he ever gave, Sartre remarks to Claudine Chonez that, whereas he had originally intended to express his philosophical views in a work of art, a novel, a short story, he came to realize that this was impossible. "There are things which are so technical

[27] *Sit* 1:32. On the disputed date of composition of his essay on intentionality, see Chapter 2, page 24, n. 34.

[28] This is doubtless what Rhiannon Goldthorpe has in mind when she speaks of Sartre's "scorn of the inner life" (Goldthorpe, *Nausée*, 26).

[29] See Sartre's remarks on Camus's *Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Stranger* in *Sit* 1 92–112 or English trans. in *EH* 73–98.

[30] Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life*, abridged and trans. Alastair Hannay (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), 479–483, on the loss of self through indecisiveness.

[31] See Beauvoir, *Mémoires d'une jeune fille rangée*, 342 or *OR* 1161.

they require a philosophical vocabulary. Thus I saw that I had to duplicate, so to speak, each novel with an essay. So at the same time I was writing *Nausea*, I was writing 'The Psyche,' a work that will soon come out and which will deal with psychology from a phenomenological point of view" (Contat and Rybalka 1:57). Portions of that text, we saw, did appear as *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions* (1939) but the rest of that 400-page manuscript was never published. We have noted this strain between the imaginary and the conceptual in Sartre's work. It will continue through his multivolume existential biography of Gustave Flaubert, *The Family Idiot*. But remarks like this have led commentators to seek anticipations, parallels and applications of Sartre's philosophical writings in his works of imaginative literature. The dialogue between *Nausea* and *The Imaginary* mentioned above is but one example. The application of themes from *Being and Nothingness* to *No Exit* and *Dirty Hands* would be another, though in the latter case, we must take into account the political situation of the time as well. And one could continue the parallels, associating *The Devil and the Good Lord* (1951) with *Saint Genet* (1952) and his various polemical essays of the 1950s and *The Condemned of Altona* (1959) with his essays opposing the war in Algeria.

Is life to be lived or narrated? In a remark critical of the then prevalent Hegelian philosophy, Kierkegaard commented: "It is perfectly true, as philosophers say, that life must be understood backwards. But they forget the other proposition, that it must be lived forwards."[32] Sartre seems to have read the Danish Socrates for the first time as a soldier. Whether directly inspired by SK or not, the following early entry in Sartre's *War Diaries* certainly resonates with the remark just cited: "I was imbued to the very marrow with what I shall term the biographical illusion, which consists in believing that a lived life can resemble a recounted life." But a life, so conceived, was "a whole existing before its parts and being realized through its parts" (*WD*, December 2, 1939). He harkens back to a passage from *Nausea* in which Roquentin questions whether there could ever be "adventures" in one's life as his girlfriend Anny passionately sought:

This is what I thought: for even the most banal to become an adventure, you must (and this is enough) begin to recount it. This is what fools people: a man is always a

[32] *The Journals of Søren Kierkegaard*, trans. and ed. Alexander Dru (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959), 89.

teller of tales, he lives surrounded by his stories and the stories of others, he sees everything that happens to him through them; and he tries to live his own life as if he were telling a story.

But you have to choose: live or tell.

I wanted the moments of my life to follow and order themselves like those of a life remembered. You might as well try and catch time by the tail.

(*Nausea* 39–40)

Yet, even if we take with caution Sartre's subsequent identification with Roquentin (or with Mathieu in *The Roads to Freedom*), one cannot avoid reading this first novel as autobiographical in significant ways. In particular, it dramatizes Sartre's own commitment to the creatively tensive world of writing philosophy in a metaphorical mode or producing the imaginary with a philosophical bite. If one recalls his own emotional upheaval with the mescaline experience and the accompanying or resultant depression, the existential malady depicted in *Nausea* rings true. And both the actual and the fictional "cures" are due to writing, though in Sartre's case at least, a life-long neurosis – his inability to leave a page blank – has merely trumped a transitory one, real or proposed. The prevalent view that associates Roquentin's erstwhile girlfriend Anny with Simone Jollivet, Sartre's first love, exhibits another autobiographical twist to the novel. In other words, writing and living may coalesce when the story is obliquely one's own: a novel that is true.[33]

And yet the problem persisted. An entry in his *War Diary* for December 1, 1939 confesses:

I don't think I'm being overly schematic if I say that the moral problem which has preoccupied me up till now is basically that one of relations between art and life. I wanted to write – there was no doubt about that and never has been. However, apart from these strictly literary labors there was "the rest" – in other words, everything: love, friendship, politics, relations with oneself, if you will.

(*WD* 72)

This led him to distinguish three periods in his life: a period of optimism when he was "a thousand Socrates" and constructed a "metaphysical

[33] This is how Raymond Aron characterizes history in general (*IPH* 509 and *Magazine Littéraire* no. 198 [September 1983]: 37) and how Sartre on more than one occasion describes both *The Family Idiot* and his autobiography, *Words*.

morality of the work of art" (1921–1929); the chastening experience of failing the *agrégation* exam and passing it on the second try, which led him, with Beauvoir's support, to modestly cleanse himself of the "super-humanity" with which he, Nizan and Maheu had endowed themselves under the spell of a Nietzschean exuberance (1929–1937) when he seemed on the edge of failure; and, finally, the *annus mirabilis* when *Nausea* was accepted for publication, "The Wall" appeared in the June 1937 issue of the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, he met Wanda Kosakiewicz, and received a teaching post in Paris (*WD* 73–78).

Omnivorous humanism(s)

It is Beauvoir who registers the "conversion":

> *Metaphysical* solidarity that I newly discovered, I, who was a solipsist. I cannot be consciousness, spirit, among ants. I understand what was lacking in our antihumanism. To admire man as given (a beautiful intelligent animal) is idiotic – but there is no other reality than human reality – all values are founded on it. And that "toward which it transcends itself" is what has always moved each one us.[34]

The issue of humanism arises when Roquentin encounters the self-taught man in the library. The autodidact is methodically reading every entry in the encyclopedia in alphabetical order, reminiscent of the young Sartre in his grandfather's library. This unsavory and rather pitiful character is the incarnation of a certain kind of humanism that Roquentin despises. He used to hang around with some Parisian humanists who were smooth in their measured philanthropy. But this little fellow was their crude, barbaric mimic: "a provincial humanist." Raised in Germany, the man confesses to Roquentin that, as a prisoner in a French internment camp during the Great War, he had traded his youthful belief in God for a belief in man. In a remark that invites ironic comparison with Sartre's experience in a German stalag a few years later, the humanist explains: "In the internment camp, I learned to believe in men."[35] Now comes the venture of trust: "Monsieur, I know that I can

[34] *Wartime Diary*, trans. Anne Deing Cordero (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), Jan. 21, 1940, 234.
[35] *Nausea*, trans. Lloyd Alexander (New York: New Directions, 1964), 114; hereafter *Nausea*.

count on your discretion." He admits to being a member of the Socialist Party – a man whose sympathy for humankind extends beyond his personal concerns. He sees party loyalty as fulfilling his vocation in life. This elicits from Roquentin a less than enthusiastic appreciation of the man who is imprudently bearing his soul.

Roquentin asks himself: "Is it my fault if, as he speaks, I see all the humanists I have known rise up? I've known many of them." He then breaks into a litany of the kinds of humanists he has known and disliked: the radical humanist (like Sartre's grandfather and stepfather) who is the particular friend of officials; the Communist who "has been loving men since the second Five-Year Plan"; the Catholic humanist, who has chosen the humanism of the angels: "he writes, for their edification, long, sad and beautiful novels which frequently win the Prix Femina." And there is a swarm of others, evocative of the Lord High Executioner's list in *The Mikado* of those who "never will be missed": the humanist philosopher who bends over his brothers like a wise elder brother who has a sense of his responsibilities; the humanist who loves men as they are, the humanist who loves them as they ought to be, the one who wants to save them with their consent and the one who will save them in spite of themselves, and so forth. "They all hate each other," Roquentin insists wryly, "as individuals, naturally, not as men" (*Nausea* 117). They are "humanists," after all.[36]

Like the "digestive philosophy" prescribed by Sartre's idealist professors that dissolved the external object (and with it evil) in the white spittle of consciousness,[37] Roquentin considers humanism as a kind of homogenizing liquor that melts all differences and dissolves the individual. Imagining the kind of argument that the self-taught man would mount were he to accept his proffered label, "Perhaps you are a misanthrope?" Roquentin recoils:

It's a trap: if I consent, the Self-Taught man wins, I am immediately turned round, reconstituted, overtaken, for humanism takes possession and melts all human attitudes into one. If you oppose him head-on, you play his game; he lives off his opponents. There is a race of beings, limited and headstrong, who lose to him every time: he digests all their violences and worst excesses; he makes a white frothy lymph

[36] See comment by Derrida on this passage: "Le Livre ouvert" (*OR* 1780–1781).
[37] Jean-Paul Sartre, "Une Idée fondamentale" (*Sit* 1:29).

of them. He has digested anti-intellectualism, Manicheism, mysticism, pessimism, anarchy and egotism: they are nothing more than stages, unfinished thoughts which find their justification only in him.

(*Nausea* 118)

Refusing to play the labeling game, Roquentain protests to himself: "I don't want to be integrated, I don't want my good red blood to go and fatten this lymphatic beast: I will not be fool enough to call myself 'anti-humanist.' I am not a humanist, that's all there is to it" (*Nausea* 118).

Though the "evidence" is taken from a piece of imaginative literature, it conveys Sartre's own thought on the matter of humanism as exhibited by his other writings at that time, including his masterwork *Being and Nothingness*. There we shall find him denying that we have a human nature but insisting that we share a human "condition" comprised of indelible features of human life such as birth and death, language and community, existence in place and time, and the rest. His opposition to the traditional concept of human nature is based on his postulatory atheism (there is no God to view "humanity" as a whole) and on his correlative view that nature offers us no moral norms; in other words, that one should not look to human nature to construct a "natural" law.

It is texts such as these but especially the remarks in *Nausea* that lead Bernard-Henri Lévy in a highly publicized book, to claim that there are "two" Sartres, a good one who is an individualist and anti-humanist and a "bad" one who discovers and embraces a kind of socialist or even Maoist humanism at mid-point in his career.[38] But we should recall that Roquentin/Sartre "will not be fool enough to call [him]self 'anti-humanist.' He is not a humanist, that's all there is to it." In other words, the case rests unresolved. Taking this remarkable passage from *Nausea* just cited as the "negative" of Sartre's composite image of the humanist, we shall observe its "positive" emerge in subsequent writings, starting with the *War Diaries* and his own "belief in man," ironically a kind of "socialist humanism" (minus the Party, of course) reminiscent of the autodidact's conversion in the detention camp.[39]

[38] See Bernard-Henri Lévy, *Sartre: The Philosopher of the Twentieth Century*, trans. Andrew Brown (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), 170–180.

[39] See my "The Humanisms of Sartre," in *Revolutionary Hope. Essays in Honor of William L. McBride*, ed. Nathan Jun and Shane Wahl (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2013), 53–69.

The positive image was already starting to appear even before the advent of the "phoney war." In his essay on Faulkner's *Sartoris* published in the *Nouvelle Revue Française* in February of 1938, Sartre had appraised the author's humanism as "doubtless the only acceptable [form]. It hates our well adjusted consciousnesses, our engineers' consciousnesses [reminiscent of Sartre's stepfather]" (*Sit* 1:13). If it is the solidarity that Roquentin resists in the name of the solitary individual, it is what Sartre will later denote in *Being and Nothingness* as "the spirit of seriousness" that repels him with its smug self-satisfaction. Speaking for herself but doubtless reflecting a similar change in Sartre, Beauvoir remarks: "It is impossible to assign any particular day, week, or even month to the conversion that took place in me about this time. But there is no doubt that the spring of 1939 marked a watershed in my life. I renounced my individualistic, antihumanist way of life. I learned the value of solidarity" (*Prime* 433). It is the "value of solidarity" that Sartre will learn through the threats of Nazi invasion, the rough-and-tumble life of a soldier and prisoner, and the occupation and resistance as he undertakes the first stage of his conversion to "socialism and freedom" – the name he will give to the Resistance group of intellectuals that he and others will form on his return from the stalag. Though he continued for the rest of his life to despise the "bourgeois humanism" of his family and of such old friends as Pierre Guille, his military experience shows signs of a weakening resolve. Reporting a conversation among his fellow conscripts about the moral obligation to share the fate of the most wretched in society, he allows: "The principle of this new Idea – whose presence I obscurely sense – is Guille's humanism, which is entirely defensible but which I do not share" (see *WD* 9).

One senses that if one could distinguish between "solidarity" as a psychological phenomenon and an ontological state, on the one hand, and "human nature" as an abstract essence or "species," one could break this barrier between Sartre's "socialist" sympathies and his "humanist" antipathies. Consider the following reflection, again from the *War Diaries*:

> This is precisely the basis of humanism: man viewing himself as species. It is this abasement of human nature that I condemn. Species whose destiny is to conquer and order the world . . . The religion of man conceived as a natural species: the error of 1848, the worst error, the humanitarian error. Against this, [he proposes] to establish

human reality, the human condition, the being-in-the world of man and his being-in-situation. The notion of human species has made incredible ravages.[40]

(21–22)

The ontology Sartre constructs in *Being and Nothingness* will merely confirm this individualist suspicion of social solidarity. Yet his experience of the communal in the military, of solidarity in the stalag and of what in the *Critique* he will call "fraternity" in the Resistance, will challenge the sufficiency of the initial model of the social that he will start to fashion in his *War Diaries*, formulate conceptually in *Being and Nothingness* and articulate in his play *No Exit*. Another set of social relations is starting to dawn on him and with it, another kind of humanism to guide it. We shall examine that new social ontology, founded on the primacy of "praxis" and the mediating third party when we address his *Critique of Dialectical Reason* in Chapter 13. By that time, the log-jam produced by the looking/looked-at model of interpersonal relations at work in *Being and Nothingness* will have been broken and the initiation of a properly social philosophy made possible.

The experience of nausea

Perhaps no other concept exhibits the anti-Cartesian character of Sartrean metaphysics so graphically as does that of nausea, though the concept of the "viscous" (the slimy) briefly mentioned in *Nausea* but as analyzed in *Being and Nothingness* (*EN* 661–674) might compete well for this distinction. Sartre is not using the term metaphorically; nausea is not a symbol of some transcendent entity. He is referring to the sweetness that invades someone's mouth as they are starting to get sick to their stomach. It is a quasi-automatic function of our embodiment. Just as angels don't smile, the Cartesian *cogito* does not vomit. Neither, for that matter, does Heideggerian *Dasein*. But the Sartrean individual does and the experience is both physical and metaphysical in the sense that it constitutes, along with boredom, what Sartre will call a "phenomenon of

[40] *WD* 21–22. As part of the same remarks, Sartre reveals their inspiration: "Nothing shows better the urgency of an undertaking such as Heidegger's, and its *political* importance [!]: to determine human nature as a synthetic structure, a totality endowed with essence . . . We posit as the objects of our interrogation not the mind, nor the body, nor the psyche, nor historicity, but the human condition in its indivisible unity" (*WD* 21).

Being" in *Being and Nothingness* (xlviii). We shall pursue this in the following chapter.

Roquentin's famous experience of the contingency of existence before the chestnut tree root in a public garden on a Sunday afternoon is the imaginative anticipation of the phenomenological ontology articulated in *Being and Nothingness* a few years later. It joins the bodily changes of the emotional subject that we saw conjuring, as if by magic, the changed world that had previously threatened, or limited, our normal existence. And it gestures toward another embodied "argument" that reveals our embarrassment before the Other's gaze in *Being and Nothingness*. These and many other examples should temper the easy accusations of unqualified Cartesianism aimed in Sartre's direction. For all that, it must be admitted at this point that there is a duality operative in his writings, but it is not that of the classical Cartesian "thinking thing" and "extended thing"; rather, it evinces a dualism of *spontaneity* and *inertia*. This duality, of possibly Bergsonian provenance, continues into the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* notwithstanding its apparent subsumption in the pervasive dialectic of that work.

Reflecting on the philosophical message of Roquentin's neurosis and its abatement, if not cure, with the experience of the work of art, Sartre remarked to Beauvoir:

> I recall that *Nausea* was somewhat out of step with my own ideas. That is, I no longer aimed at creating other-worldly objects like truth or beauty, as I thought of doing before I met you. I didn't know exactly what I wanted but I knew it wasn't a beautiful object, a literary object, an academic object that was being created; it was something else. From this point of view, Roquentin marked the end of a period rather than the beginning of another.
>
> (*Cér* 266)

That terminating period was when Sartre regarded *Nausea* as a "metaphysical essence" that was concretized every time the reader engaged with the text, not unlike the response to the invitation of the Spanish King described in *The Imaginary* when viewing his portrait. "I began *Nausea* with that belief but by the end no longer held it" (*Cér* 266).

Pursuing the path of the imaginary: *The Roads to Freedom*

Nausea had scarcely appeared in 1938 when Sartre began work on his "novel" (as distinct from his *factum*), a projected multivolume

undertaking that off and on would occupy the next decade of his life.[41] As usual, he was engaged in many other tasks at the same time. During the next two years he would keep his commitment to Poulain by producing a series of essays in contemporary literary criticism for the *Nouvelle Revue Française* (chiefly revisions of his public lectures delivered in Le Havre); he would write "The Childhood of a Leader," the last of the short stories to be gathered along with the title piece, "The Wall," in a collection that appeared in January of 1939; and would publish, *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions* in December of 1939. This kind of multitasking would continue for the rest of his life so long as his health permitted and even when it did not, as we shall see.

If *Nausea* was originally conceived as a philosophical treatise in diary form, what came to be called *The Roads of Freedom* was a novel from the start. Written out of his own experience of the political and social scene in France during the late 1930s and early 1940s, this work was a quasi-historical piece. And while it carried the usual philosophical dimension – its main protagonist is a 34-year-old high school teacher of philosophy in search of authenticity – it assumed a psychological and political perspective on current events: the gathering storm of the Second World War, the fall of France, and transport of the French soldiers to a POW camp inside Germany – events of which Sartre had first-hand knowledge. It is as if he were looking out his window and into the souls of his contemporaries caught up by seemingly irresistible sociopolitical forces – a view that must have shocked "the solitary man" and given pause to the nascent existentialist.

The first volume, *The Age of Reason*, follows the trail of Mathieu Delarue, another solitary man, as he desperately bargains with friends and family for funds to procure an abortion for Marcelle, his pregnant

[41] *The Age of Reason*, completed in 1941 but published along with volume II, *The Reprieve*, in 1945, *Troubled Sleep* (1948) along with fragments of the unfinished fourth volume, the first part of which appeared as "A Strange Friendship" in the November–December issue of his journal *Les Temps Modernes*. The second part, "The Last Chance," along with fragments of other sections appeared in reconstructed form in *L'Œuvre romanesque* (Gallimard, 1981). Sartre seems to have ceased working on the fourth volume around 1952, though he hinted to Beauvoir that other volumes might follow (see Simone de Beauvoir, *Force of Circumstance*, trans. Richard Howard [New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1965] 215). These parts and fragments of the fourth volume have appeared in English translation by Craig Vasey as *The Last Chance* (London: Continuum, 2009).

mistress who, as it turns out, would prefer to keep the child. The story occurs within a 48-hour period in June 1938. Mathieu, as a model of inauthenticity, would like to be free of the encumbrance of mistress and child. As Sartre explains in an interview after its publication in 1945:

> Sure Mathieu is guilty. But his real fault isn't where people have looked for it. It's less in proposing abortion to Marcelle than it is in being committed for eight years in a loveless relationship. And he is not really committed to Marcelle. Not because he hasn't married her – to my mind marriage makes no difference, it's just the social form of commitment. But because he knew very well that this relationship wasn't really a two-way street. They see each other four times a week. They say that they tell each other everything: in reality, they never stop lying to each other, because their relationship itself is false, it's a lie.[42]

Like Camus' protagonist Mersault in *The Stranger*, Mathieu is floating through life unwilling or incapable of making a commitment: a self-defining act, as Sartre will say in *Being and Nothingness*.

After continuing to play the spectator self in the next volume, *The Reprieve*, which catches the grasp of the Munich debacle from several points of view, shifting back and forth like the voices in a fugue between the parties to the "peace" pact as its being fashioned (Hitler, Chamberlain, Deladier and others) and those helpless individuals hoping for the impossible but resigned to the inevitable as history advances seemingly of its own accord. With the mobilization of troops on both sides and the outbreak of the "phoney war," Mathieu and his family and friends are caught in the maelstrom. He does display a bit of courage when he comes to the aid of a young pacifist demonstrator about to be throttled by a group of angry men. Mathieu assumes the persona of a police officer and snatches the hapless youth from their hands. Still, this is scarcely the self-defining action that one might hope for. Rather, it's more like a mere exchange of masks, which seems to be all that is called for at this stage of the story.

[42] Interview at the Café Flore given to Christian Risoli and published in the journal *Paru*, Dec. 13, 1945. Reprinted in *Last Chance*, 14–21. Vasey has rightly noted that the correct English rendition of *Les Chemins de la liberté* is "Roads of Freedom" and not "Roads to Freedom" as in the now standard translation of this quartet of books. (Despite this limitation, I have usually retained the standard version to avoid confusing the many readers accustomed to the received title.)

In another scene, which invites comparison with Roquentin's famous meditation on the tree root in *Nausea*, Mathieu reflects on the absolute, eternal fact of his gratuitous existence. He apprehends the de facto necessity of his freedom; he realizes, as Sartre will repeat in *Being and Nothingness*, that he is "condemned to be free":

> Nothing can rob me of this eternal moment. There had been and there forever would be, that cold glare upon those stones under the black sky; the absolute, forever; the absolute without cause or sense or purpose; without past or future save a gratuitous, fortuitous, splendid permanence. "I am free," he said suddenly. And his joy changed, on the spot, into a crushing sense of anguish.[43]

Whereas Roquentin is nauseous at the sheer contingency of everything, himself included, Mathieu experiences the irrefragable necessity of its "having occurred" – a feature Sartre will elaborate in his discussion of the historical event and the concept of being-in-itself in his *War Diaries*. In effect, the "could have been otherwise" of *Nausea* is trumped by the "cannot be otherwise" of the event as an historical fact.[44] Like Roquentin, Mathieu contemplates suicide but decides against it. If it's the superfluity of his existence that dissuades Roquentin, it's the very entry of the event into the realm of the absolute that urges Mathieu's hesitation and deferral: "This obscure suicide would *also* be an absolute, a law, a choice, and a morality, all of them complete . . . One gesture, the mere unclasping of his hands [as he hangs onto the bridge over the Seine], and I *would have been* Mathieu . . . Next time perhaps" (*Reprieve* 364–365).

Another figure enters the story in the first volume, Brunet, who plays a minor role in the second but emerges as the center of volume III, part II. Known only by his family name, he writes for the Communist newspaper *L'Humanité* and is a Communist operative who in the first volume is bent on enlisting his childhood friend, Mathieu into the Party. This too is a choice that Mathieu is unwilling to make. But willing or not, he is carried along as are those who greet the Munich Pact as their last best chance for lasting peace in Europe. Echoing a remark voiced by Sartre some years earlier, Mathieu observes, when faced with the

[43] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Roads of Freedom,* vol. II, *The Reprieve*, trans. Eric Sutton (New York: Vintage, 1973), 352.

[44] See *SFHR* I:6–7 and 31–32 and *CDG*-E 252 and 255–256.

challenge of conscription into the war with Germany: "Why am I going to the war? . . . And the war in Spain wasn't my business either. Nor the Communist Party. But what is my business?" he asks. "War is an illness, he thought; my business is to bear it like an illness" (*Reprieve* 258–259). Sartre concludes the volume and the fugue with a glimpse of the broken Deladier, returning from Munich to the cheers of the crowd crying "Hurrah for France! Hurrah for England! Hurrah for peace!" The vanquished prime minister remarks to his aide as he descends from the plane: "The God-damned fools!"

Volume three, *Troubled Sleep* (*Iron in the Soul*) brings us into the phoney war that Sartre knew as a conscript on the Alsatian Front and the subsequent surrender and imprisonment.[45] The fortunes of war have thrown Mathieu and Brunet together once more, in the same village as the Germans advance, but unaware of each other's presence. In fact, the decisive act of Mathieu's life is occurring without Brunet even realizing that it is happening or that it is Mathieu's.

The narrative is divided into two parts. In the first part the role of Mathieu continues to dominate, reaching its climax in that courageous, self-defining act that he had been entertaining but effectively avoiding thus far in his life. A ceasefire has been declared and it looks like the war is coming to an end. Now he joins a band of soldiers (*chasseurs*) who, abandoned by their officers but refusing to retreat or surrender, lodge themselves in the town hall and the church tower of a village in a suicidal stand-off with advancing German troops. After managing to kill a couple of the enemy, Mathieu and what remains of the band seem to perish as the tower is destroyed by enemy fire.

Part II belongs to Brunet, who emerges from concealment nearby in time to see the tower collapse under German fire unaware that this event marked Mathieu's end. As he approaches the enemy to surrender, he thinks to himself that the war is over and he has work to do. He must search for reliable comrades among this motley herd of dispirited men and begin the process of political formation. Brunet announces that he is a brevet officer and assumes command of the prisoners, representing

[45] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Roads of Freedom*, vol. III, *Troubled Sleep*, trans. Gerard Hopkins (New York: Vintage, 1973). The British edition is entitled *Iron in the Soul* but, as Craig Vasey points out, the more faithful translation of the French title, *La Mort dans l'âme*, is *Death in the Soul*.

them to their captors. The Communist exemplifies the Stoic discipline that we shall find Sartre admiring in his *War Diaries*, even as he plays it off against the virtue of authenticity that was starting to supplant it in his eyes. Indeed, when we consider the ethical categories Sartre is formulating as he writes this work, we recognize that both Brunet and Mathieu are caught in respective forms of bad faith.

Brunet is committed to a cause greater than himself. This affords him a certain self-control that he believes distinguishes him and his kind from the mass of soldiers that surround him. But he bristles at the sight of his natural enemy – a military chaplain equally intent on winning the allegiance of these fellows to his cause. Hearing the priest's sermon that belongs to the genre of "retribution" discourses along with Father Paneloux's homily on the plague as a chastisement in Camus' *The Plague* – both echoing the Pétanist reading of the French defeat as the well-deserved price of the people's laxity and indulgence after the Great War – with the chaplain's message ringing in his ears, Brunet recommends that the small group of loyalists gathered around him try character assassination to discredit the priest's status in the soldiers' minds – hinting that he associates with the German officers in the evenings, abandoning his flock for the material comforts of the upper class. When one of their group suggests that the priest doesn't seem to see much of the Germans, another shoots back that, intentions aside, he is *objectively* a French prisoner spending time with the enemy. In other words, the fateful logic of the Stalinist show trials remains in force in the Party, as is confirmed in the fourth volume when Brunet himself is accused of "objective" treachery by another operative who has joined the prisoners in the camp. Their job, Brunet indicates, is to proceed gradually, insisting the armistice be rejected and that the only legitimate form of government is democratic. Obviously he has other goals in mind for the long run, but one must gear the message to the audience and the "objective possibilities" of the times. When the conversation turns to the Nazi–Soviet pact of nonaggression – the event that led Nizan to quit the Party in disgust – Brunet defends the necessity for the Soviets in order to gain time to prepare for the inevitable Nazi attack: "I put my trust in the Central Committee of the USSR and I'm not going to change my attitude now . . . When a man joins the Party, nothing but the Party matters," proclaims Brunet. "This is a life

vowed to Communism; so long as he lives, he belongs to us."[46] This is a model of the bad faith that Sartre will later call "the spirit of seriousness."

One gathers from these exchanges how Sartre views both the Party and the Church. We shall see him addressing both antagonists in his famous "Is Existentialism a Humanism?" lecture (March 1946), where he explains that a new challenge to the loyalty of the younger generation is now on the scene, a third option: existentialism.

Though many thought that *Roads of Freedom* was a trilogy, Sartre continued to work on a fourth volume that would join his list of unfinished works. Nonetheless parts of the work did exist in two sections, the first published independently in *Les Temps Modernes* as "Strange Friendship" (1949) and the second "The Last Chance," which gave its name to the entire volume, did not appear until that volume was reconstructed from unpublished fragments by Michel Rybalka and Georges Bauer for the Pléiade edition of Sartre's *Œuvres romanesques* (1981).

Though unfinished, what the fourth volume does for the story is prepare for Brunet's second escape after the first failed due to betrayal by a fellow prisoner. That betrayal cost the life of another major figure, a stand-in for Nizan, who has assumed an alias after having been vilified by the Party for his public withdrawal because of its support of the German–Soviet pact. Brunet has befriended the man without knowing about his pariah status vis-à-vis the Party. By the time he has learned his identity, Brunet has come to love and respect the man. He realizes that he too is "objectively" undermining the formative project of the other operative by instructing the young recruits that the Soviets will inevitably reject that pact with the Nazis, contrary to what the Party line is asserting.

Brunet's dilemma is intensified when, in rather incredible fashion, Mathieu appears in the camp, having survived the collapse of the tower and having emerged as a committed resister to the Nazis, though, for all that, not a Party member. His commitment finds expression in organizing escapes from the camp and it is in this capacity that he and Brunet have their final meeting.

Their final conversation exhibits Sartre's growing sympathy with the Party – not to the point of joining it, which he never did, but insofar as it

[46] *Troubled Sleep*, 369, 408 and 417.

exemplifies a sense of the role the Party plays in furthering the cause of the proletariat while denying the members' freedom to express alternatives and criticize its errors. This tension of what Sartre will later call the need to "reintroduce man into Marxism" is personified in the dilemma of the conflicted Brunet facing the "existentialist" Mathieu:

BRUNET. As for the Party, I think I'm going to quit.

. . .

MATHIEU. You shouldn't quit the CP . . . You without the Party . . . What is that? Just shit. A bit of pride and some filth. And the Party without you? What will it do? Pursue exactly the politics you want it not to follow. By quitting, you send it in the direction you despise.

B. You think there's anything at all I could stop? You seem to think the CP is a congress of radical socialists.

M. Try! You've got to try to fight from within.

. . .

B. You told me straight to my face a little while ago: before, I wasn't anyone. Now, at the present, I'm someone. Believe me, I'm not overly proud of it, but I can't go back either. I didn't have a self. Resentment and shock gave it to me, and it's not going away. I can't spit it back up or swallow it down. Not used to it, I guess.

M. Right. Not used to it. But you never get used to it.

B. So you see! Even if I return to the Party, hat in hand, I won't be able to forget myself. A whole part of me will remain outside.

M. Exactly . . . Outside. Outside and inside at the same time. Completely in on it all, and out of it at the same time, wanting the impossible, and knowing you want it, and wanting it as if it were within reach – that's being a man.

(*Last Chance* 162, 172–173)

Sartre was moving in the direction of becoming a fellow traveler as he was working on this volume. In Chapter 11 we shall chart this movement toward the Party that reached its height from 1952 to 1956 and descended rapidly thereafter. His own ambivalence offers a perspective on the interplay of the moral, the political, the imaginative and the conceptual that we've come to expect from the work of Sartre.

7

The war years, 1939–1944

SARTRE'S KEEN SENSE of the maneuvering, opportunism, occasional heroism and frequent failure of nerve that marked European power politics toward the end of the 1930s was evident in his novelistic account. As we retrace these steps in "real life," we encounter Sartre playing his own role in what he had reason to believe would be a published set of recollections of memorable events: his *Carnets de la drôle de guerre* (*War Diaries*).[1] Mobilized and posted in Alsace, private Sartre filled fifteen good-sized notebooks with comments on his personal life, his mates, the state of the world along with reflections on literature and especially philosophy. In a letter to Beauvoir from a holding camp in Baccarat, Lorraine, on July 22, 1940, he announced: "I've begun to write a metaphysical treatise: *L'Être et le Néant* (*Being and Nothingness*)"[2] which will develop many of the thoughts expressed both in his *War Diaries* and in his letters from this period.

[1] "Since I intend to have these notebooks published, it's best to cross out these passages [that are derogatory of Bianca Binenfeld and Wanda Kosakiewicz]," Oct. 26, 1939 (*CDG* 621, annexe I, fragment from Notebook 2). Lamblin (née Binenfeld) got even with an account of her mistreatment by Sartre and Beauvoir. See Bianca Lamblin, *A Disgraceful Affair*, trans. Julie Plovnick (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1996). After witnessing the woman's psychological state, Beauvoir wrote to Sartre in December of 1945: "She moved me and filled me with remorse – because she's suffering from an intense and dreadful attack of neurasthenia, and it's our fault, I think . . . She's the only person to whom we've really done harm, but we have harmed her." Simone de Beauvoir, *Letters to Sartre*, trans. Quintin Hoare (New York: Arcade, 1991), 389; hereafter *LS*-E.

[2] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Quiet Moments in a War*, trans. and introduction Lee Fahnestock and Norman MacAfee (New York: Scribner's, 1993), 234; hereafter *QMW*. Letter of August 12: "I'm still working on my philosophy book (76 pages written, it's shaping up)" (*QMW* 242).

Unfortunately, only six of these fifteen[3] notebooks seem to have survived the misfortunes of war.[4] But if you supplement what they contain with the almost daily letters that he exchanged with Beauvoir and others, you obtain a detailed view of their thoughts and reactions to life in the military and on the home front for the months between Sartre's mobilization in September of 1939 and his second leave for home on March 28, 1940. On his return to his post, the letters continue through to his capture a few hours before the armistice, on June 21, 1940, which was his birthday. They become less frequent during his temporary incarceration for two months in Baccarat and his transfer in mid August to a massive POW camp outside of Trier, in Germany, that housed 26,000 prisoners, just as he recounts in *The Roads of Freedom*. Most of the letters from Germany have been lost.

War Diaries: "A proud, pagan journal"

Despite the gaps in their narrative due to the apparent loss of nine of the diaries, the remaining ones afford us the opportunity to view Sartre's reflections, especially his philosophical speculations, "in process," as it were.[5] In a letter to Beauvoir, he confesses:

> Since I have broken my inferiority complex vis-à-vis the far Left, I feel a freedom of thought I've never known before; vis-à-vis the phenomenologists too. I feel I'm on the way, as biographers say around page 150 of their books, to discovering myself.

[3] Only fourteen notebooks are listed in *WD*, but Arlette Elkaïm-Sartre speaks of fifteen in her introduction to *CDG*, which includes the additional first notebook, listed in *WD* as lost. For a discussion of the status of this search for the supposedly lost notebooks, see *PS* 109, n. 1 as well as *MAEA* 1393.

[4] For a brief history of the career of the notebooks and their fate, see Arlette Elkaïm-Sartre, "Présentation," *CDG*-F 9–10. Besides the three or four that Beauvoir recalls having given to Bost and which were lost when he was wounded on the Northern Front, Arlette believes that a couple may have been lost when Sartre's apartment was "plastiqué" by the OAS (French opponents of the Algerian revolution that Sartre was supporting) in 1961 and again in 1962 or possibly during the resultant transfer of his residence. After the second explosion, it is reported that Sartre himself never returned to the apartment to gather his belongings. Others did that for him.

[5] In the introduction to his translation of the *War Diaries*, Quintin Hoare has summarized the contents of the missing notebooks from the letters exchanged with Sartre during that period as well as the subsequent recollections made by him and Beauvoir (*WD* xvi–xviii). "A proud, pagan journal" within the subheading above is taken from *WD* 69.

> Which only means that I no longer think with an eye to certain strictures (the Left, Husserl), etc., but with a total gratuitous freedom, out of pure curiosity and disinterestedness, accepting in advance that I could end up a Fascist if that's where my reasoning led me. Don't worry, I doubt that will happen. It interests me and I think that, beyond the war and the renewed questioning, the notebook *form* counts for a great deal in this; the free and fragmented form isn't subject to prior ideas, you write each thing according to the moment and only take stock when you want to. As a matter of fact, I haven't reread all of my notebooks and I've forgotten any number of things I've said in them.
>
> (January 6, 1940, *QMW* 14, emphasis his)

There will be occasion to recall these remarks about the tentative and hypothetical nature of these often disjointed entries when we "reconstruct" his existentialist "ethics of authenticity" from another set of notebooks penned in 1947–1948.

We observed how Sartre's parallel pursuit of his literary and philosophical concerns became separated and intensified during his research year in Berlin, where he devoted the mornings to Husserl and the afternoons to the "factum" that would eventually become *Nausea*. That *modus operandi* continued during his years in the military both before and during his captivity. But now his philosophical attention was focused on his "metaphysical" treatise on nothingness and time and his literary concern on "the novel." Specifically, it was his discovery of "historicity" in Heidegger and the philosophy of history in Raymond Aron's *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, published in 1938, that fueled this interest in temporality that had been with him since he read Bergson in the lycée.

As usual, the moral dimension was scarcely latent. In the *Diaries* it achieved existential urgency with reflections on authenticity. This last was beginning to weaken his sympathy for Stoicism engendered by Alain's lectures at the Lycée Henri-IV.[6] Indeed, Arlette Elkaïm-Sartre subtitled one of the sections of the first notebook "The Tribulations of a

[6] Though he and Nizan did sit in on some of Alain's classes at the Lycée Henri-IV while they were attending Louis-le-Grand, Sartre claims not to have read the work of this influential Stoic pacifist until he entered the ENS (*Cér* 250). Then he occasionally attended the lectures of Sorbonne professor Émile Bréhier delivered on Stoicism and neo-Platonism at the ENS. In view of Sartre's attraction to Stoicism, it is curious to discover that the professor was so angered by the practice of certain philosophy students skipping his lectures (Sartre and Nizan were mentioned by name) that he threatened to halt teaching the course. It was future philosopher and Resistance martyr, Jean Cavièllès who urged him to continue delivering them (*Mémoires* 192).

Stoic," probably alluding to a remark he made in a letter to Beauvoir: "I'm writing at great length in my little notebook: the misadventures of a Stoic. You can guess what kind: the circumstances are too ironically easy and favorable for an honest Stoic such as me." Sartre exposes his problem in the third notebook:

> "Conquer oneself rather than fortune." Very well said. But a fine demonstration of the guile of stoicism . . . If I'm passionately attached to some object that eludes me, what can renouncing it mean to me? Do people think that I can continue to assert the object's value in the flesh, in short be a martyr to that value, and *at the same time* cut off all my desire at its roots? Do they not see that I grasp that value *through* my desire?
>
> (November 27, 1939, *WD* 50–51)

In the first notebook he states his objective: "To know the war and to know myself at war." But this leads him to ask "whether stoicism and authenticity are compatible. Isn't stoicism the refusal of anguish – and isn't there the stoic's trickery, a stoic optimism? And authenticity, on the contrary, doesn't it resonate with moaning (*gémissements*)? And isn't Gide, who often pursued authenticity, the worst enemy of stoicism?" (*CDG*-F 69). So we are encountering the tension we witnessed between Brunet and Mathieu in the novel now lodged in Sartre's own soul: the stoic versus the authentic individual.

Authenticity: initial sketches

Sartre is closely associated with an ethics of authenticity as distinct from an ethics of rules or consequences. In a famous footnote to *Being and Nothingness* he promises to produce such an ethics. In the several hundred pages of loosely connected reflections gathered in notebooks (*cahiers*) written in 1947 and 1948, he tries his hand at keeping that promise.[7] In retrospect, he defends his abandonment of the project because the ethical views expressed there were "too idealist."[8] One might view this project as a kind of purgation of the remaining idealist

[7] See *BN* 70 n. and 412 n. His attempt to fulfill this promise was the posthumously published *Notebooks for an Ethics* that we shall discuss in Chapter 10. It constitutes the first of three successive approaches to ethics that Sartre will sketch but never complete in his lifetime.

[8] See *MAEA* 1250.

tendencies that he had contracted from his opposition to his professors. In that sense, it would replay the work of Roquentin, whose diary performed a similar therapeutic function. But the problem of authenticity had been percolating in Sartre's mind for years. No doubt it was advanced by Heidegger's use of the term *Eigentlichkeit*, usually translated as "*authenticité*" in French and "authenticity" in English.[9] Once Sartre becomes "Sartre," and Heidegger begins to take notice of him, the German will insist that, unlike Sartrean "bad faith," his "authenticity" carries no moral significance. Sartre will reply that the very opposite is the case: Sartrean "bad faith" is merely a form of self-deception without moral bearing whereas Heideggerian *Eigentlichkeit* clearly carries a positive moral value for its author.[10] Despite protests, it became widespread to ascribe moral significance to each term.

From the random observations on "authenticity" spread throughout the *War Diaries*, we discover features that will be incorporated into a more robust concept of the term elsewhere.[11] Indeed Marjorie Grene has described "authenticity" as the "sole existentialist virtue,"[12] and Charles Taylor, though scarcely an existentialist, in his excellent book on the concept has warned anglophone ethicists not to neglect this dimension of the moral life.[13] Three features emerge from Sartre's use of the term in the *War Diaries* that will serve as ingredients for his subsequent uses of the expression: truth to oneself (which later becomes "good faith"), affirmation of one's being "in-situation," including one's historicity (the human condition as inescapably immersed in history), and

[9] In addition to his Berlin year when he read a portion of *Being and Time*, Sartre would already have encountered *authenticité* in the excerpt of Henry Corbin's translation of *Qu'est-ce que la metaphysique?* published in *Bifur* no. 8 (June 1931), where his own "Légende de la vérité" appeared, though Beauvoir claimed that "since we could not understand a word of it we failed to see its interest" (*Prime* 92). She also remarked that in 1932 "Sartre worked out the notion of dishonesty [*mauvaise foi*] which, according to him, embraced all those phenomena which other people attributed to the unconscious mind" (*Prime* 153). We've noted the appearance of of "mauvaise foi" in *Emotions* (1939). In the Heideggerian context, *Eigentlichkeit* is usually rendered as "ownmost" or "most properly one's own" (see *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson [New York: Harper & Row, 1962]; hereafter *BT*).

[10] Sartre remarks that "the expressions 'authentic" and 'inauthentic' which [Heidegger] employs are dubious and insincere because of their implicit moral content" (*BN* 531).

[11] See below, Chapter 9, on *Anti-Semite and Jew* and *What is Literature?*, as well as Chapter 10 for *Notebooks for an Ethic*.

[12] Majorie Grene, "Authenticity: An Existential Virtue," *Ethics* 62 (July 1952): 266–274.

[13] Charles Taylor, *An Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge,MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

freedom grounded in Nothingness (*le Néant*). Each will find theoretical analysis and systematic unification in *Being and Nothingness*, which, as we have just seen, is already being sketched in these notebooks.

Truth to oneself

In a remarkable anticipation of a thesis essential to *BN*, Sartre observes:

> For there to be desire, it's necessary that the desired object should be concretely present – it and no other – in the innermost depths of the for-itself [roughly consciousness] but present as a nothingness that affects it or, more accurately, as a lack. And this is possible only if the for-itself, in its very existence, is susceptible to being defined by these lacks. Which means that no lack can come from the outside to the for-itself. Just as, in the case of bad faith, lies to oneself are possible only if consciousness is by nature what it is not, so desire is possible only if the for-itself is *by nature* desire – in other words, if it is *lack* by nature . . . So if, at the source of all desire and of will, it's really necessary to posit existential lack as characteristic of consciousness, then we must ask ourselves the two fundamental questions: what is lack? What is lacking?
>
> (*WD* 233)

What he calls "existential lack" will emerge in *BN* as a defining characteristic of "human reality," namely, the fundamental desire to coincide consciously with itself. But this is an ontological impossibility akin to trying to square the circle: consciousness is nonself-identical whereas the nonconscious (the in-itself) is identical. Nonetheless, this impossible desire generates a set of specific "lacks" in a vain drive to fill them while remaining conscious. This lies behind a famous line from *BN*: man is a "futile passion"[14] to be consciously self-identical with himself. To be consciously self-identical, in Sartre's view, is what we mean by "God."

This rich text anticipates several defining features of *Being and Nothingness* itself. For example, the close connection, if not functional identity, of consciousness with the for-itself and nothingness. Likewise, the paradoxical claim that "lies to oneself are possible only if consciousness is by nature what it is not." In effect, consciousness is a notable exception to the principle of identity ("a thing is what it is and not another thing") that has served as a philosophical principle since the Greek Parmenides (*c.* 445 BC). This is an ontological basis for self-deception, or what Sartre

[14] *Passion inutile* (*BN* 615; F 708).

calls in *BN* "A knowledge that is ignorance and an ignorance that knows better." As we shall examine at length when we discuss *BN* later in this chapter, the basis of bad faith or self-deception is a certain duality or better "nonself coincidence" that distinguished consciousness from the nonconscious or the in-itself, a term also used in the *Diaries* that becomes cardinal in *BN*. Though the matter is disputed, it seems that, if inauthenticity and bad faith are distinct in Sartre's more careful usage, authenticity and good faith do overlap, in the sense that being "true to oneself" is an essential feature of the authentic individual, provided one takes that Sartrean "self" as a "self presence" and not a substantial subject.[15] And while this contributes a cognitive dimension to authenticity, the relevant knowledge is clearly practical in the sense that it involves an aspect of the "good" in its very nature. Again, "to thine own self be true" in the distinctively Sartrean manner to be elaborated below.

Sartre is beginning to regard the Stoic as trading in bad faith, specifically as enveloped in what he will call "the spirit of seriousness" in *BN* and which we've already witnessed in the dogmatic Communist, Brunet in *The Roads to Freedom*. As we have just noted, Sartre attributes a certain smug self-satisfaction to the Stoic who is assured of the order of the universe and his place in it. Hence the anguish for the free person is not experienced by the Stoic. Sartre will later dismiss as "stoic freedom" the concept of freedom as the definition of man, namely, the attitude that if the cliff is too steep for climbing, one need simply change one's project, say, to photography, and this will no longer be a limitation but perhaps an advantage. In effect, the Stoic as well as the early Sartre up to and including *Being and Nothingness* seems totally innocent of what Max Weber called "objective possibility" – the enabling or limiting power of the given state of affairs for the exercise of concrete freedom. Sartre will famously embrace such possibility in his programmatic lecture "Existentialism is a Humanism" in 1946.[16] It will lead him to reconsider his relation to Marxism.

[15] On the various readings of the relation between good/bad faith and authenticity/inauthenticity, see Ronald E. Santoni, *Bad Faith, Good Faith, and Authenticity in Sartre's Early Philosophy* (Philadelphia, PN: Temple University Press, 1995), and Joseph S. Catalano, *Good Faith and Other Essays: Perspectives on Sartrean Ethics* (Boston, MA: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996).

[16] I develop this thesis in *SME* 72–84 *et passim*.

Being-in-situation

A second feature of authentic existence consists in recognizing one's "situation." Again, that crucial term is discussed at great length in *BN*, but it includes such features of our human condition as our spatial and temporal existence, especially our mortal temporality, our existence among other humans, our language – all of which, when increasingly detailed, enable us to focus on our individually "situated" existence. Contrasting this notion with Gide's concept of purity, which Sartre understands as "an entirely subjective quality of the feelings and will," Sartre states the matter in detail:

> Authenticity is not exactly this subjective fervor. It can be understood only in terms of the human condition, that condition of being thrown into situation. Authenticity is a duty that comes to us from outside and inside at once, because our "inside" is an outside.[17] To be authentic is to realize fully ones's being-in-situation: whatever this situation may happen to be: with a profound awareness that, through the authentic realization of the being-in-situation, one brings to plenary existence the situation on the one hand and human reality on the other. This presupposes a patient study of what the situation requires, and then a way of throwing oneself into it and determining oneself to "be-for" this situation. Of course, situations are not catalogued once and for all. On the contrary, *they are new each time*. With situations there is no label and never will be.
>
> (November 27, 1939, *WD* 53–54)[18]

Two aspects of our situation hold Sartre's special attention during his wartime experience: our social being and our historicity. The former is conveyed by his experience, not just of society – underscored by the diverse roles and responsibilities allotted him by virtue of his being conscripted into that impersonal phenomenon called "the Army"[19] – but of the growing sense of *solidarity* that linked him with his fellow soldiers as distinct from the officer corps and the noncombatants. It is this dawning sense of "we" as a force and not merely a passive object that will attract him to collective action after his liberation and will move him

[17] As he argues in his essay on intentionality in Husserl (see above, Chapter 4).

[18] Compare *BN* 556 as well as *Anti-Semite and Jew* on the authentic Jew and *What is Literature?* on "historialization" as living your unique historical situation to the fullest (Chapter 9 below).

[19] For Sartre's reflections on the "military personality" penned at the start of his service, see *CDG*-F 27–32. He later analyzes the "serial" unity-in-otherness of the Army as a "collective" in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*.

increasingly toward the politics of the Left and its alternative to the bourgeois "humanism" that he had rejected so categorically in *Nausea*. If his years in the ENS were among the happiest of his life, he can write retrospectively that he was happy in the camp as well. Unlike the elitism of the former, the latter opened him to a quasi-romantic regard for the "average man." Here he could be "a whole man, composed of all men and as good as all of them and no better than any" (concluding line of his autobiography *Words*).

Sartre learned "historicity" (*Geschichtlichkeit*) from Heidegger but, as usual, read it in his own way.[20] In this case, "historicity" denotes temporality as the unique and incomparable mode of being of human selfness (see *BN* 158) that makes narrative history possible. Historicity is not a feature of nature, or of the environment. Likewise, "historiality" and "to historialize oneself," in Sartre's usage, is a component of authenticity in the sense that one assumes responsibility for one's current "history." Thus the inauthentic individual – in *The Roads of Freedom* Mathieu, initially, for example, or Sartre himself in *War Diaries* (138), given their respective situations – is someone who retains a spectator's attitude with regard to his "being-at-war" (See *CDG* 59, 126).[21] It is this appreciation of "creating oneself in History" rather than simply undergoing it, that moves Sartre beyond a timeless "wisdom" to a practical authenticity. This implies facing up to his concrete immersion in the war and in his social class, whether in explicit denial, hatred or acceptance, and the like. "Those are things that had escaped me but which the war at least will have managed to teach me" (*CDG* 138).

But he pursues the issue in a way that betrays his possibly futile attempt to relate Heidegger and Husserl when he asks: "Why do we always hesitate between wisdom and the authentic, between the timeless and History?

[20] Sartre admits that his reading of Heidegger, first *What is Metaphysics?* and then *Sein und Zeit*, "supervened to teach me authenticity and historicity just at the very moment when war was about to make these notions indispensable to me" (*WD* 182).

[21] This becomes a basic issue in *Being and Nothingness*. Discussing how each person finds himself in the presence of meanings which do not come into the world through him, Sartre remarks: "We are not dealing with a limit of freedom; rather it is *in this world* that the for-itself must be free; that is, it must choose itself by taking into account these circumstances and not *ad libitum*." Whence he concludes that it is by choosing itself and by historializing itself (*s'historialisant*) in the world that the for-itself historializes (*s'historialise*) the world itself and causes it to be *dated* by its techniques (*BN* 521; F 604). For his most complete discussion of "historialization" and its cognates, see *TE*, especially the appendix.

It's because we are not only human reality [*Dasein*] as Heidegger believes. We are a transcendental consciousness *that makes itself* human reality" (*CDG* 138–139, emphasis his). Heidegger famously abstains from reference to consciousness, transcendental or otherwise, in his masterwork whereas the Husserl that Sartre knew showed little interest in historicity. The term that will capture this aspect of authenticity will be "commitment," which Sartre has yet to employ. But it will satisfy neither Husserlian intellectualism nor Heideggerian voluntarism.[22]

Freedom and nothingness

Sartre has become known as the philosopher of freedom. Indeed, "freedom" has plausibly been proposed as the principal, if not the only, value that he embraces. If one allows for the gradual "thickening" of that value to include more than the "Stoic" freedom that is the definition of the human as in the expression "I am condemned to be free" (*BN* 439) and includes the concrete socioeconomic freedom that Isaiah Berlin famously denoted "positive liberty" – under these conditions, the ascription rings true.[23] But the linking of freedom with nothingness is peculiarly Sartrean. He admits having learned it from Heidegger who, he discovers while in the army, drew considerably upon Kierkegaard. Reflecting on a text of Kierkegaard's, *The Concept of Dread* – "the relation of dread to its object, to something which is nothing (language in this instance is also pregnant: it speaks of being in dread of nothing)" – Sartre remarks: "The influence upon Heidegger is clear: use of the stock phrase 'to be in dread of nothing' is found word for word in *Sein und Zeit*. But it's true that for Heidegger anguish is anguish-at-Nothingness, which is not Nothing but, as [Jean] Wahl says, 'a cosmic fact against which existence stands out.' Whereas, for Kierkegaard," Sartre insists, "it's a question of 'a psychological anguish' and a 'nothing that is in the mind.' This nothing, in short, is possibility . . . It's there . . . as a sign of freedom" (March 18, 1920, *WD* 131).

Sartre introduces the expression "to nihilate" as distinct from "to annihilate" to denote what we may call the "othering" character of the

[22] I use these terms realizing that both adjectives are disputed when applied to each philosopher.

[23] Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford University Press, 1969), "Two Concepts of Freedom."

for-itself or consciousness. In other words, the for-itself "others" both itself (since it is not self-identical and this othering relationship is the source of its subjectivity and its freedom) and the in-itself via what we can call an "internal" or constitutive negation. This is the negation exhibited by the famous paradox from *Being and Nothingness* anticipated above, namely, that human reality "is what it is not and is not what it is" (*BN* 58). Human reality insofar as it is consciousness in internal negation with both itself and the in-itself, simply "is" Nothingness. And where Heidegger, in a much parodied remark, claims that "Das Nichts nichtet" ("Nothing nothings"), so Sartre, without referring to that phrase, can say the Nothingness nihilates, though I do not recall him ever making that claim. The point of Sartre's metaphysical position is that the source of the negativites (the lacks) that we encounter throughout the world must be its own negativity. Sartre, unlike Heidegger, finds that negative source in consciousness itself, in its "othering" function, which is ingredient in intentionality (consciousness is always conscious *of an other*; in other words, consciousness "others") and thereby grounds our freedom. In another major thesis of *BN* anticipated in the *War Diaries*, though only by implication, "Human reality is free because it is not a self but a presence-to-self" (*BN* 440), or, we might say, "an other to itself." Again, the for-itself is *non*self-coincidental.

This metaphysics of nothingness, freedom, temporality, situation and practical truthfulness distills into "authenticity" and what will later condense into "commitment." But the concepts, expressions and major themes of the masterwork are strikingly present, even in less than half of the notebooks in which they were worked out. Before turning to *Being and Nothingness*, let us pause to consider a theater piece, conceived and produced in captivity, for the imaginative expression of his philosophical insights will henceforth occur primarily in the theater and, to a much lesser extent, in film scenarios, though we shall discover them generously at work in his several existential biographical "novels" as well.

Bariona, or The Son of Thunder

If we discount childhood "plays" and subsequent works that seem never to have survived as well as brief exercises composed while living in the "artists" barracks, it is ironic that Sartre's first extant piece for theater was the full-dress performance of a Christmas play that he wrote and

directed, and in which he played the role of one of the Magi. The authorities of the camp obviously thought such a production – properly censored – would boost prisoners' morale. Indeed, the play saw three performances, December 24, 25, and 26, to an estimated crowd of 2,000 each time.[24] Several of his fellow prisoners who were priests encouraged the project and one took the title role of Bariona, the chief of a poor village near Bethlehem in revolt against its Roman occupiers. The Germans saw the villainous Romans as the British Empire abusing its colonists whereas the prisoners properly interpreted the story as applying to their Nazi captors. A similar ambiguity will grace his next play, *The Flies*, again passing censorship in occupied Paris less than three years later.

The play melds Christian themes with proto-existentialist values. One is touched by the delicacy with which Sartre handles the former while insisting on the latter. And one is struck by his use of the term "lightness" to depict Bariona's state after his "conversion" to defend the escape of the Christ child from Herod's murderous soldiers, for that term reappears three years later in *The Flies* describing Orestes' emotional rebirth after having avenged his father's murder by killing his mother and his stepfather. Of course, the Nietzschean contrast with the "spirit of gravity" in both cases should not be overlooked.[25]

The ambiguous conversion of the skeptical Bariona entails turning from despair to hope and a kind of existential "freedom." In his exhortation to the wavering hero, the *magus* Balthasar (Sartre's role) assures him:

> Then you will discover that truth which Christ came to teach you and which you already know: you are not your suffering . . . It is you who give it its meaning and make it what it is. For in itself it's nothing but matter for human action, and Christ came to teach you that you are responsible for yourself and your suffering. It is like

[24] See *OR* 1562. In an interview with Beauvoir late in life, Sartre recalls: "That's what gave me the taste for theater" and Beauvoir adds: "théâtre engagé" (*Cér* 237).

[25] See Nietzsche's reference to "The spirit of Gravity," *Thus Spoke Zarathustra Part III*, where it is associated with the burden of Judeo-Christian ethics from which Zarathustra would unburden us by his teaching of "a wholesome and healthy" self-love in contrast with the life-denying commandments of established religion. We have already noted Nietzsche's presence in Sartre's early novel *Une Défaite* (1927) and *The Legend of Truth* (1930). One of the major losses in Sartre's bibliography is the book-length manuscript on Nietzsche allegedly written as part of his reflections on ethics about the same time as he composed his *CM* (1947–1948); see Louette, *Sartre contra Nietzsche*, 14 n. 3.

stones and roots and everything which has weight and tends downward; it's because of it that you weigh heavily on the road and press against the earth with the soles of your feet. But you are beyond your own suffering, because you shape it according to your will. You are light, Bariona . . .You are for yourself a perpetually gratuitous gift.

(Contat and Rybalka II:130)

This mixture of Stoic freedom, existential hope and responsibility offers a challenge to Bariona and solace to the captive audience. The once despairing hero finds meaning and joy in his new found freedom:

Joyful! I'm overflowing with joy like a cup that's too full. I'm free. I hold my fate in my hands. I'm marching against Herod's soldiers and God is marching at my side. I'm light, Sarah [his wife], light. Ah if you only know how light I am! Oh joy, joy! Tears of joy!

(Contat and Rybalka II:136)

If these declamations are voiced in less than deathless prose and offer one reason why Sartre refused to publish the script commercially, they exhibit, as did his novels, the personal and moral significance of what is dawning as an "existentialist" consciousness. In a subsequent drama, *The Devil and the Good Lord* (1951),[26] Sartre will again introduce a decisive "religious" conversion, this time from absolute goodness to its paradoxical equivalent as absolute evil – in another murderous war of revolution against oppression. Its concluding line: "There is this war to fight, and I shall fight it" is often seen as indicating Sartre's brief "conversion" to active involvement with the French Communist Party that began the following year and lasted for four years.[27]

Sartre's discovery of "theater" as a philosophical-literary vehicle is accompanying his discovery of the social – and the political. In fact, it has been argued that he helped form the French political theater of the 1940s and fifties and contributed to its revival after the decline of the Theater of the Absurd in 1968. Contat and Rybalka contend that "Sartre's international reputation since the end of the war is undoubtedly due far more to his plays than to his novels, essays, or works of philosophy."[28]

[26] Published in England as "Lucifer and the Lord."

[27] *The Devil and the Good Lord*, act 3, scene 2. The play itself is considered patently autobiographical (see below, Chapter 10).

[28] *ST* vii–viii.

The reluctant masterwork: *Being and Nothingness* (1943)

It is probably true that Sartre's theater won him a wider international audience than did his philosophical treatises. This may owe more to the size and accessibility of their respective genres. But in terms of intellectual renown, especially among the French intelligentsia, no single work could surpass *Being and Nothingness*, even if, like Darwin's *Origin of Species*, it has been more cited than read. It is not an easy read, especially its lengthy introduction and first chapter. Though we have remarked on the gestation of its ideas for several years, the actual manuscript was composed in a single year.[29] In spite of its obvious resemblance to Heidegger's *magnum opus Being and Time*, both in its title and in several of its topics, it would be a mistake to dismiss *BN* as little more than *BT* translated into French. As Heidegger was quick to point out, *BN* is more of an ethical work and an "ontic" undertaking than his own major work, which claims to associate the ontic with the "average-everyday" from which his ontological project begins but where it scarcely ends. In Heidegger's view, Sartre, notwithstanding his protests to the contrary, never ventures beyond the ontic and thus offers his readers at most a philosophical psychology and not the fundamental ontology that is *BT*.[30] It is the promise of Heidegger's equally unfinished work to expand our "pretheoretical understanding of being" to a fuller articulation that will move us beyond the stultifying categories of traditional metaphysics like "substance," "cause" and "time" itself, toward the being that they conceal even as they claim to render its access possible.

Sartre's method in *BN* is phenomenological with a quasi-Kantian twist. Descriptive and sustained by arresting examples, it is likewise "analytic" in the sense that it often argues from the fact to the conditions of its possibility. Sartre had already employed this method in *The*

[29] See Gardner, *Sartre's Being and Nothingness.*

[30] In response to Jean Wahl's invitation to attend a meeting of the French Philsophical Society at which Wahl was to address the topic of "the philosophy of existence," Heidegger sent a brief reply explaining that he was occupied with academic obligations in the current semester. He added: "I must repeat, however, that my philosophical tendencies, though *Being and Time* deals with "Existenz" and "Kierkegaard," could not be classified as "Philosophy of Existence" (*Existenzphilosophie*) . . .The question that concerns me is not that of the existence of man but that of being as a whole and as such." *Bulletin de la Société Française de Philosophie* 37, no. 5 (Oct.–Dec. 1937): 193.

Imaginary. It will recur, enhanced by explicit dialectical reasoning, as the progressive-regressive method in *Search for a Method* and the *Critique* over fifteen years later. The phenomenology employed here is more Heideggerian than Husserlian in nature, for it relies heavily on our pre-understanding that is then articulated by careful and apt interpretative description. In other words, Sartre's phenomenology in *BN*, like Heidegger's in *BT*, is *hermeneutical*. Another term for this pre-understanding is "preontological comprehension." Such preontological comprehension is an unusually fecund source of primitive, infallible awareness for Sartre. Thus in *BN* he speaks of a preontological comprehension of being (17), of nonbeing (7), of the futility of sincerity (63), of the criteria of truth (156), of the existence of the Other (251), of human reality (561), of the human person (568), and of one's fundamental project (570). I say "awareness" rather than "knowledge" because "knowledge" is reflective whereas preontological comprehension turns out to be "prereflective." In succeeding years, preontological comprehension had morphed into comprehension *sens phrase* in a way that not only assumes the function of Diltheyan *Verstehen* (understanding) regarding social phenomena but appropriates features of the Freudian unconscious which Sartre has categorically rejected in *BN* and elsewhere.[31]

Major theses and themes

Others have devoted book-length studies to this seminal work. Given the constraints of capturing an intellectual biography in a single volume, I have selected what I take to be several of the distinctive claims and their consequences for the descriptive analysis of being that Sartre promises in his subtitle for the work. Referring occasionally to their anticipation in earlier writings such as the *War Diaries* and their employment and sometimes revision in later ones, I shall respect the headings that Sartre gives to each of the four parts of his study in addition to the introduction and the conclusion. It is not my intention to perform a "rational reconstruction" of the argument of the book, though the "progress" of the argument is not as linear as the layout of the chapters would suggest. Rather, my intention is to underscore what is distinctively Sartrean in

[31] See below, Chapter 11.

its claims, how they coalesce to form a Sartrean vision of the world and the individual's place at its center, and the way they issue in concepts and instruments to justify the fullest possible "understanding" of a human being. In other words, moving from the abstract "toward the concrete," as Jean Wahl proposed, this book lays the foundation for an "existential psychoanalysis" with the moral punch that Sartre thought Freudian analysis lacked and which he sketches in the conclusion of his study. These outlines will be filled in by the several "biographies" of increasing length that culminate in Sartre's multivolume study of Gustave Flaubert, *The Family Idiot*, which draws upon, if it does not exactly synthesize, the individual and the social ontologies of *BN* and the *Critique* as well as on their distinctive vocabularies and methods. In sum, the movement of the book ranges from the abstract to the concrete, from Nothingness and Being to being-in-situation, freedom and individual responsibility.

"Introduction: The Pursuit of Being"

In what he called the "difficult and compromised introduction" of *BN*, philosopher Rüdiger Bubner points out that it was written last and should be so read.[32] Like Heidegger and Husserl, Sartre begins with the phenomenon, that which appears, in its very manner of appearing. And again like Heidegger, he wants to avoid both a sterile phenomenalism (the contention that there are nothing but appearances "all the way down") and a Kantian dualism of phenomena and thing-in-itself. Heidegger claims that the phenomena both reveal and conceal the being of which they are the appearances. Sartre agrees but distinguishes between the *being of the phenomena* (which is being-in-itself [*BN* 171])[33] and the *phenomenon of being* (which is an immediate, noncognitive access to the *trans*phenomenal; that is to being). Husserlian phenomenology

[32] Rüdiger Bubner, "Phänomenologie, Reflexion und Cartesianische Existenz – Zu J-P Sartres Begriff des Bewustseins," dissertation, Heidelberg University, 1964, 33 n.

[33] I am thankful to Matthew Eschleman for holding me in check on the matter of the in-itself of the phenomenon when I was tempted by the text to conflate it with what might be called the "phenomenality" of the phenomenon (which is their "to be able to be perceived," their "disclosability," in the sense that if there were no perception, there would be no phenomena). Was this Sartrean ambiguity or simply a matter of letting a Berkelean fox slip into the phenomenological hen house?

can attend to the being of the phenomena but "brackets" or "suspends" access to the transphenomenal.[34] Whatever transcendence or "otherness" remains in Husserl's "reduced" world is transcendence *within* immanence – a condition that Sartre, rightly or wrongly, will later reject as an idealist position. In Sartre's view, on the contrary, the intuition of essences does not reach being because the phenomenon of being is not a concept, not an eidos to be abstracted, but an experience of another kind. Sartre remarks that "being will be disclosed to us by some kind of immediate access – boredom, nausea, etc. and ontology will be the description of the phenomenon of being as it manifests itself; that is, without intermediary" (*BN* xlviii). So "the being of the phenomenon [its "to be perceived"] can not be reduced to the phenomenon of being" (*BN* xlix). This means that the phenomenon of being is "ontological" in the sense that St. Anselm and Descartes appealed to an "ontological argument" to usher us via definition into the realm of being. Sartre is claiming that "the phenomenon of being requires the transphenomenality of being," not in the sense that being lies "hidden" behind the phenomenon like the Kantian thing-in-itself, but in the sense of another dimension coextensive with that very phenomenon. *Pace* Heidegger, Sartre is insisting that his version of human reality (*Dasein*) is likewise ontic-ontological and not merely ontic or anthropological or average-everyday as Heidegger claims.

The upshot of these considerations is that "the being of the phenomenon, although coextensive with the phenomenon, cannot be subject to the phenomenal condition – which is to exist only insofar as it reveals itself – and that consequently it surpasses the knowledge which we have of it and provides the basis for such knowledge" (*BN* l). This is the being we have already seen Sartre designate as the "in-itself." He now speaks explicitly of *being*-in-itself.

Without repeating the argument Sartre offers to reveal the transphenomenal dimension of the "to perceive," it leads to consciousness as

[34] Without pursuing the Husserlian side of this issue any further, let me point to the debatable concept of the "*hylê*" or "matter" of the "reduced" object that seems to have been introduced by the early Husserl to defend his "realism." In his review of Sartre's *L'Imaginaire*, recall, Merleau-Ponty takes his friend to task for allotting such importance to this very problematic concept in Husserl's work (see above, Chapter 5). Reprinted in Merleau-Ponty, *Parcours 1935–1951* (11220 Lagrasse: Éditions Verdier, 1997), 45–54. Sartre did come to reject this concept as did Husserl.

"the dimension of transphenomenal being in the subject" (*BN* li). This is what Sartre called the "for-itself" in *WD*. Again, as consciousness, this mode of being is essentially other-referring, that is, it is what Husserl called "intentional." In this respect, "all consciousness is positional in that it transcends itself in order to reach an object and exhausts itself in this same positing"(*BN* li). But it does so consciously; in other words, its direct or positional consciousness of an object is indirect or nonpositional consciousness of itself. Building on an insight from the German idealist Gottlieb Fichte, Sartre avoids any infinite regress (of reflection on reflection to infinity . . . to account for knowing that you know) by insisting that consciousness is implicitly self-aware whenever it is aware of anything. But consciousness of self is not dual, Sartre insists: "If we wish to avoid an infinite regress, there must be an immediate, noncognitive relation of the self to itself" (*BN* lii–liii). This he seems to believe relieves him from any need for appeal to an unconscious or for grounding consciousness in anything but itself. He continues to argue, as he had in the early 1930s, that no ego or substantial self is needed to ground or individualize this consciousness.

Sartre's "Cartesianism" comes to the fore with his appeal to consciousness and, specifically, to the trademark *Cogito* (I think) that sets Descartes' philosophy in forward motion. But Sartre is Cartesian as he is Husserlian and Heideggerian (or later Marxist) ever in his own way.[35] He seeks the "apodicticity" (the self-confirming evidence) of the *Cogito*. "The *cogito* must be our point of departure," he states (*BN* 73–74). But we have seen him employ Heidegger's "preunderstanding" widely. Can he accommodate the evidence of the *Cogito* to the suggestive nuances of a hermeneutics? Clearly Heidegger did not think so and so avoided appeal to consciousness in *BT*. But Sartre introduces consciousness into the preunderstanding with his concept of the *pre*-reflective *Cogito*. The *Cogito* is a reflective act that, at its best, yields the clarity and distinctness of explicit evidence that Sartre values so much. Sartre is indeed Cartesian in this respect. But the *Cogito* is derivative; it relies on a prereflective *Cogito* that takes ontological and epistemic precedence; it is at this prereflective level that "preontological" understanding occurs.

[35] See *CP* 68.

By qualifying the phenomenon of being as noncognitive (like *Angst* or boredom, for example) and by giving ontological primacy to the prereflective *Cogito* over the reflective *Cogito* (understanding over knowledge), Sartre joins Heidegger in opposition to Husserl by moving phenomenology from the primarily epistemological to the appetitive, from the theoretical to the practical. But, unlike Heidegger, Sartre does so by appeal to consciousness and its intentionality.

Intentionality at Sartre's hands is not merely a defining characteristic of consciousness and a bulwark of epistemological realism, it plays an ontological role in warranting the transphenomenal character of the phenomenon itself. He has already pointed out our nonconceptual experience of the being of the phenomenon. Now he undertakes to link that experience with his earlier account of the intentional nature of consciousness itself. Sartre rather loosely calls this justification "the ontological proof." An argument favored by philosophical idealists like Descartes and Hegel, he intends to employ it in favor of the "extra-mental" and transphenomenal character of the object of our conscious acts. It purports to be more than simply another stipulative definition such as Anselm's famous definition of God as "that than which nothing greater can be conceived," which on further examination seems to have "launched" God into extra-mental existence by force of definition. Some have dismissed Sartre's version as a mere stipulation that the "Other" of our intentionality possesses more than a merely mental existence, as many idealists would maintain. And the fact that Sartre appeals to such an argument does cast suspicion on the thoroughness of his own break with Husserlian idealism. In contrast with Descartes' version, Sartre's "argument" is derived not from the reflective *Cogito* but from the prereflective being of the one perceiving, the percipiens (*BN* lx). In effect, it is a feature of the immediate and pretheoretical relation of consciousness with its object.

Here is how he simplifies the case: "Consciousness is conscious *of* something. This means that transcendence is the constitutive structure of consciousness; that is, that consciousness is born *oriented towards* a being which is not itself. This is what we call the ontological proof" (*BN* lxi; *EN* 28). He defends himself against the accusation of merely conferring a transphenomenal status on the object of consciousness by a definition. The nub of his argument is that consciousness as essentially intentional must be conceived as "in some way" a "revealing

intuition or it is nothing."[36] Husserl's "reduced" field that is satisfied with "transcendence within immanence," Sartre believes, has this intuition backwards: "a revealing intuition implies something revealed. Absolute subjectivity can be established only in the face of something revealed; immanence can be defined only within the apprehension of a transcendent." Conceding that this may look like Kant's famous refutation of idealism in the first *Critique*, Sartre insists, "we ought rather to think of Descartes. We are here on the ground of being, not knowledge" (*BN* lxii). Moreover, appealing to a temporal dimension of the phenomenon yet to be discussed, he adds: the transphenomenal being of the phenomenon "gives itself as already existing when consciousness reveals it" (*BN* lxii). Sartre concludes his introduction with a summary of the features of this being-in-itself.

In brief, being[37] or more precisely being-in-itself differs from being-for-itself in the following ways: it is neither passivity nor activity; it is beyond negation and affirmation; it is what it is, that is, it exhibits the principle of identity (just as the for-itself, we saw, was the sole exception to that principle). Accordingly, being-in-itself knows no otherness nor is it subject to temporality in the sense of becoming, it is inert; finally being-in-itself simply is: "it can never be derived from the possible nor reduced to the necessary." In sum: "Being is. Being is in-itself. Being is what it is" (*BN* lxvi).[38]

[36] A claim he will repeat implicitly in *WL* 48.

[37] It has commonly been overlooked that Sartre does insist that he "must explain how these two regions of being [in-itself and for-itself] can be placed under the same heading. That will necessitate the investigation of these two types of being, and it is evident that we can not truly grasp the meaning of either until we can establish their true connection with *the notion of being in general* and the relations which unite them" (*BN* lxiii). In effect, he never pursues this quasi-Heideggerian project, but neither does he lose sight of it completely (see *BN* lxvii ["For what reasons do they both belong to being in general?"], 216, 361 [a metaphysical theory of being in general] and 617 [Being as a general category belonging to all existents]). Gardner is one of the few scholars to have raised this topic explicitly. See *Sartre's Being and Nothingness*, § 7. On the other hand, both Sartre and Beauvoir imply the issue of being in general when they speak of "unveiling" being, a typically Heideggerian expression (see *WL* 37 and Beauvoir's *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, trans. Bernard Frechtman [Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press, 1948], 12 and 23).

[38] "An existing phenomenon can never be derived from another existent qua existent. This is what we shall call the *contingency* of being-in-itself." Reminiscent of *Nausea*, he concedes: "This is what consciousness expresses in anthropomorphic terms by saying that being is superfluous (*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.

"Part I: The Problem of Nothingness"

In his *War Diaries* Sartre had sketched the basic theme of the previous section and of the present one when he wrote:

> Anguish at Nothingness, with Heidegger? Dread of freedom with Kierkegaard? In my view it's one and the same thing, for freedom is the apparition of Nothingness in the world ...
>
> So anguish is indeed the experience of Nothingness, hence it isn't a psychological phenomenon. It's an existential structure of human reality, it's simply freedom becoming conscious of itself as being its own nothingness ... Thus the existential grasping of our facticity is Nausea, and the existential apprehension of our freedom is Anguish.
>
> (*WD* 132–133)

If being-in-itself is inert, consciousness is spontaneous. In fact, this is the profound and perduring "dualism" in Sartre's ontology, continuing into the *Critique*. But we have seen that being-for itself is intentional and this "othering" relation to the in-itself is best experienced by the questioning attitude, especially, as Heidegger explained in *Being and Time*, by the possibility it invites of a negative response. The negative is not merely a function of our acts of judging as philosophy has traditionally argued, but nonbeing surfaces as a new component of the real (much as Aristotle's "possibility" did in his response to Parmenides).[39] "The not, as an abrupt intuitive discovery, appears as consciousness (of being), consciousness of the *not* ... The necessary condition for our saying 'not' is that non-being be a perpetual presence in us and outside of us, that nothingness (*le Néant*) haunt being" (*BN* 11). The negative judgment is not the source of the nothingness that we experience. Neither could it arise from the "plenum" that is being-in-itself. On the contrary, Sartre insists, the source from which Nothingness comes into the world must be its own Nothingness, namely the human being. And what must man be in his being that nothingness may

Uncreated, without reason for being, without any connection with another being, being-in-itself is de trop for eternity" (*BN* lxvi).

[39] Between being and non-being there is no middle ground (Parmenides) but between being-in-act and non-being there is being-in-potency. For Sartre, since *The Imaginary*, consciousness has come to play that role – in fact imaging consciousness in that earlier work – has been the locus of negativity, possibility and lack.

originate with him? He must be free in his very being. In a revision of Heidegger's phrase, an expression that will define "existentialism" from then on, Sartre remarks: "Human freedom precedes essence in man and makes it possible; the essence of the human being is suspended in his freedom. What we call freedom is impossible to be distinguished from the being of 'human reality'" (*BN* 25). This "ontological freedom," what Sartre will later call "freedom as the definition of 'man'" in *EH*, will constitute both the highest value of existentialist thought as it exemplifies the Greek (and Nietzschean) maxim to "become what you are."[40] But this narrow concept of freedom will constitute a major limitation as the movement develops a social conscience in the 1940s and seeks the ontology to support it in the 1950s.

This focus on Nothingness opens the door to a phenomenology of all the "negativities" (*négativités*) that populate our experience, from the fragility of a glass or a friendship to such phenomena as distance, distraction or regret. In fact, Sartre will echo Heidegger in saying that human reality (*Dasein*) is "a being of distances" (*BN* 17). One senses the ontological dimension of the many psychological descriptions that punctuate Sartre's imaginative literature. No wonder the influential Marxist structuralist and arch foe of Sartre, Louis Althusser, could sniff

[40] In other words, "Actualize your creative freedom." Though he devotes more space to the question of values later in the book, already in this first chapter he relates nothingness and freedom to the anguish of creating moral values: "What I call everyday morality [later, "the spirit of seriousness"] is exclusive of ethical anguish. There is ethical anguish when I consider myself in my original relation to values . . . My freedom is the unique foundation of values . . . As a being by whom values exist, I am unjustifiable" (*BN* 38). This leads to a clutch of existentialist themes that will broadcast Sartre's nascent philosophy to a wide public:

> I emerge alone and in anguish confronting the unique and original project which constitutes my being; all the barriers, all the guard rails collapse, nihilated by the consciousness of my freedom. I do not have nor can I have recourse to any value against the fact that it is I who sustain values in being. Nothing can insure me against myself, cut off from the world and from my essence by this nothingness which I *am*. I have to realize the meaning of the world and of my essence; I make my decision concerning them – without justification and without excuse.
>
> *BN* 39)

We should keep this relation of anguish and moral creativity in mind throughout our reflections on Sartre's three approaches to ethics. It will remain the recurrent theme, the *cantus firmus*, of Sartre's "ethical variations" from now on.

that Sartre was "the author of wonderful philosophical novels such as *Being and Nothingness* and the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*."[41]

"Bad Faith"

Doubtless the most famous section of this work and arguably what one might call Sartre's "signature concept" is the notion of bad faith. It has been widely discussed and, one might venture, even more widely exhibited. Heidegger is correct to point out its function as a "moral" disvalue. It is a form of self-deception and thus a (kind of) lie. But the kind of lie and the form of deception is peculiarly Sartrean, for it presumes that the "dualism" or better "self-distance" required to effect bad faith appears within the unity of a single consciousness. In other words, one need not appeal to a conscious/unconscious subject to account for this all-too-common phenomenon. Our "inner distance" will suffice, at least for its basic forms. The self–other relationship will sustain the other form of bad faith, but that stage of our exposition has yet to be reached.

There are two sources of the duality required for bad faith. The first is "within" consciousness itself. The "within" is taken in an accommodated sense since we know that consciousness has no "inside"; its nature as intentional directs it entirely "into" the world and its objects. This is the "duality," also in an accommodated sense, of the prereflective and the reflective[42] that enables us to understand (prereflectively) more than we know (reflectively), as we saw in the case of Sartre's Flaubert. But Sartre's prereflective consciousness is dynamic and directional. It is the expression of a fundamental and prereflective "Choice," as we shall see. Analogous to what psychologists call "selective" perception and what one ethicist designates "decisions of principle" that are themselves unprincipled,[43] the prereflective is the locus of life-determining "Choice" and radical "conversion." Though Sartre was rather ambiguous on the nature of such "Choice" except to imply that it is unlike the

[41] Louis Althusser, *The Future Lasts a Long Time*, ed. Olivier Corpet and Yann Moulier Boutang, trans. Richard Veasey (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993), 176.

[42] One might liken these two "dimensions" to aspects of a "nonsubstantial absolute," as Sartre occasionally characterizes consciousness.

[43] See R. M. Hare, *The Language of Morals* (Oxford University Press, 1964), "Decisions of Principle."

choices from pre-given selections since it was fully autonomous and creative – in effect *sui generis*. "One does not undergo bad faith; one is not infected with it; it is not a state. But consciousness affects itself with bad faith. There must be an original intention and a project of bad faith" (*BN* 49).

The result of this initial "duality" is not only that it enables us to both "not know" reflectively and "know," that is, comprehend prereflectively, at the same time. As Sartre remarks, bad faith is the kind of knowledge that does not know and ignorance that "knows better." It follows that the unblinking eye of Sartrean consciousness, its total translucency, leaves us fully responsible for this self-deception. This is its moral significance.

But such prereflective "responsibility" is more a function of who we are, our fundamental "Choice," rather than a result of our reflective decisions from a set of options previously given to us. Like the "choice" of the ethical that Kierkegaard's Judge William offers the aesthete in *Either/Or*, it is more a criterion-*constituting* "Choice" than a selective choice according to the resultant criteria. As the Judge says to the young aesthete, first one must choose good and evil, that is, one must decide to play the moral game, and only then can one choose between good and evil.[44] Sartre even employs the Kierkegaardian expression "conversion" to denote such a fundamental "leap." Such basic revisions of life orientation, though rare, are possible and their possibility haunts our existence by the "anguish" they entail.

Though Sartre's embrace of the "hydraulic" model of the Freudian mind, viz., id, ego and superego, as well as the libidinal pressure that drives it, has been subject to much criticism from psychoanalytic quarters, his basic claim in *BN* is that the mechanism of Freudian control of the unconscious forces, namely the famous "censor," is itself in bad faith: it both knows and does not know what is permissible in our conscious life. As he phrases it, psychoanalysis substitutes for the notion of bad faith, the "idea of a lie without a liar" (*BN* 51). Similarly, other Freudian phenomena such as "resistance" exemplify the presence of bad faith.

True to his phenomenological convictions, reminiscent of the findings of *The Imaginary* and with the novelists's eye for the dramatic, Sartre proceeds to offer several "case studies" of bad faith as he searches for

[44] Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 479.

the second, ontological condition of its possibility. Perhaps the best known of these cameos is that of the waiter in the café:

> His movement is quick and forward, a little too precise, a little too rapid. He comes toward the patrons with a step a little too quick. He bends forward a little too eagerly; his voice, his eyes express an interest a little too solicitous for the order of the customer. Finally, there he returns, trying to imitate in his walk the inflexible stiffness of some kind of automaton while carrying his tray with the recklessness of a tight-rope-walker by putting it in a perpetually unstable, perpetually broken equilibrium which he perpetually reestablishes by a light movement of the arm and hand.
>
> (*BN* 59)

Sartre remarks that this seems like a game. But what is he playing? He is playing at *being* a waiter in a café the way a stone is a stone or the in-itself is an inert plenum. But to seek such a "conscious identity" is impossible. This is the most common form of bad faith.

If the prereflective–reflective dualism is the basis for self-deception "within" consciousness itself, Sartre introduces an analysis of being-in-situation in terms of facticity and transcendence, the "given" and the "taken," one might say, in order to ground the second type of bad faith in our radical denial of our ontological make-up. Human reality is in-situation and "situation" is an ambiguous phenomenon – one cannot determine in advance the proportions of the "factical" and the "transcendence" in each situation. Since the truth of our ontological make-up is that we are both transcendence and facticity in an indeterminate mixture, the lie about our true condition consists in denying one or the other of these two essential components: we either collapse our freedom (our transcendence) into our facticity by saying "that's just the way I am" – in other words denying our freedom and responsibility – again, the most common form of bad faith – or we "volatilize" our facticity into pure transcendence (possibility) by convincing ourselves that we can accomplish anything we wish (as if life were a dream with no grounding in the facts of our situation). Because the waiter plays at being a waiter as if his other possibilities (his freedom) were not ingredient in that project, as if he had "no other choice," he is living in bad faith. He is denying the anguish that his freedom entails because of the possibilities it harbors.

Sartre returns to the source of self-deception in the prereflective–reflective dichotomy when he summarizes the phenomenon: "the condition

of the possibility for bad faith is that human reality, in its most immediate being, *in the intrastructure of the prereflective cogito*, must be what it is not and not be what it is" (*BN* 67, emphasis added). This nonself-coincidence of the for-itself is expressed or better "made concrete" in our situated being. We are what we are by virtue of consciously "othering" the givens of our situation, but that does not make them any less "given."

"The 'Faith' of Bad Faith"

Sartre's analysis of the "faith" of bad faith betrays his Husserlian conception of "evidence" as the thing in its self-givenness to our immediate conscious grasp. Apodictic evidence such as that of the *Cogito*, though rare, literally "forces" our assent. It faces us with the "indubitable" such that its denial would violate a basic logical or metaphysical principle. We simply "see" that it is the case and that it must be so.[45] Sufficient evidence, on the other hand, one could say "urges" our assent. To deny it would not be irrational but clearly unreasonable. This is what Sartre seems to be arguing when he distinguishes the "certain" from the "probable" in his phenomenological account of imaging consciousness in *The Imaginary*.[46] That said, anything relying on less than such evidence is belief, which he describes as "adherence of being to its object when the object is not given or is given indistinctly" (*BN* 67). But the faith of bad faith is our satisfaction with insufficient evidence when sufficient evidence is available – which is a violation of what is commonly called the "ethics of belief."

Though Sartre does not elaborate a theory of evidence in any detail, his account of the "faith" of bad faith makes implicit appeal to such a Husserlian-Cartesian theory as employed in *The Imaginary*. Because of the dynamic character of consciousness as nonself-identical, the "metastable" character of faith of any kind is obvious. We have just noted that this instability infects the prereflective *cogito* as well. One could always choose to act or think unreasonably or even irrationally – resisting even the force of the "apodictic." As with the implicit awareness of our freedom in sustaining the act of imaginative "irrealization" noted in Chapter 5, so in the act of believing, especially in the face of

[45] See *BN* 84. [46] See above, Chapter 5.

insufficient evidence, we are aware of our "supplementing" that insufficiency with our prereflective "decision" to believe or at least our supine unwillingness to disbelieve (a point that Sartre could make but does not). As he explains: "This original project of bad faith is a decision in bad faith on the nature of faith. Let us understand clearly that there is no question of a reflective, voluntary decision, but of a spontaneous determination of our being. One puts oneself in bad faith as one goes to sleep and one is in bad faith as one dreams" (*BN* 68). All conscious acts, recall, are implicitly self-conscious. This distinction between the prereflective and the reflective is the ontological basis for the phenomenon of faith in general. But in the case of bad faith, Sartre sees a duality within the prereflective consciousness. The explicit (prereflective, positional) act of believing is implicitly (nonpositionally) aware that it is "other" than its act of believing; in other words, "the non-thetic consciousness (of) believing is destructive of belief" (*BN* 69). The "othering" character of consciousness has loosened the grip of belief on its object. Belief is of its very nature "troubled." Sartre is claiming that the agent who asks himself "Do I believe?" has, to that extent, ceased to do so. In fact, this unstable character runs even deeper. Sartre seems to think, *pace* Paul Ricoeur, that even "naive" belief is insecure.

Assumed in this discussion is the "rationalist" thesis that the evident fulfills a certain drive to which inquiry is related as motion to rest, as means to end. What we shall label Sartre's "bifocal" epistemology of praxis and vision comes to the fore when he exchanges consciousness in *BN* for "praxis" in the *Critique*.[47] But already in *BN* we encounter the instability of every conscious act – perhaps even that of the "apodictic" – a point that Sartre is unwilling to concede in his later work. Had he set aside his epistemology of "vision" (intellectual intuition of intelligible contours) or modified these intuited "essences" as means–ends continua in the manner of John Dewey's pragmatism, he might have subsumed his Husserlian intellectualism into a pragmatic dialectic. But he never managed to make such a synthesizing move. Hence the ambiguity or "bifocality" of his later understanding of knowledge.

Bad faith, in Sartre's view, seems to be our original position. Even the project to "be" in good faith or to be sincere are themselves forms of

[47] See below, Chapter 10.

self-deception. He calls bad faith "an immediate, permanent threat to every project of the human being ... because consciousness conceals in its being a permanent risk of bad faith." The origin of this risk is the fact that "the nature of consciousness simultaneously is to be what it is not and not to be what it is" (*BN* 70). Now this looks like an ontological, not an empirical claim. Its import seems to be that this is an "essential" property of consciousness (or at least of human reality) on a par with intentionality itself.[48] But lodged in a footnote that concludes the chapter on bad faith and part I of the volume, we find the following promissory note:

> If it is indifferent whether one is in good or bad faith, because bad faith reapprehends good faith and slides to the very origin of the project of good faith, that does not mean that we can not radically escape bad faith. But this supposes a self-recovery of being which was previously corrupted. This self-recovery we shall call authenticity the description of which has no place here.
>
> (*BN* 79, n. 9)

"Part II: Being-for-Itself"

In light of the foregoing, Sartre undertakes an ontological study of consciousness in the "instantaneous nucleus" of its being as "to be what it is not and not to be what it is." He parses this insight under three headings: "Immediate structures of the for-itself," "Temporality," and "Transcendence." Though these features must be considered in order and will be spread over this chapter and the next, they denote and articulate that "duality-in-unity" that is the "spontaneous nucleus" of consciousness as being-for-itself, which is the "ontological foundation of consciousness.[49]

"Presence to Self"

In *Transcendence of the Ego* Sartre discussed the ego and the me as subject and object respectively of our reflective consciousness. But the "self" of self-consciousness was left indeterminate. Now he addresses

[48] In his 1961 eulogy in honor of his deceased friend, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Sartre contrasted his own "eidetic of bad faith" in 1942 with Merleau's optimism regarding the victorious outcome of the war (*Sit* IV:196 n.).

[49] *BN* 77. "Duality-in-unity" is Gardner's felicitous phrase (*Sartre's Being and Nothingness*, 97). Sartre speaks of "a duality which *is* unity" in this context (*BN* 76).

this phenomenon in view of the duality-in-unity that is our consciousness with the visual metaphor of reflection-reflect*ing*. This quasi-instantaneous back-and-forth dynamism eludes our attempts to capture it "in flight," as it were, and achieve a static reflection. We saw that the for-itself, unlike the in-itself, was characteristically *non*self-identical. Consciousness as self-consciousness "others" itself as well as the non-self or "world." In other words, consciousness is a "nihilating" relation to itself, not a relation of identity; it nihilates itself (*se néantise*) (*BN* 239; F 295). Sartre calls this a relation of "presence to." This expression indicates both difference or "otherness" and, as we shall see, a particular temporal "distance," a "nothingness" (*néant*) that marks that peculiar phenomenon called "self-consciousness." He explains:

> The *self* ... represents an ideal distance within the immanence of the subject in relation to himself, a way of *not being his own coincidence*, of escaping identity while positing it as unity – in short, of being in a perpetually unstable equilibrium between identity as absolute cohesion without a trace of diversity and unity as a synthesis of a multiplicity. This is what we shall call presence to itself.
>
> (*BN* 77)

Sartre cashes in this analysis when he links presence-to-self with ontological freedom, the freedom which we are, explaining that "man is free because he is not a self but a presence-to-self" (*BN* 440).

"The Facticity of the For-Itself"

As his move from the abstract toward the concrete continues, Sartre addresses the "givens" of our situated being with the Heideggerian term "facticity." The for-itself "*is* in so far as it is thrown into a world and abandoned in a 'situation'" (*BN* 79). Though he will unpack the "factical" aspect of our situation later in the work, what matters now is the utter gratuity of our "othering" relation to *this* situation, beginning with the contingency of these "facts" themselves and that of our own existence. To be sure, the in-itself is without foundation; it just is. So in Sartre's cosmogony, it "seeks" its ideal foundation in the for-itself – a futile pursuit, like the snowman seeking the warmth of the sun – leading to the nihilation of the in-itself. The for-itself is the source of its nothingness but it is not the ground of its own being; it seeks that in the in-itself – resulting in bad faith. Echoing the experience of

Roquentin in *Nausea*, Sartre concludes: "Just as my nihilating freedom is apprehended as anguish, so the for-itself is conscious of its facticity. It has the feeling of its complete gratuity; it apprehends itself as being there *for nothing*, as being *de trop*" (*BN* 84).

"The For-Itself and the Being of Value"

Sartre now directs his account of the ontological structures of being-for-itself to the realm of values. Human reality, he explains, "is that by which value comes into the world" (*BN* 93). Nietzsche had famously characterized man as an "evaluating animal." Sartre's ontology of the for-itself as an internal, constitutive relation to the in-itself deepens this remark. Nihilation, as the action of consciousness, not only "others" the in-itself; it does so by transcending, that is, "moving beyond it," toward the fulfilling of a *lack* that it *is* by its very structure as for-itself. Conceived in its most abstract form, this lack is the privation of being-in-itself that would justify its being as for-itself-in-itself. It is the self as totality, as in-itself, that constitutes supreme value. All mundane desires issue from this fundamental lack and the movement to fulfill it. The resultant imperative to pursue this value, one can say, is both categorical and hypothetical. It denotes the "having to be" that henceforth punctuates Sartre's discourse. This expression indicates that value is operative. As categorical, it is a priori and "moral" in a sense to be explained. As hypothetical, it motivates and guides the needs and desires of our everyday lives. We have seen this translate into the futile desire to be God. Sartre can conclude that the for-itself is by nature [Hegel's] unhappy consciousness. But he insists that this lack is not the object of an explicit desire; rather, it is the meaning/direction (*sens*) of its prereflective awareness. As lack, this missing totality of the self "haunts non-thetic self-consciousness" (*BN* 90). And it does so not only in the abstract. Previewing what he intends to show in the remainder of the book, Sartre informs us that "the self is individual; it is the individual completion of the self which haunts the for-itself" (*BN* 91). This is what it means to say that "the being of the self is value" (*BN* 90).

Before moving from value, we should note Sartre's approving mention of Max Scheler's thesis that "I can achieve an intuition of values in terms of concrete exemplifications; I can grasp nobility in a noble act" (*BN* 93). Without pursuing the matter here, let me note that Scheler was one of

the philosophers whose work the young Sartre proposed to study if granted the research fellowship in Berlin for which he was applying. Let us remember Sartre's sympathy with value intuitionism when we encounter his claim in an influential public lecture: "For in effect, there is not one of our acts that, in creating the man we wish to be, does not at the same time create an *image* of man such as we judge he *ought* to be."[50] But at this stage in *BN*, Sartre insists that value and prereflective consciousness are correlative, they form a dyad. "Value is not known at this stage since knowledge posits the object in the face of consciousness. Value is merely given with the non-thetic translucency of the for-itself, which makes itself be as the consciousness of being" (*BN* 94–95). The question of the "objective encounter with values in the world" cannot be addressed until we have discussed the nature of the for-others, the third mode or aspect of being to be examined. The reference to "image" of the man that ought to be, reminds us that the pervasive role of imaging consciousness in Sartre's thought has been a theme of our philosophical history.

"The For-Itself and the Being of Possibilities"

In *The Imaginary*, Sartre describes imaging consciousness as the locus of negativity, possibility and lack.[51] It is beginning to look as if these features of imaging consciousness in the earlier work have become features of consciousness in general. We have just observed how value is co-present (haunts) prereflective consciousness. This is true of possibility as well. Though Sartre does not agree with Aristotle in ascribing "potentiality" to the in-itself, neither does he second Heidegger's assignment of an ontological priority to possibility over actuality. "Just as there can be lack in the world only if it comes to the world through a being which is its own lack, so there can be possibility in the world only if it comes through a being which is for itself in its own possibility" (*BN* 98) The possible, Sartre allows, is a new aspect of the nihilation of the in-itself in for-itself. Again pointing toward the chapter on temporality,

[50] *EH* 291; F 25, emphasis added. See Gérard Wormser, "Ethique et violence dans les 'Cahiers pour une morale,'" *Cité* no. 22 (2005): 73–88.

[51] This a composite of related claims about imaging consciousness made in *The Imaginary* (see above, Chapter 5, page 134).

Sartre connects the possible with the future as "not yet." But he is quick to link possibility with the "nothingness of what is not yet" (*BN* 100). Still, he acknowledges that we are catching a glimpse of the origin of temporality in this discussion of nothingness, possibility and lack. These figure in what he will call "the *circuit of selfness*" which he describes initially as "the relation of the for-itself with the possible which it is, and '*world*' for the totality of being in so far as it is traversed by the circuit of selfness." Accordingly, "the possible is *the something* which the For-itself lacks *in order* to be itself (*soi*)" (*BN* 102; F 147). Though it "haunts" the prereflective consciousness as does lack, possibility presents itself as already and as yet to come in that paradoxical phenomenon that we call "time." It is in this sense that Sartre can say that "the possible determines in schematic outline a location in the nothingness which the For-itself is beyond itself . . . It outlines the limits of the non-thetic self-consciousness as a non-thetic consciousness" (*BN* 102).

We should recall this limiting function of the "possible" in the "circuit of selfness" when we note the dawning of the phenomenon of "objective possibility" in Sartre's move toward Marxist socialism in his later works. By then, as we have remarked, the concept of "praxis" has displaced that of "consciousness" and an explicit dialectic has subsumed the either/or of Sartre's vintage existentialism.

"The Self and the Circuit of Selfness"

This section reprises the argument of *Transcendence of the Ego* regarding the "transcendence" of the empirical ego, whether as object (me) or as subject (I) of my reflective consciousness. We noted that this "egoless consciousness," though described as "impersonal," was almost as if on second thought admitted to be "*pre*personal" (*TE* 96). Sartre is now elaborating that claim. First, it is "consciousness in its fundamental selfness which under certain conditions allows the appearance of the Ego as the transcendent phenomenon of that selfness" (*BN* 103). But the *self* on principle cannot inhabit consciousness lest the translucidity of the latter be compromised by the opacity of the self (as in-itself) and ontological freedom disappear. At best, the self can serve as an *ideal*, a limit to the infinite movement of reflection reflecting reflection. Sartre has not emptied consciousness of subjectivity. In fact, he will later see his mission to Marxism precisely as an effort to defend the place of the

subject from the inroads of "economism."[52] He simply removes the substance (in-itself) from subjectivity and is left with the "immanence of self to itself" (*BN* lvii; F 24). This, of course, is yet another description of prereflective consciousness as presence-to-self. But it adds the distinctive note of *limit* to reflective withdrawal. For Sartre describes immanence as "the smallest recoil (*recul*) which can be made from self to itself" (*BN* lxv; F 32). He concludes that "from its first arising, consciousness by the pure nihilating movement of reflection makes itself *personal*: for what confers personal existence on being is not the possession of an Ego – which is only a sign of personality – but it is the fact that the being exists for itself as a presence to self" (*BN* 103; F 148).[53]

Sartre concludes this section and the chapter with a refinement of the foregoing, namely, a second reflective movement that he calls "selfness" (*ipséité*). This represents "a degree of nihilation carried further than the pure presence to itself of the prereflective *cogito*." Sartre calls this a relation of *absent-presence* of the for-itself to itself "beyond its grasp, in the far reaches of its possibilities down there (*là-bas*). This free necessity of being – down there – what one is in the form of lack constitutes selfness or the second aspect of the person. In fact," Sartre asks, "how can the person be defined if not as a free relation to himself?" (*BN* 104; F 148).

As for the world – the totality of beings as they exist within the compass of the circuit of selfness – Sartre insists "this can be only what human reality surpasses toward itself" (*BN* 104; cf. 595). It surpasses the world as *my* possible. But this possible which, Sartre assures us, is *nonthetically* an absent-present to present consciousness is not present as an object of a positional consciousness, which would make it the terminus of reflective knowledge. Rather, this ontological possibility which

[52] See *SM* 83.

[53] Once another for-itself appears and our being-for others emerges, the issue of "person" becomes more concrete: "The unreflective consciousness does not apprehend the *person* directly or as its object; the person is presented to consciousness *in so far as* the person is an object for the Other. This means that all of a sudden I am conscious of myself as escaping myself, not that I am the foundation of my own nothingness but in that I have my foundation outside myself. I am for myself only as I am a pure reference to the Other" (*BN* 260). For a further reflection on the nature and role of Sartrean "subjectivity without a subject," see his Gramsci lecture "Marxisme et subjectivité" delivered in 1961 (*LTM* no. 560, 49th anniversary issue [March 1993]: 11–39, discussed below in Chapter 14.

I *am* "haunts" the world insofar as it is "mine." This "my-ness" (*moiïté*) of the world is a fugitive structure, always present, a structure which I live."[54]

We recognize the existentialist categories of freedom, anguish and possibility emerging as fundamental components of the circle of selfness as mine. And the evaluative dimension of this revolving circle comes to the fore when Sartre amplifies the world as "the necessary obstacle beyond which I find myself as that which I am" in the form "of having to be it"; that is, as value (*BN* 104). He underscores the mutual implication of world, selfness and person (articulations of his basic in-itself and for-itself ontology) with the following summation: "Without the world there is no selfness, no person; without selfness, without person, there is no world" (*BN* 104).

But the foregoing analysis of the "immediate" structures of the for-itself was conducted under the didactic fiction of an "instantaneous nucleus." Recall his reference in the *War Diaries* to his "metaphysical" treatise on nothingness and time. Since "it is 'in time' that the for-itself is its own possibilities in the mode of 'not being'" (*BN* 104), we must continue our pursuit of the concrete by addressing the nature of temporality.

[54] *BN* 104. "*Moiïté*" seems to be a French coinage of Heidegger's "*Jemeinichkeit*" which is also translated as "myness." However, its first use by Sartre occurs in his thesis for the Diplôme d'Études Supérieures (DES) of 1926–1927 (pages 258–259) and then in *The Imaginary* (154), where it is attributed to the Swiss psychologist Edouard Claparède and is described as "the feeling of belonging to me." Sartre describes it as a neologism (*Imaginary* 170) and thus perhaps only coincidentally resembling Heidegger's term since it occurs in Claparède's *Quatre-vingt-un chapitres sur l'Ésprit et les passions* (Paris: à l'Émancipatrice, 1917). References to Sartre's DES are taken from Alain Flajoliet's execellent study, *La première philosophie de Sartre* (*PPS*).

8

Bad faith in human life: *Being and Nothingness*

Temporality: the phenomenology

Sartre conceives of time as an original synthesis, a totality with secondary structures and not a series of "instances" that Merleau-Ponty ascribes to him as a kind of "pointillism" of temporality.[1] These secondary structures, the past, present and future, must be considered in light of the synthetic whole of which they are parts. So begins his reflections with a phenomenology of these three temporal dimensions. These descriptive analyses are pursued under the totalizing eye of the ontology of world and circle of self just considered. So the past is initially "mine"; it presents itself as the past of my present and my future. This "myness" "is not a subjective nuance that would shatter the memory; it is an ontological relation which unites the past to the present" (*BN* 110). That relation is not external, it is internal and constitutive. I "am" my past, I don't simply have it. But this past has an identity and a permanence that is ever increasing as I continue to live. Its ontology is factical; it assumes the features of being-in-itself. So I am my past in the manner of not-being it. This is the temporal dimension of the facticity of my being-in-situation. "Facticity" and "Past," Sartre assures us, are two words to indicate one and the same thing (*BN* 118). But, unlike other aspects of my facticity, I am my past under the aspect of "having been" it. As Sartre explains: "If already I am no longer what I was, it is still necessary that I have to be so in the unity of a nihilating synthesis which I myself sustain in being" (*BN* 117).

If the past is in-itself, the present is for-itself, but paradoxically so. If one were to rid it of what it is not in either direction (that is, that past

[1] See *AD* 105 and 117.

and the future), the present would collapse into an atemporal instant the way a line collapses into a point if viewed on end. This leads Sartre to argue that in the present we discover "that indissoluble dyad, Being and Nothingness" (*BN* 120). Phenomenologically, he describes presence as "presence-to." In other words, it is opposed to absence as well as to the past. The for-itself is presence to all of being-in-itself or, better, "the presence of the for-itself is what brings it about that there is (*il y a*) a totality of being-in-itself" (*BN* 121; F 166). Being present for the for-itself is not simply being there. The latter merely locates the for-itself spatially and perspectivally. But the presence-to of the for-itself is an internal negation of that to which it is present. As we have come to suspect, "the structure at the basis of intentionality and of selfness is the negation, which is the internal relation of the For-itself to the thing" (*BN* 123). As he often does, Sartre appeals to metaphor to capture the particularity of the phenomenon of consciousness when he remarks that "the For-itself is present to being in the form of flight; the Present is a perpetual flight in the face of being . . . The present is not; it makes itself present in the form of flight" (*BN* 123). Where Heidegger famously employed the concept of care (*Sorge*) to capture the temporal expanse of *Dasein* (Sartre's "human reality"), Sartre opts for the image of flight from/toward. This expresses the no-thingness that is consciousness as temporality: at present it is not what it is (past) and it is what it is not (future).

Turning his phenomenological attention toward the future, Sartre relates to both the possible and to lack. The possible is seen as that which the For-itself lacks to be itself. Again, we face the question of the possible as limit – an issue that will be faced directly as Sartre turns to social constraints and "concrete" freedom in the coming years. But at this stage and throughout *BN*, he gingerly skirts the matter. The concept of project (pro-ject, as Heidegger will say) enters the scene and joins the notions of possibility and freedom.

> The future constitutes the meaning (*sens*) of my present for-itself as the project of its possibility, but that it in no way predetermines my For-itself which is to-come, since the For-itself is always abandoned to the nihilating obligation of being the foundation of its nothingness. The Future can only effect *a pre-outline of the limits within which* the For-itself will make itself be as a flight making itself present to being in the direction of another future.
>
> (*BN* 128, emphasis added)

Sartre concludes this phenomenology of time with a well-known line: "In short, the For-itself is free, and its Freedom is to itself its own limit. To be free is to be condemned to be free" (*BN* 129).

Temporality: the ontology

Static temporality

Sartre begins his examination of the "secondary ekstatic structures" of temporality by distinguishing two points of view – each valid but incomplete. The "static" attends to the "Ekstatic concept of time introduced into the literature by Heidegger."[2] As the word suggests, the three dimensions of time, past, present and future, are ways of "standing out" from simple identity of the in-itself. "The meaning of the ekstasis is distance from self" (*BN* 137). But that is precisely how the circle of selfness and the for-itself were described. In other words, time is of the "essence" of the for-itself (*Das Wesen ist was gewesen ist*), except that the "essence of Dasein is it existence" (*BN* 35; *EN* 72).[3] Sartre follows Heidegger in speaking of these temporal "ekstases" in nontemporal terms – a perennial challenge for any theory of time. Thus the Heideggerian triad of "thrownness" or "facticity" (the already), immersion or fallenness (alongside entities in the world) and existence or projection (the not yet) constitutes the model. As we have observed, Sartre adopts "facticity" and "project" for the past and the future but replaces immersion amongst things with "presence to" in the sense just described. In Sartre's ontology, these are three dimensions of the For-itself's temporal "dispersion" (its othering).

The temporal has traditionally been viewed as dispersive – "you cannot step into the same river twice" (Heraclitus). And Sartre speaks

[2] That it bears an unacknowledged Kierkegaardian provenance has been argued, for example, by John Caputo. See his "Husserl, Heidegger and the Question of a Hermeneutic Phenomenology," in *A Companion to Martin Heidegger's "Being and Time*," ed. Joseph Kockelmans (Washington, DC: Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology and University Press of America, 1986), 121.

[3] Sartre is ambiguous on thus understanding the essence of human reality. As we shall see, there is an ontological meaning of the Sartrean essence of human reality that identifies it with its past (its previous choices). In this ontological sense, "existence precedes essence" is true by definition, if one takes "existence" as synonymous with the future of human reality and "essence" as denoting its past. or its facticity.

of the For-itself as "diasporatic (*BN* 136). This simply reiterates the basic nonself coincidence of the for-itself. But it is a feature of phenomenology to conceive of time as constituting "a unity of a new type," which Sartre calls "ekstatic unity" (*BN* 134). The "unity" of the for-itself is not that of a substance (which would be in-itself); rather the for-itself "is its own nothingness and . . . can exist only in the ontological unity of its ekstases" (*BN* 171).

Viewing the three temporal dimensions in terms of the ontology elaborated in the previous chapters, Sartre describes the past in terms of a perpetually surpassed facticity that "haunts" the For-itself at the very moment that the For-itself acknowledges itself as not being this or that particular thing. Note that for Sartre "haunting" denotes a kind of presence in absence, a sort of being "present but out of reach" rather than a causal relationship – which belongs to the in-itself, as we shall see. Approaching the psychological, Sartre describes the Past as "that constantly given *density of the world* which allows me to orient myself and to get my bearings. It is myself in so far as I am myself as a person (there is also a structure to-come of the Ego). In short, the Past is my contingent and gratuitous bond with the world and with myself inasmuch as I constantly live it as a total renunciation."[4]

The future is associated with the lack and the possible. It reaches me as a "not-yet," and designates me as "an unachieved totality which can never be achieved" (*BN* 141). The two ekstases of past and future underscore the fact that the For-itself is never *itself* – what he calls "the ontological mirage of the Self" (*BN* 137).[5] And this occasions the observation that "this is why value in itself is by nature self-repose, non-temporality! The eternity which man is seeking is not the infinity of duration . . . [but] the atemporality of the absolute coincidence with himself" (*BN* 141–142).

In the third temporal dimension of ekstatic temporality, presence to being, the For-itself, "dispersed in the perpetual game of

[4] *BN* 141, emphasis added to resonate with a similar remark made about Kierkegaard some twenty years later: "Let us note at the outset that between [Kierkegaard] and us, History has taken place. No doubt it is still going on. But its richness puts a distance, *an obscure density* between him and us" ("Kierkegaard: The Singular Universal," *BEM* 149).

[5] In his *Notebooks for an Ethics*, Sartre speaks of authenticity or "authentic existence" involving freeing oneself from the Ego by pure reflection to achieve full autonomy (*NE* 478–482). For the initial discussion of authenticity in *CDG*, see above 165ff.

reflection-reflecting,[6] escapes itself in the unity of one and the same flight" (*BN* 142). And though none of these three dimensions has any ontological priority over the others, Sartre insists that "it is best to put the accent on the present ekstasis and not on the future ekstasis as Heidegger does," for it is in the present that the past and the future are revealed respectively as that which it has to be as a nihilating surpassing and as a lack "haunted" by its possible (*BN* 142). In sum, "temporality is the mode of being peculiar to being-for-itself. The For-itself is the being which has to be its being in the diasporatic form of Temporality" (*BN* 142).

The dynamic of temporality

It is here that Sartre considers the problem of duration beqeathed him by the person whose reflections initiated his interest in philosophy as a student, Henri Bergson. Though he criticizes him by name elsewhere in the book, it is the Bergsonian problem of relating, indeed of equating duration and spontaneity, that concerns Sartre here. The previous consideration of the three dimensions of temporality teaches us nothing about the problem of duration (Bergson's signature concept). Why does the For-itself undergo that modification of its being which makes it *become* past? And why does a new For-itself arise *ex nihilo* to become the Present of this Past? This is the problem of change and of novelty, not addressed in the static analysis just completed.

Regarding the first question, Sartre replies *pace* Leibniz and Kant, that the foundation of change is not permanence but the temporality itself of the For-itself. "It is the temporality of the For-itself which is the foundation of change and not the change which furnishes the foundation for temporality" (*BN* 144). "If what changes *is* its former state in the past mode," Sartre argues, "this is sufficient to make permanence superfluous. In this case change can be absolute . . . and the problem of duration ought to be posited in relation to absolute changes" (*BN* 143). Sartre is siding with Heraclitus. And since we are dealing with human reality, what is necessary is pure and absolute change, "which can very well be in addition a change with *nothing* which changes and which is actual duration" (*BN* 144).

[6] Reading *reflet-refletant* for *reflete-refletant* (*BN* 142; F 188).

"Original Temporality and Psychic Temporality: Reflection"

Sartre now distinguished two forms of reflection, each with its own temporality. Pure reflection is that awareness of the circle of selfness, the "simple presence of the reflective For-itself to the For-itself reflected-on." The unity between reflective and reflected-on is one of being, not of knowledge, which would objectify it as in-itself. The reflective *is* the reflected-on "in the complete immanence of the for-itself." Of course, this "unity" is a unity-in-duality since the "inner life" of the for-itself, so to speak, is an internal negation, an action of "othering" without objectifying. Resurrecting an expression he had employed for imaging consciousness in *The Imaginary*, Sartre speaks of the reflected-on as a "quasi-object" for such reflection. Pure reflection is the original form of reflection and its ideal form. Though it serves as the foundation on which "impure reflection" appears, "it is also that which is never first given; and it is that which must be won by a sort of katharsis" (*BN* 155). Some have likened it to Husserl's "transcendental reduction" though Sartre later insisted that he had never pursued the discussion of pure reflection in any detail. The reference to "katharsis," however, is supported by his occasional mention of "purify*ing*" reflection, as if the effort must rid consciousness of any remnant of the ontological mirage of the Self and, in effect as a requirement for authenticity.[7] Purifying reflection articulates the "original temporality" that we have been discussing thus far. It is the temporality which we *are* (*BN* 159). Such reflection discovers temporality "only in its own original nonsubstantiality, in its refusal to be in-itself." But it is consciousness *of* the three ekstatic dimensions: a nonthetic consciousness (of) flow and a thetic consciousnes *of* duration (*BN* 157).

This is admittedly dense and convoluted. Even Sartre had misgivings about it, as he explained in an interview with Michel Contat and Michel Rybalka almost thirty years later. After he admits the impossibility of a successful *self-analysis* because numerous assumptions and biases enter the picture so long as the subject is still conscious, his interviewers object: "When you say this, aren't you saying that what you called pure

[7] For references to "purifying reflection" elsewhere in *BN*, consider, for example: "Lack is accessible only to the purifying reflection, with which we are not here concerned" (199).

or nonaccessory reflection in *Being and Nothingness* – which is a requirement for authenticity – is impossible?" Sartre responds:

> You know that I never described this kind of reflection; I said that it could exist, but I only showed examples of accessory reflection. And later I discovered that nonaccessory reflection was no different from the accessory and immediate way of looking at things but was the critical work one can do on oneself during one's entire life, through *praxis*.[8]

Referring to concepts introduced in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Sartre adds: "Finally, here is an additional reason having to do with the totalizing method itself: it is impossible to totalize a living man" (*L/S* 122).

Even in *BN* itself, Sartre admits that what matters to him is the description of impure reflection inasmuch as it constitutes and reveals psychic temporality. Such temporality belongs to empirical psychology – the study of the Ego as "I" and "Me" of consciousness. Like every conscious act, accessory or impure reflection is intentional and is thetic consciousness of its object while being nonthetic or implicit awareness of itself. The phenomenological and the contrasting "empirical" dimensions of *Emotions* and *The Imaginary* exemplified psychic temporality. "By Psyche we understand the Ego, its states, its qualities, and its acts" (*BN* 162). It is a "transcendent" object for reflective consciousness; as such, the Psychic possesses a kind of "inertia" that allows it to be apprehended as related to things "in the world," even though it is not on the same plane as these existents (*BN* 166). As Sartre remarks: "Its essential difference from original temporality is that it *is* while original temporality [as non-being] temporalizes itself" (an expression reminiscent of Heidegger's "nothing nothings" meant to underscore the *sui generis* character of the dynamic phenomenon in question). Accordingly, psychic time can be constituted only by the past, with the future understood only as a past that will come after the present past; this is common sense time as a series of "nows." But the evidence which empirical psychology

[8] "On the Family Idiot," interview with Michel Contat and Michel Rybalka in 1971 (*L/S* 121–122)

considers is only probable, not certain, much less apodictic (as for some phenomenological accounts). Only the latter shares in the transparency of consciousness itself. We have already witnessed his discussion of the "image" in *Imaginaire*. The psychic object, being the shadow cast by the For-itself reflected-on, possesses the characteristics of consciousness in a degraded form.

"The Time of the World"

Universal time comes into the world through the For-itself which is temporality. But the For-itself is not consciousness *of* temporality except when it produces itself in the relation "reflective-reflected-on." In the unreflective mode, Sartre insists, "the for-itself discovers temporality *on* being – that is, outside. Universal temporality is objective" (*BN* 204). Still that full objectivity will not be realized until the third basic form of Being, namely being-for others (*pour autrui*) enters the scene.

The past

Our discussion of temporality thus far has focused on original temporality, the ontological temporality which "temporalizes" itself. Sartre now directs our attention to the time of our everyday experience. First the Past, specifically, the "abolitions and apparitions" of things. Sartre distinguishes the ontological from the metaphysical approach to this issue. He admits that they "ought to be the object of a purely metaphysical elucidation, not an ontological one, for we can conceive of their necessity neither from the standpoint of the structures of being of the For-itself nor of those of the In-itself. Their existence," he concludes, "is that of a contingent and metaphysical fact" (*BN* 206). Sartre is implicitly treading metaphysical waters anyway when he points out that any "before" or "after" in the inevitable question "What came first?" (think "Big Bang") is misplaced. The very notion of "before" and "after" can arise "only retrospectively to a world by a For-itself which is its own nothingness and its own priority" (*BN* 207). The most we can expect with such a world is the quasi-after of a "quasi-succession." To complete this "metaphysical" finesse of metaphysics, Sartre offers the same response to the origin of the principle of causality. He concludes that "the ambiguity of apparition and abolition comes from the fact that they are given, like the world, like

space, like potentiality and instrumentality, like universal time itself in the form of totalities in perpetual disintegration.

We know that the past functions as the in-itself (as Facticity for any situation) as identical with itself in contrast to the for-itself. There is only one past, which is the past of being or the *objective* past *in* which I was and which I flee.

> This means that there is a coincidence for only one of the temporal dimensions between the ekstatic temporality which I have to be and the time of the world as a pure given nothingness. It is through the past that I belong to universal temporality; it is through the present and the future that I escape from it.
>
> (*BN* 208)

The present

Sartre points to motion as distinct from becoming as a necessary condition for the For-itself to apprehend the present dimension of universal time. He believes that his ontology/metaphysics of nothingness can resolve a problem that has challenged philosophers since Zeno set forth his famous paradoxes of motion.[9] As "the being of a being which is exterior to itself," it is motion's trajectory that reveals its evanescent unity-in-otherness to the witnessing For-itself. It offers the For-itself "an *image* – projected on the level of the in-itself – of a being which has to be what it is not and to not-be what it is" (*BN* 213, emphasis added). But this image of exteriority to itself, while "realizing universal time," does so from the dimension of the in-itself, nihilated by ekstatic temporality of the For-itself. In other words, the "present" in this moving image is subject to the infinite divisibility of its absolute exteriority. The failure to distinguish this "Present" of universal time from its ontological foundation in the internal negations of ekstatic temporality of the For-itself is behind the criticism by Merleau-Ponty and others of Sartre's temporal "pointillism."

[9] Demonstrating the unintelligibility of motion, this follower of Parmenides proposed several paradoxes, the most famous of which were those of the arrow that at one moment between bow and target had to be stationary and the race between Achilles and the tortoise, given the slightest head start to the tortoise, since the intervening space between the two competitors was infinitely divisible and so Achilles would require an infinite time to traverse it. Aristotle describes and refutes these and two other arguments in his *Physics* Bk VI, ch. 2, 233a, 21 ff.

The future

Time, insofar as it is revealed in an ekstatic temporality which temporalizes itself (that is, original temporality), "is everywhere a self-transcendence and a referring of the before to the after and of the after to the before" (*BN* 215). But "our first apprehension of objective time is *practical*" (*BN* 215). It reveals itself concretely and nonthematically across a series of dependent possibles given in the nonpositional revelation of the major possible toward which I project myself – my ultimate value. In effect, time appears through trajectories. And "just as spatial trajectories decompose and collapse into pure static spatiality, so the temporal trajectory collapses as soon as it is not simply lived as that which objectively implies our expectations of ourselves" (*BN* 216).

"Part III: Being-for-Others"

It seems inevitable that a philosopher who claims that one must begin with the *Cogito* (I think) of Descartes will face the problems both of establishing a "bridge" to the "external" world and, more problematic still, of gaining access to the "minds" of others – what he calls the "Other." We have observed his enthusiastic and continued embrace of Husserlian "intentionality" to circumvent the problem of the external world to the point of accusing Husserl himself of having abandoned the concept in his treatment of mental images. The For-itself is by definition "in the world" initially by its practical concerns (thanks to Heidegger's improvement on Husserl), as we have just observed. But the pesky matter of justifying our confidence in the existence of other conscious subjects, "Others," which continued to plague Husserl, now challenges Sartre. He devotes the longest section of *BN* to the topic. The result is an especially graphic portrait of our experience of our "objectification" by the "look" or "gaze" (*le regard*) of the Other. What we shall call the "looking/looked-at" model of interpersonal relations, emblematic of Sartrean existentialism, offers an especially concrete (phenomenological) "argument" for the existence of other minds even as it thereafter hobbles his project of formulating a positive social theory. This last is graphically captured in the penultimate remark of a character in his popular play written the year *BN* was published, *No Exit*, "Hell is other people"

("L'enfer c'est les autres").[10] This has been taken as the epitaph on the tomb of his social philosophy.

It is a common philosophical argument for the so-called "existence of other minds" to reason from an analogy between our personal experience to similar experiences in other "subjects." Simply stated, as I feel pain when someone steps on my foot, so do they have a similar experience when I step on theirs. I am gaining access to their "inner" state by the weakest form of argument – from analogy. But Sartre correctly notes that the "probability" that such an argument yields, cannot warrant the certitude that we enjoy regarding the existence of the Other. Others, recognizing that our certitude of the "inner" thoughts and feelings of others surpasses the limits of simple analogies, appeal to an kind of affective "sympathy" or "feeling with" that is immediate and implicit in our social interchange. Sartre will adopt this thesis with his acceptance of "comprehension" as already noted. In fact, he considers our "pre-ontological comprehension" of the Other's existence and the certainty it provides as indicative of "a sort of *cogito*" concerning the Other: "It is this *cogito*," he insists, "which we must bring to light by specifying its structures and determining its scope and its laws" (*BN* 251).

Admittedly, comprehension becomes more important to his dialectical reasoning later in his life, where it is called upon to skirt the negative character of the looking/looked-at model of social relations. But in *BN* the context is Cartesian and so is the challenge: how do I justify my awareness of the other as subject, that is, as Other, when I seem to have isolated myself in the confines of the *Cogito*? It is characteristic of Sartrean phenomenology that he will approach this problem via our experience of shame consciousness. Here mind and body are conjoined, as it were, by the presence of an Other. By what one could call an "eidetic reduction" (the imaginary variation of an example to yield the intuitive grasp of an essence or intelligible contour), he "brings us to see," as Husserl would say, the essence of shame consciousness, namely, that "shame is shame of oneself before the Other" (*BN* 222). This self–Other relation is "contingently necessary": that is, though it is necessary for my status as an object, the Other is as contingent as I am. It is conceivable

[10] Though it premiered two years later, *Huis Clos* was written in two weeks during the fall of 1943 (see Hayman, *Writing Against*, chronology, xix).

that I could be existing in a solipsistic "world." Hence the relation must be one of *being* and not simply of knowledge.

Important consequences follow from this insight – above all that the appearance of the Other "has established me in a new type of being [being-for Others] which can support new qualifications" (*BN* 222). But first let us consider the classic "argument" that Sartre mounts to make his point. It is based on his thesis that "We encounter the Other; we do not constitute him," neither do we "deduce" his existence (*BN* 250). And if our encounter is with another subject (for-itself), it is going to imply a certain clash of nihilations; like the approach of the negative poles of two magnets, these two consciousnesses must be united and separated by an internal negation.[11] This is the ontological source of Sartre's insistence that whatever totalization I undertake, whatever social whole I form with Others, will always be a "detotalized" totality – whether individually or collectively. Even the dialectic of History to which he will refer years later will be a "dialectic with holes"; that is, "a totalization with pockets of irreducible individual consciousness-freedom."[12]

"The Look (*Le Regard*)"

This famous case, I said, can be considered a kind of "eidetic reduction," a Schelerian argument by example, a paradigm case. It instantiates Sartre's psychological insights and descriptive powers naturally apt for phenomenological philosophy. Picture someone kneeling at the door as he looks through the keyhole at a couple who are unaware of his presence. Shifting to the first person, Sartre continues:

> I am alone and on the level of a non-thetic self-consciousness. This means first of all that there is no self to inhabit my consciousness, nothing therefore to which I can refer my acts in order to qualify them. They are in no way *known*; I *am my* acts and hence they are in themselves their whole justification. I am pure consciousness *of* things, and things, caught up in the circuit of my selfness, offer to me their potentialities as the proof of my non-thetic consciousness (of) my own possibilities.

[11] See *BN* 283: "We need not understand by this that a Self comes to dwell in our consciousness but that selfness is reinforced by arising as a negation of another selfness and that this reinforcement is positively apprehended as the continuous choice of selfness by itself as *the same* selfness and as *this very selfness*." It is our project, not substance, that confers our identity.

[12] *NE* 459. See *SFHR* II:47–49, "A Dialectic with Holes in It: The Strike."

In Sartrean parlance, he is "objectifying" the pair, turning them into being-in-itself and thus "stealing" their freedom-possibility. Like the deceased characters we shall encounter in *No Exit*, their "meanings" are being imposed on them from outside. Without appeal, they stand under his interpretive gaze. He is the sovereign subject; they are objectified or, as Sartre will often say, "alienated" by his look.[13]

But suddenly the voyeur hears what he takes to be footsteps behind him. Immediately, "essential modifications appear in his structure." He experiences *shame*. Simultaneously, in one and the same nonthetic consciousness, he is aware of himself as objectified by an Other. To telescope Sartre's careful analysis, the voyeur is seen, that is, he experiences a relation of objectification for another consciousness and of himself as visible, that is, as embodied. This is not the conclusion of an argument; it's an immediate bodily realization, an emotion realized in his blushing face and cringing body. Sartre proceeds to unpack this rich, immediate experience that occurs at the prereflective level.

First, "I now exist as *myself* for my unreflective consciousness" (*BN* 260). Up to this stage, recall, the "self" was the ideal term of my circle of selfness, and the ego/me were objects of reflective consciousness. But Sartre cautions, "Only the reflective consciousness has the self directly for an object. The unreflective consciousness does not apprehend the *person* directly or as its object; the person is presented to consciousness *in so far as the person is an object for the Other*" (*BN* 260). This immediately makes me nonreflectively aware of myself "as escaping myself . . . " as a "pure reference to the Other" (*BN* 260). Though we can "know" the Other-as-object, Sartre insists that "the Other-as-subject can in no way be known nor even conceived as such" (*BN* 293). This is the ontological basis of the *interpersonal*, I shall argue, but not of the *social*, as Merleau-Ponty will correctly point out and as Sartre will later admit.[14]

But my self-for-another, so to speak, on principle flees from me. I can never recuperate it, except by "staring down" the Other, which thereupon makes my self-for-another vanish even as his emerges. This is "a

[13] Marx criticized Hegel for equating "objectification," which was necessary and insuperable, with "alienation," which was contingent and, in principle, capable of being overcome. Though Sartre sometimes makes the Hegelian mistake, he will at other times acknowledge the distinction. For the gamut of opinions regarding Sartre's position, see *SME* 242, n. 8 and the index, svv "alienation" and "objectification."

[14] *AD* 143–147.

self which I am without knowing it; for I discover it in shame and in other instances in pride. It is shame or pride which reveals to me the Other's look and myself at the end of that look. It is the shame or pride which makes me *live*, not *know* the situation of being looked at" (*BN* 261). Sartre calls myself-as-object "an uneasiness, a lived wrenching away from the ekstatic unity of the for-itself, a limit which I can not reach and which yet I am" (*BN* 275). Again, we should retain this analysis when we discuss the futility experienced by the dead in *No Exit* as they try to counter the judgments leveled on their past by the living.

My status as objectified is that of an in-itself, the possibilities of which are in the hands of the Other – my transcendence transcended, as Sartre says. Among the essential modifications of my being effected by the encounter by the Other are a universal space and time, the experience (*Erlebnis*) of simultaneity (important for his subsequent reflections on history),[15] my liability to the Other's appraisals and so forth.[16] In sum, the Other's look transforms my world as looked-at.

Sartre's point is that this experience of the Other as subject is as certain as my experience of shame, of which it is an ingredient.[17] What is merely probable, and subject to empirical verification, is the contingent event that, at this moment, there is someone actually looking at me. As he says, in the example just cited, it may simply have been a mistaken interpretation of the rustle of the curtains at the open window. Again, we are distinguishing the certain from the probable. What is phenomenologically certain is the analysis of the experience. What is probable is its instantiation in the present event.

"The Body"

Sartre is now able to return to earlier concepts, especially the body, in terms of the ontology of for-itself and for-others that is now at his command. Considering the body as for-itself, he argues that it is "the total contingency of my consciousness" (*BN* 334). Indeed, we can say

[15] See *SFHR* II, index, sv "simultaneity." Also *BN* 282, "prehistoric historization. It is a prehistoric temporalization of simultaneity."

[16] Shame (and arrogance) are authentic whereas Pride, Sartre affirms, is in bad faith (*BN* 290).

[17] "In short: The Other can exist for us in two forms: if I experience him with evidence, I fail to know him; if I know him, if I act upon him, I only reach his being-as-object and his probable existence in the midst of the world. No synthesis of these two forms is possible" (*BN* 302).

that the body is the "facticity" of consciousness.[18] It is not distinct from the situation of the for-itself. Indeed, the body is the "given" of our embodied existence, the orientation that is our perceptive field. As his analysis of shame consciousness so graphically illustrated, "the structure of the world demands that we can not see without *being visible*" (*BN* 317).

But is consciousness "reducible" to body the way "eliminative materialists" wish to reduce mind to brain functions? Sartre's position is ambiguous, as the following remarks indicate:

> Consciousness exists its body. Thus the relation between body-as-point of view and things is an *objective* relation, and the relation of consciousness to the body is an *existential* relation ... [This means] that consciousness can exist its body only as consciousness. Therefore *my* body is a conscious structure of my consciousness. But precisely because the body is the point of view on which there can not be a point of view, there is on the level of unreflective consciousness no consciousness of the body. The body belongs then to the structures of the non-thetic self-consciousness.

So it seems as if he were defending some form of reductionism. But he continues:

> Yet can we identify it purely and simply with this non-thetic consciousness? That is not possible either, for non-thetic consciousness is self-consciousness as the free project toward a possibility which is its own; that is, in so far as it is the foundation of its own nothingness ... In short, consciousness (of) the body is lateral and retrospective: the body is the neglected, the "passed over in silence." And yet the body is what this consciousness *is*; it is not even anything except body. The rest is nothingness and silence.
>
> (*BN* 329–330)

This is an application of Sartre's general thesis that "The *situation*, a common product of the contingency of the in-itself and of freedom, is an ambiguous phenomenon in which it is impossible for the for-itself to distinguish the contribution of freedom from that of the brute existent" (*BN* 488). Faced with the rock "too steep to climb," in his famous example, it will appear too steep only if I abandon the effort to acquire the training to scale it. What is an obstacle for me may not be so for

[18] This was Hazel Barnes's contention (see Schilpp, "Sartre as Materialist," 665). It follows, she argues, from its role as the contingency of consciousness.

another. Its "quality" is a function of the depth of my desire to overcome it. "Thus, the world of coefficients of adversity reveals to me the way in which I stand in relation to the ends which I assign myself, so that I can never know if it is giving me information about myself or about it."[19] Sartre calls this the "paradox of freedom: There is freedom only in a situation, and there is a situation only through freedom" (*BN* 489).

Turning to the body-for-others, he elaborates additional features of my being-for-others revealed by shame consciousness. Sartre can now draw a parallel between my body for the Other and the Other's body for me and proceed to compare and contrast these views. First of all, I can assume a point of view on the Other's body which is impossible for me on my own. And while my body, though not related to me as an instrument except in the special sense that it enables me to employ instruments such as glasses, pens and telephones, I can utilize another's body as I can any other thing. Of course, the Other's body, as "transcendence transcended" tempts me to use it as a "mere instrument," as Kant warned. But so long as it is a living body, that is, so long as it is the Other's body, that "hole" which it leaves in my field of consciousness, precisely because it too is for-itself, can "drain away" my sovereign command of the field of meaning and can even turn the tables on me in the game of stare-down that Sartre's model of the looking/looked-at invites. In effect, the Other perceived first as object is now perceived as a threat. We are at the threshold of a Hobbesian world from which we will not escape until Sartre introduces an ontology of positive reciprocity within group praxis in the *Critique*.

In addition to the body as for-itself and as for-others, Sartre distinguished a third ontological dimension of the body, "I exist my body as known by the Other" (*BN* 351). He appeals to affective structures such as shyness (*la timidité*) as an example of a lively and constant awareness of my body *as* it is for the Other and not for me. Sartre explains such affective states as embarrassment or shyness as features of the third

[19] *BN* 488–489. Gaston Bachelard (1884–1962) introduced the expression "coefficient of adversity" that Sartre will occasionally mention as countering our projects (see *BN* 324). But he is adamant that "The given in no way enters into the constitution of freedom since freedom is interiorized as the internal negation of the given" (*BN* 486). What he is describing in *BN* is "abstract" freedom, "freedom as the definition of man," in contrast with "concrete" freedom, as described in the lecture "Existentialism is a Humanism" (see the following chapter).

ontological dimension of our bodily being-for-others. He also describes it as a form of "alienation," not simply in the sense of "objectification" discussed earlier, but in the etymological sense of being alien or "other" to itself by virtue of the Other's "haunting" presence: "In the same way that a being-for-others haunts my facticity (which is non-thetically lived), so a being-an-object-for-others haunts – as a dimension of escape from my psychic body – the facticity constituted as a quasi-object for an accessory reflection" (*BN* 357).This is the body as a quasi "thing amongst things, as my facticity of being 'in-the-midst-of-the-world,'" and temporally, as past.

"Concrete Relations with Others"

Among the reflections gathered in his posthumously published *Notebooks for an Ethics*, Sartre declares: "No love without that sadistic-masochistic dialectic of subjugation of freedoms that I have described. No love without deeper recognition and reciprocal comprehension of freedoms (a missing dimension in *Being and Nothingness*)" (*NE* 414). This is the portion of *BN* with which Sartre was least pleased.[20] One can see why. The seemingly insuperable relation of "an original nihilation" with the in-itself and among for-itselfs just described infects our concrete relations with Others. This prereflective "flight" from the in-itself which, we saw, the Other confers on me, I experience as alienation. But it's a matter of (prereflective) experience, not (reflective) knowledge. It is part of my facticity which I must recognize by assuming *attitudes* with respect to it. This is the key to Sartre's analysis:

> Such is the origin of my concrete relations with the Other; they are wholly governed by my attitudes with respect to the object which I am for the Other. And as the Other's existence reveals to me the being which I am without being able either to appropriate that being or even to conceive it [since this occurs prereflectively], this existence will motive two opposed attitudes.
>
> (*BN* 363)

Either I will try to capture the Other's freedom by enchanting it with my own (Masochism) or I will attempt to subjugate that freedom while

[20] Sartre confesses: "What is particularly bad in *L'Etre et le Néant* is the specifically social chapters, on the 'we,' compared to the chapters on the 'you' and 'others'" (Schilpp 13).

preserving its character as freedom (Sadism). These are relations among Others and not between a consciousness and a thing. And while the (in)famous example of Sadism/Masochism articulated in this section strikes many as offensive, it does serve to emphasize the embodied character of Sartre's ontology as his account becomes increasingly "concrete." These "two primitive attitudes" are inescapable. Indeed, "there is no dialectic for my relations toward the Other but rather a circle – although each attempt is enriched by the failure of the other . . . We can never get outside the circle" (*BN* 363).

The result is a kind of tension without resolution because, ontologically, we are dealing with a "double internal negation." Despite the romantic and psychological desire to "melt" into each other's consciousness, this "freedom," which defines our being-for-itself, remains insoluble. This is obvious in the revolving, alienating relations of "inauthentic" love described in *Being and Nothingness*, but we shall see that it continues throughout the introduction of "dialectical" reason in the *Critique*. Sartre calls upon a "preontological comprehension" of the deception at work in our pursuit of love. He finds in it the source of the "triple destructibility of love," namely the lover's perpetual dissatisfaction with this impossible ideal, his perpetual insecurity (in the face of the Other's freedom), and the lover's shame in the inevitable regard of a third party.

The second attitude toward the Other is simply another fundamental reaction to the being-for-others as an original situation. Sartre considers this a deliberate turning from the failure to solicit the Other's consciousness by assuming my objectness for him (Masochism) toward an equally vain attempt to collapse the Other's subjectivity under my objectifying gaze while still acknowledging a spark of subjectivity lest my own objectivity disappear. This can assume several forms, from the "factual solipsism" or the indifference that Martin Buber captured in the "I–they" relation that one adopts toward the "functionaries" in a public service, to the "troubled" phenomenon of sexual desire or repulsion,[21] to explicit sadism ("an effort to incarnate the Other through violence"). Sartre cites an example from Faulkner's *Light in August* where the dying man "looks" at his torturers: "This explosion of the Other's look in the world of the sadist causes the meaning and goal of sadism to collapse"

[21] For an insightful description of sexual arousal inspired by this Sartrean text, see Thomas Nagel, "Sexual Perversion," *Journal of Philosophy* 66, no. 1 (1969): 5–17.

(*BN* 406). This is interpersonal relations as a game of stare-down. In this case, the victim refused to "blink."

Sartre makes a claim that he will explicitly reverse in the *Critique* when he concludes that "neither of these two states [of "Masochistic" or "Sadistic" attitudes to my body-for-others] "is sufficient in itself, and we shall never place ourselves concretely on the plane of equality; that is, on the plane where the recognition of the Other's freedom would involve the Other's recognition of our freedom."[22]

Once again, Sartre appends a footnote of relief from the seemingly inescapable alienation generated by the Other's look. He assures us that "these considerations do not exclude the possibility of *an ethics of deliverance and salvation*. But this can be achieved only after a *radical conversion* which we can not discuss here" (*BN* 412, n. 14, emphasis added).

"Being-with (*Mitsein*) and the We"

Sartre concludes the "social" ontology he is undertaking in part III of the book by considering the "collective" object and subject, the Us and the We. I place "social" and "collective" in scare quotes because I believe we shall discover when we reach the *Critique* that both expressions are used in an accommodated sense. To put it bluntly, the Sartrean "Us" enjoys ontological status as the object of the Other's gaze. It is a kind of being-in-itself, as much as any for-itself can be reduced to an object. But the We, on the contrary, is "a purely subjective *Erlebnis* [experience]" (*BN* 420). This is a position that has been categorized as "ontological individualism," where the collective subject is reduced to a psychological phenomenon without ontological status beyond that of an attitude or an idea. In fact, Sartre's erstwhile friend Raymond Aron continued to list Sartre among the ontological individualists even after the appearance of the *Critique*.[23] Sartre, in this text, is not denying that we have an experience of the We, for example that we experience the other subjects with whom we share the audience at a theatrical

[22] This is precisely the role of the "mediating third" in the fusing group described in the *Critique* (*CDR* 1:363–404). The "Third" that Sartre introduces in *BN* should be considered an objectifying and alienating Third. This form will continue to function in the *Critique*.

[23] Raymond Aron, *History and the Dialectic of Violence*, trans. Barry Cooper (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975), 200.

performance or the synchronized actions of our rowing team. But he considers such matters of "lateral" and nonpositional consciousness of their bodies as correlative to my body and not part of the basic looking/looked-at ontology. Sartre who had long rejected the Durkheimian collective consciousness, insists that "the 'we' is experienced by a particular consciousness" (*BN* 414).

One notable result of the looking/looked-at model is his thesis that "the being-for-others precedes and founds the being-with-others" (*BN* 414). This is an explicit rejection of the Heideggerian *Mitsein* that postulates the converse. In fact, Sartre claims that if being-with is ontologically prior to the individual for-itself, then there would be no way to derive individual existence from such a collective phenomenon. He then reminds us in a well-known phrase that "the essence of the relations between consciousnesses is not the *Mitsein*; it is conflict" (*BN* 420).

Sartre takes this occasion to introduce examples of class conflict and draw a socioeconomic moral from his social ontology. But since this will be a major concern of his subsequent work, let it suffice to note its presence in his phenomenological ontology as we had remarked its presence at the conclusion of *Transcendence of the Ego*.[24]

"Part IV: Having, Doing and Being"

Having established with the help of the questioning character of human reality the three distinct and irreducible forms of being, namely, the in-itself, the for-itself, and the for-others, Sartre continues his pursuit of the concrete by distinguishing the three cardinal categories of human reality: having, doing and being. Saving "being" for the next chapter, he elaborates the "freedom" that accompanies the determination of "man." The internal negation of the in-itself that the for-itself "is in the manner of not-being it" reveals the permanent possibility of a rupture with that particular in-itself and this, Sartre confirms "is the same as freedom" (*BN* 439). Like the "perfect waiter," we can always try to act otherwise. By now we recognize that his "freedom" can be described alternatively as our "nihilation" or our "transcendence" of

[24] See below, Chapter 9.

the "givens" of our lives – our moving beyond the factical toward the possible, beyond the essence to the future. It is with this in view that Sartre adopts the poet's "I am more than myself" to capture this phenomenon. "Human reality is free because it is not enough . . . The being which is what it is [the in-itself] can not be free. Freedom is precisely the nothingness which 'is been' (*est été*) at the heart of man and which forces human reality to *make itself* (*se faire*) instead of *being*."[25] The relation between the for-itself's nonidentity and its inherent temporality warrants Sartre's introduction of this neologism, *est été*, to characterize the nothing (*rien*) at the heart of consciousness. An adequate translation is difficult, but the oddity of the expression jars us into recognizing that consciousness, like Zeno's arrow, "is-not" at any point in its temporal trajectory. It is its past in the manner of not-being it, again the mode of being proper to Sartrean consciousness.

As he begins to concretize an originally "abstract" freedom, Sartre reveals several equivalencies for the term. Though Iris Murdoch once lamented Sartre's penchant for "great inexact equations,"[26] the increased "parsing" of his fundamental ontology consists, in large part, of rendering explicit features implicit in his three basic modes of being. Thus the pure upsurge which is the appearance of the for-itself can, in relation to action, be understood as "original Choice" which is the ground or reason (*motif*) for our subsequent choices as well as for the deliberation that precedes them and the "will" to which we appeal to effect them. "The will in fact is posited as a reflective decision in relation to certain ends . . . Human reality can not receive its ends . . . either from outside or from a so-called inner 'nature.' It chooses them and by this very choice confers upon them a transcendent existence as the external limit of its projects" (*BN* 443). This is Sartre's argument with every form of determinism. But he resists awarding "Choice" a temporal priority over choices. "By original freedom, of course, we should not understand a freedom which would be prior to the voluntary or

[25] *BN* 440; F 516. Thus Hazel Barnes translates *est été* as "is made-to-be" (*BN* 78); Maurice Natanson renders it "is-was" (*A Critique of Jean-Paul Sartre's Ontology* [The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973], 59); and Peter Caws offers us "is been," explaining that this turning of "to be" into a reflexive verb captures Sartre's nuance that the for-itself is "a self-sustaining reflection of Being upon itself" (*Sartre* [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979], 82).

[26] Murdoch, *Sartre*, *Romantic Rationalist*, 147.

passionate act but rather a *foundation* which is strictly contemporary with the will or the passion and which *these manifest*, each in its own way" (*BN* 444). The priority of "Choice" to "choices" is ontological not temporal. In the following pages, Sartre telescopes Choice, project, profound intention and original, ontological freedom into the very "being of the For-itself" (*BN* 453) This will enable him to prescribe a "hermeneutic" of our everyday actions toward the end of the book, in order to uncover our life-defining project – the goal of existential psychoanalysis whereby we finally understand the concrete – for example, Gustave Flaubert as the author of *Madame Bovary*.[27]

Sartre's concept of original Choice, the choice which we discover ourselves having made, he later likens to what psychologists call consciousness as "selection, or selective perception.[28] One is in fact reminded of the "choice" that Kierkegaard's moralist, Judge William, proposes to the young aesthete in *Either/Or*: First choose the good *and* bad, that is, play the ethical game, and only then can you choose the good *or* bad.[29] What Kierkegaard has been criticized for as proposing "criterion*less*" choice in such an instance resembles Sartre's concept of original Choice. But in both cases, I suggest, we are dealing with criterion-*constituting* choice, not unlike what British ethicist R. M. Hare labels "decisions of principle that are themselves unprincipled."[30] In the first two cases, at least, it seems one is dealing with a "conversion" experience where a new set of criteria for subsequent choices is "Chosen." This would correspond to the "radical conversion" to which Sartre referred earlier and resonate with the several references he makes to "conversion" in *WD*, in *BN*, especially in *NE* and in his interviews. This is "choice" in the sense of "commitment" in the sense that the freedom of the for-itself is always *engagé*" (*BN* 479). But in *WD*, it is worth noting that, after explaining "conversion" in its traditional Aristotelian sense of a logical exchange of one proposition for another by the mutual transposition of subject and attribute, he insists "the primary value is not authenticity but substantiality"

[27] See *L/S* 123: "I can show the importance of the social factors in the formation and personalization of Flaubert the individual who wrote *Madame Bovary* . . ."

[28] *BN* 462. But Sartre explains that they are working at the psychological level that presupposes this ontological foundation.

[29] Kierkegaard *Either/Or*, II:173.

[30] Hare, *Language of Morals*, "Decisions of Principle."

(*la substantialité*) (*CDG* 143); that is the drive to be in-itself-for-itself or what Thomas Anderson aptly calls "the God-project."[31]

"Freedom and Facticity: The Situation"

We referred to an important essay published after the war, where Sartre remarks that any "philosophy of revolution" such as he was then beginning to propose would have to elaborate the concept of "situation." It is in *Being and Nothingness* that he analyzes this basic concept in greatest detail. Again we encounter the ambiguous relation between facticity and freedom, the given and the taken inherent in any situation.

> The reader will have understood that this given is nothing other than the in-itself nihilated by the for-itself which has to be it, that the body as a point of view on the world, that the past as the *essence* which the for-itself was – that these are three designations for a single reality. By its nihilating withdrawal, freedom causes a whole system of relations to be established, from the point of view of the end, between *all* in-itselfs.
>
> (*BN* 487)

Sartre proceeds to discuss five components of "my situation," which is certainly one of the most accessible portions of the book, while insisting that no one of them is given alone and that each should be considered on the "synthetic background of the others" (*BN* 489; *EN* 570). This caveat manifests both his early and abiding interest in the "figure/ground" distinction of the Gestalt psychologists he embraced in the 1930s and the "totalizing" discourse the he will adopt after serious reading of Hegel and Marx in the mid 1940s and fifties. Sartre gathers these five aspects of my situation under the rubrics: My Place, My Past, My Environment, My Fellow man, and My Death. Each category allows him to offer insightful phenomenological analyses of their subject. We must forego discussions of each, except to warn again that the fundamental ambiguity of the comparative "weight" of facticity and freedom is at work in each of these categories.

[31] Thomas Anderson, *Sartre's Two Ethics: From Authenticity to Integral Humanity* (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1993), 53, referring to *NE* 559.

Still, I should mention that Sartre's discussion of "death" distinguished him sharply from Heidegger. If he has been distancing himself from Heidegger throughout the book, here the contrast is clearest. Whereas Heidegger famously spoke of *Dasein*'s individuating being-unto-death and urged us to embrace our mortal temporality resolutely, Sartre claims, in Epicurean fashion,[32] that death is beyond *Dasein* (Human Reality). "My death" belongs to the class of what he calls *unrealizables* along with other aspects of my objectification ("alienation") in the eyes of Others such as my "vulgarity," my "guilty conscience," before the infinite Other, and my "being a Jew," as we shall see in Chapter 9. Unlike the imaginary, which is not real ("irreal," as he explained in *The Imaginary*), the unrealizables are real features of my situation: "they represent the reverse side of the situation." They are its limits, not in the sense of something I can transcend but in the sense that marks the futile and irresistible tendency to see oneself "from outside" of one's situation. Thus when we think of our death, we adopt the viewpoint on ourselves that we have assumed before the corpses of others. But this is to conflate our dying with their death. The latter, again in Sartre's neo-Epicurean stance, is an impossibility but one predicated on our real situation – our finitude and bodily limit. "Freedom is total and infinite," Sartre reminds us, "which does not mean that it has no limits but that it *never encounters them*" (*BN* 351).

And yet, unlike the other limits, death is a *boundary*, a *Janus bifrons*. Like the final chord of a melody, it points to the silence beyond itself. But death becomes *mine* by being interiorized and humanized as my terminus – the final term belonging to a series called "my life." Sounding now somewhat like Heidegger, Sartre concludes: "Hence I become responsible for *my* death as for my life. Not for the empirical and contingent phenomenon of my decease [which Sartre considers a matter of chance] but for this character of finitude which causes my life like my death to be *my* life" (*BN* 532).

[32] Epicurus, "When we are there, death is not, and when death is there, we are not." *Epistola ad Menoeceum*, in A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley (eds.), *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 2 vols. (Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1:150. For an in-depth comparison of Sartre and Heidegger on death, see Bernard N. Schumacher, *Death and Mortality in Contemporary Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Voicing a thesis that will be dramatized in his play *No Exit* the following year, he concludes that death "is the triumph of the point of view of the Other over the point of view which I am toward myself" (*BN* 540). So *pace* Heidegger, death, far from being my own most possibility, is a contingent fact that as such escapes me and originally belongs to my facticity and to my being-for-others. "There is no place for classifying these attitudes [toward death] as authentic or inauthentic since we always die *in the bargain* (*par-dessus le marché*)" (*BN* 548; *EN* 633).

"Freedom and Responsibility"

Admitting that this brief section will be of interest primarily to the ethicist, Sartre is in effect articulating the obvious "ethical" import of the entire work as a prelude to arriving at the concrete with existential psychoanalysis in the following chapter. Just as he has "humanized" space and time, in what we may begin to deem the "existentialist" manner, so he offers us an "authorial" understanding of "responsibility" as distinct from the physically "causal" sense of the term. "Responsibility," he explains, is "consciousness (of) being the incontestable author of an event or of an object" (*BN* 553). The parenthesis indicates its nonthetic status as concomitant with any thetic consciousness of an object. It extends to the full range of our world and is coextensive with consciousness and freedom itself. One can call this "noetic" responsibility in virtue of its being a function of the meaning-giving character of consciousness as such which implies "noetic" freedom as well. A structuralist critic of Sartrean consciousness has remarked that "Existentialist anthropos, even rid of its reference to a human nature, would remain an arrogant anthropos who would take himself as the unique source of meaning."[33] We shall see that the later Sartre did reserve a clear role for "structures" in his concept of the practico-inert in the *Critique*, but even in *BN* he speaks of signs, directions and other "instrumental complexes," including "techniques for appropriating the world" (*BN* 512–521 and *SME* 29–30). Of course, the crucial difference from what came to be called the "structuralist" alternative to existentialism was the primacy that

[33] Jean-Marie Benoist, *La Revolution structurale* (Paris: Grasset, 1975), 11.

Sartre reserves for the agency of the conscious subject in "concretizing" these otherwise abstract structures. Again, we encounter the ambiguity of facticity and transcendence, the given and the taken. As one of the graffiti slogans on Parisian walls during the student uprising of 1968 put it, "Structures don't take to the streets!"

Sartre concludes this chapter with what could be seen as a miniature of the "authentic individual"emerging from *Being and Nothingness* to be projected on to the lectures and plays of the following years:

> The one who realizes in anguish his condition as being thrown into a responsibility which extends to his very abandonment has no longer either remorse or regret or excuse; he is no longer anything but freedom which perfectly reveals itself and whose being resides in this very relation. But as we pointed out at the beginning of this work, most of the time we flee anguish in bad faith.
>
> (*BN* 556)

"Existential Psychoanalysis"

Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, renowned psychoanalyst and former student of Sartre's, once remarked: "One day the history of Sartre's thirty-year long relationship with psychoanalysis, and ambiguous mixture of *equally* deep attraction and repulsion, will have to be written and perhaps his work reinterpreted in the light of it."[34] As we have witnessed thus far and as Pontalis, whom Sartre had once suggested might analyze him, knew well, Sartre's problem was the unconscious, not psychoanalysis as such. Can you practice psychoanalysis without the unconscious? The concluding portion of *BN* draws on the ontological credit of the previous chapters to show how it is possible to do so. His several "biographies" composed over the following years and culminating in his massive Flaubert study exemplified his evolving "psychoanalytic" method. In the process, he attenuates his emphasis on consciousness to the point of "suspending" it in favor of "lived" experience (*le vécu*) till its return in the Flaubert biography. We have noted a certain functional equivalent of the unconscious in Sartre's appeal to "comprehension." That continues and is enriched by his use of experience (*le vécu*) which he admits:

[34] "Reply to Sartre" from "The Man with a Tape-recorder," *BEM* 220.

> I suppose it represents for me the equivalent of conscious-unconscious, which is to say that I no longer believe in certain forms of the unconscious [*sic*] even though Lacan's conception of the unconscious is more interesting . . . I want to give the idea of a whole whose surface is completely conscious, while the rest is opaque to this consciousness and, without being part of the unconscious, is hidden from you. When I show [in *The Family Idiot*] how Flaubert did not know himself and how at the same time he understood himself admirably, I am indicating which I call experience [*vécu*] – that is to say, life aware of itself, without implying any thetic knowledge or consciousness. This notion of experience is a tool I use, but one which I have not theorized.[35]

The pages on existential psychoanalysis in *BN* are both culminating and promissory. They draw on the for-itself/in-itself/for-others triad, now concretized by appeal to our being-in-situation, and they criticize the disappearance from contemporary psychology of *man* as a unity of responsibility, that is "a unity agreeable or hateful, blamable and praiseworthy, in short *personal*" (*BN* 561).

Sartre offers us a preview of subsequent studies when he remarks that, "*to be*, for Flaubert, as for every subject of 'biography,' means to be unified in the world. The irreducible unification which we ought to find, which is Flaubert, and which we require biographers to reveal to us – this is the unification of an *original project*, a unification which should reveal itself to us as a *non-substantial absolute*" (*BN* 561).

The principle of existential psychoanalysis is that "man is a totality and not a collection. Consequently, he expresses himself as a whole in even his most insignificant and his most superficial behavior. In other words, there is not a taste, a mannerism, or a human act which is not *revealing*" (*BN* 568). Sartre borrows Freud's method of interpretation (hermeneutics) but focuses it on the subject's preontological, prereflective comprehension of his original project (the Choice) that defines the meaning/direction (*sens*) of his life. That Choice is the "transcendent meaning of each concrete, empirical choice" (*BN* 564). Where Freud attends to the unconscious, Sartre deciphers the discernible manifestations of one's "psychic life" to bring to reflective awareness (knowledge) the preflective comprehension of its transcendent meaning. "While empirical psychoanalysis seeks the complex, existential psychoanalysis

[35] Sartre, "On the Idiot of the Family," interview with Michel Contat and Michel Rybalka, *L/S* 127–128.

seeks the original choice, which it aims to capture in a self-evident intuition" (*BN* 571). It is the subject's immediate grasp of this evidence that existential psychoanalysis considers decisive.

Looking toward the future, Sartre avows that this psychoanalysis has yet to find its Freud. "At most we can find the foreshadowing of it in certain particularly successful biographies. We hope to be able to attempt elsewhere two examples in relation to Flaubert and Dostoevsky. But it matters little to us whether it now exists," he assures us, "the important thing is that it is possible" (*BN* 575).

The two remaining sections of this chapter expand on the basic principles of psychoanalysis which the phenomenological ontology of the book established. Sartre reduces the three major categories of concrete existence that entitled part IV, namely, being doing and having, to two – *being* and *having* – because he considers "doing" purely transitional. Thus knowing is a form of appropriation, that is, having. But he reserves a special place for "playing" that we encountered in his *War Diaries*, for development at length in his posthumously published *Notebooks for an Ethics*. It seems opposed to the "spirit of seriousness," which is a form of bad faith. In fact, he likens play to Kierkegaardian irony in that it "releases subjectivity." It is the one type of activity that Sartre admits is entirely gratuitous; it seems that the free agent is his own principle. Rather than concern with *possessing* a being in the world, "his goal, which he aims at through sports or pantomime or games, is to attain himself as a certain being, precisely the being which is in question in his being" (*BN* 580–581). In effect, the function of this kind of act is "to make manifest and to present to *itself* the absolute freedom which is the very being of the person." As Sartre admits, "this particular type of project, which has freedom for its foundation and its goal, deserves a special study," which he associates with the *Ethics* that he has promised (*BN* 583). Suggestive of that ethical position is the fact that Sartre likens the act of play to that of art; both acts figure in the "notebooks" where he sketches the thoughts for what came to be known as his "first" ethics.

Like Heidegger, Sartre has his "existential categories" – manners of distinguishing and relating experiences of different kinds. He concludes the fourth part of his study with a discussion of quality as a revelation of being. Gaston Bachelard had performed what he calls a "psychoanalysis" of the classical elements, namely, air, earth, fire and water. Sartre respects the insights that Bachelard provided, but thinks that he had not pursued

these "material meanings" far enough. Armed with existential psychoanalysis, Sartre aims to uncover not just the sexual or power relations exhibited by material phenomena, but to investigate their very being. We saw that years later Sartre will insist that what ultimately distinguished him from the Marxists is his metaphysical interests, his concern with being. Now he is asserting that this is what distinguishes his psychoanalysis from those of Freud, Adler and even Bachelard: his "metaphysical effort" to apprehend quality as a symbol of an ever elusive being-in-itself.

In his quest for the concrete, Sartre admits, before drawing his final conclusions, that "ontology abandons us here; it has merely enabled us to determine the ultimate ends of human reality, its fundamental possibilities, and the value which haunts it" (*BN* 615). Since each human reality has its own way of projecting itself toward the impossible goal of "conscious self-identity" (in-itself-for-itself) and of appropriating the world "as a totality of being-in-itself in the form of a fundamental quality," it is up to existential psychoanalysis to bring to reflective consciousness that particular self-defining project and the world it constitutes by deciphering the evidence of its multifaceted life – its empirical choices, its cultural and social interactions, its practices and products.

"Conclusion"

Sartre gathers several insights (*aperçus*) from the phenomenological ontology just completed under two rubrics: the metaphysical and the ethical. They are functions of his basic ontology of the in-itself and the for-itself. By "metaphysical," Sartre means the rather traditional questions regarding ultimate origins and purposes raised by his ontological descriptions such as "Why does the for-itself arise in terms of being?" Limiting the question to "this" world as a concrete and particular totality, he observes that "metaphysics is to ontology as history is to sociolology" (*BN* 619). Again, phenomenological ontology does not explain except in the formal sense of articulating intelligible contours – "essences." As Husserl observed, its aim is not to explain (causally) but simply to get one to see. If the paradigmatic metaphysical question – repeated by Aquinas, Leibniz and Heidegger, each in his own way – is "Why is there anything at all rather than nothing?" Sartre considers this question meaningless because "all the 'Whys' in fact

are subsequent to being and presuppose it. Being is without reason, without cause, and without necessity; the very definition of being releases to us its original contingency" (*BN* 619).

If "the rose is without Why?" as the mystical poet Angelus Silesius apostrophizes, not so Sartre's For-itself. It's very posture is questioning, as we have learned. And so one can expect that its origin will not be a problem for it: "The for-itself is such that it has the right to turn back on itself toward its own origin. The being by which the 'Why' comes into being has the right to posit its own 'Why' since it is itself an interrogation, a 'Why.'" But this is a question that ontology cannot address because "the problem here is to explain an event, not to describe the structures of a being" (*BN* 620). Sartre's metaphysical "hypotheses" sound suspiciously Kantian in their appeal to an "as if" wherein the in-itself in a project to found itself gives itself the modification of the for-itself. Just as the Kantian "Ideals" of pure reason tie together the otherwise divided realms of Nature and Freedom, so Sartre's "hypotheses" gain a certain "validity" only by the possibility which they offer us of unifying the givens of ontology with the absolute event that is the "pure spontaneous upsurge" of the for-itself. Still, such hypotheses will remain only hypotheses since they are beyond verification or falsification. The metaphysician can only theorize that man's futile project of conscious self-identity plays out a more profound futility that is endemic to being itself.

As for the ethical implications of *Being and Nothingness*, consider his two promissory footnotes regarding a possible ethic of authenticity. Scarcely an ethical naturalist, Sartre claims that "we cannot possibly derive imperatives from ontology's indicatives" (*BN* 625). Still, these "indicatives" offer a glimpse of the "origin and nature of value" grounded in the phenomenon of *lack*. Given that human reality exists "in situation," and that the dynamism which focuses that situation is our "condemnation" to achieve the missing (and futile) synthesis of "conscious self-identity" (in-itself-for-itself), whatever ethics one proposes from this perspective will move beyond theories of self-interest (egoism and altruism). But it avoids theories of "disinterested" (uncommitted) reflection as well, due to the absence of any "common measure" between human reality and its ideal of being self-caused (God). With an implicit nod toward Kierkegaard, Sartre proposes: "We will consider then that all human existence is a *passion*, the famous self-interest being only one way

freely chosen among others to realize this passion" (*BN* 626, emphasis added). Authenticity, then, will consist in embracing that passion while acknowledging the contingency, responsibility and anguish one bears for the empirical choices one makes/is to realize this ideal. Again, he reminds us that most often we avoid that responsibility and the anguish it entails by living in bad faith.

The less than three pages devoted to this "sketch" scarcely reveal more than some of the "values" that Sartre is promoting and the disvalues he is decrying along with the sobering reminder that we are the beings by whom values exist. Repeating several major claims from *BN* that will find ethical elaboration in his promised work, he points out that "existential psychoanalysis is moral description." Thus far he has neglected to distinguish moral from aesthetic values, for example. He will be forced to do so when he draws an analogy between moral and aesthetic creativity in his lecture on humanism (1945). But then it will be done merely by implication in order to avoid the accusation of "aestheticsm" that his analogy suggests. Nonetheless, Sartre concludes with a question that is also an invitation to the "ethics" he is intending to produce: "Will freedom by the very fact that it apprehends itself as a freedom in relation to itself [the fruit of existential psychoanalysis] be able to put an end to the reign of [this futile] value?" In particular, is it possible for freedom to take itself for a value as the source of all value or must it necessarily be defined in relation to a transcendent value which haunts it? (*BN* 627). Such an authentic freedom "chooses then not to *recover* itself but to flee itself, not to coincide with itself but to be always at a distance *from* itself" (*BN* 627). But this refers us to a "pure and not an accessory reflection" and that places us on the ethical plane "to which we shall devote a future work" (*BN* 628; F 722).

Two object lessons in (in)authenticity: *The Flies* and *No Exit*

If *Bariona* whetted Sartre's appetite for "existential" theater, the next pair of pieces moved him on to the Parisian stage and into the theatrical spotlight. *The Flies*, written and produced under German censorship the same year that *BN* appeared (1943), employs the Euripidean tragedy to communicate an existentialist message: the anguish of inauthenticity (Electra) and the "lightness" of authentic existence (Orestes), already exhibited by Bariona, as we saw. Though the play in which Olga

Kosackiewicz played Electra, was not a success, it confirmed Sartre's confidence in his ability as a dramaturge. It was produced in a major Parisian theater thanks to a calculated risk taken by distinguished director and head of an acting school, Charles Dullin, in support of an unknown playwright. During the previous year Sartre had given a series of lectures to Dullin's students on Greek drama. This doubtless facilitated his preparation of the play. So, too, did the rehearsals. As Sartre would later admit, they "taught me everything I know about the craft."[36] For example, Dullin, corrected Sartre's tendency to write for the reader rather than for the stage – a criticism that has been leveled against his plays ever since. "Don't act the words, act the situation," was the director's sage advice. It became Sartre's mantra as a playwright. In retrospect, he admitted that his continued involvement in the theater hung on this experience. "After the rehearsals of *The Flies*, I never saw the theater again with the same eyes" (*ST* 191).

As a form of "political" theater, this play could be read as a gloss on the sense of guilt and remorse that the Pétain regime had tried to instill in the French population after their country's military defeat and occupation. But it also exhibited the prevalence of inauthenticity: Electra's failure of nerve in the revenge murder of her mother and stepfather – and her brother's costly authenticity: "Orestes will go onward, unjustifiable, and with no excuse and no right of appeal, alone. Like a hero. Like all of us."[37] The language is redolent of Nietzsche with is fixation on the death of God, and when it has Zeus admitting "the bitterness of knowing men are free," one glimpses the existential "humanism" that Sartre will be propounding in his famous lecture three years later. "Orestes knows that he is free," Zeus informs the King, and he draws the existential humanistic conclusion: "Once freedom lights its beacon in a man's heart, the gods are powerless against him. It's a matter between man and man, and it is for other men, and for them only, to let him go his gait, or to throttle him."[38]

[36] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Sartre on Theater*, ed. Michel Contat and Michel Rybalka, trans. Frank Jellinek (New York: Pantheon , 1976), 190; hereafter *ST.*

[37] Sartre's remark on the jacket copy for publication of *Les Mouches* in book form (Paris: Gallimard, 1943).

[38] *The Flies*, act 2, scene 3, in *No Exit and Three Other Plays* (New York: Vintage, 1955), 103–105; hereafter *Flies.*

Toward the end of the play, Orestes enunciates the moral of the story and of Sartrean existentialism: "For I, Zeus, am a man, and every man must find out his own way" (*Flies* 122). Yet, the hero's "authenticity" is imperfect, since the freedom he exemplifies is for himself alone; his sister and townspeople reject it and he leaves, pursued, no doubt, by the furies for his crime.[39]

We noted that 1943 was a very productive year for Sartre. Besides *Being and Nothingness* and *The Flies*, he accepted the invitation from the film company Pathé to write scenarios for possible production near or after the approaching liberation. Two of Sartre's several submissions eventually came to fruition, *The Chips are Down* (as a short story and film in 1947) and *Typhus*, published posthumously by Gallimard (2007). We are reminded of his early interest in the egalitarian character of the seventh art. As Arlette Elkaïm-Sartre observed, Sartre looked to the equivalent of *Metropolis* and *Birth of a Nation* as indicators of the power of the cinema to "speak of the masses to the masses."[40] He would continue to write scenarios, the most famous of which was his lengthy and ill-fated work on the life of Freud for John Houston.[41] As his life and interests became more politicized, he turned increasingly to the popular press, interviews, occasional pieces, radio and television to communicate and promote his political views to the general public.

Doubtless, Sartre's best-known and most frequently performed play is *Huis Clos* (*No Exit* or *In Camera*).[42] It too was written in 1943 (in a fortnight) but premiered in Paris in May 1944. Sartre had asked Albert Camus to direct the piece and take the male lead. Camus accepted at first and the initial rehearsals were held in Simone de Beauvoir's hotel room.[43] Why he later withdrew is unclear. One of the female leads, Olga Barbezat, was arrested and her husband was no longer interested

[39] Sartre will later link Orestes with the "will to liberation" and see him as "a man who does not wish to be severed from his people" so that, when the masses can and must become conscious of themselves, "he can return in peace into anonymity and be at rest within his people" (interview on the occasion of a presentation of this play in Berlin, 1948 [*ST* 197]).

[40] Arlette Elkaïm-Sartre, prefatory note to Jean-Paul Sartre, *Typhus* (Paris: Gallimard, 2007), 9.

[41] See below, Chapter 15 as well as *Sartre avec Freud*, a special issue of *LTM* 68, nos. 674–675 (July–Oct. 2013).

[42] *No Exit and Three Other Plays. In Camera* is the English translation of the piece. It was originally entitled *Les Autres* and published as such in *L'Arblète* (see *Prime* 669).

[43] *Prime* 677.

in funding the production. The new producer had his own ideas of who should play the roles. Beauvoir recalls that "at this point, Camus, feeling that he was not qualified to direct professional actors or, indeed, to put on a play in a Paris theater, wrote a charming little note to Sartre releasing him from their prior agreement" (*Prime* 704). In other words, he saw the handwriting on the wall.

The scene is Hell and the three condemned, a male and two females, are in the same room, where each explains in bad faith why she or he does not deserve to be there. In this remarkable psychological study, Sartre manages to illustrate several of the cardinal principles of *Being and Nothingness*. The first is the primacy of the "gaze" as the vehicle for interpersonal relations. The condemned are incapable of sleeping or even blinking to avoid the other's objectifying look. No mirrors, no darkness, each is inescapably being-for-others and their basic relation is not Heideggerian "being with" but Sartrean conflict. When two propose to make love, the third reminds them to remember that she is watching, imposing the identity of the in-itself on them and robbing them of their freedom to control the meaning of their acts. Next, at a crucial moment in this conflictive triad, the male rushes toward the presumably locked door and, to his astonishment, manages to open it. A new dimension of freedom presents itself – which each of the "prisoners" refuses. The comfort of their bad faith is preferable to the anguish of freedom. As a final example, the dramatist gifts them with the ability to see and hear what their survivors are saying about them while leaving them powerless to intervene. Sartre had reminded us that "the dead are prey to the living" (*BN* 543); it's up to us to determine the meaning of the lives of those who've gone before us. At issue here is whether their lives were inauthentic. Only Inez, the lesbian, seems capable of an existence approaching authenticity in her refusal to look to the judgment of others for her "identity." Yet, even she is unwilling to pass through the open doorway. The effect of this "situation" is that there is no need for torturers and pitchforks: "Hell is other people" ("L'enfer c'est les autres"). If one reads this famous phrase in light of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, one will gather more appropriately that "Hell is the objectifying Third."

9

Existentialism: the fruit of liberation

Admitting that "it is not pleasant to be taken for a public monument while one is still alive" (*Sit* II:43) Sartre nonetheless had to live with gradually becoming an institution in France and around the world. He learned to use his fame to foster various political and social causes. Sartre's name along with those of Beauvoir and, to a lesser extent, Camus and Merleau-Ponty have come to be associated with the philosophical movement known as "existentialism." Correctly or not, they and that movement have commonly been identified with the years immediately following the liberation of Paris on the 26th of October 1944. The second half of the 1940s was the period of their emerging celebrity, though *Nausea* and several short stories (published as *The Wall*) had introduced Sartre to the literary public by the time he was called to active duty on September 2nd, 1939 and Camus's *The Stranger* had appeared in 1941.

But what is this philosophical "school" that bears the label "existentialism"? To start with, it is more an attitude and a manner of living than an abstract, systematic doctrine. As such, one can trace its roots throughout western philosophy at least to Socrates and his notion of philosophy as a way of life ("care of the self"). Indeed, one of Sartre's critics, Julien Benda, remarked that existentialism "is simply the modern form of an eternal philosophical stance."[1] And while it is tailor-made for what one of its two nineteenth-century progenitors, Søren Kierkegaard, called "indirect" or "oblique" communication by means of imaginative literature and thus fits quite well a master of the imaginary like Sartre, this

[1] Julien Benda, *Pour ou contra l'existentialisme* (Paris: Atlas, 1948), cited in *Life* 260.

scarcely prevented Sartre from producing a systematic existentialist ontology as we observed in *Being and Nothingness*.[2] That creative tension between the conceptual and the imaginary, the philosophical and the literary which had characterized Sartre's early thought is now gathered under the rubric of "existentialism."

Sartre as media person (*l'homme médiatique*)

Sartre's entry into journalistic media began with the pieces written for *Combat*, *Le Figaro* and *Les Lettres Françaises* after the liberation. Henceforth, a flood of ad hoc articles, prefaces to others' books, numerous interviews, film scenarios, nine sessions of a radio series ("Tribune des *Temps modernes*"), an intended television series as well as the founding or support of journals and newspapers will mark his public persona. Michael Scriven points out that Sartre was raised in a culture that favored print media.[3] Having just lived through the era of fascist and Nazi propaganda and discovered the power of the media to reach the larger public, he accepted Albert Camus' invitation to write a series of seven reflections on Paris in the days immediately before and after its liberation for his newspaper, *Combat*. Another such reflection, for the first legal issue of *Les Lettres Françaises*, "The Republic of Silence," began with the memorable, if paradoxical line: "Never were we freer than under the German occupation."[4]

Sartre proceeded to offer a lesson in existential ethics by way of explanation: "The choice that each of us made of his life and being was authentic because it was made in the presence of death ... For the secret of a human being is not his Oedipus complex or his inferiority complex. It is the very limit of his freedom, his ability to resist torture and death." Then, in a rehearsal of his argument in the humanism

[2] For a quasi-existentialist critique of philosophical systems, perhaps like *Being and Nothingness* and even his own, *Phenomenology of Perception*, see *AD* 9.

[3] Michael Scriven, *Sartre and the Media* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 5. But after the war the emerging power of film, radio and television to reach "the masses" opened him to those forms of communication. One can imagine that Sartre would have adapted to the Internet and even have produced his own blog, had the state of technology and his health permitted it.

[4] "*The Republic of Silence*," in Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Aftermath of War*, trans. Chris Turner (Oxford: Seagull, 2008), 3; *Sit* III:11.

lecture the following year, he continued: "Yet in the depths of [the tortured men's] solitude, it was the others, all the others they were protecting – all their Resistance comrades [by their refusal to talk]. For isn't this total responsibility in total solitude the very revelation of a dark freedom?" "Each citizen [of the Republic of silence]," he continues, "knew what he owed to all and that he had to rely on himself alone . . . Each of them, in choosing himself in freedom was choosing freedom for all."[5] Sartre is extending his life-changing experience of solidarity in the stalag to the heroes of the Resistance as a model for the entire population, a move he will elaborate in his humanism lecture. We should remember this model of response to a mortal threat when we encounter Sartre's seemingly hyperbolic claims of concrete freedom and collective responsibility in later works like the *Critique*, the play *The Condemned of Altona*, his many occasional pieces, or, as we are about to see, his seminal humanism lecture.

Within a month of the liberation of Paris, Sartre gathered a group of friends to constitute the editorial board of a monthly to be called *Les Temps Modernes*, after his favorite Chaplin film. Many of these had participated in the short-lived Resistance group, "Socialism and Freedom" (see Chapter 11), and had discussed the need for a periodical that would articulate and disseminate these twin ideals.[6] Gallimard had already assured the funding for its publication.[7] Its initial members were Raymond Aron, Beauvoir, Michel Leiris, Merleau-Ponty, Albert Ollivier, and Jean Paulhan, with Sartre as editor in chief. Camus, who had been associated with the Socialism and Freedom group, was unable to join because of the demands of editing *Combat*. Its initial issue appeared for an eager public on October 15, 1945 with an introduction (*présentation*) by Sartre in the form of a quasi-manifesto, not only for the journal but for the movement itself. Let us consider that essay in order

[5] "Republic of Silence," 4–6; *Sit* III:12–14.

[6] Annie Cohen-Solal remarks: "The idea for *Les Temps modernes* had been formulated with Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty, and later Camus and Leiris, in the wake of discussions held by 'Socialism and Freedom,' and, more urgently, after its failure" (*Life* 258).

[7] A gesture that some interpreted as paying "conscience money" for the fact that Gallimard had remained in business and continued to publish the formerly prestigious *Nouvelle Revue Française* under German censorship and edited by collaborationist Pierre Drieu la Rochelle as "a showcase of the 'new' Franco-German solidarity" (Steven Ungar, introduction to *WL*, 9). For an insightful and critically sympathetic portrait of Drieu, see *WL* 161–164.

to compare it with what might be called the "ratifying" lecture/event "Is Existentialism a Humanism?" that took place two weeks later.

Introducing *Les Temps Modernes*

This programmatic text presents Sartre's view of the editorship he intends to give his review.[8] In view of its subsequent history, one can see how closely he pursued the twin ideals of socialism *and* freedom that guided its inception. Philosopher – and specifically metaphysician – that he was, he models his journal on the pursuit of a *synthetic anthropology* in the broad, French sense that would embrace the "human sciences" as well as literature and the arts. Exploiting the distinction between the analytic spirit and the spirit of synthesis, Sartre irenically weighs the respective values and dangers of each: "atomistic" materialism with its respect for the individual and "collectivist" domination with its sense of the whole. The former he associates with the bourgeois mind, its false ideal of disinterested, value-free inquiry, its blindness to class identity, and its "mechanical" psychology. Turning to literature, as the new journal must, Sartre finds these bourgeois qualities incarnate in the work of Flaubert and especially Proust.[9] The threat of synthetic thinking, he grants, is the ease with which it can slip into totalitarianism, willing to dissolve the individual in the group and its objective interests. "Thus do the analytic demands of Rousseau frequently interfere in many minds with the synthetic demands of Marxism" (Introduction 263). The problem lies with the copula as this essay makes clear: socialism *or* freedom is a neat if not easy choice; but socialism *and* freedom is problematic; its resolution depends on the meaning one gives to "freedom." Sartre agrees and from now on he will champion a "concrete" or what is more commonly called "positive" freedom that, he argues, demands a kind of socialism.

Despite its philosophical grounding, the focus of the journal is not primarily theoretical; its stated project is to be liberating. So the

[8] Following Jeffrey Mehlman's translation of *Présentation des Temps Modernes* in *WL* 249; hereafter Introduction with reference to the *WL* edition.

[9] On Proust as exemplary of this bourgeois penchant for "psychological" explanations, see *What is Literature?*, "The bourgeois saw only *psychological* relations among the individuals whom his analytical propaganda circumvented and separated" (*WL* 107, emphasis his).

philosopher of freedom now begins to cash in the concept of freedom-in-situation that he had introduced in *Being and Nothingness*. He starts by linking what has come to be known as negative (the absence of constraints) and positive freedom ("concrete" freedom in his vocabulary) to the analytic and synthetic mentalities respectively. No doubt freedom "as the definition of man" remains an ontological given in this discussion as it will throughout his work. But conceived here in analytic terms "freedom" implies that "a politically active individual has no need to forge human nature," which for the analyst is universal and timeless. "It is enough for him to eliminate the obstacles that might prevent him from blossoming" (Introduction 257). Overlooking for the moment the economic considerations that will subsequently enter his sociohistorical accounts, Sartre's attention is drawn toward the analytical habit of mind. "One *constitutes* oneself as a bourgeois by choosing, once and for all, a certain analytic perspective on the world which one attempts to foist on all men and which excludes the perception of collective realities" (Introduction 257). Midway through the essay he introduces the term "dialectical" to contrast the synthetic view of human emotions with the "psychological atomism" employed by Proust. Hereafter that term will be associated with the synthesizing rationality and the cultural world that Sartre is absorbing from his review of Hegel and Marx.[10]

Three additional concepts and issues deserve mention as we conclude our discussion of the Introduction. The first is the distinction Sartre draws between *human nature* (a static and universal concept) and the *human condition*, that denotes "The totality of constraints that limit [us] a priori such as the necessity of being born and dying, of being *finite* and of existing in the world among other men"; but these constraints also include the "indivisible totalities whose ideas, moods, and acts are secondary, dependent structures and whose essential characteristic lies in being *situated*" (Introduction 260). Whereas "human nature" is basically context-free, "human condition" is situational. We recognize here an elaboration on the "metaphysical condition" of being in-situation from

[10] On the controversy over the presence of a dialectic in Sartre's previous work, especially *Being and Nothingness*, see above, Chapter 7. Sartre does link the spirit of synthesis with "those who have profoundly understood that man is rooted in the collectivity and who want to affirm the importance of historical, technical, and socioeconomic factors" in this comprehension (*Intro.* 262). But he explicitly insisted in *BN* that "there is no dialectic for my relations toward the Other but rather a circle" (*BN* 363).

BN now conjoined with the basic principle of existential psychoanalysis that human reality is a totality, not a collection (see Introduction 261).

Of particular significance, secondly, is Sartre's mention of *integral man* near the end of the essay. This model of synthesizing anthropology finds its major use in the lectures that Sartre will deliver at the Gramsci Institute in Florence in 1965 which, along with the Cornell University lectures, comprise what is called Sartre's "second" or "dialectical" ethics. Like his first ethics, this too will be published posthumously.[11] "Integral man" resembles the moral equivalent of what Sartre will soon be calling the "singular universal" in epistemology as his Hegelian vocabulary gains purchase. Here integral man is described as the worker who must *make himself* a worker in the sense of Nietzsche's counsel: "Become what you are." He shows himself to be an integral man by choosing himself simultaneously as a worker and a man, while at the same time conferring a meaning on the "proletariat" in its present condition by his choice of resignation or revolution (Introduction 265). This model unites "authenticity" with socioeconomic "situation" to yield a less individualist concept of the historical agent. Such a form of dialectical reasoning or what we might call "telescoping" will reach its apex when it addresses historical understanding in terms of what Sartre calls "incarnation" and "enveloping totalization" in volume II of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*.[12] And in the Flaubert study we will discover that a person "totalizes his era to the extent that he is totalized by it," another way of describing the "singular universal."[13] So this short inaugural essay proves to be more programmatic than even Sartre could have foreseen.

Finally and introducing a topic that will appear as "What is Literature?" in six successive issues of *Les Temps Modernes*, Sartre mentions the problem of "committed literature." This is the antithesis of the idea of "art for art's sake" or of the detachment prized by analytic thinking in general. The concept of commitment (*l'engagement*) was already in Sartre's active vocabulary, punctuating *Being and Nothingness* for example and issuing in the claim that "there is only the viewpoint of committed knowledge" (*BN* 308; *EN* 370). Now it enlivens his approach

[11] See below, Chapter 10. [12] See below, Chapter 13.

[13] See below, Chapter 11 and *The Family Idiot* (*L'Idiot de la famille*, 3 vols. [Paris: Gallimard, 1971–1988], III:426; hereafter *IF*).

to literature and will go on to undergird his theory of history, though without bearing the label "committed." "We write for our contemporaries," he insists, and not for the ages (Introduction 253). So he entitles a chapter of *What is Literature?* "Situation of the Writer (*l'écrivain*) in 1947."

"Is Existentialism a Humanism?"

This scandalous event has become emblematic of the *l'enfant terrible* image cast by Sartre's debut. The hall in which he lectured was overcrowded. As Beauvoir recalls, so many people were turned away that "there was a frenzied crush and some women fainted" (*Force of Circumstance* 39). By all accounts, it was a performance. Except for its performative character, "debut" is scarcely the proper term. Not only had the first issue of *Les Temps Modernes* appeared two weeks before, prefaced by Sartre's "Introduction," but the first two volumes of his *The Roads to Freedom*: *The Age of Reason* and *The Reprieve*, had arrived in the bookshops a month earlier and *No Exit* had premiered quite successfully the year before. This combination suggested an existentialist onslaught. Sartre could not have been surprised at the crowd.

Speaking without notes, Sartre seized the teachable moment to combine a simple summary of existentialist thought with a robust, if not entirely consistent, defense of the social dimension of its seemingly individualist ethics.[14] Given the nature of the occasion, one could not expect a fully formed social ethic, much less an ontology geared to sustain it. The latter would come with *Search for a Method* and especially the *Critique* some fifteen years later. The former was emerging in his frequent ascriptions of individual and collective responsibility in the media.

This stenographic transcript of a public lecture, as we noted above, is the only piece that Sartre publically regretted having published.[15] And yet it is this philosophical piece, if any, that most people read. It exhibits the weakness of an informal address where the ideas are still in gestation.

[14] The original title for the lecture was interrogative and this is how Beauvoir lists it in *Force of Circumstance*, 38. The initial German translation also retains the interrogative title.

[15] See *Film* 94–95; see also Francis Jeanson, *Sartre and The Problem of Morality*, trans. Robert V. Stone (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 22 and translators's note.

This is both its weakness and its strength, for it enables us to capture Sartre's thoughts "on the wing" as it were, as he stretches to accommodate his established individualist concepts to social categories. Rather than a principled argument, the address is a concatenation of *aperçus* that gesture toward a kind of "argument" that can be reconstructed with the help of other value concepts voiced elsewhere yet within the temporal neighborhood of this talk.

I have reconstructed the "argument" of this lecture in detail in another work.[16] It consists of eight insights-premises that can be loosely linked to form a rational reconstruction of his case. Let me summarize them briefly.

1. Since there is no God (Sartre's atheism being a conclusion of his definition of God as an impossible ideal, "Being-in-itself-for-itself"), there is no human nature or essence that could serve as an a priori norm. This is his objection to natural law ethics and to "essentialism" of any sort.
2. Bereft of necessary norms, the human is what he makes himself to be; in a lapidary phrase adapted from Heidegger, his "existence" precedes his "essence." Sartre terms this "the first principle of existentialism" (*EH* 22). "Existence" is a rich expression, as we have seen in *Being and Nothingness*, which few in the audience will have read. It comprises the "not yet" of ekstatic temporality, the nothingness and possibility of our ontological freedom, and a host of other features that follow from our nonself-coincidence. But here it suffices to describe existence loosely as our "original Choice." Recall from *BN*, "For human reality there is no difference between existing and choosing for itself" (572). If "existence" is coterminous with choosing, "essence" denotes our prior choices. That we are our choices is the motto of this lecture. But that remark, so understood as we noted earlier, makes "existence precedes essence" true by definition, a tautology. Nevertheless, it is a fruitful tautology as our brief unpacking of "existence" will suggest.
3. If existence precedes essence, the human being is responsible for his creation, for what he is. In choosing, he chooses himself and his world. Thus far, Sartre is merely restating the position elaborated in *Being and Nothingness*. We now reach his threshold-crossing claim that will lead us to responsibility for others. It requires two subsidiary arguments.

4.1 His first argument has been underrated, if not totally ignored by commentators whose fire has been drawn to the next, quasi-Kantian claim. Yet this argument

[16] *SME* 33–41. All quotations are from *EH*.

evinces a characteristically Sartrean regard for imaginative consciousness as value-constituting. In the language of *The Imaginary*, it conceives of value as an image demanding to be realized.

It is on this value image that Sartre's first subsidiary argument rests: "In fact, in creating the man each of us wills ourselves to be, there is not a single one of our actions that does not at the same time create an *image* of man as we think he *ought* to be" (*EH* 24, emphasis added). And later, "The fundamental aim of existentialism is to reveal the link between the absolute character of the free commitment, by which every man realizes himself in realizing a *type* of humanity – a commitment that is always understandable, by anyone in any era – and the relativity of the cultural ensemble that may result from such a choice" (*EH* 43, emphasis added).[17] This normative image appears in Sartre's writings from then on. Without further defense, he appeals to what has become a commonplace in axiological ethics such as that endorsed by Max Scheler.[18]

In this first subordinate argument, it is the value image which invests individual choice with collective import: "I am fashioning a certain image of man as I choose him to be. In choosing myself, I choose man" (*EH* 25). Consider Sartre's reference to *image*, not rule, in these remarks. It is the indirect communication of such value images through imaginative literature that has become the hallmark of existentialism.

4.2 In what appears to be a bold and unexpected appeal to Kant, Sartre restates his moral imperative in terms of the "universal legislator" formulation of the Categorical Imperative.[19] Note that he does so in the context of existential

[17] We are reminded of his appeal to "types" in his early Nietzschean fable *The Legend of Truth* (see above, Chapter 2).

[18] Sartre listed Scheler among those whose work he was proposing to study at the French Institute in Berlin (see *SME* 38). He and Beauvoir were impressed by his book on *The Nature and Forms of Sympathy* (1928) and he certainly was familiar with Scheler's famous theory of the material a priori in ethics, for he remarks in *BN*: "As Scheler has shown, I can achieve an intuition of values in terms of concrete exemplifications" (93). Though that work was not translated into French until 1955, Arlette Elkaïm-Sartre suggests that he might have read its German original (1913–1916) (see *WD*-F 288, n. 1). Actually, he refers explicitly to Scheler's *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Value* in his *Notebooks for an Ethic*, composed in 1947–1948 (see 252 and 275). For Beauvoir's second thoughts on Scheler's political character, see above Chapter 2, note 23.

[19] "Act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a universal law of nature." *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), in Immanuel Kant, *Ethical Philosophy*, 2nd edn., trans. James W. Ellington (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 30 [421].

anguish: the imperative entails a "feeling of total and profound responsibility" for all people. He likens it to what the commanding officer experiences who must send others on a certain-death mission. In his version, each person ought to say to himself: "Am I really a man who is entitled to act in such a way that the entire human race should be measuring itself by my actions?" (*EH* 26–27).

Unfortunately, in his urge to elicit the experience of existential anguish from his audience, Sartre "psychologizes" a "logical" issue that distinguished Kant from the Utilitarians and most other moralists. This could be discounted as rhetorical license and even defended by pointing out that existential "anguish" is more than merely psychological, as we know from *Being and Nothingness*. But like Hegel and Scheler before him, Sartre's aim in modifying Kant's Categorical Imperative is to overcome its abstract "formalism." Kant, he explains, "believes that the formal and the universal are adequate to constitute a morality. We, to the contrary, believe that principles that are too abstract fail to define action" (*EH* 49). Yet even in this "legislative" argument the value image shows through: "I am constantly compelled to perform *exemplary* deeds. Everything happens to every man as if the entire human race were *staring* at him and measuring itself by what he does" (*EH* 26, emphasis added).

5. Having defended the generality of his moral imperative, he must extend his argument to imply the freedom of all. He builds on the ontology of being-for-others in *BN* but with a new and quasi-Hegelian twist: appeal to mutual "recognition."[20] He claims that I am as certain of the existence of others as I am of myself and adds that "I cannot discover any truth whatsoever about myself except through the mediation of another. Under these conditions," he continues, "my intimate discovery of myself is at the same time a revelation of the other as a freedom that confronts my own and that cannot think or will without doing so for or against me. We are thus immediately thrust into a world that we may call 'intersubjectivity.' It is in this world that man decides what he is and what others are" (*EH* 42–43).
6. As in *BN*, Sartre relies on the fundamental ambiguity of "situation." This time he employs it to render the universal human *condition*, understood as our "fundamental situation in the universe" (*EH* 42) intelligible to every person without

[20] Beauvoir will develop the concept of mutual reciprocity more fully than Sartre at this stage in her *An Ethics of Ambiguity* published in 1947.

appeal to an abstract, normative human nature.[21] The intersubjective into which I am indubitably thrown by my *cogito*, he insists, is a world of subjectivities, that is, of other *freedoms*. In fact, Sartre tarries with the idea of collective consciousness hitherto anathema in his thought when he claims that: "The subjectivity that we thereby attain as a standard of truth is *not strictly individual in nature*, for we have demonstrated that it is not only oneself that one discovers in the *cogito*, but also the existence of others. Contrary to the philosophy of Descartes or Kant," he continues, "when we say 'I think,' we each attain ourselves in the presence of the other, and we are just as certain of the other as we are of ourselves" (*EH* 41).

It is what he now calls "fundamental situation" that accounts for the "absolute" character of free commitment as distinct from its relative expression in diverse historical periods. He is, in effect, continuing to draw on the ontology of *BN* to counter historical relativism. Thirty years later, Sartre will repeat this heretical Marxist claim in a discussion with a pair of young Maoists when he asserts: "Freedom without alienation is an idea which transcends class lines and historical periods and [which] pertains to the very constitution of human reality" (*ORR* 342). By then, the ontology of *BN* has been subsumed, if not replaced, by the dialectical relations of the *Critique*.

7. Sartre's next premise is that "freedom, under any concrete circumstance, can have no other aim than itself, and once man realizes, in his state of abandonment, that it is he who imposes values, he can will but one thing: freedom as the foundation of all values" (*EH* 48). It follows, he believes, that "the ultimate significance of the actions of men of *good faith* is the quest of freedom itself" (*EH* 48, emphasis added). The difference between abstract and concrete freedom is that the former does not imply the other's freedom whereas the latter does: "As soon as there is commitment, I am obliged to will the freedom of others at the same time as I will my own" (*EH* 48).

This seems to presume that my good faith/authenticity (the terms are associated here) must acknowledge the truth of my concrete existence, namely, that I exist "intersubjectively" and in mutual recognition of that fact. "When operating on the level of *complete authenticity*," Sartre

[21] During the questioning period after the lecture, Pierre Naville, "a Marxist intellectual of the Trotskyite variety" (Scriven, *Media*, 126, n. 66), questioned the validity of Sartre's distinction between "condition" and "nature." Many have repeated this question over the years, suggesting that it is a distinction without a difference, at least if one is considering "basic condition" (see *EH* 59–60).

cautions, "I have acknowledged that existence precedes essence, and that man is a free being who, under any circumstances, can only will his freedom, I have at the same time acknowledged that I must will the freedom of others" (*EH* 49, emphasis added). He believes that this warrants his making moral judgments of inauthentic types such as those who conceal their freedom by appeal to determinism ("cowards") and those who try to justify their existence when in fact it is contingent ("bastards"). Judgments of bad faith strictly speaking, on the other hand, seem to be errors of judgment or self-deception or cognitive dissonance that, when Sartre is being precise, have no immediate moral standing. When someone, for example, simply "chooses bad faith," Sartre remarks, "I do not pass moral judgment against him, but I call his bad faith an error." In effect, it's a judgment of truth, "a logical rather than a value judgment" (*EH* 47). As we noted earlier in our study, Sartre seldom manages to distinguish these two lines of judgment in terms of moral values and disvalues. He often takes them equivalently, despite insisting on several occasions that judgments of bad faith have no moral significance. It seems that when the agent in question is seeking excuses for his bad faith rather than "owning up to it" and acknowledging its free choice, it is only in such cases that bad faith slips into inauthenticity. So when Sartre simply denies that "bad faith" has moral value, he is failing to make the distinctions introduced here.

At this point, Sartre, the implacable foe of ethical naturalism, crosses the bridge from fact to value. Good faith is seen to require not only consistency but that I acknowledge by my choices, for example, by assuming the responsibility which accompanies them, that I am the foundation of all values. "Choosing freedom," the criterion of good faith, is not the same as "maximizing" some value, for freedom is neither the object nor the specific content of our choice. Rather, freedom constitutes what Sartre terms the *form* of our choice, the ultimate meaning (*sens*) of our actions (see *EH* 49).

8. As soon as there is commitment, our concrete freedom "depends entirely on the freedom of others and the freedom of others depends on our own" (*EH* 48). What elsewhere I have called Sartre's "universal freedom conditional"[22] forms the linchpin of his social ethic. Though it has antecedents in the ontology of *Being*

[22] See *SME* 33.

and Nothingness, the principle is better read as an anticipation of the mutuality prized by the *Critique*. In this lecture it is more of a stipulation than a self-evident principle. It helps to remember that Sartre sets this claim on the "plane of free commitment" (*EH* 51); that is, he takes it as "operating on the level of complete authenticity" (*EH* 49).

The foregoing claims seem to support, if not strictly imply, that *freedom unrecognized remains abstract*. This is a corollary to Sartre's thesis that being-for-others is constitutive of human reality as situated (no. 6) as well as to the newly stated formula that choice of self implies intersubjectivity (no. 5). The claim that my freedom depends on that of others and theirs on mine explicitly appeals to a new and henceforth paramount ideal, that of the *human community*, though it is only mentioned here as a possibility (see *EH* 51).[23]

Reflections on the Jewish Question (*Anti-Semite and Jew*)

Though faulted for its ignorance of its subject and particularly for its insensitivity to the religious and general cultural dimension of Jewish life and tradition, this hastily written occasional piece is commonly recognized by friend and foe alike as a major document in the history of Jewish relations in post-war France. Written in 1944, there was controversy over whether it should be published at all. Some thought it was too soon to raise this topic in so direct a manner while others insisted that the time was ripe to face a reluctant public with the harsh realities of anti-Semitism in France. One could view this work as the major public expression of what has been called a Jewish "engagement" in Sartre's philosophy and personal life.[24] Michel Rybalka remarks that this text, reflecting the situation of French society in the fall of 1944, "should be

[23] The reconstruction of Sartre's argument in "Existentialism is a Humanism" is taken substantially from *SME* 33–40 and is gratefully used with permission from that Press.

[24] Sartre confirms Beauvoir's reference to a draft of a "Constitution" that Sartre sent to De Gaulle during the occupation for reconstituting the French government after the war. All of its eleven copies are now lost, but he agrees that, of its 120 articles, there was a large section on granting specific rights to the Jewish citizens "to speak their language, to practice their religion, to preserve their culture, and the like" (See *Cér* 495 and Steven Ungar's introduction to *WL*, 5). Sartre explains that an interview by a young Swiss Jew, Arnold Mendel in 1939, convinced him that these specific rights had to be assured by any future government. The text of the original interview is reproduced in *October* 87 (winter 1999): 172–173.

completed by a second volume recording what Sartre wrote and said about Jews, Israel, and the Palestinians throughout the years, to the very year of his death in 1980."[25] Obviously, Sartre's adoption of an Algerian Jewess as his daughter and literary executrix as well as his close relation with the Egyptian Jew who served as his secretary and co-author of an important set of interviews toward the end of his life confirms this involvement even as it demands the complement to *Reflections* that Rybalka calls for. Despite its limitations, which Sartre himself acknowledged on more than one occasion, the book was enthusiastically received by a new generation of Jewish intellectuals who, as Rybalka observes, "were able to understand the originality of Sartre's position and the complexity/simplicity of its existentialist philosophy."[26] As historian Pierre Vidal-Naquet, whose parents had died in Auschwitz, recalls: "When I read *Anti-Semite and Jew*, I felt myself avenged indeed."[27]

The first chapter, "Portrait of an Anti-Semite," appeared in an early issue of *Les Temps Modernes* a year after its composition. The rest of the work did not come out in book form until 1946. To cut to the chase, Sartre argues that anti-Semitism is not a mere opinion, an innocuous view simply to be tolerated. As he explains: "I refuse to characterize as opinion a doctrine that is aimed directly at particular persons and that seeks to suppress their rights or to exterminate them."[28] Sartre does not use the term "holocaust" in this work and has been sharply criticized for failing to do so. But he begins his reflections with this mention of "extermination" as ingredient in the passion of the anti-Semite. In the third chapter he raises the immediately relevant question of how his countrymen will react to "those Jews whom the Germans did not deport or murder [and who] are coming back to their homes." Sartre is among the first in such a visible manner to raise the question: "Do we say anything about the Jews? Do we give a thought to those who died in the

[25] Michel Rybalka, "Publication and Reception of *Anti-Semite and Jew*," *October* 87 (winter 1999): 162. For discussion of "the remainder of the story," Vincent von Wroblewsky has gathered a collection of such texts as an addition to his German translation of *Réflexions sur la question juive*. See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Überlegungen zur Judenfrage* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1994).

[26] Rybalka, "Publication," 162.

[27] "Remembrances of a 1946 Reader," *October* 87 (winter 1999): 7.

[28] *Anti-Semite and Jew*, trans. George J. Becker (New York: Shocken, 1995), 9; hereafter *Anti-Semite and Jew* or *AJ*.

gas chambers at Lublin? Not a word. Not a line in the newspapers. That is because we must not irritate the anti-Semites; more than ever, we need unity" (*Anti-Semite and Jew* 71).

In terms of existential psychoanalysis, the anti-Semite needs someone to hate in order to transfer his fear of his own freedom to another, to a subhuman against whom as the "other" he can define himself and justify his existence – a typically bourgeois trait in Sartre's vocabulary. In a paraphrase of Voltaire, he observes that "if the Jew did not exist, the anti-Semite would invent him" (*Anti-Semite and Jew* 13). "Anti-Semitism, in short, is fear of the human condition. The anti-Semite is a man who wishes to be a pitiless stone, a furious torrent, a devastating thunderbolt – anything except a man" (*Anti-Semite and Jew* 54).

In the next chapter Sartre addresses the "friend" of the Jew, the liberal democrat. We now witness an application of the analytic/synthetic distinction that Sartre has applied to class reasoning. The democrat is a champion of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. A master of Enlightenment (analytical) reason, the democrat is an assimilationist. He offers the Jew the solace of abstract rights. In effect, he is counseling: "You enjoy all the privileges of the French citizen. You should be satisfied with the same rights as the rest of us. Just don't be so . . . Jewish!" The abstract democrat wishes to sacrifice the Jew to the man. Sartre will elaborate this form of thought in the concluding chapter. It constitutes a variation on a favorite theme: The bourgeois free-thinkers of the Third Republic favor the privatization of religion, if not its total abolition, in a secular state while maintaining a public morality that feeds on religious belief.[29] Sartre will repeat this criticism in the *Critique*. His position, articulated in the humanism lecture, is that a properly existentialist ethic will be creative, freedom-oriented and basically rule-free. He takes this to be the logical consequence of a "consistently atheistic point of view" (*EH* 53).

Chapter three has caused the most furor among critics, chiefly because of its description of the authentic and the inauthentic Jew.

[29] "Existentialists are strongly opposed to a certain type of secular morality that seeks to eliminate God as painlessly as possible . . . This is the gist of everything that we in France call radicalism – nothing will have changed if God does not exist; we will encounter the same standards of honesty, progress and humanism, and we will have turned God into an obsolete hypothesis that will die out quietly on its own" (*EH* 27–28).

Unlike "bad faith," "inauthenticity" seems to be a moral disvalue for Sartre just as "authenticity" is explicitly assigned moral meaning – at least until now. Referring to the "inauthentic Jew," he cautions "the term 'inauthentic' implying no moral blame, of course" (*Anti-Semite and Jew* 93), whereas he continues to insist that "the choice of authenticity appears to be a moral decision" (*Anti-Semite and Jew* 141).

He begins by reminding us that man is defined first of all as a being "in situation." That means that he forms a "synthetic whole with his situation – biological, economic, political, cultural and so forth. He cannot be distinguished from his situation, for it forms him and decides his possibilities; but, inversely, it is he who gives it meaning by making his choices within it and by it" (*Anti-Semite and Jew* 59–60). This is an important development of the concept of situation that we have been tracing since its introduction in *Being and Nothingness.* There the relation between transcendence or freedom and facticity was admittedly ambiguous. But the ontological priority was clearly reserved for transcendence, that is "choice." We have been observing a gradual "thickening" of Sartre's concept of freedom as it becomes increasingly "concrete" with the "factical" dimension of the situation growing apace. *Anti-Semite and Jew* marks a threshold where Sartre addresses the *reciprocal conditioning* of facticity and freedom, the "given" and the "taken" in the human situation. That reciprocity will evolve further into "dialectical" relationships in *Search for a Method* and the *Critique.* At issue is the ontological and explanatory "weight" that can be assigned to the factical dimension of any situation. This has been a bone of contention between existentialists and Marxists and later between existentialists and structuralists. At the levels of ontology and methodology this debate is subtending many of the philosophical works that Sartre will henceforth produce. It will surface most clearly in the short concluding chapter of this essay.

"The Jew is one whom other men consider a Jew: that is the simple truth from which we must start" (*Anti-Semite and Jew* 69). This rather outlandish assertion will surprise no one familiar with the ontology of being-for-others formulated in *Being and Nothingness.* They will recognize it as an abstract claim that Sartre could apply to all of us. Remember that one form of bad faith in *BN* was precisely to let another's view determine who we choose to be (consider the "perfect waiter"). But when one descends from ontological heights to the concrete reality of our social being and our cultural, religious and generally historical traditions,

the remark is appalling. It leads to such paradoxical corollaries as the claim that "The Jew is not yet *historical*, and yet he is the most ancient of peoples, or nearly so" (*Anti-Semite and Jew* 84). Of course, Sartre is describing the anti-Semite's view of the matter at this point. But it is curious that he fails to cite as a counterexample the deep religious and cultural tradition of the Jewish people, especially when describing the Jew's "situation."[30] His erstwhile friend Raymond Aron offers the following explanation of these omissions: "[*Réflexions sur la question juive*] is a fine book, but Sartre was not knowledgeable about Jews. He thought that all Jews were like his schoolmate, Raymond Aron, who was totally unreligious, thoroughly French, who largely ignored Jewish tradition, and thus, only Jewish because others called him Jewish."[31]

Turning to the major claim of this chapter and the source of the most controversy, Sartre offers us his most complete description of authenticity thus far.[32] Regarding the exercise of freedom within the limits of a situation, he argues that it may be considered as *authentic* or *inauthentic* according to the choices made in the situation. Authenticity, he claims "consists in having a true and lucid consciousness of the situation, in assuming the responsibilities and risks that it involves, in accepting it in pride or humiliation, sometimes in horror and hate" (*Anti-Semite and Jew* 90). He goes on to list "courage and more than courage" as necessary conditions for authentic action. Though he does not parse these components, it is clear that truth or better "truthfulness" and courageous acceptance of the possibility of risk and the resultant responsibility are part of this moral category. So too is the affective dimension with which one lives it. Indeed, already in *Being and Nothingness*, true to the existentialists' regard for the emotions as revelatory of our world, Sartre had remarked that consciousness of choosing ourselves

[30] Facing this objection in his extended interviews with Benny Lévy, Sartre explains: "I was thinking of history in a certain well-defined sense – the history of France, the history of Germany, the history of America, of the United States. In any case, the history of a sovereign political entity that has its own territory and relations with other states like itself" (*Hope* 103).

[31] Raymond Aron, *The Committed Observer: Interviews with Jean-Louis Mussika and Domique Walton* (Chicago, IL: Regnery, Gateway, 1983), cited by Jonathan Judaken in his *John-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 123.

[32] A precautionary note: An earlier and equally important analysis of "authenticity" occurs *passim* in *WD* (see index, s.v. "authenticity") and in *Carnet I* of *CDG*-F, esp. 68–69 and 138–139.

"is expressed by the twofold 'feeling' of anguish and responsibility. Anguish, abandonment, responsibility . . . constitute the *quality* of our consciousness in so far as this is pure and simple freedom" (*BN* 464). Jewish authenticity consists in "making himself a Jew" in his own way and not according to the stereotype or the abstract principles imposed by others. In this sense, he joins other "authentic" individuals in the existentialist company of self-creators. "At one stroke the Jew, like any authentic man, escapes description" (*Anti-Semite and Jew* 137). He is as unique as his concrete project.

Inauthenticity, on the contrary, is characterized as *flight*: from the risks of one's choices, the anguish of one's ontological freedom and, above all, from one's situation. Given the unblinking eye of Sartrean consciousness, the inauthentic Jew "is therefore acting in bad faith" (*Anti-Semite and Jew* 99). Yet curiously, Sartre seems intent on excluding the moral significance of both expressions, despite his use of each in an obviously pejorative sense. Sartre describes various "ruses of flight," one of which, the rationalist habit of mind, the "passion for the universal," he designates "the royal road of flight" (*Anti-Semite and Jew* 110). This is the road of the "intellectual" exhibited both by his professor at the Sorbonne, Léon Brunschvicg, and by Henri Bergson, whose vitalism, Sartre believes masks a deep rationalism.

Toward the end of the chapter Sartre alludes to the social and political dimensions of the Jew's situation that personal authenticity has not resolved but rather exacerbated. Here, it seems, we have faced him with another painful choice, namely between Jerusalem (the emerging Zionist movement) and France. "Thus the choice of authenticity appears to be a *moral* decision, bringing certainty to the Jew on the ethical level but in no way serving as a solution on the social or political level: the situation of the Jew is such that everything he does turns against him" (*Anti-Semite and Jew* 141).

It is this dilemma that Sartre begins to face in his brief concluding chapter. Admitting that he can only gesture in a direction that such a "resolution" might take, he makes three important points. The first is the introduction of what he calls *concrete liberalism*. Unlike its abstract, universalist version that ignores particularities as it does a kind of violence to the Jew, the Black, the Arab in the name of "human nature," Sartre's variety is more "dialectical" in nature, though he does not employ the term. "This means, then, that the Jews – and likewise the

Arabs and the Negroes – from the moment that they are participants in the national enterprise, have a right in that enterprise; they are citizens. But they have these rights *as* Jews, Negroes, or Arabs – that is, as concrete persons" (*Anti-Semite and Jew* 146). The same applies to the woman, who likewise should be able to vote "as a woman . . . in her full character of a woman" (*Anti-Semite and Jew* 146). As Michael Walzer observed in his introduction to *Anti-Semite and Jew*, we might describe the Sartrean program in this book as "*Multi-culturalism now*" (*Anti-Semite and Jew* xix). Sartre does seem to think that this approach will eventually lead to a kind of assimilation without the violence implicit in abstract liberalism. But for now, this is the most desirable way of dealing with the situation.

But what of the anti-Semite? Here I believe Sartre raises his argument from the nature of "situation" to a new level. After assuring us of the impossibility of acting directly on another freedom – an existentialist prohibition grounded in the ontology of *BN* – he urges that we act on the *bases and structures* of the choices that the anti-Semite faces such that the anti-Semitic choice becomes socially and economically unavailable. Sartre links anti-Semitism with "the present system of property" and asserts, incredibly, that anti-Semitism could not exist in a society without classes and founded on collective ownership of the instruments of labor" (*Anti-Semite and Jew* 150). "Since [the anti-Semite], like all men, exists as a free agent within a situation, it is his situation that must be modified from top to bottom. In short, if we can change the perspective of choice, then the choice itself will change. Thus we do not attack freedom, but bring it about that freedom decides on other bases and in terms of other structures" (*Anti-Semite and Jew* 148). "What is there to say," he concludes, "except that the socialist revolution is necessary to and sufficient for the suppression of the anti-Semite?" What is there to say, indeed.

"Materialism and Revolution"

Published in *Les Temps Modernes* the same year that *Reflexions* appeared, this is a pivotal essay in Sartre's political and social thought, but typically, it is ontological in nature as well. Two years later, when Sartre is making conciliatory gestures toward the Communist Party, he explains that this was a critique of "Marxist Scholasticism of 1949" or "if you

prefer, against Marx *through* Neo-Stalinist Marxism."[33] The essay consists of two parts: "The Revolutionary Myth" and "The Philosophy of Revolution".

"The Revolutionary Myth"

This section could have been titled "Why I am not a Communist," for it lodges a metaphysical critique of dialectical materialism.[34] "I now realize that materialism is a metaphysics hiding positivism" (MR 201). And it inconsistently eliminates human subjectivity, reducing it to an object of scientific investigation while making the scientist "an objective beholder" that claims to contemplate nature as it is, absolutely.

We have observed Sartre pursue the ontological line in *BN* while resisting the positivist stand that dismisses metaphysics as meaningless. In the present essay he takes the metaphysical tack. Addressing now the materialist "metaphysics" of the Marxists, he concludes:

> It is a clear and a priori stand on a problem which infinitely transcends our experience. [In other words, it is "metaphysical" in a common use of that term.] This is also my own stand, but I did not consider myself to be any less a metaphysician in refusing existence to God then Leibniz was in granting it to Him. And by what

[33] "Materialism and Revolution," in Jean-Paul Sartre, *Literary and Philosophical Essays*, trans. Annette Michelson (New York: Crowell-Collier, Collier Books, 1962), 198 n. 1; hereafter MR.

[34] In Eastern Europe it was common to distinguish Dialectical Materialism (DIAMAT, as it was known) from Historical Materialism. In 1938, Stalin wrote a work entitled *Dialectical Materialism and Historical Materialism* that settled the matter for some. The former comprises roughly the Marxist metaphysics and philosophy of science, including the "laws" of dialectical progress in nature, adapted by Engels from Hegel's philosophy of nature (Sartre dismissively refers to Marx's "unfortunate meeting with Engels" [MR 248 n.]). Historical materialism is the "materialist" philosophy of history that embraces a form of economic determinism "in the long run" and the distinction between forces and relations of production as well as the ideological superstructure carried along by those changes in the base. Obviously this rather simple account is refined over the years, such that a kind of "technological" determinism enters the scene and the relation between base and superstructure is considered to be reciprocal in character. From his earliest work, *Transcendence of the Ego*, Sartre rejected a dialectic of nature, but he continued to favor a "materialist" (in scare quotes) theory of history, so long as it was not determinist and left room for individual action in history. He believes that those conditions will be met when he hits upon a "dialectical nominalism" in the *Critique*. In "Materialism and Revolution" one senses his discomfort with a "materialism" that claims to be "dialectical" and "revolutionary." He had yet to reconcile these concepts.

miracle is the materialist, who accuses idealists of indulging in metaphysics when they reduce matter to mind, absolved from the same charge when he reduces mind to matter?

(MR 204)

One should not rush to enroll Sartre among the mind–body dualists in any unqualified way. We have acknowledged that *Being and Nothingness* is "dualist" in nature, while pointing out that it does not subscribe to a two-substance ontology. The most that we can conclude from the quotation just cited and from *BN* is that Sartre is not a "crass materialist." Neither was Marx, who explicitly rejected such a position. As he moves toward a dialectical philosophy, it seems that Sartre may be adopting an "emergentist" form of materialism, again as did Marx. This would admit that mind developed from "matter," to put it simplistically, but insist that it is irreducible to matter in its distinctive features, chief of which, for Sartre, would be "intentionality," which he has consistently defended as the defining characteristic of the mental.[35]

Sartre is willing to consider a dialectical relationship among ideas, as we find in Hegel, but considers it implausible in matter, which is characterized by inertia, because "the mainspring of all dialectics is the idea of totality" (MR 204). This was already his position in *Transcendence of the Ego*. We shall find him continuing to reject a dialectic of nature (what the Soviet Communists called DIAMAT) and, once he accepts a historical dialectic in the *Critique*, insisting that the "practico-inert" (heir to being-in-itself) is anti-dialectical in that it can turn praxis against itself in counterfinality.[36]

The theoretical backbone of his argument is an anticipation of his discussion of the dialectic with the French Philosophical Society the following year that we shall discuss in Chapter 12. It turns on the distinction between the Hegelian "notion" (*Begriff*) and the abstract "concept." "Science is made up of *concepts*, in the Hegelian sense of the term. Dialectics, on the other hand, is essentially the play of notions." Voicing what could be a mantra for Sartre's philosophical life since he and Beauvoir first read Jean Wahl's *Toward the Concrete* in 1932 and continuing into the *Critique* and *The Family Idiot*, he explains: "Dialectical enrichment lies in the transition from the abstract to the

[35] See above, Chapter 7, "The Body." [36] See *CDR* 1:713.

concrete, that is, from elementary concepts to notions of greater and greater richness. The movement of the dialectic is thus the reverse of that of science" (MR 209). We recognize a variation on the distinction between analytic and synthetic reasoning that is now well established in Sartre's discourse. But he is willing to grant the pragmatic truth of the "materialist faith" insofar as it is linked with the revolutionary attitude. "It is a fact that materialism is now the philosophy of the proletariat," he concedes, "precisely in so far as the proletariat is revolutionary" (MR 222). In the second part of this essay, Sartre sketches the kind of philosophy that should replace the materialist myth of the proletarian revolution with a logically coherent philosophy to match its revolutionary mentality. In effect, he is reaching toward the horizon from which his *Critique of Dialectical Reason* beckons

"The Philosophy of Revolution"

Because this major document could easily be discussed at monograph length, it seems prudent to limit our consideration to four claims made in this text which portend the next, dialectical phase of Sartre's thought.

A philosophy of revolution is a philosophy of work. Sartre is initially circumspect in claiming that "work is, among other things, a direct link between man and the universe, man's hold on Nature and, at the same time, a primary kind of relation between men" (MR 226). Compare this with his remark in the *Critique* fourteen years later: "The essential discovery of Marxism is that labor, as a historical reality and as the utilization of particular tools in an already determined social and material situation, is the real foundation of the organization of social relations. This discovery *can no longer* be questioned" (*CDR* 1:152, n. 35, emphasis his). This is a fulfillment of the promise voiced in "Materialism and Revolution": "The liberating element for the oppressed person is work" (MR 237).

The physical resistance of matter to manual labor, Sartre imagines, also gives rise to the worker's sense of solidarity (his class consciousness) and leads him to understand himself in terms of action and not of being; in effect, human reality is action that is both the unmasking of material reality and its modification. Labor also familiarizes him with necessary violence and, above all, with his freedom as the "transcendence" of this situation. This is freedom as "the possibility of *rising above* a situation in

order to get a perspective on it – not simply a theoretical viewpoint but "an indissoluble linking of understanding [*compréhension*] and action" (MR 235). In the *Critique*, Sartre will describe "comprehension" as the "totalizing grasp of any praxis [human activity in its sociohistorical context] in so far as it is intentionally produced by its author or authors" (*CDR* 1:776; *CRD* 1:190, trans. emended).

Revolutionary thinking expresses a new humanism. The shout that "we too are men," which echoes among the revolutionaries, Sartre will hear voiced on several occasions, not only by the economically exploited but by the colonized and the racially oppressed. What is now at issue and will continue to be is a conflict of "humanisms." All of these forms of injustice exhibit a kind of racist bias, as that plaintive cry attests.

Bringing the ontology of *Being and Nothingness* to bear on the demands of an exploitative society, Sartre lays out the plan for his future social theory: "It is the elucidation of the new ideas of 'situation' and of 'being-in-the-world' that revolutionary behavior specifically calls for" (MR 253). And because this new humanism is grounded on freedom and not the recognition of historical necessity – as "Marxist economism would have us believe" – its future is possible but not guaranteed. "Precisely because man is free, the triumph of socialism is not at all certain" (MR 253).

What is Literature?

Les Temps Modernes, like Sartre himself, was committed to politics, literature and what the French call *les sciences humaines*, that we saw included academic anthropology, sociology, psychoanalysis, linguistics, history and, of course, philosophy.[37] Several of his major works appeared initially either in part or entirely in the journal. *What is Literature?* was serialized over six monthly issues. Despite its occasional errors of fact and lax copy-editing (which seemed to concern Sartre less as the years went on), this is recognized as a major piece of literary criticism.

[37] For charts of the relative percentages of space accorded each field, including the other arts such as cinema, music and theater, over the first four decades of the journal, see Howard Davies, *Sartre and "Les Temps Modernes"* (Cambridge University Press, 1987), appendices 3 and 4, 218–226.

The interrogative dominates this book. Three of its chapters are titled as questions: "What is Writing?," "Why Write?," and "For Whom Does One Write?" Following his recent counsel that the writer's responsibility is not eternal but contemporary, the final chapter addresses "The Situation of the Writer in 1947" (see note 36). Let us follow his response to each question as we prepare to assess the situation of the writer at that time.

"What is Writing?"

In response to this question, Sartre introduces the distinction between poetry and prose that will haunt him in subsequent essays because of his contention that prose can be politically committed whereas what he calls "poetry" (which includes painting, music and sculpture) cannot. Poetry, in his view, is intransitive; it is for its own sake, whereas prose is transitive – it carries us into the world. He makes an implicit exception for "literary prose" as we shall see.

Besides this famous distinction between poetry and prose, Sartre refers to a parallel and more basic one between *sense* and *signification*. Introduced earlier in *The Imaginary*, it appears frequently in Sartre's art and literary criticism, his cultural history, his existential biographies and even his theory of history, once he formulates one with the help of historical materialism and existential psychoanalysis. Admittedly, this is quite a harvest to be gathered from a pair of conceptual seeds, and it would be reckless to ignore the numerous other factors that figure into the development of Sartre's thought in each domain. But the point is that this distinction between sense (*sens*), which might now be translated as "concrete" or "lived presence," and conceptual meaning (*signification*) along with the cognate expressions that gather around each lends a unity and coherence to Sartre's thought that survives the transformations and displacements required for his evolution from existential phenomenologist to "materialist" dialectician. We have been witnessing some of those changes in the collection of essays gathered in this chapter of our study.

Sign is the vehicle of prose in the transitive respect just mentioned whereas the image is a feature of "poetry" in that it transforms ("derealizes") its object into an image, which Sartre, forgetting the lesson of his *The Imaginary*, sees as a kind of "thing." Thus "a cry of grief is a sign of the grief which provokes it, but a song of grief is both

grief itself and something other than grief ... The empire of signs is prose; poetry is on the side of painting, sculpture, and music" (*WL* 27–28). He insists that "One does not paint significations; one does not put them to music. Under these conditions," he challenges, "who would dare require that the painter or the musician commit himself?" (*WL* 28). Anticipating a likely counterexample, Sartre challenges: Did Picasso's *The Massacre at Guernica* ever win a single heart to the Spanish cause? He doubts it: prose is capable of being committed and should be; poetry is for its own sake (and for the aesthetic joy it can occasion as a secondary effect) and is incapable of political or moral commitment. Sartre will soon regret this hobbling of poetry when he writes of the African and West Indian poets of liberation in "Black Orpheus" (1948). They, in fact, used the language of their colonizers to resist colonialism.[38]

The "committed" writer knows that words are action and that the secondary action effected by prose is "action by disclosure." This raises the question "What aspect of the world do you want to disclose? What change do you want to bring into the world by this disclosure?" (*WL* 37). At this initial stage it suffices to claim that "the writer has chosen to reveal the world and particularly to reveal man to other men so that the latter may assume full responsibility before the object that has been laid bare" (*WL* 38).[39] Subsequently, this will lead Sartre famously to abandon imaginative literature almost entirely.

"Why Write?"

Each of our perceptions is accompanied by the consciousness that human reality is a revealer (*dévoilante*); that is, it is through human reality that 'there is' (*il y a* [Heidegger's *es gibt*]) being, or, to put it

[38] Originally the preface to an anthology of works by African and West Indian poets, *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue français*, ed. Léopold Sédar-Sanghor (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948), excerpts were published in *LTM* and the entire text translated as "Black Orpheus" in *WL* 291–330. Citations to the text in *WL* are given as *Orpheus*.

[39] This notion of "laying bare" or "revealing" (*dévoilement*) suggests a well-known Heideggerian usage, namely, understanding "truth" – in Greek "*alétheia*" – as "uncoveredness," that Beauvoir adopts in her *Ethics of Ambiguity* published the same year (1946). The parallels between the essays presented in this chapter and Beauvoir's ethical monograph are striking. For additional uses of "unveiling" (*dévoilement*) in Sartre's existential biographies, see below, Chapter 15.

differently, that man is the means by which things are manifested" (*WL* 48). But Sartre assures his long-standing commitment to ontological realism when he adds that "to our inner certainty of being 'revealers' is added that of being inessential in relation to the thing revealed" (*WL* 48). In an anticipation of what decades will later be called "receptionism" in literary theory, Sartre remarks that our "disclosing," whether as author or reader, is "creative" disclosing. In fact, "the reader is conscious of disclosing in creating, of creating by disclosing" (*WL* 52). This awareness of freedom that Sartre previously attributed to our imaging consciousness he now seems to ascribe to interpretative acts generally. It will open the way for similar uses in historical writing and reading and to what we shall describe as "committed history" as an extension of the "committed literature" that he is promoting in the mid 1940s.[40]

Again he characterizes the production of the literary work of art, adding that the same holds true for painting, music and sculpture, as acts of generosity, as appeals from one freedom to another – author to reader. If prose is utilitarian, aesthetic communication and the "joy" it elicits "form a complex feeling but one whose structures and condition are inseparable from one another. It is identical," he insists, "with the recognition of a transcendent and absolute end which, for a moment, suspends the utilitarian round of ends-means and means-ends." The final goal of art, he claims, is "to recover this world by giving it to be seen as it is, but *as if it had its source in human freedom*" (*WL* 63–64, emphasis added).

Using terms and argument from the ontology of *BN* and especially from *The Imaginary*, Sartre offers a refined and subtle account of this "aesthetic modification of the human project" such that it implies a pact between human freedoms and an "*image-making* consciousness of the world in its totality both as being and having to be"; that is, as fact and as value. But in spite of the "momentary suspension" of the utilitarian character of prose, literary prose – which is the problem species here – does seem to demand "concrete" (read "political") and not merely

[40] See below, Chapter 11 and my "Committed History" in David Carr, Thomas R. Flynn and Rudolf Makkreel (eds.), *The Ethics of History* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2004), 230–246; hereafter *EHist*.

"abstract" freedom, which it likewise fosters in order to succeed. This is why Sartre can assert that no decent literature was produced under the Fascists or the Nazis.

We now encounter a form of argument that has been favored by classical German idealists like Fichte, Hegel and especially Schiller. The argument, as Sartre elaborates it, is to connect in some demonstrative or at least plausible manner, the freedom that is the definition of the individual with the socioeconomic freedom (promised by socialism) via what he calls the *aesthetic pact*. But to reach Sartre's socialist goal the argument must extend to concrete freedom for everyone and not just for a chosen few.

He has been facing that challenge since *EH*. Can the aesthetic freedom and the joy that accompanies its successful exercise invite or even demand political freedom or at least, undermine its blockage? Clearly totalitarian governments since Plato have seemed to think so and have censored what the Nazis labeled "degenerate" art accordingly. In his play *Rock and Roll*, prominent British playwright Tom Stoppard dramatizes, among other things, the mutual incompatibility of this popular art form and the discipline of the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia. Sartre has long valued the "democratization" of art. Recall his lecture to the students and their parents on the "seventh art" at their honors ceremony during his first semester of teaching. But it is in *WL* that he draws on the resources of his phenomenological studies to forge an argument between the creation/reception of art and political commitment by means of the experience of freedom.

His argument turns on the phenomenological thesis that "the aesthetic object is properly the world in so far as it is aimed at through the imaginary" (*WL* 64). And the aesthetic pact entered into between artist and audience, he claims, modifies the intersubjective situation of each one's respective project. The factual world as imaged emerges as a value because of its saturation with mutual freedom. That "world" becomes ours in the aesthetic joy conveyed (or at least made available) to each and everyone. The work of art is both an exigence and a gift: a gift as "an act of confidence in the freedom of men" (*WL* 67) and "a task proposed to human freedom" (*WL* 65) to maximize the concrete freedom (the choices) for all. "Although literature is one thing and morality a quite different one," Sartre allows, "at the heart of the aesthetic imperative we discern a moral imperative" (*WL* 67).

That translates into a number of conclusions, one of which is that, as committed writers, we cannot ignore social injustice in our society when we take up our pens. To do so, he will argue from now on, is to be a party to that injustice itself. We shall encounter this argument for the remainder of Sartre's career. It combines his fundamentally moral outlook with his growing sense of social responsibility. Another conclusion he draws from the foregoing is that "The art of prose is bound up with the only regime in which prose has meaning, democracy" (*WL* 69). Of course, by now we know that this democracy is nurtured by a socialist economic system, a point he will stress in the following section.

"For Whom does one Write?"

After offering us a brief survey of the writer and his public in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Sartre notes such writers' preference for abstractions, their penchant for psychological accounts, and their insensitivity to historical context ("historialization"). Turning to his own critique, Sartre considers how the writer can address those who are willing to hear the message of socioeconomic liberation. It won't be the liberal democrat criticized in *Anti-Semite and Jew*; that is, the historical optimist of the Third Republic, who fails to take seriously the warning of Dostoevsky that, if God does not exist, all is permissible, and who reduces moral evil to a mere idea as did Sartre's idealist professors at the Sorbonne.[41]

> This is why the work of art is irreducible to an idea: first, because it is a production or a reproduction of *being*, that is, of something which never quite allows itself to be *thought*; then, because this being is totally penetrated by an existence; that is, by a freedom which decides on the very fate of thought. That is also why the artist always had a special understanding of Evil, which is not the temporary and remediable isolation of an idea, but the irreducibility of man and the world to Thought.[42]

From 1848 to 1914, Sartre summarizes, "The author had to write on principle *against all his readers*" (*WL* 109, emphasis his). But a virtual public was forming thanks to authors like Proudhon and Marx, the

[41] *WL* 335, n. 11 and above, section on *Anti-Semite and Jew*.

[42] *WL* 106–107; *Sit* II:159, translation emended to replace "reducible" with "irreducible" (106) and "of Thought" with "to Thought" (107).

socialists and the Communists who, after the Great War, framed a different situation from which and for which to write. The Heideggerian term "historicity"(*Geschichtlichkeit*) and sometimes "historialization" already employed in *BN* and employed several times in the *Notebooks for an Ethics* now enters the scene. If History (with a Hegelian *H*) is the study of the dead past under the retrospective illusion of causal necessity, then we can say that "historialization" is the revival of these past moments as "lived absolutes," with their contingency, possibility, and risk.[43] It is to this sense that Sartre appeals in his response to the question "For whom does one write?" The answer depends on the situation and must be changed accordingly. One does not propose abstract freedom to oppressed and exploited people. But it is Sartre's hope that the rise of class consciousness among the proletariat in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries will invite the writer to realize that union of content and form that had necessarily eluded his bourgeois predecessors.

While acknowledging the limitations of his brief history, Sartre tellingly appeals to its conclusion "*be it only an ideal*" as the discovery of "the pure essence of the literary work and, conjointly, [of] that type of public – that is, of society – which it requires" (*WL* 134). "In short, *actual* (*en acte*) literature can only realize its full essence in a classless society. Only in such a society could the writer be aware that there is no difference of any kind between his *subject* and his *public*" (*WL* 137). For the subject of literature has always been man in the world. As that world changed and concrete freedom became objectively possible (a Weberian term Sartre is courting but doesn't use), the writer can address "the sum total of men living in a given society . . . in social time" (*WL* 136). For "if the public were identified with the concrete universal, the writer would really have to write about the human totality; not about the abstract man of all the ages and for a timeless reader, but about the

[43] See *NE* 467 and *Truth and Existence* 79–80 (*SFHR* 1:83): "we must make ourselves historical by living our era (historical situation) to the fullest." Likewise *WL*: "It is not a matter of choosing one's age but of choosing oneself within it" (195). In *EN* he will remind us that "the historian himself is *historical* (*historique*) that is to say, that he 'historicizes' himself (*s'historialise*) by clarifying 'history' in light of his projects and those of his society" (*BN* 501; *EN* 582). In the *Carnets*, it was the kaiser's unwillingness to "historialize" his historical situation, namely the gradual loss of his empire, that constituted his inauthenticity in Sartre's view (see *WD* 19–20 and *SFHR* 1:82–83).

whole man of his age and his contemporaries" (*WL* 137). Finally, "literature would really be anthropological, in the full sense of the term" (*WL* 138). "In short, literature is, in essence, the subjectivity of a society in permanent evolution . . . To be sure," he repeats, "this is utopian" (*WL* 139–140).

"Situation of the Writer in 1947"

"I am speaking about the French writer, the only one who has remained a bourgeois" – so begins his concluding chapter. Addressing writers who share his historical situation – which includes the violence, the propaganda, the betrayals, the discrediting of trusted individuals and institutions – in sum, the recent war and its immediate aftermath, Sartre expands several of the conclusions drawn in his three previous chapters.

The first is the importance of "historialization," namely, of facing up to our situation with its limits and opportunities, its liabilities for the past and its possibilities for the future. "All of a sudden we found ourselves *situated* . . . Historicity flowed in upon us . . . a bitter and ambiguous mixture of the absolute and the transitory."[44] Historialization, then, "is not a matter of choosing one's age but of choosing oneself within it" (*WL* 195). Sartre has been presenting a lesson in such moral "ownership" in this essay and the others in our chapter, especially in *Anti-Semite and Jew*. He cites a genealogical example of the various forms of exploitation and bad faith exhibited by three generations of writers: before the Great War, between the World Wars, and the present, post-war generation. This generational reference will prove to be a favored argument that Sartre will repeat, though the subjects change, in *The Communist and Peace*, the *Critique*, and *The Family Idiot*. It reveals yet another, generational path "toward the concrete."

"The fact is that the purely imaginary and *praxis* are not easily reconciled" (*WL* 334, n. 25). Though directed against the surrealists' "revolution," this remark captures Sartre's thought as well, especially his politically "committed" writings following the liberation. References to

[44] *WL* 175; *Sit* II:243, translating "historicité" *as* "historicity," a technical term of Heideggerian inspiration, instead of "history." See note 42 above.

"image" and the "imaginary" in our present chapter have suggested this and the rest of our study will confirm Sartre's quasi confessional claim.

An effect of the peculiarly French experience of the war and occupation, Sartre seems to believe, is that it gives the lie to moral relativism. Not in favor of absolute good, perhaps, unless one assigns that honorific to "freedom," but clearly to absolute *evil*. He cites torture as the paradigm. Hinted at in his early works but now brought to center stage is Sartre's "theodicy." This is a branch of metaphysics formulated by Leibniz to "justify the ways of God to men," that is, to reconcile the various evils in creation – physical, metaphysical and moral – with the existence of a good and omnipotent God. Sartre's is a failed theodicy, I would argue, but a theodicy nonetheless in that it addresses the justification of evil in the world. Its message is that evil is real and that it "cannot be redeemed" (*WL* 180; see *Sit* VII:332–342). The former he argues against his idealist professors like Léon Brunschvicg, who insist that evil does not exist except as a function of ignorance; the latter is sustained against his Christian compatriots who seek to overcome evil with absolute good. Sartre gives this problem full artistic expression in his play *The Devil and the Good Lord* (*Lucifer and the Lord*) (1951) and in his extraordinary existential biography, *Saint Genet. Actor and Martyr* (1952). The effect of dialectical materialism, as he claims to have shown presumably in "Materialism and Revolution" is "to make Good and Evil vanish conjointly. On that view, there remains only the historical process" (*WL* 178).

Sartre exhorts the writer to create "a literature of production" (of *praxis*) to counter the bourgeois "literature of consumption," whose model is Gide (see *WL* 119). To counteract his critics, he argues that "if negativity is one aspect of freedom, *constructiveness is the other*" (*WL* 191, emphasis added). For "production" read *praxis*, understood as "action in history and on history; that is a synthesis of historical relativity and moral and metaphysical absolute, with this hostile and friendly, terrible and derisive worlds which it reveals to us" (*WL* 194). We will make frequent reference to "praxis" and its dialectical "rationality" when it supplants "consciousness" in *Search for a Method* and the *Critique*.

Finally, Sartre reaffirms the moral exigence lodged in the aesthetic experience and he translates it into the demand to convert the city of ends (his version of Kant's moral kingdom) into "a concrete and open

society – and this *by the very content of our works*" (*WL* 221, emphasis added). For even if formal beauty elicited a general feeling of good will toward everyone as an end in himself, Sartre cautions, the concrete reality of our present society is that it is built on violence. "We must *historicize* the reader's good will" by directing his attention on the oppressed of the world. "But we will have accomplished nothing if, in addition, we do not show him – and in the very warp and weft of the work – that it is quite impossible to treat concrete men as ends in contemporary society (*WL* 222). What he calls "the present paradox of ethics" (*WL* 221) figures centrally in his dialectical ethics and reappears five years later in *Saint Genet* as the present "alienation" of man, namely, the fact that "Ethics is *for us* inevitable and at the same time impossible" (*SG* 185 n.). The task of the committed artist is to exhibit this paradox. Clearly, art as such is not enough.

10

Ends and means: existential ethics

On November 1, 1946, Sartre delivered a lecture entitled "The Writer's Responsibility" for the inaugural general conference of UNESCO at the Sorbonne. In view of the auspicious nature of this founding symposium, he concludes with a litany of recommendations that he believes should guide the writer in our day:

1. To create a positive theory of liberation and freedom;
2. To put himself in a position to condemn violence from the viewpoint of oppressed men and classes;
3. To establish a true relationship of ends and means;
4. To immediately reject, in his own name – which, of course, will not prevent it – any violent means of establishing a regime;
5. Finally, to devote his thoughts without respite, day in, day out, to the problem of the end and the means; or, alternatively, the problem of the relation between ethics and politics.

Underscoring the timeliness of these remarks, he adds: "That is the problem . . . of the present age, and it is our problem, it belongs to us writers. That is our responsibility, not eternal but contemporary."[1]

This exhortation underscores the fundamentally moral character of Sartre's thought. He concluded his first major essay, *Transcendence of the Ego*, with the prospect that "no more is needed in the way of a philosophical foundation for *an ethics and a politics* which are absolutely positive."[2] And he ended his final attempt at an ethics, "an ethics of the

[1] Reprinted in *Reflections on Our Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), 82–83, translation as emended in Contat and Rybalka 1:165. Repeated in words soon to appear in *What is Literature?*: "One must write for one's age" (*WL* 243).

[2] *TE*-E 106, emended and emphasis added.

we," with an encomium of revolution as "replacing [our present situation] by a more just society in which human beings can have good relations with each other . . . A society in which relations among human beings are ethical."[3]

Though Sartre rather consistently opposed what he called "Machiavellianism," understood popularly as the notion that politics is amoral and that the end justifies the means, he had to come to terms with the morality of violence, especially the consequentialism of the revolutionary claim that one must crack a few eggs to make an omelette. This tension grew as he became more actively engaged with the French Communist Party (1952–1956) – a period he recalled as one of "amoral realism" (*ORR* 79); it haunted his involvement with the Algerian revolution and his subsequent relations with the Maoists. It was the year when he began fellow-traveling with the Communists that he wrote in *Saint Genet*: "Any ethic which does not explicitly profess that it is *impossible today* contributes to the bamboozling and alienation of men. The ethical 'problem' arises from the fact that Ethics is *for us* inevitable and at the same time impossible" (186 n., emphasis his). Nearly a decade later, Sartre would emphasize this agony even more forcefully (in implicit debate with Albert Camus over the Algerian revolution) with his preface to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*.[4]

As a journalist born and raised in Algeria, Albert Camus had long defended the Arab population against oppression by the French minority. But as a pacifist, he believed it was in the interests of the Arabs to pursue autonomy within the French Union rather than seek complete independence by violent rebellion. Sartre, on the contrary, held this view in utter contempt:

> A fine sight they are too, the believers in non-violence, saying that they are neither executioners nor victims [allusion to a line in Camus' *The Plague*]. Very well then; if you are not victims when the government which you voted for, when the army in

[3] Jean-Paul Sartre and Benny Lévy, *Hope Now: The 1980 Interviews*, trans. Adrian van den Hoven (University of Chicago Press, 1996), 107; hereafter *Hope*. See below, Chapter 14, pages 379 ff.

[4] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, preface by Jean-Paul Sartre (Paris: Maspero, 1961), trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove, 1965); henceforth *WE*. Because of Sartre's pro-Israeli remarks during the Arab-Israeli Six Day War in 1967, Fanon's widow forbad the publication of his preface in the subsequent printing of the French text of *WE*.

which your younger brothers are serving without hesitation or remorse have undertaken race murder, you are without a shadow of a doubt, executioners.

(*WE* 25)

If the political and the ethical have been moving in parallel streams in Sartre's works, often watering the same landscape, they come into full confluence in the concept of *collective responsibility* when he concludes: "But if the whole regime, even your non-violent ideas, are conditioned by a thousand-year-old oppression, your passivity serves only to place you in the ranks of the oppressors."[5] We shall follow these streams and their confluence in this chapter and the next.

The first stream: stages on Sartre's ethical way

It is common to gather Sartre's reflections on ethics into two or even three stages, reflecting his respective methods and ontologies. The initial stage is the phenomenological, followed by the dialectical and finally, what may be called the "dialogical." We shall consider each stage in terms of the major works that ground and exhibit it. For the ethics of authenticity, the leading work is Sartre's posthumously published *Notebooks for an Ethics*, though many of its insights were anticipated in texts that we have already discussed, like *What is Literature?* His dialectical ethics is formulated in the notes for a single lecture, "Ethics and Society" presented at the Gramsci Institute in Rome in 1964, and a series of talks, "Ethics and History," scheduled for delivery at Cornell University the following year but canceled in objection to America's escalation of its war in Vietnam.[6] The social ontology of the *Critique*

[5] *WE* 25. I have discussed Sartre's concept and use of "collective responsibility" at length in *SME*, especially parts II and III. For a fine analysis of the Sartre–Camus controversy, see Ronald Aronson, *Camus and Sartre: The Story of a Friendship and the Quarrel That Ended It* (University of Chicago Press, 2004), and a collection edited and translated by David A. Sprintzen and Adrian van den Hoven, *Sartre and Camus: A Historic Confrontation* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2004).

[6] Jean-Paul Sartre, "Morals and Society" (or) "Socialist Ethics" is discussed in several essays by Elizabeth Bowman and Robert Stone, such as "Dialectical Ethics: A First Look at Sartre's Unpublished 1964 Rome Lecture Notes," *Social Text* nos. 13–14 (winter/spring 1986): 195–215 (hereafter DE), as well as by Thomas Anderson in *Sartre's Two Ethics*. See essays by all three in *Sartre Alive*, ed. Ronald Aronson and Adrian van den Hoven (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1991) (hereafter *SA*), and by Bowman and Stone in *Sartre*

(1960) laid the groundwork for this second ethics. The dialogical ethics or what he described as "an ethics of the we" consists of the recorded conversations that the now blind Sartre held with his secretary and confidant Benny Lévy toward the end of his life. Sartre's seemingly wholesale rejection of earlier positions in these conversations and his apparent "softness" on quasi-religious themes that he had previously dismissed shocked both Simone de Beauvoir and Raymond Aron. They saw them as the ramblings of a sick old man under the influence of an aggressive religious convert.

However one may assess this apparent volte-face and the "ethics" that it sketched, it should already have become clear that many, though certainly not all, of the allegedly "shocking" remarks in these interviews should not have disturbed anyone who cared to hear what Sartre had been saying over a good part of his public life. Not that one could have predicted this "conversion" without the catalytic presence of Benny Lévy, but that, in retrospect, one can notice a series of remarks – some off-hand but others quite relevant to the discussion – that make this change less radical than might otherwise have been expected. We shall address these last two "ethics" in Chapter 14 below, once their appropriate ontologies and contexts have been considered in the intervening chapters.

Ethics of authenticity: *Notebooks for an Ethics*

We have discussed Sartre's initial reflections on authenticity in his *War Diaries*, where his shift was "from Stoicism to Authenticity,"[7] and in *Being and Nothingness*, where he concluded the text with a set of questions that "can find their reply only on the ethical plane."

Today: A Centenary Celebration, ed. Adrian van den Hoven and Andrew Leak (New York: Berghahn, 2005) (hereafter *Centenary*). For reference to the manuscripts for both Gramsci lectures conserved in the Beinecke Library, Yale University, and for the first in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, along with other secondary literature, see below, Chapter 15. The most complete published version of "Morale et Histoire," the "Cornell Lectures," ed. Juliette Simont, appears in *LTM* nos. 632, 633, 634 (July–Oct. 2005): 268–414; hereafter MH with reference to the *LTM* version. Bowman and Stone have discussed the Cornell Lectures in *Centenary*, chapter 17, and in "'Morality and History': Birth and Re-inventions of an Existential Moral Standard," *Sartre Studies InternationaI* 10, no. 2 (2004): 1–27. They offer detailed information about the relevant manuscripts in the Beinecke in note 5, p. 20.

[7] Arlette Elkaïm-Sartre, *CDG* 12; see *CDG* 68 and *WD* 50–51 as well as Chapter 7 above.

He assured us: "We shall devote to them a future work" (*BN* 628). The 574 pages of *Notebooks* constitute Sartre's initial attempt to make good on that promise.

Sartre left this material unpublished in his lifetime, probably because he considered it too idealist in nature (*Cér* 234). He saw it as "completely mystified" due to its insensitivity to the materialist dimension of the ethical (*Film* 103) – "an ethic by an author for authors, pretending to write for those who did not write," as he put it.[8] By then he was already moving into the dialectical stage of his thought. Still, these pages contain a wealth of insights that complement and in important respects revise the popular image of existentialist ethics gathered from the conflictual relations analyzed in *Being and Nothingness* and dramatized in his popular play, *No Exit*. Rather than a close and extended reading of the entire text,[9] I shall discuss several theses and themes that constitute what I take to be the major contributions of this work to what we understand as Sartre's "existentialist" ethics.

Authenticity

Let us begin with the signature term of that ethics. Earlier we contrasted it with bad faith and likened it to good faith, while admitting that the relationships are problematic in Sartre's own usage.[10] But authenticity is clearly a moral value for Sartre. Like good faith, it carries a cognitive dimension that excludes self-deception. But it also resists the inertia of "the spirit of seriousness" that relies on formulae and ethical ready-mades to cloak its freedom and the anguish that accompanies it. In effect, the authentic individual[11] embraces his contingency the way Nietzsche's individual embraces the Eternal Recurrence and Heidegger's "authentic" individual resolutely grasps his mortal temporality (his

[8] *MAEA* 1250.

[9] For an initial move in that direction, see Gail Evelyn Linsenbard, *An Investigation of Jean-Paul Sartre's Posthumously Published Notebooks for an Ethics* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000).

[10] See above, Chapter 7, "Authenticity: Initial Sketches."

[11] At this stage, it is primarily the individual that is in question, despite Sartre's initial gestures toward the social as we observed in *EH* 41. But we are about to witness in *Notebooks* Sartre's elaboration of the "situation" of the authentic individual who lives in a state of *positive reciprocity* with the Other – something barely conceivable in *Being and Nothingness*, except perhaps psychologically.

being-unto-death).[12] One is reminded of Sartre's famous challenge to the young man facing a far-reaching moral dilemma: "You are free, so choose; in other words, invent" (*EH* 33). He even risked likening moral choice to constructing a work of art, but hastened to caution: "We are not espousing an aesthetic morality" (*EH* 45). Some of his critics failed to honor that caveat.

Gift-response

In *Notebooks* that risk is intensified when he extends the model of gift-response between artist and viewer, author and reader, from his aesthetic writings to authentic interpersonal relations and even to political situations, where one hopes to communicate among free agents without alienating or objectifying them in the process. We have encountered this model in the author–reader relation discussed in *What is Literature?*, serialized in *LTM*, while the *Notebooks* were being composed. In the *Notebooks* we find this analogy elaborated:

> The work of art, for example, demands that its content be recognized materially by the freedom of a concrete public. It is gift and demand at the same time, and only makes a demand insofar as it gives something. It does not ask for the adhesion of a pure freedom, but rather that of a freedom engaged in generous feelings, which it transforms. It is therefore something completely other than a right. It is the means of directly affecting a qualified freedom.
>
> (*NE* 141)

As the work of art reaches its aesthetic actualization when individuals adopt the aesthetic attitude by considering the artifact as an analogon (the thesis of *The Imaginary*), so social relations must move beyond the abstract freedom of man in general ("the tiresome character of a humanism founded on rights" [*NE* 140]) by a generous, transformative attitude toward concrete freedoms:

> Relations among men must be based upon this model if men want to exist as freedom for one another: 1st, by the intermediary of the work (technical as well as aesthetical,

[12] Nietzsche, *Portable Nietzsche*, *The Gay Science*, 101–102, and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 269–271 and 327–333; Martin Heidegger, *BT* § 53.

political, etc.); 2nd, the work always being considered as a gift. The beautiful is a gift above all else. The beautiful is the world considered as *given*. The work being the particularity of the person and his image as given back by the world, it is in treating my work as inhabited by a concrete freedom that you treat my Me as freedom. Whereas if you turn directly toward this Me, it evaporates into abstract freedom.

(*NE* 141)

Positive reciprocity

This is the lesson of the *Notebooks* to supplement the adversarial image of the interpersonal in *Being and Nothingness*. It relies on generosity, gift-appeal and more fundamentally, the concept of positive reciprocity so clearly lacking in *Being and Nothingness*, which Sartre once described as his "eidetic of bad faith." If *Anti-Semite and Jew* counseled that we change the "bases and structures" of the anti-Semite's choice, that is, his "situation," since we cannot deal causally with another freedom directly, the *Notebooks* has added the model of gift-appeal from one concrete freedom to another as "the means of directly affecting a qualified freedom" (*NE* 141).

Mutual recognition

The request as distinct from the order, which elsewhere Sartre calls "the Other in us,"[13] is "an appeal for collaboration and reciprocity in action." It involves a comprehension, that is, an understanding of the Other's goal or purpose. This understanding is concrete and contextual. It is essential to authentic interpersonal relations. As Sartre explains:

I recognize the freedom of the one to whom I make my request, I recognize the legitimacy of his ends, not because they are absolute but because he wants them.

[13] See Thomas R. Flynn, "An End to Authority: Epistemology and Politics in the Later Sartre," reprinted in *Sartre and Existentialism*, ed. William L. McBride, 8 vols. (New York: Garland, 1997), vol. VI, *Existentialist Politics and Political Theory*, 51 and 64. The quotation from *IF* 1:166 is "Belief is the Other in me," which I transpose into authority playing that role because Sartre "considers the similarity between belief and authority to lie in the *otherness* (heteronomy) which each entails," 64. This rendition seems to be confirmed by Sartre's remark that "duty is the will of the other in me" (*NE* 191).

At the same time, I ask that this freedom recognize my freedom and my ends and that, through this reciprocal recognition, we bring about a certain kind of *interpenetration of freedoms* which may indeed be the human realm.

(*NE* 290 emphasis added; in his dialogical ethics, it is called "the ethical realm")

In sum, "the appeal, in effect, is a promise of reciprocity" (*NE* 284).

Authentic and inauthentic love

Sartre has not abandoned the inauthenticity depicted in *Being and Nothingness.* Indeed, he seems to build upon it. Consider his account of "authentic love," which advances us significantly beyond the limitations of being-for-others explained in the earlier work:

No love without that sadistic-masochistic dialectic of subjugation that I described [in *BN*]. No love without deeper recognition and reciprocal comprehension of freedoms (a missing dimension in *BN*). However, to attempt to bring about a love that would surpass the sadistic-masochistic stage of desire and of enchantment would be to make love disappear, that is, the sexual as a type of unveiling the human. *Tension* is necessary to maintain the two faces of ambiguity, to hold them within the unity of one and the same project. There is no synthesis given as to be attained. It has to be *invented*.

(*NE* 414–415, emphasis added)

And this invention is an ongoing process. It is a project of "doing" and not the stasis of "being," which would betray the ontology of inauthenticity found in *BN*.

We must remember that the Sartrean ontology, based on consciousness in *Being and Nothingness* and on praxis in the *Critique*, is dynamic and processive. The moral virtue of authenticity embraces this dynamism in its concrete occurrence while resisting the tendency to flee the anguish which such freedom and contingency entail toward inauthentic identity and thing-like permanence. The *Notebooks* amplify the meaning of the "situation" in which we find ourselves exactly as Sartre recommended in "Materialism and Revolution."[14]

Authentic love builds on the claim of *EH* that "concrete" freedom requires that everyone be free. Sartre admits that the "appeal" or "gift"

[14] See above, Chapter 9, pages 248 ff.

can be undermined by bad faith if the society is rent by divisions of class or caste. "In an alienated society," he insists, "all behavior must be alienating, even generosity" (*NE* 368). In other words, individual and interpersonal authenticity depend on what in *Anti-Semite and Jew* he called the "bases and structures" (the "situation") of choice. "An authentic appeal therefore has to be conscious of being a surpassing of every inequality of condition toward a human world where any appeal of anyone to anyone will always be possible" (*NE* 285). "When the gift is given between equals without reciprocal alienation,[15] its acceptance is as free, disinterested and unmotivated as the gift itself. Like the gift, it is freeing. This is the case in an evolved civilization for the gift of the work of art to a spectator" (*NE* 370). Again, this resembles Beauvoir's concept of "an open future."[16]

Returning to the example of authentic love, consider the following:

> Here is an original structure of authentic love (we shall have to describe many other such structures): to unveil the Other's being-within-the-world, to take up this unveiling, and to set this Being within the absolute; to *rejoice* in it without appropriating it; to give it safety in terms of my freedom, and to surpass it only in terms of the Other's ends.
>
> (*NE* 208)[17]

[15] As in the Potlach ceremony of mutual destruction by outdoing each other by gift-giving till one is totally ruined (a famous example from French anthropologist, Marcel Mauss's *The Gift* [New York: Orton, 1967] that Sartre quotes several times).

[16] "To be free is not to have the power to do anything you like; it is to be able to surpass the given toward an *open future*; the existence of others as a freedom defines my situation and is even the condition of my own freedom" (Beauvoir, *Ethics of Ambiguity*, 91).

[17] Attempting to describe once more "what *loving* signifies in its authentic sense," Sartre observes:

> I love if I *create* the contingent finitude of the Other as being-within-the-world in assuming my own subjective finitude and in *willing* this subjective finitude, and if through the same movement that makes me assume my finitude/subject, I assume his finitude/object as being the necessary condition for the free goal that it projects and that it presents to me as an unconditional end. Through me *there is* a vulnerability of the Other, but I will this vulnerability since he surpasses it and it has to be there so that he can surpass it. Thus one will love the gauntness, the nervousness of this politician or that doctor, who pushes aside and overcomes this thin, nervous body and *forgets* it. For it is made to be forgotten by him (and for rediscovering itself transposed into his work) yet, on the contrary, to be thematized or objectified by me. This vulnerability, this finitude *is the body.* The body for others. To unveil the other in his being-within-the-world is to love him in his body.
>
> (*NE* 501)

Remarks like these abound in the *Notebooks*. They can be read as ambiguous evidence: first, in support of Sartre's dismissal of the text as "idealist" and "mystified"; but in retrospect, from the perspective of the Lévy interviews, these statements render less than shocking what could be read as a return of the repressed in his final months. At this point it must suffice simply to foreground the ambiguity.

My choice to help another freedom, in Sartre's view, expresses my basic project to maximize concrete freedoms (read possibilities) in a finite world. He later states this in Heideggerian terms as "unveiling" and manifesting Being.[18] In contrast, Sartre dubs "inauthentic" our original, prereflective "Choice" to be in-itself-for-itself or God. This project, he claims, "is first in the sense that it is the very structure of my existence" (*NE* 559).

Such an "ontological" characterization of our "original" condition leaves problematic what Sartre will soon be "historicizing," namely, the sense that our individual "conversion" could enable us to embrace our contingency and spontaneity even as we take distance on – or even learn "to live without" – our egos. Our seemingly inevitable immersion in bad faith is countered by the possibility that a collective change in the bases and structures of our social choices (most notably the emergence of a society of material abundance) might yield a condition where "the possibility of inauthenticity" is reduced, if not abolished all together. Sartre had left the door open in *BN* for a possible "conversion" which entailed the liberation from bad faith and a self-recovery of being "that we shall call authenticity" (*BN* 70 n.). And in *Transcendence of the Ego* he had already distinguished between the "self" (which is prereflective) and the Ego and the me, which are the products of our reflective consciousness. Now he informs us that the authentic individual must learn "to live without the Ego" (*NE* 414) or a Me and that "the ipseity [selfness] of calling things into question must take its place" (*NE* 478). As he recommended earlier: "Get rid of the I and the Me. In their place put *subjectivity* as a lived

[18] Note the striking parallel between these phrases and similar claims made by Beauvoir in *Ethcs of Ambiguity*, where there is an open-future argument (82 and esp. 91) that parallels Sartre's maximization of possibilities choice, and her remark that "to will oneself free and to will that there be *being* are one and the same choice" or "man also wants to be a disclosure of being" (70, 23).

monadic totality that refers to the self of consciousness by itself [the ipseity just mentioned]."[19]

Conversion

All this is effected by what in *BN* Sartre called a "Pure" or "purifying" reflection as distinct from an "impure" or accessory reflection – our standard "turning back on ourselves" that produces the ego and the Me of reflective psychology – the "psychic" object. What makes pure reflection different (and difficult to conceive) is that it seems to "reflect" without objectifying. In effect, it purports to catch consciousness "on the wing." This yields an intensified grasp of the prereflective such as Sartre describes in the phenomenological ontology of *Being and Nothingness*.[20]

Sartre does speak of purifying reflection as a katharsis (*BN* 159–160) and it seems to carry an evaluative significance especially in the *Notebooks*. If one simply limits the purifying reflection to the process of changing one's fundamental "Choice" in the sense that it is a "criterion-constituting" Choice such as we can find in Kierkegaard, then the name "conversion" is appropriate. It then denotes a radical shift of the fundamental project to abandon the desire to be God (in-itself-for-itself) and authentically to live one's selfness (ipseity) spontaneously and

[19] *NE* 418. In Chapter 14 below we discuss this major distinction between subject and subjectivity in the later Sartre. It is the topic of his Conférence de Rome of December 12, 1961, not to be confused with the subsequent "Rome" and "Cornell" lectures delivered or scheduled to be delivered in 1964 and 1965 respectively.

[20] Some have likened it to Husserl's "phenomenological reduction" that shifts our awareness from the "natural attitude" of naive realism to the properly philosophical attitude that "suspends" such uncritical belief and renders everything "phenomenal." We have proposed that what remains is the same melody but in a different key (see Thomas Busch *The Power of Consciousness and the Force of Circumstances in Sartre's Philosophy* [Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990]). The difficulty is that Sartre also takes this reduction in a moral sense and not simply the epistemological sense adopted by Husserl. From the start of his career, in *Transcendence of the Ego*, for example, Sartre has given this reduction a moral reading. This resonates with his describing it as a "conversion," calling it "purifying" and describing it as a "katharsis." Consider: "But pure reflection can be attained only as the result of a modification which it effects on itself and which is in the form of a katharsis. This is not the place to describe the motivation and the structure of this catharsis" (*BN* 159–160). On this topic, see Dorothy Leland, "The Sartrean Cogito: A Journey between Versions," in William L. McBride (ed.), *Sartre and Existentialism,* vol. IV, *Existentialist Ontology and Human Consciousness* (New York: Garland, 1996), 167–180.

"without an ego." But let me repeat that this is a problematic concept that Sartre appears to have abandoned in his later years.[21]

Authenticity and history

The general direction of our philosophical biography is "toward the concrete." Such was the direction of *Being and Nothingness* and such has been the vector of Sartre's thought ever since. This continues in his account of authenticity, a multifaceted concept, as we have been observing. One of these aspects that plays a particularly crucial role in rendering concrete the authentic individual is what Sartre calls *historialization*. Inspired by Heidegger's concept of "historicity," in Sartre's usage, it denotes action as revealing/unifying "Being from *my* point of view" (*NE* 486). Historialization entails a kind of Nietzschean embrace of my life and my epoch to the fullest rather than seeking refuge in a high-altitude overview (*conscience de survol*) of the era. In Sartre's words: "It is not a matter of choosing one's age but of choosing oneself within it" (*WL* 195). But in his case, this is pursued under the aspect of freedom – the maximization of possibility for self and others. It amounts to *commitment* to addressing the ethical problems of one's situation, now expanded to include the society in which one lives, with its socio-economic conditions, its present issues and its possibilities as Sartre challenged the writer in *What is Literature?*

But in that same text he raises the political dimension of his approach to art: "Freedom of writing implies the freedom of the citizen. One does not write for slaves. The art of prose is bond up with the only regime in which prose has meaning, democracy. When one is threatened, the other is too. And it is not enough to defend them with the pen," he writes,

[21] When asked by Contat and Rybalka in 1971 whether his previous remark was not tantamount to saying that pure or nonaccessory reflection in *Being and Nothingness* – which is a requirement for authenticity – was impossible, Sartre replied: "You know that I never described this kind of reflection; I said it could exist, but I only showed examples of accessory reflection. And later I discovered that nonaccessory reflection was not different from the accessory and immediate way of looking at things but was the critical work one can do on oneself during one's entire life, through *praxis*" (*L/S* 121–122; *Sit* x:104).If we accept this easy dismissal of an apparently entrenched, major concept, we might salvage its cognitive function by replacing it with "comprehension," which Sartre will describe as the nonreflective awareness of praxis (see *SFHR* 1:102–104). Indeed, Sartre seems to be doing just that.

presaging his abandonment of literature for more direct political involvement: "A day comes when the pen is forced to stop, and the writer must then take up arms" (*WL* 69).

A treatise on violence

What are the relationships between ends and means in a society based on violence?" (*WL* 192). Sartre devotes pages 170–215 of the *Notebooks* to a mini-treatise on violence. That violence bears a striking resemblance to the violence Sartre experienced in the 1930s and 1940s, namely what we might call "fascist" violence. He admits that he is describing "the universe of violence," namely "the universe as it appears when violence is taken as an end. The extreme case" (*NE* 178). This is the world of the person who is in bad faith, the one who subscribes to the maxim that the end justifies the means, indeed "any means whatsoever."[22] Elsewhere, Sartre has mitigated this claim by appeal to counter-violence, structural violence and especially a degree of violence that would destroy the very goal for which it was employed. In the last instance, we are no longer dealing with "the extreme case."

In opposition to the authentic ethic just described, "the violent man prefers *being* to doing" (*NE* 182). "The goal and final justification of violence is always *unity* [being-in-itself]" (*NE* 186). Accordingly, Sartre can rise to the macro level of his analysis and proclaim: "The Hegelian dialectic [with its tragic universe] is the very image of violence because he has described the negation of negation and is confident about a whole that will make the positive spring forth from this negation of negation" (*NE* 184).

For an example of what I have labeled "fascist" violence, consider the principles of what Sartre calls "the *ethic of force* (which is simply an ethics of violence justifying itself)" (*NE* 186). Listed among its fourteen "commandments" are: (1) the victor is always right; (2) the principle of harshness; (3) love for the struggle; (4) the value of evil that cleanses and purifies like a fire; . . . (13) the beauty of pessimism. Violence and

[22] *NE* 172. Ronald Santoni offers a careful argument in defense of "The Bad Faith of Violence – and is Sartre in Bad Faith Regarding it?," *Sartre Studies International* 11, nos. 1/2 (2005): 62–77.

aesthetics; and (14) realism, in the name of efficacy (*NE* 186).[23] The list could set the framework for an "amorality" play. Sartre has drawn on these "values" for several of his plays.

Authenticity in an inauthentic world: *Saint Genet*

As if the *Notebooks* had never been written, Sartre responded to a question about his depiction of negative love in *Being and Nothingness*, "Beginning with *Saint Genet* I changed my position a bit, and I now see more positivity in love . . . I wrote *Saint Genet* to try to present a love that goes beyond the sadism in which Genet is steeped and the masochism that he suffered, as it were, in spite of himself" (Schilpp 13). His 578-page "introduction" to the collected works of Jean Genet (1952) was seen by some as the long-awaited ethics promised in *Being and Nothingness*.[24] It certainly does treat of good and evil and, in Sartre's view, presents the model of as "authentic" an individual as he ever depicted.

Beauvoir notes the increasing importance that Sartre has been giving to social conditioning in his post-war works. "What is striking about this work is that there is scarcely an ounce of freedom ascribed to man. You give an extreme importance to the formation of the individual, to his conditioning." To which he responds defensively: "The transformation of Jean Genet [from unhappy child homosexual into Jean Genet great writer, homosexual by choice and, if not happy, at least sure of himself] is truly due to the use of his freedom. It transformed the meaning (*sens*) of the world by giving it another value. It is certainly this freedom and nothing else that was the cause of this reversal; it is freedom choosing itself that brought about this transformation" (*Cér* 449).

[23] Theodor Adorno remarked seventeen years before the publication of the *Notebooks* that "many of Sartre's situations are derived from fascism and [are] true as indictments of fascism, but not as a *condition humaine*' (*Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton [New York: Continuum, 1973], 226 n.). While the "ethics of force" just described confirms the first part of Adorno's assessment, other features of Sartrean "violence" described in the *Notebooks* and elsewhere move beyond it.

[24] "Working fifteen hours a day on a genius of a chiseler and homosexual is enough to make a person's head swim. He gets under my skin and gives me hallucinations. He wakes me up in the middle of the night. But it's fascinating" (letter to Simone Jollivet, Jan. 2, 1950, *Quiet Moments in a War*, 289).

Echoing his earlier claims about the important role of "situation" in conceiving a revolutionary philosophy ("Materialism and Revolution") and the decisive function of the "bases and structures" of choice in fostering an agent's action (*Anti-Semite and Jew*), this exchange between Beauvoir and Sartre underscores again the ambiguity of the "given" and the "taken" (facticity and transcendence) that has plagued Sartre's thought since *BN*. The force of circumstance will continue to grow until it gains nearly "equal importance" with transcendence in the concepts of "free organic praxis" and the dialectic of the *Critique*.

So, in the existentialist tradition, what does Jean Genet "make of what has been made of him"? The moments in that metamorphosis anticipate the moments in Flaubert's transformation from the family idiot, passively constituted, to the cynical knight of nothingness, to the poet, to the novelist – all occurring under the aspect of the negative.[25] Sartre admitted that his Flaubert study was a sequel to *Saint Genet*, but he allowed that it was a sequel to *The Imaginary* and *Search for a Method* as well. When we reach *The Family Idiot*, we will discover that these characteristics are not mutually exclusive; that they enhance the significance of that massive enterprise.[26]

Considered to be one of Sartre's finest achievements, the "biographical novel" on Genet's life and works serves a bridge role in Sartre's oeuvre. It incorporates many concepts from *Being and Nothingness* – the ontology of in-itself, for-itself and for-others, bad faith, the cardinal categories of being and doing, the sadomasochistic conception of love, an emphasis on the imaginary and consciousness in its prereflective and reflective levels. But there are indications that problems and concepts calling for the *Critique* are already present in this ample and intensely written work. Chief among these are the appeal to "praxis" (already at work in *WL*), an emphasis on positive reciprocity as a fact and an ideal exemplified in "genuine love" (*SG* 328), a sense of the limit of psychoanalytic explanations, appeal to a dialectic that flattens into the "circular," an implicit demand for the "mediating third party" that will

[25] "Denouncing the real in the name of the irreal [the imaginary]," (*IF* III:147), correcting "unreality" in *FI* V:131. We should add to Flaubert's achievements "playwright," since late in life he wrote a comedy in four acts, *Le Candidat* (1873) that had an unsuccessful run on the Parisian stage the next year.

[26] See below, Chapter 15.

appear in the *Critique* to resolve seemingly intransigent dichotomies, and an increased role for the imagination in ethical and political contexts. For these reasons, *Saint Genet* brings to term many established "existentialist" concepts even as it opens the door to dialectical and praxis-oriented conditions and comprehension.

The spiral or the whirligig (Tourniquet)

In a letter to Simone Jollivet ("Toulouse"), Sartre avows: "All that I know is I would like to construct an ethics in which Evil is an integral part of Good."[27] He sees two dialectics at work in the young Genet's attempt to overcome his original alienation: the familiar alternative of (inauthentic) being (in the eyes of others) in opposition to (authentic) doing (nonthetic self-consciousness of his ability to act otherwise). "The two dialectics that control his inner life run counter to each other, they jam, and finally they get twisted and whirl about idly" (*SG* 329). And yet, Genet wills their (impossible) unity. What results, on Sartre's reading, is a hellish merry-go-round of alternatives taken to their extremes in the adolescent Genet's life: the Hero and the Saint, the Criminal and the Traitor, the active and the passive homosexual, the evil of consciousness and the consciousness of evil. "In short, thesis and antithesis represent two moments of freedom. But these two segments, instead of merging in a harmonious synthesis (to deny the false *in order* to affirm the true, to destroy *in order* to build), remain mutilated and abstract and perpetuate their opposition" (*SG* 338). Sartre is offering us a glimpse into an existential psychoanalysis that has yet to find its "cure."

Perhaps the resolution of this vicious circle will reveal itself in "the last contradiction: Dream and Reality." As Sartre did with *Nausea* and will repeat in his autobiography and his other biographies, he is testing the "salvific" power of the imaginary. In the context of the prodigious power of the negative, he interprets the "choice" of the imaginary as the "derealization" of himself in the poetic, "because it unfolds both in the dimension of the real and in that of the dream" (*SG* 351). He has yet to link this dichotomy with Absolute Evil or its magical transformation into

[27] *Quiet Moments*, Aug. 16, 1949. He had begun work on *Saint Genet* the previous year.

Absolute Good, but the emergence of Beauty, and his subsequent commitment to the world of poetry and theater, enables him, as it will Flaubert, to draw the public into his realm, beyond the commonplace alternatives of good and evil, to the aesthetic sphere where creative freedom rules. Acknowledging that "the imaginary corrodes praxis" (*SG* 352, 418), Sartre's Genet realizes that

> the derealization of the real was an attempt at synthesis, he wanted to unify his realism and his power to dream. The synthesis has failed: why not attempt the inverse operation, why not *realize the imaginary?* . . . To realize the imaginary means to include the imaginary in reality *while preserving its imaginary nature*; it means unifying, within the same project, his realistic intention and his derealizing intention.
>
> (*SG* 418)

This is precisely how Sartre described the work of art in *The Imaginary.*[28] Genet has moved from aestheticism to art, from gesture to act. "This pure freedom of the artist no longer knows either Good or Evil, or rather, it now makes of them only the object of its art: Genet has liberated himself" (*SG* 422).[29]

Genet as a model of authenticity

It is clear that Sartre admires Jean Genet, not despite his playing the role of antithesis to entrenched bourgeois morality but because of it. Genet's logic of "loser wins" pushes the envelope of the thought and behavior of the "just" and "reasonable" man beyond the limit. His Nietzschean inversion of received values opens the door for moral creativity in anticipation of the "Dialectical" ethics yet to be conceived. His learning to say "we" (*SG* 403) opens a field of "generosity" that fosters and is fostered by the social dimension of Genet's later life. In this, he replaces the model of the mythical "solitary individual" of Sartre's school days and early writings. With the mature Genet, Sartre avows:

[28] *Imaginary*, "The Work of Art," 188–194.

[29] "He has sincerely attempted to liquidate *all* ethics, that of anarchists as well as others, because every ethic implies humanism and humanism is the bugbear of this outcast who has been relegated to the inhuman" (*SG* 245).

For a long time we believed in social atomism bequeathed to us by the eighteenth century, and it seemed to us that man was by nature a solitary entity who entered into relations with his fellow men *afterward* . . . The truth is that "human reality" "is-in-society" as it "is-in-the-world"; it is neither a nature nor a state: it is made.

(*SG* 590)

Genet's is an ethic of "doing" (*faire*) transformed from an earlier (inauthentic) ethic of being – in the eyes of others. Yet it is immersed in a world that renders the ideal of absolute reciprocity scarcely conceivable. "It is concealed by the historical conditioning of class and race, by nationalities, by the social hierarchy" (*SG* 590–591). "Concealed," we should note, not destroyed.

I suggested that Genet replaced Sartre's "solitary man." But one might better say that he relocated it in a sociohistorical setting. "Genet's 'impossible nullity,'" Sartre insists, "is solitude [not physical isolation]." He continues: "Our solitude is the way we feel our objectivity for others in our subjectivity and on the occasion of failure" (*SG* 592). Sartre would characterize artistic creativity both here and especially in the Flaubert as "failure behavior" (*conduite d'échec*).[30] A reiteration of "loser wins," the creation of the work of art draws the inhabitants of the real freely into the realm of the imaginary where the artist rules.

How, then, are we to live this ethics that is at once necessary and impossible? Sartre's ethics of action "must give itself ethical norms in the climate of nontranscendable impossibility." Again his advice: "Choose; that is, create," and assume responsibility for your choices. This, he implies, would be the temptation of "real morality, because it is beyond Being as it is beyond Evil." Genet "has freed himself from good and evil . . . he has steadily played loser wins" (*SG* 571 and 574).

"The most extraordinary example of the whirligig of being and appearance, of the imaginary and the real, is to be found in one of Genet's plays, *The Maids*" (*SG* 611). Sartre points out that "the truth of the matter is that Genet wishes from the very start to *strike at the root of the apparent*" (*SG* 611, emphasis his). Referring implicitly to *BN*, Sartre reminds us that he has shown that "an appearance borrows its being from being" (*SG* 625). But the imaginary may afford us a respite

[30] *SG* 191 and 350, and *IF* III:173.

from the demands of the real or even offer a way of living amidst the insuperable conflicts of action and opinion that mark the real.

Bringing his analysis to a close, Sartre combines the ethical and the political when he compares Genet to the Old Bolshevik, Nikolai Bukharin. In the Moscow "show trials" of 1936–1938, Bukharin accepted "objective" guilt for something of which he was subjectively (personally) innocent. In effect, he sacrificed himself (and the truth) to the Party and its policies (assessed by another standard of truth). Genet, in Sartre's view, "is the Bukharin of Bourgeois society" (*SG* 594). The Just and the moral public condemn his depravity, his crimes and the disgust his literature elicits. "But, unlike Bukharin, [Genet] proclaims in defiance of all that he *is right to be wrong*. He *alone* declares himself right; he knows that his testimony is inadequate and he maintains it *because* of its inadequacy He is proud of being right *in the realm of the impossible* and of testifying to the impossibility of everything" (*SG* 595–596). Sartre now appeals implicitly to two of his "political morality tales" and prepares us for a third to bring to our attention his claim that "Genet is we." Like Hugo in *Dirty Hands*,[31] who was executed for refusing to conform to a change in the Party Line, and Franz in *The Condemned of Altona*, who takes full responsibility before future generations who will judge him (us) guilty for our present crimes, Genet faces us with the challenge to conform to social strictures or to forge our own path. Assuming that the future will entangle us in "objective guilt" of one kind or another, at that point, Sartre believes, we will have to choose: "[we] will be either Bukharin or Genet. Bukharin or our will *to be together* carried to the point of martyrdom; Genet or our solitude carried to the point of Passion" (*SG* 599).

Yet he offers us hope with another option. "If there is still time to reconcile, with a final effort, the object and the subject," he counsels, "we must, be it *only once* and *in the realm of the imaginary* . . . have the courage to go to the limits of ourselves in both directions at once." Again, the imaginary, with all its limits, comes to the rescue – or seems to do so. Presumably this occurs by the reading of Genet's collected works to which *Saint Genet* serves as the introduction. But this imaginative

[31] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Dirty Hands*, trans. Lionel Abel, in *Three Plays* (New York: Knopf, 1949 [1948]); and *Condemned* (*Loser Wins* in Great Britain).

resolution might equally be achieved by taking to heart the message of the third play just mentioned, *The Devil and the Good Lord*.[32]

The Devil and the Good Lord: an exchange of dialectics

This is acknowledged as a clearly autobiographical work as, one can argue, is Sartre's *Saint Genet*, produced a year later. Both texts depict concretely the dilemma of someone trying to live authentically in an inauthentic world. Gone is the option of simply changing oneself rather than one's situation – a solution appealing to "Stoic," or what I called "noetic" freedom in *BN*. In both cases, we have suspended the presumably defining mantra of vintage existentialism: "A man can always make something out of what is made of him" (*BEM* 35). Set in the time of the peasant rebellion during the reformation in Germany, this tale recounts the conversion of its hero, Goetz, from the pursuit of Absolute Evil to that of Absolute Good. It appears that the destruction of human lives is inevitable in either case. But the plight of the priest, Heinrich, underscores the same problem from another angle. As Sartre explains: "Nowadays, we know there are some situations that corrupt an individual right into his inmost being." One such is the moral dilemma facing Heinrich:

> If he sides with the poor, he betrays the Church, but if he sides with the Church, he betrays the poor. It is not sufficient to say that there is a conflict in him: he himself is the conflict. His problem is absolutely insoluble, for he is mystified to the marrow of his bones. Out of this horror of himself he chooses to be evil. Some situations can be desperate.[33]

Two morals are set forth from this story: first, that even the best of choices leave us with "Dirty Hands," the play that *The Devil* is said to complement; and second, that in the choice between the human and the absolute, between man and God, the option for man will do less harm. We shall call this Sartre's mitigated or chastened humanism.

As we move to a more explicit consideration of the political stream of Sartre's thought, let us ease the transition with reference to violence

[32] *The Devil and the Good Lord*, trans. Kitty Black (New York: Knopf, 1960 [1951]) (*Lucifer and the Good Lord* in Great Britain).

[33] Interview with *Samedi-Soir*, a mass-circulation weekly (June 2, 1951); *ST* 229.

once more. It is a common difficulty for the means–end relationship in both ethics and politics. As Sartre admits: "There is a criticism by Catholics which seems to me to have more truth in it, that the reign of Godless man begins in violence. I am well aware of that. But history shows pretty well that the reign of God too is accompanied by violence" (*ST* 237).

11

Means and ends: political existentialism

In this chapter we return to the texts that form the common source for the ethical and political streams mentioned in the previous chapter. But now our intent is to review some of the same institutions, structures and events from the perspective of Sartre's developing political theory and practice. Perforce, such a move will entail some repetition – a certain "rerun" of the film for the sake of a perspective politically enriched much as Heidegger famously ventured when he undertook a *Wiederholung* (repetition) of the first portion of *Being and Time* under the aspect of "temporality" in the second. The political significance rather eclipsed in the previous chapter should now achieve full view. As a student in the lycée, the young Sartre did not display a serious interest in political theory or in practical politics generally. His natural tendencies were anarchic. Toward the end of his years at the ENS, however, he did publish an informed essay on contemporary French legal theories "The Theory of State in Modern French Thought" (1927). It was in the fall of that year that his close friend Paul Nizan joined the French Communist Party (PCF). Nizan would later spend an idealistic year in the USSR and return to lecture Sartre, Beauvoir and their mutual friends on the promise of the Soviet Revolution. Sartre's interests, at that time, were more literary and philosophical than political. He resisted the siren call of socialism, for example, that had turned the heads of many of his classmates at the École, including Raymond Aron.[1] Eschewing party adherence, Sartre nonetheless was strongly opposed to

[1] *Cér* 476–477. This essay is a revision and expansion of my contribution to *The Cambridge Companion to Existentialism*, ed. Steven Crowell (Cambridge University Press, 2012), "Political Existentialism: The Career of Sartre's Political Thought," used with permission.

colonialism, which he regarded as a sordid form of state takeover. The young Sartre harbored a basic egalitarian spirit from his early teens and, as he recalled, thought of the French control of Algeria whenever the injustice of colonialism came to mind (*Cér* 478). As his life-long companion Simone de Beauvoir remarks, they showed little concern for politics after graduation and did not even vote in the critical general election of 1936 that ushered in the socialist program of the Front Populaire. But even in those years his tendencies veered toward the Left.

As we review Sartre's life from the political angle, we discern several stages in the development of his political thought and action. It extends from early indifference mixed with sympathy for the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War, through resistance to Nazi domination everywhere, to a favoring of leftist movements generally and passed through a period of "amoralist political realism" (in association with the PCF). His relation with the PCF cooled with the repression of the Hungarian revolution in 1956 and ended with total rejection of the Party in 1968, accompanied by a sympathetic identity with the "direct action" of the extreme Left in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This trajectory concluded in a kind of muted optimism regarding the possibility of social reform in his discussions with Benny Lévy in his final years.

In a number of conversations with two Maoist friends, one of whom would become his last secretary, Sartre recalled having been a "sounding board for politics without directly engaging in it" for most of his life.[2] If "sounding board" denotes committing his pen to leftist causes as well as signing petitions and participating in public protests, Sartre, in the second half of his life, was a political sounding board par excellence.

As we prepare to chart his career, we should note several features of Sartre's political thought that will appear rather consistently. First, he approached the political as a moralist searching for those individuals who were responsible in an ethically evaluative sense for seemingly impersonal social movements such as racism, colonialism and capitalism. Not that he rejected "structural" causality or its moral aspects (*pace* Louis Althusser) – we shall see him insisting apropos of colonialism that "the

[2] Philippe Gavi, Jean-Paul Sartre, Pierre Victor, *ORR* 274. Beauvoir considered Gavi more of an anarchist than a "Maoist" strictly speaking. However, given the fluidity of that term in contemporary parlance, it would be difficult to define a "Maoist," strictly speaking.

meanness is in the system."[3] But the responsible individuals are the prey of the existentialist. Secondly, his conception of political commitment involved a "curiously ambivalent" attitude toward physical violence. Though he opposed violence for its own sake, in a society such as ours in which he believed violence was systemic, he considered violent opposition to be "counter-violence" and thus justified within limits.[4] Thirdly, he maintained a fundamentally anarchistic view of authority and a pessimistic opinion of social relations. Despite flashes of enthusiasm in later life for the effectiveness of small, spontaneously organized action groups such as Party cells, that threatened exploitative institutions, they seemed often, if not always, to be absorbed by those organizations or to harden into similar collectives themselves. Sartre gave this as the reason why his *Critique of Dialectical Reason* should be read as a fundamentally anti-Communist book ("a Marxist work written against the Communists," as he put it).[5] So let us pursue this path according to several shifts in his political stance, keeping in mind that there is an ethical dimension to most of these moves as Sartre seeks to determine the responsible parties sustaining and navigating the waves of impersonal structures and social causes – an existentialist hallmark.

Political bent of the student, scholar, teacher (1915–1939)

In his early years, Sartre's relation to the political was oblique; on the one hand, it reflected his relations with his maternal grandfather, his stepfather and, on the other, it was influenced by his friends and teachers at the two prestigious Parisian lycées he attended, Henri-IV and Louis-le Grand, and the ENS. The two adults exemplified the moderate conservative ideals of the Radical-Socialist Party of the Third Republic, which each seemed to champion and which Sartre dismissed as the party of functionaries, anticlericals and the petit bourgeoisie.

His close, long-lasting friendship with Paul Nizan, on the other hand, certainly affected Sartre's distrust of the Communist Party that was never completely healed, even in the midst of his fellow-traveling in the early 1950s. Nizan, who died at the battle of Dunkirk in May of 1940,

[3] *CP* 283.
[4] See his address to the inaugural session of UNESCO at the Sorbonne, Nov. 1, 1946, ch. 10, n. 1.
[5] *L/S* 18.

had renounced his allegiance to the Party the year before because of its support of the nonaggression pact between Hitler and Stalin which cleared the way for the invasion of Poland. The Party responded by vilifying Nizan as a traitor and government informer. In 1947, Sartre joined François Mauriac, Raymond Aron and many others in an open letter to the leaders of the PCF, challenging them either to furnish evidence behind their smear campaign against Nizan's name or to retract these accusations publically.[6]

Although he came under the influence of the charismatic pacifist professor known as Alain at the Lycée Henri-IV, Sartre's own pacifism seems to have been rather short-lived and superficial. By the time he undertook military service during the "phoney war" of 1939–1940, Sartre had all but buried those inclinations in the face of the Nazi attack. Still, we witness him recording in his *War Diaries* on several occasions the tension at play in his personal life between the Stoicism that had attracted him in college and which he associated with Alain's pacifist arguments and the quest for authenticity.[7] But it was antimilitarism rather than opposition to violence per se that fed Sartre's "pacifism." This would surface in his *War Diaries* and thereafter, especially in his frequent descriptions of the "counter-"violence that permeated the actions of the exploited and the oppressed as his writing become increasingly polemical in the late 1940s and thereafter.

We noted that Sartre spent the academic year 1933/1934 at the French Institute in Berlin under a fellowship to study contemporary German philosophy, especially Husserlian phenomenology. In view of his extreme involvement in matters political after the war, it is nearly inconceivable that he would ignore the events that followed Hitler's assumption of power nine months before his arrival: the book burnings, the manifestations, the assassinations – in effect, the National Socialist

[6] In 1948 Sartre would write a play, *Dirty Hands*, that treats the dilemma of a Party loyalist caught in the midst of the Party's change of policies that required him to redefine the motives of his previous actions initially undertaken at the Party's behest. Understandably, the Party was displeased by the opportunistic "thesis" of the play. Voicing dismay that his play was being presented as anti-Communist propaganda at a time when his relations with the PCF were warming, Sartre personally forbade its performance in Vienna while a congress of the "World Peace Movement" was taking place (December, 1952). See above, Chapter 10 page 281 for the ethical perspective on this work.

[7] See *CDG* 84–90.

"revolution" that was taking place virtually outside his window. But Sartre seems to have remained the detached scholar during his residence at the institute.[8]

A measure of Sartre's political commitment during the 1930s was his relationship to the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939). Though he certainly sided with the Republicans, as did many of his close friends, and would publish a powerful short story "The Wall" in 1937 which dramatized that war experience, he remarked later that it was not "his" war.[9] "When I wrote 'The Wall,'" he admitted, "I had no real knowledge of Marxist thought, I was simply in complete opposition to the existence of Spanish fascism."[10]

Yet Sartre was not insensitive to the political implications of his early work in phenomenology. We noted his reference to the political and ethical implications of his notion of an egoless consciousness at the conclusion of *The Transcendence of the Ego* (1936).[11] This conjunction of the ethical and the political will establish a recurrent theme throughout his subsequent work.

Vintage existentialism (1938–1946)

Sartre returned to Paris after several months of incarceration in a Nazi stalag after the fall of France, quite intent on playing a part in the Resistance. He, Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir and others gathered a group of intellectuals under the banner of "Socialism and Freedom [*Liberté*]" in March of 1941 that recruited about fifty members and lasted scarcely nine months. It could not compete with other resistance organizations, especially the PCF, which had abandoned its pacifist direction once the Germans invaded the Soviet Union in June of that year. But the values of "socialism" and "freedom" continued to guide Sartre's public life. Indeed, in his valedictory interview with Beauvoir, Sartre reflected on his experience of true community as a prisoner and wished that it could be conjoined with freedom:

> We founded the movement Socialism and Freedom (*Liberté*). The title was my choice because I had in mind a socialism in which [freedom] existed. I had become a

[8] His correspondence with Beauvoir during this period seems to have been lost.

[9] Marius Perrin, *Avec Sartre au Stalag XII D* (Paris: Delarge, 1980), 463, cited *Life* 154.

[10] Contat and Rybalka II:50.

[11] *TE* 106.

socialist by then, owing in part to the sad socialism of my life as a prisoner that nonetheless was a collective life, a community.

...

The Marxists in France gave no place to the notion of freedom, [to the notion that people] could form themselves according to their own options and not as conditioned by society ... The idea that a free man could exist beyond socialism – when I say "beyond" I don't mean at some later stage but surpassing the rules of socialism at every moment – that's an idea that the Russians have never had. That's what I had in mind by calling our little group in 1940, 1941 "Socialism and Freedom." Though it is very difficult to realize beginning with socialism, it's the connection, socialism-freedom, that represents my political inclination. It was my political bent and I've never changed it. Today I'm still defending socialism and freedom in my discussions with Gavi and Victor [in *On a Raison de se révolter*].

(*Cér* 494, 502)

In the early years following the liberation of Paris by the Allies in 1944, Sartre accepted an invitation to join David Rousset and Gérard Rosenthal in the inauguration of a non-Communist nonparty of the Left called the "Revolutionary People's Assembly" (Rassemblement Démocratique Révolutionnaire or RDR).[12] Its aim was to reconcile Communists and socialists into a common front against capitalism at home and colonialism and superpower politics abroad. It was in search of a "third" option between either side of the cold war politics, though clearly from a left-leaning perspective. Noteworthy was Sartre's rationale for joining this group: his appeal to "situation" as "an idea capable of uniting the Marxists and non-Marxists among us."[13] In his *Being and Nothingness* (1943), Sartre had characterized "human reality" (his version of Heidegger's *Dasein*) as "being-in-situation." And in his seminal essay "Materialism and Revolution" published the year before joining the RDR, we saw him conclude: "It is the elucidation of the new ideas of 'situation' and of 'being-in-the-world' that revolutionary behavior specifically calls for."[14] It is commonly acknowledged that this futile foray into organized politics soured him on the genre. Still, he would continue to recommend that members of the working class join the Communist Party, which Sartre came to see as its sole voice in what he

[12] June 18, 1948 (Contat and Rybalka 1:213).
[13] Jean-Paul Sartre, David Rousset, Gérard Rosenthal, *Entretiens sur la Politique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), 38.
[14] MR 253.

had years before come to believe was "class conflict." Indicative of his own ambivalence in this regard, he refused to join the Party himself, though we said he supported four years of fellow-traveling with the PCF from 1952 to the Soviet crushing of the Hungarian revolution in 1956.

In his last interview with Beauvoir (1974), Sartre admitted: "I was never in favor of a socialist society before 1939." He described his position up to that point as "an individualism of the Left" (*Cér* 479–480). If his experience in the army and in the POW camp taught him the importance of social relations, he was still in thrall to the individualist ontology he was formulating in *Being and Nothingness.* It based interpersonal relations on the objectifying gaze of competing individuals, resulting ontologically in a kind of stare-down and politically in a Hobbesian war of all against all. Recall a famous phrase from that book that "the essence of the relations between consciousnesses is not the [Heideggerian] *Mitsein* (being-with); it is conflict."[15] Twenty-six years after *BN*, Sartre described this stage of his thought as "a rationalist philosophy of consciousness."[16]

Commentators have read the ontology of *BN*, namely, its basic categories of being-in-itself and being-for-itself as a Cartesian dualism of material thing and immaterial consciousness. But we have seen that this is mistaken, if taken to mean that Sartre subscribed to a two-substance ontology of matter and mind. Only being-in-itself is substantial or thing-like; being-for-itself or consciousness is a "nonsubstantial absolute" (a no-thing related to the in-itself by an internal negation). There is no need to unpack these ontological claims except to reaffirm that the basic dualism which grounds Sartre's ontology and so his political and his ethical theories is a dualism of *spontaneity and inertia*. A functional equivalent of the for-itself and the in-itself respectively, they will replace these terms from *BN* in his *Critique*, though, significantly, they return in the Flaubert biography.

Ethics and politics (means and ends)

The end–means issue is a recurrent theme in Sartre's thought. It distinguishes him from the means–ends continuum of Deweyan pragmatism and the consequentialism of the utilitarians, for whom he had

[15] *BN* 429.
[16] *BEM* 41.

little use. Though the matter is complex and Sartre's reflections are often ad hoc and flexible, focused, as they usually were, on specific problems in concrete situations, we must recognize that there are nonnegotiables in his political and ethical theories. One such is the free organic individual (the responsible subject) and another is the value concept of freedom. They emerge at each turn of his thought. In effect, we are charting a roughly parallel development of his ethics and his politics posed in the conclusion of *Transcendence of the Ego*, emerging into full light with his "discovery" of the philosophical significance of society in the late 1930s and early 1940s, and continuing to the hypotheses entertained in his discussions with Benny Lévy in the aftermath of the "events of May, 1968."

Humanisms and the political

We witnessed Sartre's strong animus against several types of humanism in the novel that made him famous, *Nausea* (1938). But a year later he was applying that negative view to political principles in his *War Diaries*, minus the total rejection displayed in the novel:

> If we are looking for political principles today, we have really only four conceptions of man to choose between. The narrow conservative synthetic conception (*Action française*, for example); the updated narrow synthetic conception (racism, Marxism); the broad conservative synthetic conception (humanitarianism); the analytical conception (anarchic individualism). But nowhere do we find any reference to the human condition, determined on the basis of individual "human reality."[17]

The problem, in his opinion, is that, of the many meanings of "humanity," "the modern meaning – the human condition of every individual – has not yet been unveiled" (*WD* 25).[18]

What is that "modern" meaning that will engender the political principles of the future? With the wisdom of hindsight, we can say that it is a *humanism of "situation."* Parsing that term as Sartre uses it, we find that every situation is at once objective, practical (lived) and historical. How these features will emerge in Sartre's political and social thought

[17] *WD* 28, entry of Nov. 21, 1939.

[18] Subsequently, he would defend a Marxist "humanism of work" (*CP* 37, 55, 200) and a "humanism of need" (in the Rome Gramsci lectures, see below, Chapter 14).

remains to be seen. But it is already clear that the elements of its conception are germinating in the young conscript's mind. So let us consider each in view of its contribution to his emerging political (and ethical) thought.

Objective possibility

This expression, formulated by Max Weber, denotes the extramental phenomena that both limit and foster our actions. One of Weber's examples was that the firing of shots on a street in Munich served merely to occasion a revolution that was objectively possible (waiting to happen), whereas a similar incident elsewhere and at another time might have gone unnoticed. In contrast, one might agree with Marx that the Paris Commune failed because it was objectively impossible; that is, the time was not yet "ripe." In the *War Diaries*, Sartre calls such objective possibilities "exigencies," denoting "objects that demand to be realized" (*WD* 39). Marx had a keen sense of objective possibility and especially impossibility, though he did not employ the term. Of its several uses, its original meaning applies to the sociohistorical realm, where it refers to the set of socioeconomic conditions that make some projects possible and render others impossible. An application of Marxist theory to Sartrean "situation" lies behind Sartre's remark that "it is history which shows some the exits and makes others cool their heels before closed doors."[19] By the time he makes that claim, in *The Communists and Peace* (1952), Sartre is in league with the PCF, though, as ever, in his own way. The point is that Sartre's growing awareness of objective possibility thickens his sense of "freedom" from a quasi-Stoic "freedom to think otherwise" (what he called "freedom as the definition of man" in his "Existentialism is a Humanism" lecture and which we have termed "noetic" freedom) to a full-fledged notion of "positive" or "concrete" freedom that requires the change of socioeconomic conditions which at present limit one's concrete possibilities. We recognize this as the thinking behind the claim made in Sartre's famous but unfortunate public lecture, "Is Existentialism a Humanism?" that no one can be concretely free unless everyone is free.

[19] *CP* 80.

Two other publications from this period register this change in Sartre's political and ethical thought from an individualist ethics and politics of authenticity to a more socially centered concern with the concrete freedom of humans and the reconstruction of institutions: the launching of the journal *Les Temps Modernes* (October 1945) and the issuing of *Anti-Semite and Jew* (*Reflections on the Jewish Question* [1946]), which we discussed earlier.

In the programmatic "Introduction" to the initial issue of *LTM*, Sartre insisted that "far from being relativists, we proclaim that man is an absolute. But he is such in his time, in his surroundings, and on his parcel of earth."[20] This is the dimension of "historialization" that has been part of Sartrean "authenticity" since the *War Diaries*, *Truth and Existence* and *What is Litrature?* The writer must speak for his time and address the problems of this situated absolute. The journal stands on the side of those who wish to change both the social condition of the human and the conception that he has of himself. Implicitly gesturing toward historical materialism, Sartre sees a relation between these two goals. He insists, first, that a feeling (*sentiment*) is always the expression of a certain way of life and a certain conception of the world that is common to an entire class or to an entire epoch; and, secondly, that its evolution is not the effect of just any inner mechanism whatsoever but is the effect of these historical and social factors" (*Sit* II:21). It is in this context that he introduces the contrast between the *analytic* method or spirit and the *synthetic* or, as he shall now also call it, the *dialectical*. The former insists on the "myth of human nature" whereas the latter thinks holistically and developmentally. Articulating a theme that will recur throughout his writings thereafter, Sartre associates the analytic spirit with the bourgeoisie and the dialectical with the working class. As he will observe in the *Critique*: "at a certain level of abstraction, the class conflict expresses itself as a conflict of rationalities." The former thinks atomistically and is blind to socioeconomic class, whereas the latter is totalizing and thinks in terms of solidarity (*Sit* II:19–21). Sartre draws upon this distinction, already employed in *Anti-Semite and Jew* in another context, to form the methodological thesis for his *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960).

[20] *Sit* II:15; *WL Introducing LTM*, 254.

Sartre concludes the introduction with an irenic gesture toward the Marxists. While insisting that man, despite being totally conditioned by his situation, harbors “a center of irreducible indetermination,” he declares that “this sector of unpredictability is what we call freedom and the person is nothing but his freedom” (*Sit* II:26). This freedom is both a curse and the unique source of human greatness. “The Marxists will agree with us on this point in spirit, if not in the letter, because, as far as I know, they do not abstain from leveling moral condemnations” (*Sit* II:27). In other words, consistently or not, a determinist must acknowledge a sliver of indeterminacy as a condition for making moral judgments. If the individual is totally conditioned and totally free, then the task that remains for the editors is to expand his possibilities of choice; that is, to increase his concrete freedom. This is the project that the fledgling journal sets for itself.

We already discussed *Anti-Semite and Jew* in an ethical context that revealed the moral significance of the “bases and structures” of an individual’s choices. The explicit premise of his argument is the existence of a close reciprocal relation between human reality and the “material conditions” of its “situation.” In effect, Sartre is calling for structural change in society to render the “choice” of anti-Semitism virtually impossible. He rather naively believes (*pace* Foucault) that “anti-Semitism is a mythical, bourgeois representation of the class struggle, and that it could not exist in a classless society” (*Anti-Semite and Jew* 149). Presumably, faced with overwhelming counterevidence, he would redefine the nature of such socialist societies as way stations on the path to genuine Communism. In any case, gone is the near omnipotence of Sartrean consciousness to redefine one’s situation at will, what I have been calling “noetic” freedom/responsibility. One must acknowledge the “dialectical” relation between the social conditions and the freedom that both incorporates and transcends it.

Praxis and lived experience (le vécu)

Praxis (purposive human activity in its sociohistorical context) had already entered Sartre’s vocabulary in *What is Literature?* (1947) where it is defined as “action in history and on history; that is, a synthesis of historical relativity and moral and metaphysical absolute, with this hostile and friendly, terrible and derisive world which it reveals to us.”

And it occurs in his posthumously published *Notebooks for an Ethics*, composed in 1947–1948. But it plays its major role in *Search for a Method* and the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* where it supplants consciousness ("being-for-itself) as the vehicle of transcendence and freedom. It is already clear that Sartrean consciousness is goal-oriented. In *BN* he had taken it as coextensive, if not synonymous, with life-orienting fundamental choice. Already in *BN*, Sartre claimed that "the view of pure knowledge is contradictory: there is only the viewpoint of *committed* knowledge. This amounts to saying that knowledge and action are only two abstract faces of an original and concrete relation" (*BN* 309; *EN* 370). The significance of this conception of knowledge as a form of action is that it translates easily into knowledge as a form of praxis and all that will accompany it in terms of dialectical relations and understanding (*Verstehen*). This, of course, remains to be elaborated in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* in the 1960s, but it assures us that the move from consciousness to praxis was not an about-face. Correlatively, it echoes Marx's famous claim in the *1844 Manuscripts* that the time had come no longer merely to understand the world but to change it. Sartre had been moving in that direction for some years.

The appearance of the concept of lived experience (*Erlebniss*; *le vécu*) was as significant in Sartre's vocabulary as that of praxis. "Lived experience" was introduced, as Sartre explained, to enrich the situational and the subconscious aspects of "consciousness" that it supplanted in his writings:

> What I call *le vécu* – lived experience – is precisely the ensemble of the dialectical process of psychic life, in so far as this process is obscure to itself because it is a constant totalization, thus necessarily a totalization which cannot be conscious of what it is. . . ."Lived experience," in this sense, is perpetually susceptible of comprehension but never of knowledge.
>
> (*BEM* 41)

He explains: "I suppose [*le vécu*] represents for me the equivalent of conscious-unconscious" (*L/S* 127). As we noted earlier in our study, *le vécu* seems to be a refinement of "prereflective" consciousness in *BN* where you understand more than you (reflectively) know.

This major modification of Sartre's psychology enables him to appeal to "Freudian" concepts without resorting to the opaque realm of the unconscious. The unblinking eye of Sartrean consciousness is retained and our unqualified responsibility preserved. An "existential" approach

to Marxism will embrace the psychological phenomena in more than a superficial, "ideological" sense. If this path is now opened by focusing on "lived experience," it will reveal its promise in the several "biographies" of famous literary and other artists that Sartre will pen in the second half of his life. Once asked by Maoist friends why he continued to labor over his gigantic study of Gustave Flaubert, Sartre defended his undertaking as the attempt to produce a model "socialist" biography (see *ORR* 73–74).

The historical

We know that Sartre opposed the classical concept of human nature because he saw it as ahistorical; a "myth" of bourgeois universality. The "human condition," on the other hand, was a more flexible concept, one that was open to historical development according as the concrete features of the human condition changed. We marked his proposal of an incomplete list of such features in *BN*. They included my past, my environment, my fellow man whose intentions are inscribed in the "instrumental complexes" of my social life such as the signs in the subway or the directions on a medicine bottle. This aspect of our situation proclaims our "historicity" and locates our existence in a set of relations that are both temporal and explanatory in more than a simply narrative sense.

Sartre elaborates this dimension of our situation by appeal to a Hegelian saying that our "essence is our past" (*Das Wesen is was gewesen ist*). If "situation" is an ambiguous mix of facticity and transcendence, of the in-itself and the for-itself, of the given and the taken, then the temporal dimension of our facticity is precisely our biography. But as Sartre's individualist ontology expands, so this description does as well: our facticity is read as our history, not merely our biography; it is "our" story, not simply mine.

If only he can develop a social ontology that will move us beyond a merely psychological account of the collective subject – the "we," the "class" – it would fit nicely into the Marxian theory of history and class consciousness (Lukács), where the "subject" of history is the proletariat. Sartre will subscribe to such a view in the *Critique*, but at this vintage existentialist stage, he lacks the social ontology to warrant talking of a collective or "class" subject in more than a purely psychological sense.

The problem is his individualist looking/looked-at theory of interpersonal relations. He has not overcome the limits of analytic reason, even as he is insisting that human reality is a totality, not a collection – the first principle of existential psychoanalysis (*BN* 568).

Political existentialism (1947–1952)

Aside from the stark contrast between the pre- and the post-war Sartre, the other stages of his life bleed into one another. So the present period begins with the elaboration of the concept of "committed literature" developed in *What is Literature?* (1947) but previewed in Sartre's UNESCO address a few months earlier. This set of essays underscores the concept of writing as "action" with its attendant political and moral implications. But it does so while trying to navigate between the aesthetic extremes of bourgeois "art for art's sake" and Marxist "socialist realism." The situated writer who does not speak up for the economically exploited and the socially oppressed of "our time," Sartre warns, is a collaborator in such oppression and exploitation. We observed this overlap of the moral and the political in the previous chapter. Extended to all registers of society and various forms of social injustice, this becomes the common theme of Sartre's writings for the next two decades.

Various existential concepts are at work in this view of committed literature. Chief among them is the concept of "situation" that invites elaboration in terms of the concepts of objective possibility, praxis and the historical just enunciated. Of the many questions which the committed writer must address to his contemporaries, none is more pressing than that of the *relation* between morality and politics (see *WL* 154). This, in turn, raises the dilemma of the Communist Party that, as we have just noted, adopts a rhetoric of moral responsibility by its frequent appeal to social (in)justice, while sustaining a materialist dialectic which seems to render such ascriptions unwarranted. In other words, freedom and economic determinism are mutually incompatible. Such is Sartre's view of the matter.

Whatever one may think of psychological "compatibilism," Sartre consistently opposed it, even to the point of confessing to having adopted a kind of "amoral realism" during his years of fellow-traveling with the PCF (see *ORR* 79). Toward the end of *What is Literature?*

he asks whether contemporary writers should offer their services to the Communist Party in order to reach the masses, and responds with an unqualified *no*. As he explains: "The politics of Stalinist Communism is incompatible with the decent (*honnête*) exercise of the literary profession" (*Sit* II:280). He goes on to stress the ambiguity of a party that proclaims revolution while defending its own material interests and those of the Soviet Union. In effect, it has become "conservative" and even a "reactionary" entity. Sartre mentions the Party's vilification of Nizan as evidence of its tendency to slander rather than openly discuss the merits of a case. And his appeal to the vested interests of the Party itself anticipates the reason why he will disassociate himself from it after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. His reason is captured in the title of his essay: "The Communists are Afraid of Revolution." As he explains elsewhere, "It is not our fault if the PC is no longer a revolutionary Party" (*Sit* II:287).

But the problem of means–ends, of morality and politics, continues to insinuate itself in *What is Literature?* The writer must live the tension between fact and value, the given and the taken that defines the human situation as such. Applied to the political realm, this raises the seemingly irreconcilable opposition between revolutionary action and moral respect for the individual agent. Given the audience he is addressing, Sartre proposes a literary commitment that maneuvers between Communist propaganda and bourgeois neocapitalism, writing directly for the mass media: the film, which he had been doing even during the occupation, and the radio, as he would try to do with a series of radio presentations that the team of *Les Temps Modernes* broadcast on national radio entitled *La Tribune des Temps modernes* (*The Modern Times Rostrum*). The latter produced nine broadcasts, starting in October of 1947 in its attempt to promote the "third way" between Gaullism and Communism that was about to be sketched by the RDR in the following months.

Sartre addresses the means–ends problem clearly toward the conclusion of *WL*:

> Such is the present paradox of ethics; if I am absorbed in treating a few chosen persons as absolute ends . . . if I am bent on fulfilling all my duties towards them, I shall spend my life doing so; I shall be led *to pass over in silence* the injustices of the age, the class struggle, colonialism, anti-Semitism, etc., finally, to *take advantage of oppression in order to do good*.
>
> (*WL* 221, emphasis his)

But the other side of the paradox is that by throwing myself completely into the revolutionary enterprise "I risk having no more leisure for personal relations – worse still, of being led by the logic of the action into treating most men, and even my friends, as means."

At this point, Sartre introduces an aesthetic value that, while it is appropriate for his audience (the writer in 1947), harkens back to the conclusion of *Nausea* where the protagonist seeks "salvation" through literary art. Though Sartre has by now concluded that "evil cannot be redeemed" (*WL* 180), he does allow that "the contemplation of beauty might well arouse in us the purely formal intention of treating men as ends." Still, his growing sense of objective (im)possibility counters that "this intention would reveal itself to be utterly futile in practice since the fundamental structures of our society are still oppressive" (*WL* 221). Sartre counsels that "if we can start with the moral exigence which the aesthetic feeling envelops without meaning to do so, we are starting on the right foot." But our task is to "*historicize* the reader's good will." By this Sartre means that we must turn the purely formal intention to treat men in every case as an absolute end into a specific intention by the *subject* of our writing that directs his intention upon his neighbors, upon the oppressed of the world." But we shall have accomplished nothing, he warns, "if we do not show him – and in the very warp and weft of the work – that it is quite impossible to treat concrete men as ends in contemporary society" (*WL* 222).

This entails considering the "city of ends" that Sartre adopts from Kant, as a practical "ideal" toward which we should aim and approach "only at the end of a long historical evolution." Sartre acknowledges this is the *strain* peculiar to the project he is proposing. Repeating what we have said is the leitmotif of his political and ethical philosophy, he insists that "we must militate in our writings in favor of the freedom of the person *and* the socialist revolution. It has often been claimed that they are not reconcilable. It is our job to show tirelessly that they imply each other" (*WL* 223).

A few years later, as Sartre is moving into the stage of full cooperation with the PCF, he published a large volume, introducing the works of Jean Genet: *Saint Genet* (1952). To return to our discussion of the conclusion of that work in the previous chapter, our dilemma of choosing between Genet and Bukharin can now be replayed as the freedom–socialism alternative, which itself instantiates the end–means option.

Recall that Sartre challenged us with the thought that we might succeed in reconciling this dichotomy "be it only once and *in the realm of the imaginary*" if only we had the courage "to go to the limits of ourselves in both directions at once" (*SG* 644, emphasis added). Here as elsewhere, Sartre is urging us to increase the tension rather than reduce it or, perhaps better, to resolve it in the "as if" of a Kantian ideal. However, if one opts to "go to the limits of ourselves in both directions at once" (to emphasize the individual *and* the social), one may see this suggestion as Sartre's last salute toward what we might call a "Kierkegaardian dialectic," namely, one that forces an existential choice rather than resolving into a synthesizing "mediation." This would underline Raymond Aron's critique of Sartre's project of Marxist existentialism voiced in 1946: "A follower of Kierkegaard cannot at the same time be a follower of Marx."[21]

The misplaced imaginary: Sartre's fellow-traveling with the PCF (1952–1956)

Sartre was already having problems resolving the tension between end and means, politics and ethics. In 1948 he had abandoned writing his "Ethics" promised at the end of *BN* after producing several hundred pages of notes, published posthumously as *Notebooks for an Ethics.* He later explained that the text was too idealist in nature and no longer expressed his current thoughts (see *Cér* 234). If one looks for a more "realist" and even more "materialist" version of his ethical insights, one could do no better than to read his "profoundly autobiographical" play, *The Devil and the Good Lord*, premiered June 7, 1951. It is commonly accepted as mirroring Sartre's entire ideological evolution (Contat and Rybalka 1:249). For someone who balanced imagination and conceptualization, the literary and the philosophical most of his life, it is not surprising to note how creative literary works either anticipated or retrospectively exemplified the ideas articulated in his philosophical work. His play, *No Exit*, for example, communicates imaginatively much of the phenomenological ontology of being-for-others of *BN*. A major

[21] Raymond Aron, *Marxism and the Existentialists*, trans. Helen Weaver, Robert Addis and John Weightman (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 30. The citation comes from an essay written in 1946.

issue in *The Devil and the Good Lord* is the relation between ethics and politics – the Absolute and the (Peasant) Revolution. In its concluding scene Goetz, the new commander of the peasants and a convert from the other side, after having just coldly killed a subordinate who questioned his authority, exclaims:

> The kingdom of man is beginning. A fine start! ... Never fear, I shall not flinch. I shall make them hate me, because I know no other way of loving them ... I shall remain alone with this empty sky over my head, since I have no other way of being among men. There is this war to fight, and I shall fight it.
>
> (act 3, scene 11)

In an interview published the day this play opened, Sartre defends his sympathy with the Communists: "To the extent that I am inspired by a rather broad Marxism, I am an enemy for Stalinist Communists [the PCF]. . . . Until the new order, the Party will represent the proletariat for me, and I do not see how this situation could possibly change for some time ... It is impossible to take an anti-Communist position without being against the proletariat" (cited in Contat and Rybalka II:254).

These remarks were prescient. Sartre added several new members to the team of *LTM*. The result was a closer orientation with the Party. In particular it meant that Sartre cooperated with the PCF in defending Henri Martin, a sailor jailed for distributing tracts opposing the war in Indo-China. Sartre's lengthy piece, *The Henri Martin Affair* was a sign of his joining ranks with the PCF.[22] But his chief move in that direction was a set of essays published in *LTM* under the title *The Communists and Peace* starting in July of 1952. It was occasioned by the arrest of the acting head of the PCF on trumped-up charges in the aftermath of a massive demonstration against the arrival in Paris of American general Matthew Ridgway, who had succeeded General Eisenhower as Supreme Allied Commander in Europe. His visit was to seek support for western participation in the Korean War that had begun in June of 1950, and for the cold war generally. This text, which illustrates Sartre at his most hyperbolic, ushers in the next years that will fix him permanently, in the eyes of many, in the Communist camp. Such expressions as "An anticommunist is a dog" (*Sit* IV:248) or "there is crap in the

[22] Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'Affaire Henri Martin* (Paris: Gallimard, 1953).

bourgeois heart"[23] were scarcely fashioned to allay the fears of the expanding Iron Curtain and Soviet hegemony. Yet Sartre had made it clear that he was agreeing with the Communists on specific, limited subjects, "arguing on the basis of *my* principles and not *theirs* (*CP* 68). This served to distinguish him from the Stalinist-oriented PCF during this period of relative cordiality.

Some of those principles would appear in Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, especially remarks that reveal that the principles of a social ontology are starting to form. But the conceptual framework had changed. The means–end issue was being "historicized" and the "situation" becoming concrete. In the previous chapter we witnessed Sartre's forceful statement of the "ethical problem" of means and ends in a violent society lodged in a footnote to *Saint Genet*: "Ethics is *for us* inevitable and at the same time impossible" (*SG* 186 n.). It seems that the high-minded nonnegotiables of Sartre's ethical belief up to this point are being placed on the shelf of abstraction or projected on to the sky of an idealist "as if." In effect, he is echoing, however reluctantly, the revolutionary's maxim that the end justifies the means – up to a point.

This was the period during which Sartre broke with two of his most important friends and associates, Albert Camus and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. In Camus' case, though their respective political views had been moving in opposite directions for some time, what occasioned the break was Sartre's heavy-handed treatment of Camus' political treatise *The Rebel* in a review by Francis Jeanson in *LTM*. Sartre would have known that Jeanson's review would not be favorable when he asked him to write it. Aside from the quality of Camus' argument, much of the controversy focused on Sartre's alleged deliberate silence regarding the labor camps maintained by the Stalinist regime. Their existence had recently been discovered by the western press and the moral outrage rebounded on the Stalinist PCF. Sartre took Camus' remarks as a personal attack and responded in kind in *LTM*. It would have sufficed to have pointed out that the journal had acknowledged and taken a position on the camps from the moment their existence became known. "Yes, Camus," he agreed, "like you, I find these camps inadmissable; but inadmissible too is the use that the bourgeois press makes of them every day"

[23] *WA* 274.

(*Sit* IV:104). Indeed, this is a form of defense that Merleau-Ponty had used in an analogous context in his *Humanism and Terror* (1947). But Sartre was far less conciliatory and indeed, quite harsh and *ad hominem* in his lengthy response to Camus. Thus ended the loss of the man whom Sartre would later identify as "probably the last good friend I had" (*L/S* 64).

In a footnote to his response to Camus that distinguished Marxist practices from Marxist philosophy, Sartre (seemingly oblivious of Marx's thesis regarding "unity of theory and practice") made the following telling observation: "I don't have to defend Marx's [ideas], but allow me to say that the dilemma you have set before us (either its 'prophecies' are true or Marxism is merely a method) leaves unscathed the entire Marxist *philosophy* and all that, in my view (who am not a Marxist) constitutes its deep truth" (*Sit* IV:197 n.). So it seems important for Sartre to distinguish between the admirable Marxist philosophy and its sometimes "inadmissible" practices, even at the start of his shared path with the PCF.

In the case of Merleau-Ponty, who had been in charge of the political desk at *LTM*, the conflict was again political. This time it concerned the Korean War, on which Sartre sided with the Communist north and Merleau-Ponty with the anti-Communist south. Merleau-Ponty's resignation cost the journal one of its best minds and most balanced thinkers. Sartre wrote an editorial favoring the north without even consulting him. The journal continued to move increasingly toward the Left from then on. However, as Ian Birchall correctly observes, one must not identify the review with Sartre's personal politics during this period of cordiality with the Party. Any number of essays critical of Stalinist Communist practices both in France and abroad appeared in its pages. But the crisscross of Sartre's and Merleau's political paths was deeply grounded in their respective philosophical styles and personalities.[24] The contrast morphed into open conflict when Merleau-Ponty published *Adventures of the Dialectic* (1955) that contained a chapter entitled "Sartre and Ultra-Bolshevism." As the title suggests, the piece was scarcely conciliatory. It concentrated on *The Communists and Peace* and *BN*, as Beauvoir pointed out in "Merleau-Ponty and Pseudo-Sartreanism,"

[24] See Anna Boschetti. *Sartre et Les Temps modernes* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1985), 262.

her equally intemperate rejoinder in *LTM* the same year. She accused Merleau-Ponty of "bad faith" for having ignored the work on which Sartre was presently engaged, which, she insisted, addressed many of the issues from *CP* that Merleau-Ponty had criticized. In effect, Sartre was redressing an imbalance between the individual and the social, the ethical and the political, that would find its ontological foundation in his next major work, *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960).

Sartre confirmed his sympathy with the PCF with voyages that also served to embarrass him after his return. The first was to attend the congress of the World Peace Movement in Vienna on December 12–19, 1952, during which, as we noted, he prohibited the performance of his play *Dirty Hands*. Though Sartre and Beauvoir insisted that only twenty percent of those attending were Communists, Ronald Hayman reports that "nearly all the delegates from the West were communists" (*WA* 283). Except for Sartre, each of the fifty attendees from France was a member of the Party. In one of his declarations he spoke of the three events of his adult life that had meant the most to him, that had renewed his hope: the Popular Front, the liberation, and the Vienna Congress (*Life* 337). In May–June 1954 he made his first visit to the Soviet Union. He returned singing its praises. Incredibly, for example, he claimed that there was complete freedom of criticism in the USSR. Recalling these remarks twenty years later, Sartre admitted that the series of remarks published after his return was the work of his secretary, Jean Cau, and that he was not enthused by what he saw there: "They showed me what they want me to see, obviously, and I had a lot of reservations" (*Cér* 462).

Between revolutions (1956–1969)

With the discovery of the labor camps in the USSR and its violent quelling of the Hungarian workers' uprising in 1956, Sartre began to distance himself from the PCF once more. It should be noted that his relation with the Italian Communist Party had been and remained cordial throughout these years.[25] Sartre wrote a lengthy essay, "The Phantom

[25] Whereas the passing of the former head of the PCF was given perfunctory notice in *LTM*, Sartre wrote a laudatory obituary on the death of "my friend Togliatti" in the same journal. As head of the Italian Communist Party, Palmiro Togliatti was associated with "polycentrism" and with what came to be called "Eurocommunism" (*Sit* IX:139–151).

of Stalin," to explain his move. Spread over three issues of his journal (November 1956–January 1957), it called for the de-Stalinization of the PCF while arguing that the Party, nonetheless, remained the best hope for the proletariat. Besides the exorcism of the ghost of Stalin and the establishing of common cause with other parties of the Left, Sartre even included the Socialist Party (SFIO), which, in a not conciliatory interview in *L'Express*, at the same time, he described as the party of "those who torture in Algeria."[26]

There were three other revolutions that drew Sartre's considerable attention during these twelve years: the war in Vietnam, especially the American involvement, which lead him to participate in the Russell War Crimes Trial; the Algerian War of Independence; and the Cuban revolution. Each could be considered the fruit of colonialism or neocolonialism and, as such, eliciting the same disgust that we noted the young Sartre harbored toward colonialism, especially with the French presence in Algeria, long before he was ever "politicized." More recently, he had written that colonialism is a system of impersonal, structural rules and associated practices. One could apply to it what he remarked about another system, capitalism: "the meanness is in the system" (*CP* 183). We shall see that the defining feature of Sartrean existentialism, even if it is attenuated during his years of fellow-traveling with the PCF, is a certain *irreducibility* that he reserves for the responsible individual. Only in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* will he fashion the social ontology to support that position, but we can safely modify his claim just mentioned about these social structures and institutions: The meanness is (not entirely) in the system. Whether it be the "two hundred families" (*NE* 415) that, in popular opinion, moved their money to Swiss accounts when the Socialists came to power in 1936, thereby weakening the government, or the racist attitudes and practices that sustained the workings of neocolonialism in 1950s Algeria, the appeal to system or "structural necessity," in Sartre's view, will not excuse the populace. As he says or implies in his many essays and interviews on social issues, "We are all guilty." Whether it be our lack of concern for the structural injustices of a corrupt regime in Cuba, our sympathy with the actions of our national armies in Algeria or Vietnam, our unwillingness to

[26] Ian Birchall, *Sartre against Stalinism* (New York: Berghahn. 2004), 169.

protest against or our willingness to benefit from the exploitation of the Arab population in Algeria or the locals in Southeast Asia, Sartre voices the rhetorical judgment: "We are all guilty." Doubtless this presumes a degree of solidarity as well as an idea of collective responsibility that Sartre has yet to justify beyond appealing to the "spirit of synthesis." But his practice is calling for a theory that the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* will attempt to supply.

If the Spanish Civil War was "not his war," as Roland Dumas remarked years later, "The Algerian war was *his* war."[27] In January of 1955, *LTM* had started a campaign in support of the Algerian rebels. In 1957 its issues were confiscated on four occasions by the government in Algeria. The November issue was seized by the metropolitan government for the first time. Sartre's essay on a case of torture by French forces in Algeria appeared in the weekly *Express* (March 6, 1958). That issue too was confiscated. In the same month Sartre published an essay in *LTM* entitled "We are all Assassins." As the war progressed and the tide turned in favor of the rebels, Sartre's life was threatened and bombs were exploded by members of the Organization of the Secret Army (OAS) on two occasions at the entrance to his apartment on rue Bonaparte (July 19, 1961 and January 7, 1962). The war ended July 3, 1962 when France granted Algeria independence after a referendum.

Sartre and Beauvoir accepted the invitation of the Cuban journal, *Revolución*, to visit the island from February 22 to March 21, 1960, a year after Castro had become premier. They were effusive in their praise of the Cuban revolution and its charismatic leader. What seemed to impress Sartre particularly was the evidence for "direct democracy" that he thought he observed during his visit. We shall see that preference for workers' councils resonates with Sartre's congenitally anarchistic leanings when his sympathies turn toward the "Maoists" later in the decade. Still, he acknowledged that this was the "honeymoon of the Revolution," and he warned that things could change significantly in the future. He had described the petrification of spontaneous groups in the Bolshevik revolution and in his major study, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, had even argued that this was its normal devolution in a society of material scarcity of goods. So, despite the excessive rhetoric, reminiscent of his

[27] Quoted from an interview of Oct. 15, 1984; *Life* 440–444.

first visit to the Soviet Union, Sartre had his apprehensions here as well. These were justified in 1971 when his request for clemency for an imprisoned Cuban poet, Heberto Padillo, was rejected by his former hero, and Sartre found himself dismissed as one of those "bourgeois liberal gentlemen ... two-bit agents of colonialism ... who dared to criticize Cuba."[28] The entire Sartre–Castro episode had the appearance of a second-rate melodrama. Nonetheless, it was Sartre's unflinching commitment to socialism and freedom that moved him into Castro's orbit and just as thoroughly drew him out of it again.

The third revolution of this period was less parochial. It seemed to involve the Great Powers and their respective spheres of influence even more than the Cuban Crisis. The civil war between North Vietnam and South Vietnam was an invitation for Sartre to join the underdog again against the American Goliath who claimed to be threatened by the "domino effect" that would topple all the democratic countries of the region if South Vietnam succumbed to the Communist momentum. Sartre had long been opposed to French colonialism in Indochina. This time, he was invited by the world-famous philosopher and pacifist, Bertrand Russell, who had paid his dues by being jailed for opposing Britain's participation in the First World War. The International War Crimes Tribunal or "Russell Tribunal," as it was also known, held its first deliberative session from May 2 to 10, 1967 in Stockholm, and its second from November 20 to December 1, 1967 in Roskield, Denmark. It proposed to hear and weigh evidence against the United States and its allies for war crimes alleged to have been committed in Vietnam. As its executive president, Sartre announced in his opening address on May 2, 1967: "the Tribunal would judge the crimes committed in Vietnam by the definitions and standards of existing international law and particularly the judgments of the Nuremberg Tribunal which judged German war crimes in 1945."[29] Since their only authority was "moral," they hoped to appeal to public opinion by publicizing the "crimes against humanity" that were now being ascribed to the victors of an earlier war. Sartre published an essay "On Genocide" that was accompanied by a summary of the evidence and the judgment of the International War

[28] Speech cited by Birchall, *Sartre against Stalinism*, 205.

[29] Arlette Elkaïm-Sartre, *"On Genocide" and a summary of the evidence and the judgments of the International War Crimes Tribunal* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1968), 6.

Crimes Tribunal written by his adopted daughter, Arlette Elkaïm-Sartre. The unanimous judgment of this body was that the United States was guilty of genocide in Vietnam during the period specified. Again, the appeal is to human solidarity of rights and interests. Offering a variation on a Sartrean theme, the document concludes: "This crime [of genocide], carried out every day before the eyes of the world, renders all who do not denounce it accomplices of those who commit it, so that we are being degraded today for our future enslavement" ("On Genocide" 84–85).

Beyond Communism, beyond Marxism (1968–1980)

If photos of Soviet tanks crushing the Hungarian revolution destroyed whatever belief Sartre had maintained in the Stalinist orthodoxy of Soviet and French Communism, then the Soviet-ordered invasion of the Czech Republic by Warsaw Pact troops in 1968 to suppress its liberalizing "Prague Spring" ended his sympathy for Communism generally, with the possible exception of the Italian version, which he always considered *sui generis*. As he remarked to his "Maoist" discussants in the early 1970s, "The Communists . . . don't give a fig about justice, what they want primarily is power" (*ORR* 76).

The "events of May 1968" marked a turning point in French politics and culture, the effects of which continue to this day. If it would be excessive to label it the "Sartrean" revolution, as some have done,[30] there is little doubt that these events resonated with Sartre's model of "political existentialism": (1) its moral indignation, (2) spontaneity, (3) comradery, (4) heightened sense of disalienation, (5) distrust of party politics, (6) confidence in "direct action," and (7) visceral dislike of authority. These features have emerged in the survey of his career in politics just traced. Of course, if "politics" is limited to the exercise of voting and active relations with, if not membership in, political parties, then the extent of Sartre's career is considerably reduced. But as he insisted to his Maoist friends, in words worthy of Michel Foucault: "Everything is political; that is, everything questions society as a whole and ends up disputing it" (*ORR* 27).

[30] A pseudonymous professor at the University of Paris (Nanterre) had characterized the May events as a "Sartrean" revolution (see Epistémon [Didier Anzieu], *Ces Idées qui ont ébranlé la France* [Paris: Feyard, 1968], 78–87).

When we add to this list of features (8) "violence," we see why Sartre would find their youthful exuberance and impatience with mere verbiage so attractive, especially in his last decade. In a set of conversations (interviews) with two "Maoists," one of whom will become his last secretary,[31] from November 1972 to March 1974, Sartre took stock of his political biography in particularly explicit and challenging remarks. Among the many decisive statements uttered in this context was his admission that he had moved from an "irrealist idealism" at age 18 (which is why he abandoned his ethics of authenticity sketched in the *Notebooks for an Ethics*) to an amoralist realism at 45 (with the Communists) toward rediscovery of a moralist realism but now materialist, antihierarchical and libertarian (with his post-Communist colleagues) (*ORR* 79). What Sartre calls "materialist" is not a crass reductionist identity thesis of mind to brain, nor a Marxist determinism that he rejects as "economism." Rather, it denotes the elaboration of his basic concept of situation in terms of "objective possibility." There is determinism in nature, as Kant insisted, and in history too, as Hegel claimed, but "we can always make something out of what we've been made into" – which is the Sartrean existentialist mantra, extended via dialectical reasoning to encompass the material conditions of our existential life (*le vécu*). This irreducible wedge of *subjectivity* (which Sartre once described as "the limit of reflexive recoil" [*EN* 32]) is the ontological ground of our freedom, whether abstract or concrete, and our moral responsibility. This is why he can assert against orthodox Dialectical Materialism that morality is not merely a function of the superstructure but "exists at the very level of production." He agrees with the "Maoists" that "a worker is moral by virtue of the fact that he is an alienated man who reclaims freedom for himself and for all" (*ORR* 45). In fact, this was a basic Sartrean claim long before he encountered *les Maos*. Still, as the dilemma of Heinrich in *The Devil and the Good Lord* exhibits, some situations render choices morally bankrupt however they are made. It is this confluence of the political and the moral in our society, Sartre insists, that leaves each of us with dirty hands.

[31] Benny Lévi (a.k.a. Pierre Victor). The so-called "Maoists" were a loose grouping of "Gauchistes" who stood to the far Left of the Communists, and valued each of the eight features of Sartrean thought just mentioned, especially spontaneity, violence and deep ethical convictions. In his preface to the book *Les Maos en France*, Sartre made it clear his opening line: "I am not a Maoist" (*Sit* x:38). But then, their identity was as fluid as their convictions were anarchical.

Search for a Method and *The Critique* in the context of political existentialism

If the features of existentialist politics can be gathered from Sartre's ad hoc statements and essays, then the theoretical foundation for this approach was laid in *Critique of Dialectical Reason* and its introductory essay, "Search for a Method." These works have been subjected to careful commentaries. But a brief reference to aspects of the argument of each will elucidate how they support features of existentialist politics enumerated above. We shall devote a more detailed discussion of each text in terms of history and social ontology in the next two chapters.

Let us note at the outset that the *Search for a Method* was not written as an introduction to *CDR*. It was a translation with some additions of an essay, "The Situation of Existentialism in 1957," published in a Polish journal at the request of its editor. So when it is attached to *CDR*, one should not be surprised that the fit is not perfect. Addressing the question "Do we have today the means to constitute a structural, historical anthropology?" (*SM* xxxiv), Sartre frames the hypothesis that we have indeed achieved that capability and that it is the product of the union of existentialist psychology (and moral concerns) with Marxist dialectic (and social causality). The second of its three chapters is dedicated to "The Problem of Mediations." Who says (Hegelian) "dialectic" says "mediation," as Kierkegaard knew so well and was alleged to reject. But Sartre here and in the *Critique* but especially in *The Family Idiot* is at pains to analyze those factors that "mediate" the abstract or general (structural) features of the historical situation with the concrete "praxis" of the "free organic individual." It is this emphasis on mediating factors that enables Sartre to bring the Marxist "forces and relations of production" to bear on the lives of individuals. Chief among these mediators was the family. An object lesson in such mediation was Sartre's Flaubert study.[32] One can say that the mediations preserved the "structural causality" of Louis Althusser, *pace* Althusser himself, by means of the praxis of concrete, existential individuals. With a bit of help from the Marxian dialectic, it looks as if Marx and Kierkegaard had been conjoined after all.

[32] See below, Chapter 15.

The "progressive-regressive method," adopted from the Marxist sociologist Henri Lefebvre and introduced to bring this synthesis about, was the topic of the final chapter of *Search for a Method*. In brief, it begins with a phenomenological description of the object in question, say Flaubert's writing of *Madame Bovary* or the staging of a boxing match on a September evening of 1939. The regressive movement proceeds analytically from fact to the conditions of its possibility, working its way through layers of increasingly abstract conditions (which could be called "structures" at a certain level of abstraction). One could designate this as the "sociological"or the *Marxian* phase of the process.

A certain intelligibility is achieved. One has located the individual or the event in the context of class consciousness, for example, or the relations and forces of production operative at that time. As Sartre remarks apropos the simplistic use of economic determinist arguments: "Valéry is a petit bourgeois intellectual ... But not every petit bourgeois intellectual is Valéry. The heuristic inadequacy of contemporary Marxism," Sartre urges "is contained in those two sentences. Marxism lacks any hierarchy of mediations" (*SM* 56). This is what existentialism will supply.

In many ways, the progressive-regressive method is better exemplified by the Flaubert study than by the *Critique*. And one can understand, in light of the above, why Sartre could defend his continued labor on that project when the "Maoists" were urging him to abandon it in favor of more politically useful work: "I consider the opus to be a socialist work in the sense that, if I succeed, this will allow us to advance in the understanding of men from a socialist viewpoint" (*ORR* 73–74). Still, it was the *Critique* (1960), not *The Family Idiot* (1971–1972), that produced the theoretical underpinning for the qualities that link existential politics with the events of May '68.

In summary fashion, then, let us relate each of the aforementioned eight features of the "Maoist" events of May 1968 listed above to concepts that will be developed in the *Critique*:

(1) Moral indignation. We have mentioned the primacy of the praxis of the free organic individual. This is illustrated throughout the two volumes of the *Critique*. At the base of the "practico-inert" conditioning (material heir to being-in-itself, as we said) is the sedimentation of prior praxes – of the colonists, for example, whose attitude and practices continue the effects of the system they have inherited.
(2) Spontaneity. In what Sartre calls after Malraux an "apocalyptic moment," the alienated individuals spontaneously fuse into a group; group membership entails new qualities such as power, right and duty.

(3) Comaraderie. Where each member views every other not as identical but as "the same" in practical interest and concern; the power of members surpasses that of a mere collection of isolated individuals.

(4) Heightened sense of disalienation. Thereby overcoming the alienating status of "serial alterity," where each is mechanically related to the others as other to other, like the TV-viewing audience or the individuals jostling for scarce seats on a bus.

(5) Distrust of party politics. The Party, even if it originates small groups (cells), does so hierarchically and for its own interests; the Party wants power, not freedom.

(6) Confidence in "direct action." Since the unity of the group is practical not theoretical; its goals are generated from the group itself; the group as it is forming simply *is* its goal.

(7) A visceral dislike of authority. Which, as Sartre said elsewhere, is the "*other* in us." With the organized group arises a self-imposed authority structure that, Sartre believes, inevitably hardens into the institution – which is a phenomenon of the practico-inert such as the Party or the state.

(8) Violence. The basis of violence is interiorized scarcity; it will pervade society so long as material scarcity infects it. The "sworn group" (e.g., those who took the Tennis Court Oath in the French Revolution, which is Sartre's paradigm case of all of these features) introduced a relation of "fraternity-terror" that sustained a Rousseauian *sameness* via the threat of mortal consequence for betrayal.

Though Sartre had often described the violence that qualified societies of oppression and exploitation, as well as the "counter-violence" of the oppressed and the exploited, only in the *Critique* does he connect this to the scarcity of material goods. This warrants his implicit reference to a "socialism of abundance" where violence would presumably be rare, if not excluded entirely. But the dyad "fraternity/terror" emerges to full view at the apocalyptic moment of group formation. True, it has been present, if not mentioned, throughout Sartre's discussion of the political and the social, but now, faced with the fact of interiorized scarcity, it haunts Sartre's thought to the point that he will finally admit that he has still not been able to reconcile one with the other.[33]

In the interview he gave to Michel Contat as he turned 70, Sartre remarked how it was Marxism as a philosophy of power that he rejected, not several of its tenets such as the class struggle, surplus value and the rest, that he continued to find valid. But he added: "We must develop a way of thinking which takes Marxism into account *in order to go beyond*

[33] "But to tell you the truth, I still don't clearly see the real relationship between violence and fraternity" (*Hope* 93).

it, to reject it and take it up again, to absorb it. This is the condition for arriving at a *true socialism*" (*L/S* 61, emphasis added).

In a way that echoes the title as well as the thesis of "Socialism or Barbarism" – a leftist group with which he had ambivalent relations over the years – Sartre summarized his vision of the future: "Either man is finished . . . or else he will adapt by bringing about some form of libertarian socialism." He explains what he sees as the coming revolution: "Revolution is not a single moment in which one power overthrows another; it is a long movement in which power is dismantled. Nothing can guarantee success for us, nor can anything rationally convince us that failure is inevitable. But the alternatives really are socialism or barbarism" (*L/S* 83–84).

"All Power to the Imagination"

A graffito on the walls during the events of May 1968 read: "L'Imagination au pouvoir." The cry to leap from the political rut into which parties of all stripes were stuck voiced the spirit of the rebels in the streets. It also echoed the persistent theme of Sartrean thought since he penned his thesis on the imagination for his DES in 1926–1927. As we remarked at the outset, it has been the thesis and the theme of the present work. The path toward existential politics charted in the present chapter should support, if not confirm, that Sartre was at heart a philosopher of the imaginary.[34] Given the major role played by the concept of the imagination throughout Sartre's thought – not to mention the ease with which he moved into imaginative literature and his penchant for striking "phenomenological" descriptions, it should come as no surprise that his guiding values of "socialism and freedom" should assume synthesis "if only in the imagination" (*SG*). Such is his "vision" of the "new man," the "socialist man," whom we cannot yet experience but who will emerge with the advent of a "true" socialism (*ORR* 336–337). In a remark that anticipates his hope for a society of fraternal equality and cognitive transparency repeated in his last discussions

[34] I have developed this thesis elsewhere with additional evidence. See, for example, "L'Imagination au Pouvoir. The Evolution of Sartre's Political and Social Thought," *Political Theory* 7, no. 2 (May 1979): 157–190, and "Sartre as Philosopher of the Imagination," *Philosophy Today* 50, supplement (2006): 106–112 (double columns).

with Benny Lévy published shortly before his death (1980), Sartre describes the ideal, the guiding star of his political life in terms of the imaginary that has been his weapon as well as his trap throughout his public life:

> Socialism indeed makes no sense except as a dream (*comme l'état rêvé*), and a poorly conceived one at that, where man will be free; and it is that condition of freedom which people who desire socialism, whether they say so or not, [are in fact seeking]. (*ORR* 347)

12

A theory of history: *Search for a Method*

In a footnote to *What is Literature?* Sartre muses: "Some day I am going to try to describe that strange reality History, which is neither objective, nor ever quite subjective, in which the dialectic is contested, penetrated, and corroded by a kind of antidialectic, but which is still a dialectic. But that is the philosopher's affair" (*WL* 333–334). In fact, we have seen that from his youth, Sartre wished to be a philosopher and a literary person, both Spinoza *and* Stendhal. But if the two sides of his self-definition often existed in creative tension, the philosophical gene emerged as dominant in his later years.[1] Sartre's philosophical interest in the practice of history, as we observed, seems to have been sparked by the success of Raymond Aron's defense and publication of two volumes on the philosophy of history for his state doctorate.[2] Aron's *Doctorat d'état* qualified him for a teaching post at the university level – something that Sartre never achieved, though he thought it within his reach if Jean Paulhan had only delayed publishing the manuscript of *The Imaginary* with Gallimard, a move that seemed to disqualifiy it as a thesis.[3]

[1] Recall Sartre's "farewell" to imaginative literature with the writing of *Words*.

[2] Raymond Aron, *Introduction à la philosophie de l'histoire. Essai sur les limites de l'objectivité historique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938) and *Essai sur une théorie de l'histoire dans l'Allemagne contemporaine. La Philosophie critique de l'histoire* (Paris: Vrin, 1938).

[3] Sartre had informed Beauvoir of this shortly before: "Paulhan writes that Wahl and Brunschvicg decided to take *L'Imaginaire* as a doctoral *thesis*. They'll publish the thesis, deleting the first part (which already appeared in *La revue du Méta*). I'm agreeing, provided there is no secondary thesis to write [which was the usual requirement for the Doctorat d'État]. Does that seem right?" The very next day he laments: "Paulhan is an odd bird. According to your letter of the 8th, *L'Imaginaire* is already out. Splendid, but his letter was mailed *in Paris* on the 7th and consequently he had to know that the book was on sale at the very moment he was

Whether or not one sees a dialectic at work in *Being and Nothingness*,[4] we know that Sartre had dialectical thought on his mind when he criticized Dialectical Materialism but favored what came to be called "Historical Materialism," in the closing passages of his first mature philosophical publication, *Transcendence of the Ego* (1936–1937).[5] We witnessed dialectic come to the fore in his book *Anti-Semite and Jew*, where he distinguished analytic from synthetic reason and explicitly ascribed a decisive role to changing the "bases and structures" of choice to counter anti-Semitism. Dialectic figured centrally in his seminal essay "Materialism and Revolution" in which he attacked neo-Marxist "economism" as if the only "bases and structures" to be addressed were economic. He had not yet worked out the precise relation between transcendence and facticity bequeathed him by the ontology of *BN*, because he still considered "materialist dialectic" a contradiction in terms. Recall his insistence that "It is the elucidation of the new ideas of 'situation' and of 'being-in-the-world,' that revolutionary behavior specifically calls for. And if [the revolutionary] escapes the jungle of rights and duties into which the idealist tries to mislead him, it should not be only to fall into the gorges rigorously marked out

preparing a delay in publication. I don't give a damn, but I must admit he's an odd sort. And why didn't he tell me about it a month and a half ago when Wahl was sounding you out on the subject? If Wahl didn't do it himself, that must mean that Paulhan had taken it in hand himself. I suppose this Machiavelli, for whatever reason, didn't want anything to do with that scheme. I tell you this to sketch in the character because, so far as I'm concerned, it leaves me cold particularly since I could still offer something on Nothingness or anything else if the spirit moved me" (*Quiet Moments in a War*, letters of March 9 and 10, 1940). Beauvoir responds: "I had a talk with Colette Audry. Apparently Wahl's maintaining the *L'Imaginaire* can appear as a thesis even after its publication, and that there has been a precedent with some other fellow who'd been called up. Perhaps that's the explanation of the little mystery" (*Letters to Sartre*, March 14, 1940). Sartre seems not to have pursued this further. He remained a Lycée professor till he abandoned teaching altogether at the end of June 1944, a month after the premiere of *No Exit* (May 27), which Gabriel Marcel judged "an extraordinary success" (*Life* 214).

[4] Robert Cumming and Klaus Hartmann find a dialectic at work in *BN* and earlier, whereas Sartre denies it in the same volume (Schilpp 61–71, 631–632, and 9–10, respectively). For a more detailed argument for Sartre's "dialectics," see Klaus Hartmann, *Sartre's Ontology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1966), 132–138, as well as his characterization of the relation in *BN* as a "dialectic of pairs" in *Sartre's Sozialphilosophie* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1966), 31; and Gerhard Seel, *Sartre's Dialektic* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1971). See *SFHR* 1:276, n. 2.

[5] I'm not counting his juvenilia, especially *The Legend of Truth* discussed above in Chapter 2.

by the materialist" ("Materialism and Revolution" 253). In effect, Sartre's version of the "third way" between eastern communism and western capitalism is the political expression of a fundamental ontological and epistemic divide. As we have come to expect, this distinction sustains a moral dimension that Sartre's dialectical method is keen to enable and defend. Though his second ethic is called "dialectical" because of its explicit use of the social ontology of the *Critique*, his initial "ethics of authenticity," written in 1947–1948 and posthumously published as *Notebooks for an Ethics*, makes frequent appeal to dialectical relations as well.[6]

Before turning to his two major texts that develop the organics of his historical dialectic, let me mention two other publications that prepare the way for *Search for a Method* and the *Critique*: "Self-consciousness and Self-knowledge," a lecture Sartre presented to the French Philosophical Society on June 2, 1947; and, as a counter-position, Merleau-Ponty's chapter, "Sartre and Ultra-Bolshevism," in his *Adventures of the Dialectic* of June 1955.

[6] Especially the "master/slave" thesis of the Hegelian-Marxism dialectics that formed the core of Kojève's influential reading of the *Phenomenology* (among the numerous references to this theme, see *NE* 73–74, 384–388). Sartre's working definition of "dialectic" in the *Notebooks* reads thus:

> The synthetic unity of a totality spread out over time. In an atemporal totality, in effect, since the whole governs the secondary structures, no secondary structure is intelligible without its complementary structure. The sole fact, therefore, of positing (determining) one of these structures calls for the other and the total intelligibility turns out to be the whole. Spread out over time, this conception means that every form that appears necessitates, if it is to be intelligible or if it is to be, the complementary form and that these two, once they appear, unite in the totality that they *were*.
>
> (*NE* 456–457)

But in the case of a strike, for example, which he sees as a subjective/objective phenomenon, "I can never close the circle." Because of the plurality of agents and intentions among the strikers as well as their "objectification" (unification) in the eyes of the bosses, we have two dialectics (among the strikers as individuals and between them and their objectification in "The Strike"). Anticipating a prime category in the *Critique*, Sartre describes the former as nominalist, "*for there can be a nominalist dialectic*" (*NE* 457, emphasis added) and the latter as realist. But if I try to complete the circle in a synthesis of these two "dialectics," he warns, "in both cases the dialectic is *broken off.* There is a dialectic up to a certain point, a break, an irrational leap into another dimension of being, a new dialectic, and a new leap" (*NE* 458). Sartre says the History is dialectical, the surpassing of the dialectic, and the interference between the dialectic and its surpassing. Reserving a place for individual agency and moral responsibility in the whole, we saw that Sartre speaks of "a dialectic with holes in it *une dialectique à trous*" (*NE* 449). We may call this a properly "existential dialectic."

Addressing professional philosophers

While still in the glow of the existentialist comet, Sartre accepted Jean Wahl's invitation to address the French Philosophical Society at the Sorbonne, the only time he did so. His topic was "Self-consciousness and Self-knowledge." The audience included the well-known philosophers Julien Benda and Jean Hyppolite, whose translation of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1939) and two-volume commentary on *The Genesis and Structure of the Phenomenology of Spirit* (Vrin, 1946) Sartre cites frequently in *Notebooks for an Ethics.* The title of his talk appears in a quote from Hyppolite's *Genesis* in Sartre's *Notebooks* (*NE* 63). Alexander Kojève's *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* receives even more citations in Sartre's text. Clearly the dialectic of the French Hegel was on Sartre's mind in 1946–1947.

In the course of his address, Sartre makes several claims about his reading of Husserl that reveal his shift toward a dialectical account, though not a complete abandonment of phenomenology by any means. Let me cite three.

One: the move toward dialectical thinking starts with Sartre's "correction" of Descartes (and Husserl) by giving ontological priority to *pre*reflective consciousness over the traditional *Cogito* which Sartre had claimed in *BN* was commonly limited to a reflective consciousness. Failure to recognize the priority of this prereflective awareness over its reflective derivative, in Sartre's view, left both Descartes and Husserl enclosed in idealism, solipsism and a pointillist concept of temporality. In other words, their ontologies were static rather than dynamic and their epistemologies essentialist rather than nominalist. Ironically, it is for just such temporal pointillism that Merleau-Ponty was to criticize Sartre in *Adventures of the Dialetic.* Obviously, Merleau-Ponty did not attend this session or read its published transcript.

Two: focusing on the prereflective opens the door to a practical, pretheoretical being-in-the world that invites a hermeneutical phenomenology *à la* Heidegger. While Sartre does not speak of "hermeneutics," he does point out "a strictly philosophical circle to elucidate the right of reflection to thematize what one finds characteristic of the being of the nonthetic [*prereflective*] *cogito*" (CSKS 125). It also presumes the act of "comprehension" (the *Verstehen* of the German social theorists like Dilthey and Weber, favored by Aron), elaborated in *NE* (276–277) and

later described in the *Critique* as "simply the translucidity of praxis to itself" (*CDR* 1:74). Because prereflective consciousness is future-oriented, it fits well with Sartre's notion of the dialectic. In *Search for a Method* he will speak of the "dialectical determination of *real* temporality (that is, of the true relation of men to their past and their future)" . . . explaining that "dialectic as a movement of reality collapses if time is not dialectic; that is, if we refuse to recognize a certain action of the future as such" (*SM* 92 n.).

Three, and finally: toward the end of his lecture Sartre proposes a "synthesis of the contemplative and nondialectical consciousness of Husserl, who alone leads us to the contemplation of essences, with the activity of the dialectical project – but without consciousness, and hence without foundation – that we find in Heidegger, where we see, on the contrary, that the first element is transcendence" (132b).[7] But it seems that Sartre is becoming more Hegelian in the discussion when he reaffirms in response to an intervention by Julien Benda: "When I said that the *cogito* as an instantaneous truth does not achieve truth properly so called, and that, in agreement with Hegel, truth properly so called has become, it is clearly understood that I agree with you: truth is becoming" (135b). But he turns pragmatic at this point and warns that if one should need a totality of becoming in order to judge, "we would fail precisely for lack of criteria." Citing the question of whether Hitler was right or wrong, he concludes:

> We have an absolute need for criteria both for action and for life in general. We need a starting point: this is true, that is false; we need certitudes. It is impossible that a man should operate on the basis of a simple moral probability when he asks other men to give their lives, as he might have done during the war or the occupation.
>
> I believe we have need of both: a becoming truth and, nevertheless, a certitude such that one can judge it. And I believe that *if one reintegrates temporality into the categories*, that is, if one notices the grasp of consciousness by reflection is not the grasp of a snapshot, but of a reality which has a past and a future, then a temporal truth is possible, often probable, but it sometimes carries an apodicticity which does not depend on the totality of history or the sciences.
>
> (CSKS 135b–136a, emphasis added)

This is an example of what I have called Sartre's "two epistemologies, the one a phenomenological epistemology of vision, modeled on

[7] See Jean-Paul Sartre, *TE* 41 and 66.

Husserl's apodictic grasp of an essence or intelligible contour, the other one of praxis, much more in line with a pragmatist theory where the "apodictic" is really the "nonnegotiable" in Quine's famous thesis.[8]

Merleau-Ponty, Sartre and ultra-Bolshevism

During the first years of his fellow-traveling with the PCF Sartre published a set of essays in *Les Temps Modernes* (July 1952–April 1954) that appeared as "The Communists and Peace" in *Situations* volume VI (1964). Written in anger against the French government, especially its police ("The Forces of Order"), Sartre focused on two events: the May 28, 1952 violent demonstration against the visit of General Ridgway to Paris as the new head of NATO, and the strike of June 2 against the arrest of several prominent Party members after the previous demonstration turned violent. The conservative press interpreted the relatively sparse participation in the strike as evidence that the workers had abandoned the PCF. The entire scene moved Sartre to side with the Party but as usual, on his principles, not theirs. His justification for supporting the practices of the PCF is that he had come to believe no other political entity could effectively serve the French proletariat at that time.[9]

It is this text in particular that Merleau-Ponty seems to have had in mind when he launched his uncharacteristically acerbic attack on Sartre's "Ultra-Bolshevism." Merleau-Ponty had resigned from the editorial committee of *LTM* in May of 1953, though his subsequent

[8] See my "Praxis and Vision: Elements of a Sartrean Epistemology," *Philosophical Forum* 8 (fall 1976): 21–43, and Willard V. O. Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," *Philosophical Review* 60: 20–43, widely anthologized.

[9] "The 'proletariat shaped into a distinct political party' – what is it in France today if not the totality of the workers organized by the CP? If the working class wants to detach itself from the Party, it has only one means at its disposal: to crumble into dust" (*CP* 88). I should add that Sartre's *A Reply to Claude Lefort* was directed against the founder of the "third way" group "Socialism or Barbarism" and a friend of Merleau's. He had published an essay in *LTM* no. 89 (April 1953) critical of *The Communists and Peace*. Sartre's reply, when it was not personal, touched on matters that Merleau will criticize in *Adventures* as well. So I shall not pursue this exchange in favor of that between Merleau and Sartre, except to note that Lefort, in his reply in *LTM* fifteen months later, sought to show that the PCF is counterrevolutionary. This is the very claim that a chastened Sartre will repeat during the "Events of May, 1968" in an essay entitled "The Communists are Afraid of Revolution."

farewell essay, ostensibly a comment on Malraux's *Le Musée imaginaire* but taken to be his response to *What is Literature?* was considerably more moderate in tone. Let us again select several examples from his "Ultra-Bolshevism" chapter that raise issues which Sartre will address in the *Critique*.

One: Merleau-Ponty argues that Sartre cannot achieve a genuine (Marxian?) dialectic because he lacks a concept of what Lukács after Weber called "*objective possibility*" to provide the negative dimension (counterfinality?) as well as the *mediation* to negate that negation. Consequently, he leaves us with pure fact and arbitrary decision – Voluntarism (where pure action is simply force). "He never evokes the basic Marxist hope of resolution in *tru*e action, that is to say, action fitted to internal relations of the historical situation, which await nothing but action to 'take,' to constitute a form in movement. In other words, Sartre never speaks of revolution, for the truth to be made is in Marxist language precisely the revolution" (*Adventures of the Dialectic* 122).

For a brief rejoinder, Sartre might have cited a text that we recognize from *Communists and Peace*: "It is history which shows some the exits and makes others cool their heels before closed doors" (*CP* 80). This will be elaborated both in *Search for a Method* and in the *Critique*, but it was available to Merleau-Ponty if he had read that text more carefully. One gets the impression that he read this and other essays in the light of *Being and Nothingness*, where objective possibility is clearly absent. We shall see an entire section of "Search" devoted to "The Problem of Mediations."

Two: what distinguishes Sartre from Marxism most obviously is his philosophy of the *Cogito* versus Marx's philosophy of *praxis*, but what distinguishes them fundamentally, Merleau-Ponty insists, is their respective philosophies of *time*: "Sartre's entire theory of the Party and of class is derived from his philosophy of fact, of consciousness, and beyond fact and consciousness, from his philosophy of time" (*Adventures of the Dialectic* 105). It is the pointillism of time, its unextended "moments" that make Sartrean conversion a constant possibility and while rendering fundamental "choice" an absolute beginning (*Adventures of the Dialectic* 129–132).

Now Sartre had been mentioning "praxis" for years, though it came to the fore with the concept of a literature of praxis in *What is Literature?* (*WL* 194ff.) And it is mentioned occasionally in the *Notebooks*, though

Merleau-Ponty may not have had access to these unpublished notebooks. His reading of *WL* and other texts as reflections of the ontology of *BN* renders him blind to any evidence of development in Sartre's social ontology. This was the core of Beauvoir's equally intemperate response.

Again, Sartre's address to the French Philosophical Society puts the lie to this account – at least in the Hegelian notion of praxis and "becoming truth." His distinction between the reflective and the *pre*reflective *Cogito* (already made in *BN*) allows him to speak of a prereflective *duration* that is not instantaneous consciousness, while relegating "a static and dynamic temporality to the reflective description of the *cogito*" (CSKS 114).

Still Merleau-Ponty has his finger on a basic ambiguity in Sartre's general epistemology, especially as he tries to fortify Hegelian dialectic with Husserlian apodicticity. We shall encounter again this instance of what Foucault would call an epistemology that is "one cog out of alignment."[10] Here the challenge is to synthesize or at least to coordinate the elements of *two* epistemologies, one of Praxis and the other of Vision, the former dialectical and the latter phenomenological. We shall encounter this juxtaposition of the incongruous in "Search for a Method," but it occurs throughout Sartre's post-war thought.[11]

Thirdly, and finally: Merleau-Ponty claims, correctly, that Sartre's lack of the concept of an *interworld* renders him incapable of constructing a social ontology properly speaking:

> In Sartre, there is a plurality of subjects but no intersubjectivity. Looked at closely, the absolute right that the I accords to the other is rather a duty. They are not joined in action, in the relative and the probable, but only on principles and on the condition that the other stick rigorously to them . . . The world and history are no longer a system with several points of entry but a sheaf of irreconcilable perspectives which never coexist and which are held together only by the hopeless heroism of the I.
>
> (*Adventures of the Dialectic* 205)

I conclude with this lengthy remark because it is both a fair, critical assessment of the inadequate social ontology of *BN*, as we have observed on several occasions, and an invitation to produce precisely the dialectical ontology that Sartre is about to undertake with the *Critique*.

[10] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Random House, 1970), 30.
[11] I have developed this thesis in "Praxis and Vision," 21–43.

Sartre never responded to this attack, except by writing the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. But in her equally intemperate reply, Beauvoir accuses Merleau-Ponty of writing in bad faith because he was aware that Sartre was in the process of revising the social ontology of *BN*, which he admitted was its weakest part.[12]

Search for a Method ("Question of Method")

In November of 1956, Sartre and Beauvoir accepted an invitation to the Polish Embassy where they met Jan Kott and Jerzy Lisowski, the editors of a Polish journal, *Twórczoéć*. As part of an issue on current French culture, the editors asked Sartre to write an essay on the state of existentialism in 1957. The result was "Marxism i Egzystencjalizm" (April 1957), published as "Questions de méthod" in *LTM* (September–October 1957), altered considerably so as to adapt it to the "needs of French readers" (*SM* xxxiv). Graced with an augmented preface and a diminished title, "Question [in the singular] de méthode" appeared as a quasi-introduction to book I of the *Critique* in 1960. The "one question" which Sartre is posing here and in the *Critique* is "Do we have today the means to constitute a structural, historical anthropology?" (*SM* xxxiv). Motivating Sartre's concern are the twin themes of (a kind of) *Humanism* and (a kind of) *Ethics*. We have witnessed their directive role in much of his previous work and shall recognize their guiding presence in what follows.

In the 1950s the philosophical challenge was to offer a theory of human life (anthropology) that respected the claims of an aggressive "structuralism" that was spatial in its imagery and synchronic in its argument, such as he witnessed in the work of Lévi-Strauss, Althusser, Barthes and others with the reality of History (with a Hegelian *H*) in a diachronic, totalizing sense.[13] In what is his second major work, Sartre is

[12] Simone de Beauvoir, "Merleau-Ponty and Pseudo-Sartrianism," *International. Studies in Philosophy* 21 (1989): 3–48. Her original essay appeared in *LTM* (June–July 1955) to coincide with the publication of *Adventures* in June.

[13] One of the definitions of "anthropologie" is "Ensemble des sciences qui étudient l'homme" (Collins-Robert French dictionary). This contest between structuralism and history, in the context of the "man" of the "human sciences," is discussed throughout *SFHR* II (see index, sv "Anthropology"). Michel Foucault famously exhibited his animus against the "human sciences" when he called for "a method of analysis purged of anthropologism" (52). In response to the accusation that he was murdering traditional humanist history with his

addressing the defining issue of resolving the presumed conflict between structure and history. As Wilhelm Dilthey dreamed of writing a "Fourth" *Critique*, this one on history to complement Kant's other three, so Sartre is undertaking a similar task, but refined by the recent successes of structuralist thought, an alleged enemy of narrative history, the human subject, and dialectic in what the French call the "human sciences" (*Les Sciences Humaines*).

Echoing his advice to the Philosophical Society ten years earlier, Sartre concludes his preface to *Search for a Method* with the following reminder and proposal:

> From Marxism, which gave it a new birth, the ideology of existence [Existentialism] inherits two requirements which Marxism itself derives from Hegelianism: If such a thing as a Truth can exist in anthropology, it must be a truth that has *become*, and it must make itself a *totalization*. It goes without saying that this double requirement defines that movement of being and knowing (or of comprehension) which since Hegel is called "dialectic." Also, in *Search for a Method* I have taken it for granted that such a totalization is perpetually in process as History and as historical Truth. Starting from this fundamental postulate, I have attempted to bring to light the internal conflicts of philosophical anthropology, and in certain cases I have been able to outline – upon the methodological ground which I have chosen – the provisional solutions to these difficulties.
>
> (*SM* xxiv–xxxv)

In the rest of this preface, which has been expanded for the first edition of the *Critique*, he distills the foregoing into two overarching questions: "Is there a Truth of Man?" and "Is there a Dialectical reason" to complement well-established positivist, "analytic" reason? (*CDR* 10–11).

"Marxism and Existentialism"

Sartre takes the title of the first chapter from his essay for the Polish journal. The comparison had been percolating in his mind at least since

"archaeologies," Foucault proclaimed that what he was attacking was "the last bastion of philosophical anthropology (*la pensée anthropologique*)" (10). "Anthropologism," he warned in what may be the moral of *The Order of Things*, "is the great internal threat to knowledge of our day" (*Order of Things* 348). The challenge Foucault posed to the phenomenologists and hermeneuticists is whether they can "formalize without anthropologizing" (see *Order of Things* 324). Pointing to the theoretical ground of the "humanism" propounded by Hegel, Marx and Sartre, Foucault announced: "It was Nietzsche . . . who burned for us, even before we were born, the intermingled promises of the dialectic and anthropology" (*Order of Things* 263). See below, note 24.

the founding of *Les Temps Modernes*, the formulating of a "definition" of existentialism in *EH*, and the failure of his experiment with the "third way" politics of the RDR.[14]

It is one thing to make a gesture of reconciliation with the French Communist Party, but it is quite another to sell them the farm, which Sartre seemed to be doing in *Search for a Method*. Among the startling claims of this chapter is his famous elevation of "living" Marxism to the rank of "the philosophy of our time" (*SM* 30), to which existentialism is related as a (necessary) "ideology" in the sense of being a function of the cultural "superstructure" built on the economic base (forces and relations of production). To be sure, glossing one of Marx's rare utopian indulgences, Sartre does admit that Marxism itself will eventually be overcome "once man has been freed from the yoke of *scarcity* . . . and there will exist *for everyone* a margin of *real* freedom beyond the production of life." Because Marxism will have lived out its span, "a philosophy of freedom will take its place." But Sartre warns, "we have no means, no intellectual instrument, no concrete experience which allows us to conceive of this freedom or of this philosophy" (*SM* 34). Years later, in his existential psychoanalysis (biography) of Gustave Flaubert,

[14] Rassemblement Démocratique Révolutionnaire (RDR). On Sartre's brief involvement with "third way" politics between communism (the PCF) and western capitalism see his remarks with one of the founders of the RDR, David Rousset and an initial member, Gérard Rosenthal, in *Entretiens sur la politique (Discussions on Politics)* held on June 18 and November 24, 1948 (Paris: Gallimard, 1949). Several of his examples in that conversation such as the claim that "the sole way to free men is to act on their situation" (39) reflect his remarks in *Anti-Semite and Jew* and "Materialism and Revolution." Others anticipate concepts basic to the social ontology of *Search* and the *Critique*: "Ours is a mediating position (*une position médiatrice* 84). The building of a socialist Europe is a peace-maker (*facteur*) (86), discussions among the members should be conducted "in the presence of the *concrete universal*" (122) [see the *singular universal of the Critque*] (122) or regarding the chief barrier to the realization of concrete freedom, Sartre proclaims: "It's the existence of these quasi institutional political formations that are the [political] *parties*" (104, emphasis added). Sartre considered the RDR to be a non-Communist, non-Party of the Left – a gathering, not a party. But the second conversation indicates that he had not convinced the French that this was the case. He left the RDR on October 15, 1949 as he began to recognize the power of the PCF over and on behalf of the working class. He also learned that Rousset was seeking financial support for the RDR from American labor unions and other American sources (see *Life* 307). Perhaps reviving memories of his youthful arguments with Sartre, Raymond Aron is reported to have dismissed the project of the RDR as "*revolutionary romanticism*" (*Life* 304). Though a bit harsh, this judgment does touch once more on the role of the imaginary in Sartre's political thought.

Sartre would introduce the term "a socialism of abundance" (*FI* V:171), noting that there is an "original contingency" at the core of its internal necessity, which reserves a place for existential creative freedom in whatever "dialectical necessity" one may ascribe to History (shades of his "dialectic with holes"). In effect, the philosopher of the imaginary is asking us to act "as if" in the hope that the future is worth the sacrifice.

In 1948 the Hungarian Marxist philosopher Georg Lukács published a book-length polemic against Sartre, *Existentialism or Marxism*. In this book he argued that Sartre's politics were little more than petit bourgeois revolt and that "he is absolutely incapable of understanding [Marxism]" (150). Illustrating the kind of assertion and counter-assertion that such political polemics can sink to, Sartre retorts that it is Lukács who does not understand Marx (*SM* 21). But this confrontation did goad Sartre into summarizing what he takes to be the provocative relation between Marxism and existentialism for the concrete thinker:

> Here let us simply observe that Lukács fails absolutely to account for the principal fact: we were convinced *at one and the same time* that historical materialism furnished the only valid interpretation of history and that existentialism remained the only concrete approach to reality. I do not pretend to deny the contradiction in this attitude. I simply assert that Lukács does not even suspect it.
>
> (*SM* 21)

"The Problem of Mediations and Auxiliary Disciplines"

It was structuralist Marxist Louis Althusser who labeled Sartre "the philosopher of mediation *par excellence*."[15] This was no compliment from a structuralist author; on the contrary, it was an implicit attack on "dialectical" reasoning and its theory of history that Sartre was now embracing. We saw Sartre's analogous contrast of his and Foucault's respective approaches to history, namely the cinema versus the slide-show. Taking the latter's *The Order of Things* as a model structuralist achievement, Sartre is claiming that structure is to history as the static is to the dynamic.

[15] Louis Althusser, Etienne Ballibar and Roger Establet, *Lire le capitale*, 2 vols. (Paris: François Maspero, 1965), II:98.

If a driving force of Sartre's philosophical life has been to gain access to concrete reality, kept at a distance by the neo-Kantianism of his Sorbonne professors, and a reason why he and Beauvoir favored Jean Wahl's *Toward the Concrete*, we have witnessed Sartre's attempt to slake this thirst by concluding *BN* with a discussion of existential psychoanalysis. This is his method to gain insight into the defining core of an individual's life by uncovering his/her life-defining Choice. As history assumed increasing importance in the late 1940s and 1950s, Sartre found Hegelian and Marxian dialectic a useful key to incorporating "universal" intelligibility into the concrete life of a living individual. This was the "singular" or "concrete" universal mentioned occasionally in earlier works but brought to center stage in *Search for a Method* and the *Critique*. But the pivot of dialectical reasoning was the concept of *mediation*: specifically the concretizing power of the human sciences to render important generalizations comprehensible, and of the actions of individuals to realize them in the uniqueness of their lives.

As Sartre emphasized in the preface to *The Family Idiot*, which is in many ways the culmination of his life's work, "*The Family Idiot* is the sequel to *Search for a Method*. Its subject: what, at this point in time, can we know about a man?" What Sartre is now seeking is the current state of the human and natural sciences that enables us to "comprehend the comprehenson" (*CDR* 805, 696) of any subject in question, as occurs in the boxing match that figures so prominently in volume II of the *Critique*. Taking aim at the Marxist economic determinists as he had done in *MR*, Sartre makes the now famous remark: "Valéry is a petit bourgeois intellectual, no doubt about it. But not every petit bourgeois intellectual is Valéry. The heuristic inadequacy of contemporary Marxism is contained in these two sentences" (*SM* 56). As he explains: "Marxism lacks any hierarchy of mediations which would permit it to grasp the process which produces the person and his product inside a class and within a given society at a given historical moment" (*SM* 56). The Marxist, he believes, can reach the individual only by appealing to *chance*. Sartre seems to imply that his existentialist version of Marxism can achieve a kind of "dialectical rationalism" (my term) with the help of existential psychoanalysis; that everything becomes intelligible, though not causally determined as analytic reason would have it, since "dialectic is not a determinism" (*SM* 73).

Consider the following:

> Existentialism refuses to abandon the real life to the unthinkable choices of birth for the sake of contemplating a universality limited to reflecting indefinitely up itself. It intends without being unfaithful to Marxist principles, to find mediations which allow the individual concrete – the particular life, the real dated conflict, the person – to emerge from the background of the *general* contradictions of productive forces and relations of production.
>
> (*SM* 57)

One senses that Sartre is gesturing toward the "structuralist" Marxists like Althusser and Lévi-Strauss, whose horizontal application of basic categories (Sartre's "analytic reason") he hopes can be integrated ("subsumed") into a totalizing historical process with the help of appropriate mediating praxes. In particular, he had in mind those of the family, and his study of Flaubert argued this in detail. He was writing Flaubert's existential biography while working on the *Critique*, with the result that extended references appear in both *L'Idiot* and the *Critique*. It is not surprising that Sartre should remark: "the explosive mixture of naive scientism and religion without God which constituted Flaubert, and which he tried to overcome by his love of formal art, can be explained if we understand that everything took place *in childhood*: that is, in a condition radically distinct from the adult condition."[16]

This leads Sartre into "the one privileged mediation which permits [dialectical materialism] to pass from general and abstract determinations to particular traits of the single individual," namely, *psychoanalysis*. He does not mean that of Jaspers, which he dismisses as "mythological," nor even the theories of Freud, insofar as they employ their own myths and, of course, rely on the unconscious. It is (existential) psychoanalysis that

[16] He continues: "It is childhood which sets up unsurpassable prejudices, it is childhood which, in the violence of training and the frenzy of the tamed beast, makes us experience the fact of our belonging to our environment *as a unique event*" (*Mallarmé or the Poet of Nothingness*, trans. Ernest Sturm [University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988], 60; hereafter *M*). And even that can neither be deduced from the abstract antecedents nor left to chance. We must not forget that Sartre is preparing his autobiography *Words* at this time as well (see Beauvoir, *Force of Circumstance*, 346, and Contat and Rybalka 1:480). And, for that matter, his description of the dinner-table sparring over religion and science that Poulou recalls from the exchanges between "Karlémami" at 1, rue le Goff echoes those ascribed to the Flaubert household by Sartre in *Family Idiot*. In both cases, the tension was relieved, the contradiction resolved, by the subject's turn to writing.

Sartre has in mind, with its focus on life-defining choice, but now enhanced with appeal to the unsurpassable experience of childhood and the particular family that mediates the individual and his class. In an irenic footnote for the benefit of skeptical Marxists, Sartre asks:

> Is the general conditioning by his class ... incompatible with the unsurpassable experiences of childhood? But precisely what was this unsurpassable childhood, if not a particular way of living the general interests of our surroundings? Nothing is changed ... It reintroduces historicity and negativity in the very way in which the person realizes himself as a member of a well-defined social stratum.
>
> (*SM* 65, n. 66)

Displaying perhaps an excess of enthusiasm, he insists that "psycho-analysis conceived as mediation, does not bring to bear any new principle of explanation" (*SM* 65 n.). It does, however, provide us with understanding.[17]

Before moving to the final chapter of *Search*, let me emphasize two claims in this chapter, one ontological and the other moral, which are of particular relevance to the *Critique*. Ontologically, Sartre insists that "there are only men and real relations between men." He grants that this means that a social whole such as the group "is in one sense only a multiplicity of relations and of relations among those relations." But then how do we determine the type of reality and efficacy which people our social field and which may be conveniently called the "intermundane [Merleau-Ponty's *interworld*]" (*SM* 74)? Taking as an example an anglers' club, Sartre acknowledges that the members have a certain type of reciprocal relation among themselves. "When we say there are only men and real relations between men (for Merleau-Ponty I add things also, and animals, etc.), we mean only that we must expect to find the support of collective objects in the concrete activity of individuals. We do not intend to *deny* the reality of these objects, but we claim that it is *parasitical*" (*SM* 77). Still, he freely admits "the relative irreducibility of social fields" (*SM* 82).This is a prime example of what I shall call Sartre's thesis of the "*primacy of free organic praxis.*" It has grounded his theory of knowledge and his ethic, but it is fundamentally an ontological

[17] On the distinction between explanation (via causes, characteristic of the natural sciences) and understanding, *Verstehen* (in terms of ends, proper to the human sciences) introduced into social philosophy by Wilhelm Dilthey and Max Weber, see *SFHR* 1:16.

principle, as we can see. It also gives the lie to Aron's insistence that Sartre defends a methodological and, it would seem, an ontological "individualism" in social philosophy as well, for this would link him with the individualism of bourgeois "analytic" reason, from which he had sought to free himself at least since *Anti-Semite and Jew*. Sartre calls his "third alternative" "dialectical nominalism," an appeal to the dialectic to save the primacy of free organic praxis while insisting on the relative autonomy of social phenomena.[18]

The humanist theme surfaces here when Sartre dismisses the Marxist version of universalizability as an abstract skeleton with a structuralist framework, and claims that as a result it has "entirely lost the meaning of what it is to be a man" (*SM* 83). He concludes this chapter, however, by reminding his critics that his aim is not to reject Marxism in favor of an idealist humanism, but simply "to reconquer man within Marxism" (*SM* 83).

"The Progressive-Regressive Method"

For years, Sartre had been employing the "regressive method" of "critical analysis," arguing Kant-wise "from a fact or state of affairs to conditions of its possibility." He used it in *The Imaginary*, for example, to convey his insights more easily to a public still relatively unfamiliar with the phenomenological method (see *Imaginary* 179). In the previous chapter of *Search for a Method* Sartre cites "a simple and faultless method for integrating sociology and history in the perspective of a materialist dialectic" (*SM* 51 n.). It involves several phases:

(a) *Descriptive*. "Observation but with a scrutiny guided by experience and by a general theory." We might call this the "phenomenological" phase, using that term in its broad descriptive sense.
(b) *Analytico-Regressive*. Analysis of reality. Attempt to *date* it precisely.
(c) *Historical-Genetic*. Attempt to rediscover the present [reality], but elucidated, understood, explained.

(*SM* 52 n.)

Sartre endorses this project with one small addition: "We believe that this method, with its phase of phenomenological description and its

[18] For a discussion of the distinction between methodological and ontological holism and individualism with regard to Aron's position, see *SFHR* II:315 n. 58 and *SME* 126ff.

double movement of regression followed by progress, is valid – with the modifications which its objects may impose upon it – *in all domains of anthropology*" (*SM* 52 n.). We should note that Sartre takes "anthropology" in a sense equivalent to what the French call "the human sciences" (*les sciences humaines*) – that includes history, sociology and psychoanalysis.[19] How this threefold method maps over the Hegelian-Marxian dialectic so that neither the group nor the man is suppressed remains to be seen (see *SM* 53). Sartre points in that direction when he insists that "the very development of the dialectical philosophy must lead it to produce – in a single act – the horizontal synthesis and the totalization in depth" (*SM* 82). This is the task sketched in the present chapter, but admittedly slated for development in the *Critique* and *The Family Idiot*.

In search of a "supple, patient dialectic"

Sartre landed a direct hit on "Neo-Marxist scholasticism" with his "Materialism and Revolution," published in the ninth issue of the first volume of *LTM*.[20] It is the rigidity of the "Official" (Stalinist) reading of Dialectical Materialism, its reductionist "economism," that Sartre opposed in the late 1940s. Such an approach to history and the "anthropology" that sustained it was, in his view, impatient with the nuances of concrete life and in denial of the "mediating "factors that could give it access to the concrete. We saw Sartre opening the door to a more "humanist" dialectic in *MR* and laying the path for such an approach in *Search for a Method*. Before turning to the *Critique*, let me state the Marxist mantra for a materialist dialectic that Sartre will now adopt, but as usual in his own way: "Men themselves make their history but in a given environment which conditions them."[21] It is the nature and flexibility of that "conditioning" that continues to divide Sartre from the "Marxists," even as greater flexibility is incrementally acknowledged by each side. The "sticking point" in this exchange is the reality of

[19] Sartre's use of "anthropology" would resemble that of Foucault in *The Order of Things*, especially when Foucault disparages the "anthropological slumber" of nineteenth-century thought, where he notoriously imprisons Sartre (*Order of Things*, 340). See above, note 14.

[20] The phrase "supple, patient dialectic" is taken from *SM* 126.

[21] Sartre quotes this from a letter of Lenin to Marx ("The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," *Karl Marx. Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan (Oxford University Press, 1977).

individual freedom and its concomitant moral responsibility. Can Marxism become a concrete philosophy? Can existentialism suffer a truly social conditioning? Can either of them support a viable social ethic?[22]

Sartre has already made a significant concession by shifting his focus from consciousness to *praxis* (roughly, purposive human activity in its socioeconomic field), from facticity to "objective possibility," and from "transcendence" to *need* as "going beyond a situation" (*SM* 91).[23] We shall soon witness his characterization of "comprehension" as the "translucidity of praxis to itself" (*CDR* 74), and his insistence that "to grasp the meaning of any human conduct, it is necessary to have at our disposal what German psychiatrists and historians have called 'comprehension'; . . . it is originally progressive" (*SM* 153), but it may be "entirely regressive" (*SM* 155) or "simultaneously progressive (toward the objective result) and regressive (I go back toward the original condition)" (*SM* 154). Still, "our comprehension of the Other is never contemplative; it is only a moment of our *praxis*, a way of living – in struggle or in complicity – the concrete, human relation which unites us to him" (*SM* 156).

What makes this undertaking "existentialist" is its emphasis on the project of the laborer – his or her physical overcoming and fashioning the resistance of the material object to yield "worked matter," as he will say in the *Critique*. It is "into this very Knowledge and into the universality of concepts, [that existentialism] wants to reintroduce the unsurpassable singularity of the human adventure." So he concludes: "Thus the comprehension of existence is presented as the human function of Marxist anthropology" (*SM* 176).[24]

[22] Again, Sartre lays out this issue programmatically in his introduction to the first issue of *LTM*: "Though he is completely conditioned by his class, his salary, the nature of his work, conditioned even in his feelings and his thoughts, it is nevertheless up to [the worker] to decide on the meaning of his condition and that of his comrades. (*WL/Presentation* 265)." That is the basic paradox facing the Marxist existentialist. As for the social ethic, that will be the subject of his second, dialectical ethic in chapter 14.

[23] For a more complex definition of "praxis" consider: "An organizing project which transcends material conditions towards an end and inscribes itself, through labor, in inorganic matter as a rearrangement of the practical field and a reunification of means in light of an end" (*CDR* 1:734). We shall parse this definition when we study the *Critique* itself.

[24] "The movement can *think* itself only in Marxist terms and can *comprehend* itself only as an alienated existence, as a human reality made into a thing. The moment which will surpass

Sartre combines the two terminologies in this last chapter of *Search for a Method* to ease our move to the *Critique*: "We shall define the method of the existentialist approach as a regressive-progressive and analytic-synthetic method. It is at the same time an enriching cross-reference between object (which contains the whole period as hierarchized significations) and the period (which contains the object as its totalization)" (*SM* 148). Again, this will assume particular significance in *The Family Idiot*.

Finally, Sartre repeats a major ontological claim that will continue to function both in the *Critique* and in *The Family Idiot* when he insists:

> These relations [among individual capitalists] are molecular because *there are only* individuals and particular relations among them (opposition, alliance, dependence, etc.); but they are not mechanical, because *in no case* are we dealing with the colliding of simple inertias. Within the unity of his own enterprise, each person surpasses the other and incorporates him as a means (and vice versa); each pair of unifying relations is in turn surpassed by the enterprise of a *third*.
>
> (*SM* 162, last emphasis added)

What follows in the final pages of the book is a cavalcade of terms and concepts that will be defined as they appear in the first volume of the *Critique*. But the underlying question for both *Search for a Method* and the *Critique* is raised toward the end of the first volume of the latter: "Do we now possess the materials for constructing a structural, historical anthropology?" Several of Sartre's contemporaries had produced structural anthropologies and others had given us historical anthropologies.

this opposition must reintegrate comprehension into Knowledge as its non-theoretical foundation." In other words, the foundation of anthropology is man himself, not as the object of practical Knowledge, but as a practical organism producing Knowledge as a moment of its *praxis*" (*SM* 179). Appealing implicitly to a "truth of microphysics [that] the experimenter is part of the experimental system" (*SM* 32, n. 9), Sartre summarizes the risk and the promise of his methodological sketch:

> It is necessary that the questioner understand how the questioned – that is, himself – *exists his alienation*, how he surpasses it and is alienated in this very surpassing. It is necessary that his very thought should at every instant surpass the intimate contradiction which unites the comprehension of man-as-agent with the knowing of man-as-object and that it forge new concepts, new determinations of Knowledge which emerge from the existential comprehension and which regulate the movement of their contents by its dialectical procedure.
>
> (*SM* 180)

The task for Sartre himself in both *Search for a Method* and especially the *Critique* was to conjoin these two approaches in one grand theory. It would have to be dialectical, but "supple" and respectful of the epistemic, ontological and moral primacy of the free organic individual. Such was the ideal of a *Critique of Dialectical Reason*.

13

Individuals and groups: *Critique of Dialectical Reason*

Volume 1, *Theory of Practical Ensembles*

Sartre defends the published order of *Search for a Method* followed by *Critique of Dialectical Reason* in his preface to the first edition of the *Critique*:[1]

> I fear that the two works included in this volume may appear to be unequal in importance and scope. Logically, the second should have come before the first, since it is intended to supply its critical foundations. But I was afraid that this mountain of notes might seem to have brought forth a mouse . . . Moreover, since, the second work did in fact grow from the first, it seemed to preserve the chronological order, which, from a dialectical perspective, is always the most significant.
>
> (*CDR* 2nd edn., *annexe* 821)

Given that Sartre later described *The Family Idiot* as the sequel to *Search for a Method*, and in view of the numerous references to Flaubert that punctuate both *SM* and *CDR*, the question arises whether the progressive-regressive method introduced in *SM* and soon to be observed in *The Family Idiot* will map over the dialectic in the *Critique* – in effect, whether it is synonymous with or at least complementary to the method used in that work.[2]

[1] It served as preface to the entire volume 1 in the first edition of the *Critique de la raison dialectique (précédé de Question de méthode)* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), hereafter *CRD*.

[2] Klaus Hartmann overstates the case when he insists that *Search* has little to do with the *Critique* (Hartmann, *Sozialphilosophie*, 52–56, and "Sartre's Theory of Ensembles," in Schilpp 659–660, n. 3). Even the biographical studies that enter into the latter can be classified as brief existential psychoanalyses (the study of Stalin's totalitarian character in

The subtitle of *Being and Nothingness* is "*An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology.*" The subtitle of the *Critique* could be "*An Essay in Social Ontology*," because it discusses the nature and functions of the basic kinds of social being. What makes possible a valid social philosophy and a viable theory of history for Sartre is his replacement or better complement of the visual model of interpersonal relations employed in *BN* with the praxis model adopted in the *Critique*. Whereas the "Third" party in *BN* is simply the existential Other writ large and so could be labeled an "alienating" (objectifying) Third, the praxis model of interpersonal relations renders positive reciprocity possible through the practical mediation of a Third (*le tiers médiateur*). If the model of alienating relations in *BN* is the objectifying gaze of the infernal trio caught in Sartre's *No Exit*, the paradigm of nonalienating relations in the generous gift of the artist, which was already discussed in *Notebooks for an Ethics*, is given ontological status with the "mediating third" that emerges in the *Critique*. Sartre remarks in *BN* that the existence of the Other is our "original fall" (*BN* 289). In the *Critique* he speaks of our relations mediated by the "practico-inert" as "basic sociality" (*CDR* 318). And in contrast with the group, which he sees as the model of nonalienating interpersonal relations in the *Critique*, he discusses the practico-inert ensemble as "the matrix of groups and their grave" (*CDR* 635). We shall sort out these several technical terms shortly, but suffice it to say that "practico-inert" assumes and modifies the function of "being-in-itself" from *BN*.

The initial edition of volume I of the *Critique*, the only one published in Sartre's lifetime, is scarcely user-friendly, with 700 pages of text in small print on large pages, with sentences running for over a page and paragraphs continuing across several pages, and the whole prefaced by a table of contents with only four entries, one of which is "Question of Method." The book resembles Kierkegaard's analogy of someone

volume II of the *Critique*, for example [see *CDR* II:263–271]). Admittedly, the P-R method is mentioned only occasionally in the *Critique* (see *CDR* I:124), whereas it is omnipresent in *The Family Idiot*. But his mention of the regressive and progressive natures of the argument in volumes I and II respectively (see *CDR* I:817–818) should settle the matter regarding the progressive/regressive nature of the *Critique* as well.

trying to find their way around Denmark with a map of the world on which the country appears as the size of a pinhead. Raymond Aron, who considered Sartre "the most Germanic of French philosophers," called the *Critique* "a sort of baroque monument, overwhelming and almost monstrous."[3] Still, he devoted his Gifford lectures (1962 and 1965) and a year-long course at the Sorbonne (1966–1967) to the book. And it has been rightly called "a landmark in modern social thought ... a turning point in the thinking of our time" (Raymond Williams in the *Guardian*). Significantly, Claude Lévi-Strauss, who devoted the final chapter of his famous *The Savage Mind* to the *Critique*, also lectured on the text. As the leading structuralist-anthropologist of his day, he and the movement which he represented were forces to be reckoned with. Sartre used a number of structuralist code words like "signifier" and "synchronic/diachronic" in the *Critique*, both to show that there was considerable room for structure in his thought (though he located it in the realm of the practico-inert and limited its method to analytic reason) and especially to defend the primacy of free organic practice, which is the existential nonnegotiable of Sartre's praxis philosophy.

After considering Merleau-Ponty's critique of Sartre's feeble social ontology in *Adventures of the Dialectic*, one can imagine Sartre writing the *Critique* with Merleau-Ponty's book at his side. Whether it be the dialectical notion of time or the use of "interworld" or any of the other expressions and ideas from *Adventures* that are adopted and/or "corrected" in the *Critique*, this major work can be seen as a response to his former friend and colleague at *LTM*. Of course it is more than that. But the "actuality" of this phenomenon helps to situate the text and Sartre's writing it "at full gallop" (with the aid of drugs to support the intensity of his work).[4] So let us consider several of the terms that Sartre introduces in the process of grounding a dialectical, structural anthropology – and the theory of history that it supports.

[3] *HDV* xix.

[4] On the drugs Sartre used to support his intense work schedule, see *Life* index, s.v. "Sartre, drugs taken by." Most frequently mentioned, in addition to alcohol and tobacco, was Corydrane (a mixture of aspirin and amphetamines). For years available over the counter, Corydrane was banned in France as a toxic product in 1971.

Four cardinal concepts

Praxis

We have already observed this term in Sartre's vocabulary before the *Critique*, but now it assumes in his thought the leading role previously reserved for the "for-itself" or consciousness.[5] In a footnote Sartre translates "praxis" and "practico-inert" into the vocabulary of *BN*, while correcting a misunderstanding of *BN* that fundamental alienation derived from some prenatal choice.[6] In one of those "great inexact equations" that he favors, Sartre announces that "Dialectic and praxis are one and the same" (*CDR* 802); if not precisely the same, dialectic constitutes the logic of *praxis*. *Praxis* occurs according to the threefold articulation of the Sartrean dialectic: "contradictions, surpassing (*dépassement*) and totalization" (*SM* 34). Later in *Search for a Method* he remarks that "*praxis* is inconceivable without *need*, *transcendence*, and the *project*" (*SM* 171). And later: "Need, negativity, surpassing, project, transcendence, form a synthetic totality in which each one of the

[5] In addition to the "literature of Praxis" mentioned in *What is Literature?*, consider: "It is *praxis* which integrates [the workers] while differentiating them; it is the apparatus [the 'collective object' in *CDR*, e.g. the machine tools] which carries out the mediation between all and each. But the origin of the current [the 'drive' for change of the status quo] remains extra-union: it is hunger, anger or terror which sets things in motion or sometimes, as in 1936 [when the Popular Front wins the French elections], it is hope that suddenly bolts from the blue" (*CP* 217). It is in this sense that the workers' *destiny* is set by their tools while those same instruments are the "*interest*" of the employers. Interest/destiny forms a common "dialectic" introduced in *CP* but elaborated in *CDR*.

[6] "For those who have read *Being and Nothingness*, I can describe the foundation of necessity as practice: it is the For-itself, as agent, revealing itself initially as inert or, at best, as practico-inert, in the milieu of the In-Itself. This ... is because the very structure of action as organization of the unorganised primarily relates the For-itself to its alienated being as Being in itself. This inert materiality of man as the foundation of all knowledge of himself by himself is, therefore, an alienation of knowledge as well as a knowledge of alienation. Necessity, for man, is conceiving oneself originally as Other than one is and in the dimension of alterity. Certainly, *praxis* is self explanatory (*se donne ses luminières*); it is always conscious of itself. But this non-thetic consciousness counts for nothing against the practical affirmation that *I* am what I have done (which eludes me while constituting me as other). It is the necessity of this fundamental relation which explains why, as I have said, man *projects himself* in the milieu of the In-Itself-For-Itself. Fundamental alienation does not derive, as *Being and Nothingness* might mislead one into supposing, from some prenatal choice. It derives from the univocal relation of interiority which unites man as a practical organism with his environment" (*CDR* 227–228, n. 68). For a helpful commentary on this passage in terms of Marxist "alienation," see McBride, *Sartre's Political Theory*, 130ff.

moments designated contain all the others" (*SM* 173). In other words, to reason dialectically is to think holistically. But it is also to accept the concept of dialectical temporality, or, as he explained earlier, to recognize a certain "action of the future as such" (*SM* 92 n.). That is an essential feature of *praxis* as totalizing – not merely a retrospective summation but a goal-focused project.

Again in *SM*:

> The very notion of *praxis* and that of dialectic – inseparably bound together – are contradictory to the intellectualist idea of a knowledge. And to come to the most important point, *labor*, as man's reproduction of his life, can hold no meaning if its fundamental structure is not to project. In view of this default – which pertains to the historical development and not to the actual principles of the doctrine – existentialism, at the heart of Marxism and taking the same givens, the same Knowledge, as its point of departure, must attempt in its turn – *at least as an experiment* – the dialectical interpretation of History.
>
> (*SM* 175, emphasis added)

Thus far, the dialectic is a heuristic. We are in the formal mode of gathering and identifying the components of the social ensemble. In fact, Sartre never surpasses the formal mode in volume 1 of the *Critique* (see *CDR* 1:818).

What makes this undertaking "existentialist" is its emphasis on the project of the laborer, his/her physical overcoming and fashioning the resistance of the material object to yield "worked matter," as he will say in the *Critique*. It is "into this very Knowledge and into the universality of concepts, [that existentialism] wants to reintroduce the unsurpassable singularity of the human adventure." So Sartre concludes: "Thus the comprehension of existence is presented as the human function of Marxist anthropology" (*SM* 176).

Sartre states categorically: "The essential discovery of Marxism is that labor, as a historical reality and as the utilization of particular tools in an already determined social and material situation, is the real foundation of the organization of social relations. This discovery *can no longer* be questioned" (*CDR* 1:152, n. 35). Following Marx, he takes physical labor to be the most basic form of praxis:

> In so far as body is function, the function need and need *praxis*, one can say that *human labor*, the original *praxis* by which man produces and reproduces his life, is *entirely* dialectical: its possibility and its permanent necessity rest upon the relation of interiority

which unites the organism with the environment and upon the deep contradiction between the inorganic and organic orders, both of which are present in everyone.

(*CDR* 90)

We have spoken of the translucidity of praxis, which would suggest that it shares the transparency and unqualified responsibility of Sartrean consciousness. But such is not the case. True, Sartre does say that praxis enjoys the immediacy of prereflective consciousness and that, like the prereflective, it is practical and engaged. Indeed, he asserts that "although *praxis* is self-explanatory and transparent to itself, it is not necessarily expressible in words (*CDR* 1:93). This means that the self-awareness of *praxis* is similarly prereflective. Given that "knowledge," for Sartre is reflective, whereas that practical awareness called "comprehension" or "understanding" is prereflective, it follows that an agent or a group could comprehend more than it could know. Sartre thinks that this is true for the group members and even for the individuals dispersed in what he calls "serial" relations, such as the television-viewing audience or the members of a crowd. We can now appreciate Sartre's claim in the *Critique* that bourgeois individuals *understood* the significance of practices proper to their class as did those who were excluded – even if they did not reflectively know it. Yet even that "understanding" now seems to be qualified by the external influence of its situation. The unblinking eye appears to be clouded by individual history. To anticipate *The Family Idiot* where this epistemological matter is best illustrated, Sartre concedes that "presence to self for each of us possesses a rudimentary structure of praxis. Even on the level of nonthetic consciousness, intuition is conditioned by individual history" (*FI* 1:141). In Flaubert's case, it is his childhood "passive constitution" which accounts for a life of massive bad faith (passive activity) whose epistemological manifestation is his "choice" of belief and the imaginary over knowledge and the real.[7]

The practico-inert

In his foreword to the second edition of the *Critique*, Fredric Jameson speaks of Sartre's having invented a "new concept and a new and durable philosophical term, the so-called practico-inert, as a more precise way

[7] See my "Praxis and Vision," 30, as well as Chapter 15 below.

of designating objects which are not mere things and agencies which are not exactly people either" (*CDR* 2nd edn., xxiii). This is the "anti-dialectic" which Sartre mentioned in *What is Literature?* in which "the dialectic [of History] is contested, penetrated, and corroded by a kind of antidialectic which is still a dialectic." I remarked earlier that the basic dualism of Sartre's thought was not so much one of consciousness and the nonconscious as one of spontaneity and inertia (praxis and the practico-inert). But we must recognize that it is *practico*-inert. Exhibiting what we have been calling the "primacy of praxis," the inert spoken of here is the sedimentation of past praxes. And it imposes an alienating or "othering" character on whatever it mediates.[8] Sartre describes it as "simply the activity of others in so far as it is sustained and diverted by inorganic inertia' (*CDR* 1:556). Not raw nature, but nature as modified by prior praxis, is the mediating factor. Praxis, on the other hand, aims toward *sameness*, not static *identity*.

A major premise of Sartre's new praxis philosophy is that "reciprocal ternary relations are the basis of *all* relations between men whatever form they might take" (*CDR* 1:111). The kind of binary formation that abounded in *BN*, Sartre believes, "is the necessary ground for any ternary relations, but, conversely, a ternary relation, as the mediation of man amongst men, is the basis on which reciprocity becomes aware of itself as a reciprocal connection" (*CDR* 1:109). In effect, it concretizes an abstract duality. The nature of these reciprocities, whether negative (struggle) or positive (cooperation) depends on the mediation of the practico-inert or of *praxis* respectively (see *CDR* 1:113).

Sartre can now speak of two basic kinds of social reality, that of the active group constituting the *common field* and that of effectively separated though ostensibly united individuals forming what he terms the *practico-inert* field. This is the field of *serial* relations based on the mediation of such "worked matter" as natural languages, rituals of

[8] Marx criticized Hegel for failing to distinguish *alienation* (of which he famously lists four forms in his *1844 Manuscripts*) from *objectification* so that the former seemed as inevitable and insuperable as the latter. Raymond Aron correctly levels the same objection against Sartre, except that Sartre does seem to respect the distinction when it matters and simply slips into "loose usage" when it does not. For examples of his distinguishing the two concepts and their respective implications, see *CDR* 1:366. For the gamut of opinions as to whether Sartre identifies alienation with objectification, running from "clearly Yes" through "more Yes than No" (Aron) to "emphatically No," see *SME* 242, n. 8.

exchange or physical artifacts. He claims that the practico-inert constitutes "fundamental sociality" (*CDR* 1:318). Since he conceives the group as arising through an essential negation of the practico-inert, he characterizes the practico-inert as "the matrix of groups and their grave" (*CDR* 1:635). Sartre's view is that the motor of history is scarcity (*la rareté*) of material goods, which leads to a quasi-Hobbesian war of all against all and the violence that marks history as we know it.[9] Sartre distinguishes two basic forms of seriality in the *Critique*, the collective and the institutional, each at opposite ends of the practico-inert field.

Consider his example of the people waiting at a bus stop. Their bond of materiality, the practico-inert ensemble, is called the *collective*; the "thing" which forges it, the *collective object*, in this case the bus; and the relations altered thereby, *serial*. A scarcity of seats coupled with various demands on the travelers to "meet obligations" generates competition for places and, depending on what is at stake, even overt violence (think of the photo of people clinging to the last helicopter out of Saigon toward the end of the Vietnam War). Sartre's larger thesis is that scarcity of material goods (of whatever sort) generates the violence that has marked recorded history. We noted his single mention of the ideal of a "socialism of abundance" in a footnote to *The Family Idiot*, which indicated the end-ideal of properly human striving. He goes on to describe the ephemeral nature of the revolutionary group in the French Revolution as well as its seemingly inevitable demise by the gradual solidification of its spontaneity, first into the pledged group (where the "oath" serves as a practico-inert wedge), next into the organized group and finally the institution, which Sartre seems to regard as the victorious return of the practico-inert in the social realm. He devotes considerable space in book II to the Soviet Union and "directorial" society generally. In other words, he has an ideal but he is not a prophet, as we shall discover in his final discussion on ethics with Benny Lévy.[10]

Process is Sartre's term for the sequence of impersonal practices that populate the practico-inert field. The social field, he remarks, "is full of acts without an author" (*SM* 163–164). He lists three "modalities of human action": individual praxis (which he also calls "constituting"),

[9] "Scarcity, as the negation of man in man by matter, is a principle of dialectical intelligibility" (*CDR* 1:149).

[10] See *Hope* 69ff.

"common constituted praxis," and "praxis-process." They are, he insists, "in themselves distinct from the practico-inert process and . . . are its foundation" (*CDR* I:789).The last mode unites praxis with otherwise "necessary" social relations.

Consider what he calls the "system" of colonialism. In a famous critique of this institution, he remarks that "the meanness is in the system" (*CP* 183), because he considers it exploitative by its very nature. But to be true to his notion of praxis-process, he should have said "the meanness is *not entirely* in the system," for at the base of exploitative processes are oppressive praxes for which individual responsibility should be assumed. As Merleau-Ponty observed: "With Sartre, as with the anarchists, the idea of oppression always dominates that of exploitation."[11]

The mediating Third

"It should be recalled that the crucial discovery of dialectical investigation (*l'expérience dialectique*) is that man is 'mediated' by things to the same extent that things are 'mediated' by man . . . This is what is called dialectical *circularity*'" (*CDR* I:80). Sartre made a similar remark regarding what could be called the "principle of totalization" in *The Family Idiot*, when he said that "a man totalizes his epoch to the precise degree that he is totalized by it" (*FI* V:394). "If the idealist dialectic misused the triad, this is primarily because the *real* relation between men is necessarily ternary. But this trinity is not a designation or ideal mark of the human relation: it is inscribed *in being*, that is to say, in the materiality of individuals" (*CDR* I:109).

Sartre appreciates that the core social relation is triadic. In *BN* that relation was objectifying and in that sense alienating as well. But what appeared to be triadic was at base dyadic. What we have called the "alienating Third" is really the Other of *BN* writ large. It is the looking–looked-at relation as exhibited in the play *No Exit*, where the famous concluding remark, we suggested, should read "Hell is the (alienating) Third." That relationship continues in the *Critique* as mediated by the practico-inert. Serial relationships from which the group is born and into which it returns conceal a fundamental impotence behind

[11] *AD* 155.

the mask of power. Sartre cites the radio-listening audience as an example, but he could have mentioned the demonstrators at public events in the same regard. Interpersonal relations in this condition are not those of true, positive reciprocity (which is emerging as the prime value in Sartre's social philosophy). Rather, imitation or contagion, not cooperation, is the rule; interchangeability and numerical equivalence, not uniqueness, obtain among members of a series.

With the emergence of the group-in-fusion this changes. Sartre takes the group to be the second degree of sociality after seriality, which is the first. He adopts Malraux's term "Apocalypse" to describe that moment when the group breaks out from serial dispersal to gather themselves into something new and different in kind. The change is qualitative, since as a group member the individual has achieved a new set of relations, roles and powers that were not available to him in his serial state. The group is irreducible to its members yet dependent on their organic praxes and has an ontological status of its own: it is an entity of real relations. It mediates the membership of its members just as they mediate that of one another and of the group insofar as they direct their praxis to the common end. In contrast with the unfreedom and "passive activity" of the series, Sartre describes the emergence of the group as "the sudden resurrection of freedom" (*CDR* 1:401). He warns that the group "is not a metaphysical reality, but a definite practical relation of men to an objective and to each other" (*CDR* 1:404 n.).

This raises the implication, seemingly contrary to his previous thought and writing, that the individual is free only as a group member and that he can accomplish nothing of social significance by himself. This is precisely what he will admit to his Maoist interlocutors in 1974.[12] But if he continues in his quest of the concrete, it seems that *individuals-in-relation* will meet his need.

For an object lesson in group formation, its full blossoming and eventual falling into serial decay, consider Sartre's analysis of the Parisian crowd in the Quartier Saint-Antoine, July 14, 1789, when they were in serial flight before royal troops. Suddenly (in Sartre's imaginative reconstruction), as if by prior agreement, someone shouts "Stop!", and the

[12] "I think that an individual in the group, even if he is a little bit terrorized, is nonetheless better than an individual alone and considering separation. I don't think that an individual alone can accomplish anything" (*ORR* 171).

command (*le mot d'ordre*) echoes among scores of people who reverse direction even as they change their perception of the scene. What was constructed as flight is now read as mobilization for counterattack. It is a practical awareness that "we" are acting – at first a small band, but soon swelling to large proportions, each participant buoyed up by the realization that "we are a hundred strong." Sartre calls this constitutive action the interiorization of multiplicity. It denotes the crucial praxis where each takes the rest as "the same" and adopts what was the "elsewhere" of serial flight as the "here" of common concern. Each emerges as the common individual, the practical negation of serial individuality.[13]

To summarize Sartre's brilliant phenomenological description amidst a dialectical analysis, let us simply note that, once the group is formed and the external threat removed, an "oath" is conceived to preserve the union.[14] This pledge of loyalty to their cause under pain of death for betrayal constitutes the problematic concept of "*fraternity-terror*" that haunts his social philosophy. It is a duality that Sartre never managed to resolve (see *Hope* 93). He sees the pledge as the insertion of a necessary element of the practico-inert into the spontaneity of the group, its subsequent (d)evolution into the organized group, and finally the institution (for example, the bureaucratic state). There seem to be stages or degrees of practico-inert mediation in Sartre's social ontology, but one can state simply that where the practico-inert mediates, human relations are serial; where praxis mediates, the relations are free.

Regarding the mediating third party (MT), as *le tiers médiateur* is often translated, we can better appreciate its function – and it is a functional concept – if we think of a football team (under whatever

[13] See *CDR* 1:351ff. and *SME* 112–122 for the follow-through and detailed analysis of this event.

[14] The famous "Tennis Court Oath" of 1789. For Sartre's heretofore unpublished notes regarding the origin of the National Assembly entitled "Mai-Juin 1789" and "Liberté-Égalité" conserved at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center of the University of Texas-Austin, see *Sartre inédit*, transcribed, presented and annotated by Jean Bourgault and Vincent de Coorebyter, *Études Sartriennes* no. 12 (Brussels: Ousia, 2008), 5–256. Jean Bourgault's introduction to the unedited manuscript, *Le Manuscript "Mai-juin 1789*," is particularly helpful. Actually, this is a foreshortened version of the events. The storming of the Bastille followed the Oath by several weeks. Sartre is giving us an ideal reconstruction according to the social ontology he has formulated in the *Critique*. The equivalent of the group-in-fusion could have been mapped, though less dramatically, over the grouping of the members of the États Généraux prior to their taking the Oath.

description). Consider the following: the MT is a praxis; the MT interiorizes a potentially dispersed multiplicity into a practical whole (the Third "receives the power he gives and he sees the other third party approaching him as *his* power" [*CDR* 1:510]). If power is the first of many "common qualities" of the group, it joins others such as "function, rights and duties, structure, violence and fraternity." The member (of this team, in our example) "actualizes all these reciprocal relations as his new being, his sociality" (*CDR* 1:510). As Sartre explains:

> The members of the group are third parties, which means that each of them totalizes the reciprocities of others. And the relation of one third to another has nothing to do with alterity: since the group is the practical milieu of this relation, it must be a human relation ... which we shall call *mediated reciprocity.*
>
> (*CDR* 1:374, emphasis added)

In the middle of his analysis Sartre pauses to remind us that at the level of the "constituted dialectic" (group *praxis*) we can understand "any common praxis because we are always an organic individuality which realizes a common individual," since "to exist, to act, and to comprehend," he explains, "are one and the same" (*CDR* 1:558). But this establishes what he terms a "schema of universality," namely "constituted dialectical Reason," which "governs the practical comprehension of a specific reality, which Sartre calls "*praxis*-process."

He offers several examples of this comprehensibility, the most striking of which are the "counter-finality" of Chinese deforestation and Spanish attempts at hoarding gold from its South American mines. In each instance, the reverse of what was intended occurred. The Chinese lost land to flooding due to the resultant erosion, and the Spanish government lost much of its wealth due to that inflation which followed its policy of hoarding gold from its colonial mines. We should note that these examples, read dialectically, yield important examples of what Sartre calls "dialectical necessity" and constitute something as close to a "proof" of his approach as one could expect at this stage:

> Thus it is not a process which is transparent to itself in so far as it is produced in the unity of a project, but an action which escapes from itself and diverts itself according to laws which we know and clearly understand in so far as they effect an unbalanced synthesis between interior and exterior. In so far as, having achieved our own goal,

we understand that we have actually done *something else* and why our action has been altered outside us, we get our first dialectical experience of necessity.

(*CDR* I:222)

To summarize his argument, he repeats: "Necessity appears in experience when we are robbed of our action by worked matter [the practico-inert], *not* in so far as it is pure materiality but in so far as it is materialized *praxis*" (*CDR* I:224).

As he concludes book I of the *Critique*, Sartre hangs his argument on two hypotheses.The first is the methodological appeal to praxis as comprehension: "*If a situated dialectic* is possible, then social conflicts, battles, and regular conflicts, as complex events produced by the practices of reciprocal antagonism between two individuals or multiplicities, must, *in principle* be comprehensible to the third parties, who depend on them without participating, or to observers who see them from outside without being in any way involved." From this point of view, he continues, "nothing is fixed a priori: the investigation has to be continued" (*CDR* I:816). He proposes to do this in the progressive phase planned for book II. His second hypothesis makes this clear:

If History really is to be the totalization of all practical multiplicities and of all their struggles, the complex products of the conflicts and collaborations of these very diverse multiplicities must themselves be intelligible in their synthetic reality, that is to say, they must be comprehensible as the synthetic products of totalitarian *praxis.* This means that history is intelligible if the different practices which can be found or located at a given moment of the historical temporalization finally appear as partially totalizing and as connected and merged in their very oppositions and diversities by an intelligible totalization from which there is no appeal. It is by seeking the conditions for the intelligibility of historical vestiges and results that we shall, for the first time, reach the problem of *totalization without a totalizer* [that is Dialectical Reason] and of the very foundation of this totalization, that is to say, of its motive-forces and of its non-circular direction.

(*CDR* I:817)

Thus, he concludes, "the *regressive* movement of the critical investigation has demonstrated the intelligibility of practical structures and the dialectic relation which interconnects the various forms of active multiplicities" (*CDR* I:817). But, he warns, we are still at the level of synchronic totalization with our discovery of the *elementary formal structures.* So we have now located the *dialectical structures of a structural*

anthropology. We have yet to consider the diachronic depth of practical temporalization by a progressive movement that will complete this regressive move. But Sartre has been pursuing the goal stated in his preface to *Search for a Method* and the *Critique*: "My intention is to raise one question and only one: do we now possess the materials for constituting a structural, historical anthropology?" (*CDR* 2nd edn., *annexe* 822). The foundation for such an anthropology has been laid by a regressive argument. It remains to chart its progressive complement in the next volume.

Volume II, *Critique*

The editor's subtitle for this unfinished text is "*The Intelligibility of History*." The volume purports to constitute the "progressive" movement which complements the more "regressive" arguments of the first book, though in fact we will have to wait for *The Family Idiot* to view the "progressive" method fully, in the "existential biography" of Gustave Flaubert and his times. Like most of Sartre's major works, it remains a torso.

The boxing match

Having described history as we know it as a tale of conflict and violence due to the scarcity of material goods, and violence as "interiorized scarcity" (*CDR* I:815), it was not surprising that Sartre, an amateur pugilist, would turn to the boxing match as an object lesson in the intelligibility of History. As he observes toward the end of volume I, "Struggle as reciprocity is a function of reciprocity of comprehension. If one of the adversaries should cease to comprehend he would become *the object of the Other*" (*CDR* 816, n. 133). There is a Hobbesian tone to this remark and to Sartre's analysis of practico-inert mediation via what we have called the "alienating Third," which resonated throughout both volumes (a war of all against all). But, as we have seen, a more Rousseauian situation arises when scarcity is overcome or at least suspended, with the advent of the group and group member as mediating Third. Again, that is the sudden, if short-lived, emergence of freedom.

Once more, we are in search of the concrete. So the "dialectical" reading of a particular boxing match differs from its "analytical"

alternative as the contextualized and totalized differ from the a-contextual and abstract. Read "dialectically" in a spiral manner of "internalization and externalzation," Sartre's account of this particular event on this boxing card held in this arena on this evening aims to make comprehensible the expanding spiral of the mediating factors that are "enveloped" by the practice of prize-fighting and "incarnated" by this particular match. What he calls "enveloping totalization (*totalisation d'enveloppement*)" can be pictured as the expanding circles of the dialectical spiral, whereas "incarnation" (*l'incarnation*) denotes the contracting circles of that spiral that point to the race and social condition of these fighters – in sum, their existential "biographies."

It may help to consider a similar contrast Sartre drew in his discussion of language toward the end of *Being and Nothingness*.[15] Inspired by the Hegelian dialectic, Sartre distinguished between the "truth" and the "reality" of the Hegelian Dialectic in his discussion of "language." French was the reality of "language," which was the "truth" of French. Likewise, dialect was the reality of French, which was the "truth" of dialect and so forth until one arrived at this particular utterance which was the reality of the patois, which was the truth of the utterance. The terminus of this spiral was the "reality" of this person in this situation uttering these words. From this, Sartre draws a properly "existentialist" though rigorously antistructuralist conclusion: "Freedom is the only possible foundation of the laws of language" (*BN* 517; *EN* 600). Returning to the boxing match, the potentially limitless amount of information that one might gather as the social and historical context of the match widens is "compressed" into this antagonistic reciprocity. The fighter is mediated by the match in his practical relation to the other.

The theme of life and death introduces another existentialist dimension both into the dialectic of this event and into the volume generally. In

[15] See Sartre's use of the Hegelian distinction between "truth" and "reality" in his discussion of "techniques for appropriating the world" (*BN* 512–513 and *SME* 28–29). Already in *Notebooks for an Ethics*, Sartre seemed to be anticipating aspects of the dialectical spiral in *Critique* volume II when he observed that "every historical event has a physical aspect that alters it and draws it toward the side of the general ... Consequently *chance* is within each historical event ... If Stalin were to die, nothing would be changed. However precisely if – at least this [would change], that the Soviet myth incarnated in Stalin would not be incarnated in anyone else in the same way" (*NE* 27; *CM* 33).

the example of this particular match, what Sartre sees among the "conditions and grounds" of this conflict, which their praxis interiorizes, is the fundamental scarcity of the "material conditions of their existence" (*CDR* II:9). He considers this the "deepest source" of their violent combat: "the absolute is *above all* the difference separating life from death . . . Every violence-event is produced, lived, refused, accepted as *the absolute*" (*CDR* II:31). In the present example, it is the knockout, "always risked, always awaited by the crowd – [which] is a public realization of death" (*CDR* II:31). Later he elaborates that it is *violent* death that condemns an individual or a group to utter failure: "For such a death is realized as the *incarnation* of the *enveloping totalization* inasmuch as it *is in itself*, rather than as a determination for itself of intersubjectivity" (*CDR* II:310). Harkening back to his Bergsonian influence, Sartre lays bare the basis of this struggle to overcome scarcity: "human praxis has a non-transcendable aim: to preserve life" (*CDR* I:385). And echoing his prediction in *Search for a Method* of an unimaginable philosophy of freedom to emerge in a world without scarcity, he cautions: "Nothing warrants the assertion that this end [the preservation of life] would remain non-transcendable, even if humanity one day freed itself from the yoke of scarcity. On the other hand, it is clear that it is our own History – the history of need – which we are describing, and that the other, if it does exist one day as a transcendence of 'pre-history,' is as unknown to us as that of another species living on another planet" (*CDR* II:385 n.).

Two technical terms, just introduced in the previous paragraphs and one unique to this volume, require additional explanation: Enveloping Totalization[16] and Incarnation. Presumably more appropriate to the Progressive method and the history that it is groomed to comprehend, they gloss the previous pair ("practico-inert" and "praxis") by expanding the scope of "totalization" and sharpening the focus of "free organic praxis." One could say that together they constitute and clarify the "Concrete" or "Singular" universal by which Sartre enlists the Hegelian "*notion* (*Begriff*)" in his pursuit of the concrete (*le concret*).[17] Sartre had

[16] This is my translation of *totalisation d'enveloppement*, which Quentin Hoare renders "totalization-of-envelopment" in *Critique* volume II.

[17] See his lecture to the French Philosophical Society in Chapter 11 above as well as *SFHR* I:106–117.

admitted to having delivered in volume I "not the real concrete, which can only be historical, but the set of formal contexts, curves, structures and conditionings that constitute *the formal milieu* in which the historical concrete must necessarily occur" (*CDR* I:671).

Enveloping totalization

A term unique to *Critique* volume II, enveloping totalization (ET) is "a turning back of the inert upon the agent to recondition him" (284). In terms of *Critique* volume I, it is a temporalizing of praxis-process and, as such, draws its unity from its transcendence toward a goal (praxis) and forges passive syntheses and multiplicities (processes). The editor of this text calls it a "system" (*CDR* II:183 n.). In this sense it could describe colonialism discussed earlier. True to his dialectical nominalism, Sartre gives "enveloping totalization" a somewhat different meaning as its referent shifts.[18] Still, he preserves the primacy of praxis when he adds, in rejecting any idealist interpretation of this phenomenon, that "it goes without saying that this dissolving mediation [of the practical process] is carried out by men" (*CDR* II:232). Once more, the meanness is not entirely in the (colonial) system.[19]

In its most comprehensive form, enveloping totalization may be seen as a version of that "totalization without a totalizer" on the possibility of which Sartre hangs the meaning of history in volume I. Retaining the hypothetical mode of these volumes, he writes early in volume II: "We do not even know yet if the enveloping totalizaion can exist. We shall see further on that it is the condition of any intelligibility of history" (*CDR* II:33 n.).

Incarnation

"Correlative to ET, it is an internal and local temporalization, a 'moment,' as Hegel might say, of the ongoing totalization" (*CDR* II:77). "Incarnation" appeared earlier in the context of *sens* and the

[18] But if there is a "family resemblance" among these uses, one, it seems, is the head of the family: "Enveloping totalization, inasmuch as it is implied and aimed at by all partial totalizations, is praxis itself inasmuch as it engenders the corporeity that sustains and deviates it, and inasmuch as it attempts at every moment to dissolve its own exteriority into immanence" (*CDR* II:232). In effect, the totalization is seeking *incarnation*, the universal is pursuing the *concrete*.

[19] See *CP* 183.

concrete universal (see *NE* 170). Thus every move of the boxers in the ring "incarnates" the fundamental violence that permeates the historical process in a field of scarcity. The upshot of this quasi-Hegelian stance is that "*boxing in its entirety* is present at every instant of the fight as a sport and as a technique, with all the human qualities and material conditioning (training, physical condition, etc.) that it demands" (*CDR* II:20). Of course, Sartre will expand ET, of which this fight is an incarnation in a dialectical sense, to include the socioeconomic dimension (the contractual relationship, the capitalist interest, the racial and class identities of fighters and crowd and the like; unfortunately, "gender" identities are not mentioned). It appears that the duality of ET and incarnation was introduced to foster the historical character of the dialectic, rendering it historical, not in a narrativist sense but in its social ontological dimension.

Incarnation is an especially apt notion for integrating idiosyncrasies and biographical considerations into the historical account as befits an existentialist theory. In fact, the existentialist approach to history, being a combination of historical materialism and existential psychoanalysis, demands that we "concretize" (incarnate) the formal abstractions into the convergence of a lived life. Sartre speaks of incarnation as "the concrete universal, constantly producing itself as the animation and temporalization of individual contingency." In the case of the boxing match, this means that "*one* punch, like *one* dance, is indissolubly singular and universal" (*CDR* II:40). So Sartre's turn to Stalin, if not a complete treatise on the dictator and the "directorial" society that he constituted and that constituted him in a dialectical circularity, is a suggestive move in that direction. Though incomplete, it prepares us for a more complete "existential psychoanalysis" of Flaubert and his times in *the Family Idiot*.

The circularity of incarnation: the case of Stalin

Armed with these additions to the dialectic constructed in volume I, Sartre is now in a position to discuss a historical phenomenon that focuses not only on the formal ensembles of structural intelligibility and on a praxis-process of professional violence, but on a sovereign individual: and not just any individual, but one who in the 1930s and 1940s could say "L'État, c'est moi" or its Russian equivalent, though

there were other candidates for that title in other countries in those days. After distinguishing directive (dictatorial) from nondirective societies, the latter being capitalist societies left for future study, Sartre focuses on Stalin and the phenomenon of Stalinism as a case study in the dialectical circularity between the common individual and the sovereign. Though he allows that the formative experiences of this Georgian seminarian were decisive in many respects (as befits his appeal to "the unsurpassable childhood" [*SM* 65 n.]), his interest at this stage is not in biography as such (the "singularization of the social"), but in history as the subsumption of chance events and personal idiosyncracies (the "socialization of the singular") (*CDR* II:216).

Where does this lead? To a dialectical relation by which Stalin makes himself (and is made) the man of the hour: a transformation of the individual and a deviation of the social function (see *CDR* II:219). It is this reciprocal modification, this transformation and deviation, which Sartre calls the "Circularity of incarnation" (*CDR* II:194), that determinists like Georgi Plekhanov overlook. What it means is that, as a common individual, "Stalin was not a mere *person*." Sartre dubs him "a human pyramid, deriving all his practical sovereignty from the inert structures and from all the support of every leading sub-group (and every individual) . . . But conversely, inasmuch as he was not just a man called Stalin but *the sovereign*, he was *retotalized* in himself by all the complex determinations of the pyramid" (*CDR* II:199).

What distinguished Stalin from other sovereigns, in Sartre's mind, was that he was so constituted by the type and organs of his power that there was no *gap* between person and function, between a private Stalin and a public Stalin, where freedom, responsibility and (one could say) "conscience" could lodge.[20] By subsequent moves of his dialectical argument, Sartre uncovered Stalin's voluntarism, the terror, suspicion and other qualities of the regime. The Russian revolution "demanded a sovereign who would be a dogmatic opportunist" (*CDR* II:215). Without slipping into historical determinism as analytic reason might counsel, but relying on dialectical necessity, which Sartre finds compatible with freedom, Stalin emerges as "the man of the hour," not

[20] See C*DR* II:200.

because that is who he was but because that is who he made himself to be in circular Incarnation.[21]

The Intelligibility of History

The editor of this volume, Arlette Elkaïme-Sartre, observed that "since History [with a Hegelian *H*] is born and develops in the permanent framework of a field of tension engendered by scarcity, reflecting on its intelligibility involves first answering the preliminary question: are struggles intelligible?" (*CDR* II:x). The opening example of the boxing match viewed from either an evolving macro perspective or "compressed " into an increasingly micro focus was meant to illustrate the "dialectical" intelligibility of interpersonal relations in their socio-historical context. We have discussed this combination of historical materialism (Marxism) and existential psychoanalysis in Sartre's method since the mid 1940s. By the time he wrote the "biography" of Jean Genet (1952), we saw that Sartre was willing to admit: "I have tried to do the following: to indicate the limit of psychoanalytic interpretation and Marxist explanation and to demonstrate that freedom alone can account for a person in his totality (*SG* 584). Of course, we have stressed Sartre's growing sense of social conditioning on our choices (their "bases and structures"). As his attention turned to the positive role of the "givens" of our situated being in limiting and fostering our choices, non-Marxist considerations entered the picture. Thus, he could acknowledge in an interview in 1975 that without a fundamental ontology, he could not have raised the social problem in the way he did in the *Critique*:

> That is really where I differ from a Marxist. What in my eyes represents my superiority over the Marxists is that I raise the class question, the social question, starting from being, which is wider than class, since it is also a question that concerns

[21] In an interview before the second volume of the *Critique* had been written (1969), Sartre predicted that "all the notions which will emerge from the second volume will be rigorously applied to our own history; my aim will be to prove that there is a dialectical intelligibility of the singular. For ours is a singular history . . . What I will seek to show is the dialectical intelligibility of that which is not universalizable" (*BEM* 54). From another perspective, he suggests: "I will simply try to show the dialectical intelligibility of a movement of historical temporalization" (*BEM*: 52) He sums up his project from another, complementary position: "My aim in the second volume of the *Critique* was precisely a study of the paradoxical object which is an institutional ensemble that is detotalized" (*BEM* 56).

> animals and inanimate objects. It is from this starting point that one can pose the problems of class. I am convinced of that.[22]

His turn to the structures of dialectical thought (the regressive movement) sets the ahistorical (synchronic) conditions for the dialectic that is historical (diachronic) and respectful of the primacy of "free organic praxis." It is such praxis that guards existential moral responsibility amidst impersonal forces and relations (again, "the meanness is not entirely in the system") (see *CP* 183).

But if ontological issues are more fundamental than the socioeconomic (in the sense that a social ontology is more basic than an appeal to "economism" in understanding history), then Sartre's approach to historical understanding is not rationalist, not even a dialectical rationalism which would leave no room for chance or contingencies in general. In this matter, Sartre has softened his critique of "certain Marxist theorists" who seemed reduced to explaining the concrete via appeal to chance events (see *SM* 56). We have seen that even the unblinking eye of prereflective consciousness, can be "clouded" by historical conditions.[23]

While the second volume ends rather than concludes with an impressive set of additional reflections that enrich the previous discussion even as they lead us into the progressive argument of the Flaubert, let our present consideration of the *Critique* suffice to open the book on Sartre's social ontology and the productive overlap of dialectical ontology and the regressive-progressive method.

[22] Schilpp 14.

[23] At this point, let me repeat an observation I made on similar material some years ago:

> The foregoing examples of the boxing match and of historical Stalinism, coupled with our analysis of the basic "notions" of enveloping totalization and incarnation, lead us to the conclusion that if history is not rigorous in the sense of confirming to a universal schematism such as Marx, Oswald Spengler or even Arnold Toynbee have proposed, neither is it a plurality of random events and their causes (the positivists' "one damn thing after another"). The individual and chance character of praxis, the fact that praxis "overflows" into process or that contingencies of individual facticity are ingredient in social action – this in no way implies that history occurs haphazardly. "Contingency appears only through strict exigencies. Through all its deviations and all its side-tracks," Sartre assures us, "we shall see later on that the historical process continues on its path. Only this path is not defined a priori by the transcendental dialectic" (*CDR* II:226). As we have come to expect, it is determined by praxis and the practico-inert.
>
> (*SFHR* I:170)

14

A second ethics?

As we continue our investigation of Sartre's intellectual life, we must keep in mind that, despite the nearly life-long hovering of ethical concerns over his political commitments and written work, Sartre never produced an ethical theory. Rather, he offered "sketches" for what such a theory might entail, as he did with his *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions* in the 1930s.[1] But this was always done in a hypothetical,

[1] Francis Jeanson reads *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions* as Sartre's initial glimpse of an ethics (Francis Jeanson, "De l'Aliénation Morale à l'Exigence Éthique," *LTM, Témoins de Sartre* nos. 531, 532, 533 (Oct.–Dec. 1990): 890; hereafter "L'Exigence." In *Emotion in the Thought of Sartre*, Fell confirms the moral significance of *anguish* in *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions* and in *BN*. To elaborate the purifying function of anguish, he cites Sartre's play *Kean*. Kean, a famous English actor in the early nineteenth century, is depicted as someone who, in Sartre's version, cannot be anyone but the characters he portrays on the stage. Though the play is an adaptation of Alexandre Dumas's *Kean, ou Désordre et génie*, Sartre's theme is not only the ambiguous identity of the actor – we are all playing at being whoever we are, he seems to imply, and his example of the "perfect waiter" in *EH* confirms it. Rather, Sartre insists apropos Denis Diderot's famous treatment of a parallel topic in *The Paradox of the Actor*, "Diderot is right that the actor does not really experience his characters' feelings; but it would be wrong to suppose that he is expressing them quite coldly, for the truth is that he experiences them irreally. Let us concede that his real personal feelings . . . serve him as an *analogon* and through them he aims at the passions that he has to express" (*ST*, 163). Our study of Sartre's aesthetic in *The Imaginary* indicated how he characterized the aesthetic imaginary as "the irreal," not the unreal: "The occurrence coincides with the beginning of purification, and anguish hence is an emotion of moral significance. Kean, like many another Sartrean hero, becomes a moral agent at the moment of anguish, the moment when he moves from the unreflective level on which he suffers from his own emotional self-deceptions to the reflective level on which he realizes that he is a free agent victimized by emotion because he has chosen to be so victimized" (Fell, *Emotion in the Thought of Sartre*, 231). The morally purifying function of anguish recurs in Sartre's analysis of the Belgian mothers who killed their babies that were born horribly disfigured by a medication for morning sickness, Thalidomide, prescribed during pregnancy. Sartre sees this as an "anguished" choice/invention of a way

exploratory manner, and, as in the present case of the "dialectical" ethics, he was willing to pursue lines that did not seem to converge. One might object that a dialectician, a totalizer such as we saw at work in the two previous chapters, should be in search of convergence; that the acceptance of incompatible, if not outright contradictory claims, would be taken as a sign of defeat. But we should remember that this same author described the Hegelian insistence on unity as an implicit appeal to violence.[2] In the case of Sartre's first ethics, unity was achieved with explicit use of the phenomenological ontology formulated in *Being and Nothingness*: his ethics of authenticity.

As Sartre's thought matured and his concept of freedom and responsibility "thickened," his ethics and politics did so as well. We witnessed his four-year period of fellow-traveling with the French Communist Party – a period of "amoral realism," as he admitted to his "Maoist" friends. With the help of the dialectical ontology elaborated in the *Critique*, Sartre developed a social ontology to accommodate his growing sense of socioeconomic conditioning, historical agency and collective responsibility.[3] As we observed above in Chapter 13, this ontology supported an existentialist emphasis on free organic praxis, social wholes both positive and negative, and the practico-inert, which is both freedom's birthplace and its grave. The historical and its conditions of possibility were missing in Sartre's earlier attempt, which he set aside as idealist – "an ethic by a writer for writers."[4]

But these attempts at a dialectical ethics in the 1960s seemed to be either repressed or rejected in the 1970s. When he was asked in an interview less than four years before his death whether the regressive analysis developed in *CDR* is the foundation for every future ethic and, if so, what that ethic on the basis of the *Critique* would look like, Sartre responded by naming several concepts to be elucidated in the so-called "ethics of the We" on which he was working "with a friend"

toward creating a society in which such infanticide will never again be called for. Though denying either approval or disapproval of such actions, he clearly respects the anguished creativity of their choices. It seems that, for Sartre, an authentic moral choice is an anguished one – the emotion being a sign of its creative nature.

[2] See *NE* 184 and 193.

[3] See *SME* chapter 7, "The Conditions and Range of Collective Responsibility. The Theory Reconstructed," 124–150.

[4] *MAEA* 1250.

(Benny Lévy) at the time. He even named its proposed subject and title: "Power and Freedom."[5]

> In that book I will provide the first principles of morals. We are doing it in dialogue form, because I can no longer write [after a serious stroke that left him virtually blind] so that it is a dialogue just like ours, whereby each says what he has to say and the other answers. And I will try to show that morals and politics can only make sense from the moment when the concept of power and the reality of power are truly removed. A society without power starts to become an ethical society, because a new form of freedom is established, which is the freedom of reciprocal relations of persons in the form of a we.[6]

Despite mention of an ethic based on principles found in *CDR*, Sartre moves immediately into what we shall be calling his "Dialogical" ethics with Lévy, as if the hundreds of pages devoted to his "Dialectical" ethics a decade earlier had never been written. Emphasizing the break from his earlier work, he continues:

> Speaking more generally, *Power and Freedom* returns to concepts which lie before *BN*, as for example contingency in *Nausea*, more generally as everything that I said in *Nausea*. And I am trying to recover it, because it seems to me that it is the starting point of my thought. And I am trying to close the circle, to link up my first thoughts with my latest, by giving up some of my ideas from *BN* and *CRD*.[7]

These claims may give us pause when assessing his dialogue with Benny Lévy, as we shall do shortly, but it is certainly worth keeping in mind when we do. Yet before turning to this dialogical ethics and its apparent repudiation of some of Sartre's ideas in *BN* and *CDR*, let us examine rather closely the "dialectical" ethics that lies between the *Critique* and *Power and Freedom*.[8]

Sartre's second, "Dialectical" ethics

Like the thoughts recorded in his *Notebooks for an Ethics*, the remarks from which we must reconstruct this second ethics are scattered over

[5] Leo Fretz, "An Interview with Jean-Paul Sartre," trans. George Berger, in Silverman and Elliston (eds.), *Sartre. Contemporary Approaches*, 233. Recorded Nov. 25, 1976.

[6] Ibid., 233.

[7] Ibid., 234.

[8] Benny Lévy, *Pouvoir et liberté*, notebooks set out, presented and annotated by Giles Hanus (Paris: Verdier, 2007); hereafter *PL*.

hundreds of pages in which Sartre recorded notes for a single lecture and a set of lectures. The single lecture was delivered at the Gramsci Institute in Rome on May 23, 1964 as part of a symposium – with prominent Marxist humanist intellectuals such as Roger Garaudy, Karel Kosik and Adam Schaff as participants – on the theme of "Ethics and Society."[9] The set of lectures addressed the topic of "Morality and History" and was scheduled for April 7 to 14, 1965 at Cornell University but was canceled, despite elaborate preparations by the host institution, because of the American escalation of the war in Vietnam.[10]

Sartre was working on the Rome lecture when the invitation arrived from Cornell to give a set of five lectures on Flaubert and ethics (*la Morale*).[11] So though the typescript for the Rome lecture is not simply duplicated in the notes for the Cornell lectures, the two are sufficiently intertwined (with terms from the *Critique* appearing in both) to warrant our referring to both, together with the disorganized collection of papers that seem to overlap with them, as Sartre's "Dialectical Ethics." Sartre's friend, the ethicist Francis Jeanson, noticed the large manuscript from which Sartre delivered his lecture and asked him how he could give a single talk from such a sheaf of papers. "It was simple" Sartre replied, "I turned the pages ten at a time!" Jeanson said he would thereafter refer to that mass as "Notes on the relations between morality (*la morale*) and history."[12] This captures in brief the spirit of both the single lecture and the set. It resonates with Sartre's claim in the *Critique* that a concrete ethics must be historical, that is dialectical, whereas his view in *BN* was that the concrete had to be existentially psychoanalytic,

[9] See "Determinism and Freedom," Contat and Rybalka II:241–252), translation from French version of the Italian version (of the original talk in French), "Determinazione e libertà" in the volume *Morale e Società*, ed. Galvano della Volpe (Rome: Editori Riuniti, Instituto Gramsci, 1996), 31–41. Neither the French original nor the translations were reviewed by Sartre, though the Gramsci Institute states that "I testi qui riprodotti sono stati rivisti e autorizzati dagli autori, in particulare la relazione de Galvano della Volpe." Michel Rybalka warns us that Sartre's contribution, at least, was not reviewed by him. We have consulted this collection of papers and discussions from the colloquium, "Determinazione e Libertà," presented at the Gramsci Institute in Rome, May 22–25, 1964, but shall cite the more accessible English translation with this caveat.

[10] He assumed leadership from Bertrand Russell of the war crimes hearings at the end of the war (see below, note 38).

[11] *OR* LXXXVI.

[12] "L'Exigence" 557, n. 2.

that is biographical. The function of existential psychoanalysis to uncover the life-defining choice of an individual explains why this procedure came at the end of *BN*. As we noted earlier in our study, the movement of the argument in *BN* is from the general to the particular, from the abstract to the concrete. This movement facilitates Sartre's turn toward his promised ethics of authenticity[13] and lays the structure of existential psychoanalyses (biographies) that exhibit his abstract principles in individual lives.

The Rome lecture: "Morality and Society"

The focus of the notes for the Rome lecture is on the construction of a "socialist" ethic.[14] This fits quite well with the many technical terms from the *Critique* that punctuate these texts. It also builds on the notion of group praxis as historically efficacious in contrast with that of the solitary individual (analyzed in *NE*) who, Sartre now concedes, is socially impotent.[15] Finally, it resonates with what Sartre told Beauvoir toward the end of his life were his life-long guiding values: socialism and freedom.[16]

So how does such a "socialist ethics" unfold, addressed as it was to the intellectuals of the Italian Communist Party and their foreign Marxist guests? According to the typescript of these notes,[17] such an ethics must meet at least four conditions. It must address the *ethical paradox* facing any ethics that claims to be both moral and concrete. This is the old

[13] *BN* 70, n. 9. Later in the book he calls it an "ethics of deliverance and salvation" (*BN* 412, n. 12).

[14] This, at least, is the plausible interpretation of these notes by Elizabeth Bowman and Robert Stone, who have worked these manuscripts as long and assiduously as anyone in North America and, to the best of my knowledge, are the first to have published in English on both the Rome and the Cornell lectures.

[15] See *ORR* 171. It was the "bourgeois individualism" of *NE* that Sartre offered as one of the reasons for his abandoning it (see *Cér*).

[16] Which, we saw, was his title for the first "resistance" group that he gathered after his return from the stalag in March 1941.

[17] The source of these Rome lecture notes is the document available in the Bibliothèque Nationale (rue de Richelieu) in Paris and the typescript of the document presented by Beauvoir to John Gerassi and now located in the Beinecke Rare Books Library at Yale. For a reconstruction of the three documents referred to as Sartre's "Dialectical Ethic," see DE 195–215.

question of relating "is" to "ought," fact to moral value, that Hume revived in modern thought. But in this case, the problem expands to relating and even conjoining an abstract ethical theory with history, and specifically history in our day.[18] Secondly, it must account for what is specific about the *experience of morality*, if it is neither positivist nor idealist in nature, the one stressing facts and the other promoting values. What in Sartre's view distinguishes a socialist ethic from non-ethical agents and phenomena? Thirdly, as Foucault once warned, dialectic leads to humanism, which entails a bourgeois morality of self-realization. He considered it a nineteenth-century affliction and Sartre one of its carriers.[19] Granted, Sartre's dialectic does lead to a *humanism* that, in turn, entails an *ethic* (*une morale*). But must such a humanism and the ethic it inspires necessarily be bourgeois? Are not a socialist humanism and a socialist ethic conceptual or even historical possibilities? The honored guests at this lecture would have responded unqualifiedly in the affirmative. Finally, how does one deal with the seemingly intractable problem of *means and ends*[20] that has plagued Sartre for decades? Stated in terms of the *Critique*, how does one resolve the problem of *fraternity and terror*?

[18] This conference was held at a time when the "official" doctrine of Stalinist communism, which locates morality in the ideological superstructure supported by an "amoral" or "premoral" economic and technological base, had been under attack by several of the speakers at this conference – Sartre, of course, included. A week later, Sartre was to leave for another visit to Russia. (June 1–July 10, 1964), one of nine he made between June 1962 and September 1966 (*Life* 404). In the past Sartre had referred to a specific year to contextualize his critique of "economism" in "Materialism and Revolution" (its object was "the Marxist scholasticism of 1949" [MR 198 n.]) and to assess "the situation of the Writer in 1947" (*WL* 141ff.). So a "concrete" ethic, such as he is projecting in these lectures, is going to bear the marks of the 1960s prior to May 1968, namely the end of the Algerian war, the Cuban revolution and the anti-Soviet uprisings in eastern and central Europe; not to mention the American intervention in Vietnam, which, as we know, affected the second of these lectures directly. But it also underscores the contingency of his remarks and of the *morale* he is delineating.

[19] "Because it is a philosophy of history, because it is a philosophy of human practice, because it is a philosophy of alienation and reconciliation. For these reasons and because fundamentally it is always a philosophy of return to the self (*soi-même*), dialectic in a sense promises the human being that he will become an authentic and true man. It promises man to man and to this extent it is inseparable from a humanist ethic (*morale*). In this sense, the parties most responsible for contemporary humanism are evidently Hegel and Marx." Michel Foucault, *Dites et écrits*, ed. Daniel Defert and François Ewald (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 1:541.

[20] Discussed above in Chapters 10 and 11.

Ethical paradox

The root of what Sartre calls "the ethical paradox" lies in the ambiguity of its basic term, the *norm*. As we shall see in the next subsection, norms support both authentic and inauthentic moral approaches. In fact, this term recurs often both in the Rome and in the Cornell lectures. Though the paradoxical nature of moral reasoning has accompanied Sartre from the start, it is in these lectures that it comes to the fore, so prominently that one could call the dialectical ethics an ethics of paradox. As his colleague Merleau-Ponty was considered the philosopher of ambiguity,[21] so Sartre could be known as the moralist of paradox.

Sartre has consistently opposed the naturalist fallacy – that you can derive "ought" from "is" or, as we might now say, morality from history – ever since his discussion of values in *Being and Nothingness*. At the conclusion of *BN* he writes: "Ontology itself cannot formulate ethical precepts. It is concerned solely with what is, and we can not possibly derive imperatives from ontology's indicatives. It does, however, allow us to catch a glimpse of what sort of ethics will assume its responsibilities when confronted with a *human reality in situation*" (*BN* 626, emphasis added). As he implies in "Materialism and Revolution," the concept of situation may serve to bridge this gap between fact and value, is and ought. The revolutionary solution ("radical ethics") seems called upon to play this difficult role in the Cornell lectures and *Hope Now*, if only, as the latter records, one can dissociate the concepts of revolution and terror, fraternity and violence.

After explaining that "existential psychoanalysis is moral description, for it releases to us the ethical meaning of various human projects," Sartre continues:

> It indicates to us the necessity of abandoning the psychology of interest along with any utilitarian interpretation of human conduct – by revealing to us the *ideal* meaning of all human attitudes [viz. the desire to be in-itself-for itself or "God"]. These meanings are beyond egoism and altruism, beyond any behavior which is called *disinterested* . . . We will consider then that all human existence is passion, the famous self-interest being only one way freely chosen among others to realize this passion.
>
> (*BN* 626)

[21] Alphonse de Waelhens, *Une Philosophie de l'ambiguïté: l'existentialisme de Maurice Merleau-Ponty* (Louvain: Béatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1967).

The moral, for the later Sartre, is linked with praxis, that is with the free organic individual. In contrast to the "alienating third party" that objectifies others via forms of the practico-inert, the *Critique* introduces the pivotal role of the "mediating" third (party), a functional term, as we know, that describes free organic practice as constituting the fused group.[22] This is the moment of concrete freedom, "the origin of humanity" (*CDR* I:436). We could say it is the ethical moment as well, in the sense that dialectically it generates and is generated by a "mediated reciprocity that has nothing to do with alterity [alienation]" (*CDR* I:374). As will become clear in the resultant dialectical ethics, this positive reciprocity mediated by praxes, both individual and group, offers a glimpse, however brief, of a future free from the alienating mediation of the practico-inert. Sartre will now elaborate that "true ethical moment" by contrasting it with inauthentic moral systems and their nature and structure.

Throughout our study we have spoken of the threefold primacy of "praxis" in Sartre's thought: the ontological, the epistemological, and the ethical. Though the epistemic primacy does not figure centrally in this dialectical ethics, it does play a crucial role in the *Critique*, where the intelligibility of history depends on the mutual transparency of individual and group praxis. That is actually a basic methodological assumption that Sartre defends not transcendentally but in practice.

The ontological primacy, recall, emerges when we talk about praxis as grounding social relations, sustaining processes (systems) such as capitalism and colonialism, and even leaving behind sediments as *practico*-inert. And the ethical primacy of praxis reveals itself in the dialectic where it sustains and is dialectically sustained by the practico-inert, the locus of alienating moralities (ethical heir to the spirit of seriousness in *BN* and seriality in the *Critique*).

The experience of morality

Sartre is intent on proposing a concrete morality (ethics). Consequently he rejects moral *imperatives* outright. He now seems to believe that all

[22] On the "apocalyptic" moment when the disunited series "fuses" into the practical group with its union of praxes and mutual concerns, see above Chapter 8, the social ontology of *Critique* I.

such commands in their "one size fits all" formulation are functions of the practico-inert, which undermines the free, creative praxis of moral agents either by harnessing them to the past or by limiting the scope (possibilities) of their future. Sartre draws a major distinction between *norm, value* and *imperative* in order to distinguish a "true" or authentic ethics from what he takes to be inauthentic varieties. *Norms* are the common ontological structure of objects of different sorts, like *institutions* (particularly laws which prescribe conduct and define sanctions) and *customs* (which are diffuse and noncodified while revealing themselves objectively as imperatives with diffuse and noninstitutionalized sanctions). *Values*, which are also normative, refer to human conduct or its consequences, and constitute the object of axiological judgments (roughly, judgment expressing an assessment of favor or disfavor). They too impose the weight of the past on the spontaneity and creativity of our present decisions, or foreclose the extent of our future possibilities.

It is the ambiguity of norms, for Sartre, that accounts for the ambiguous or paradoxical character of ethical judgments. They can generate authentic and inauthentic moralities accordingly as they aim for moral autonomy and the maximization of possibilities, opening up for the agent a "pure future" (a term Sartre adopts from Beauvoir).[23] Or, on the contrary, they can limit the agent with imperatives or pre-given values. As Sartre summarizes: "We shall call 'ethics' the totality of imperatives, values, and axiological judgments constituting the commonplaces of a class, a social milieu, or an entire society."[24]

This contextualization of the "totality" is significant. It smells of relativism, possibly historicism, but, as we shall see, Sartre links it with what he calls "historialization." Inspired by Heidegger, Sartre introduces the term in his *War Diaries* (301).[25] But in his hands it denotes the commitment of an agent to their present situation – the admission of their facticity – in order to move beyond it in creative freedom or to remain the same in repetition (as in inauthentic moralities).

[23] Beauvoir, *Ethics of Ambiguity*, 82.

[24] Contat and Rybalka 2, "Determinism and Freedom," 248.

[25] See three phases of "the movement of historialization" in *SFHR* II:175 or index, sv "historialization." The topic is treated along with "historicity" throughout *Truth and Existence*.

His examples of the inauthentic *morale* include Kantian deontology: an ethic of duty and principles that must be "universalizable" in the sense of allowing for no exceptions, including for oneself. Sartre's anarchist tendencies emerge when he repeats an expression he has used over the years to the effect that "duty," like "authority," is the Other in us: "Duty inhabits my soul like phlogiston inhabits fire. It is the purely abstract presence of the Other."[26] It is alienating in the sense of "objectifying" and so, in terms of the *Critique*, is a function of the practico-inert. Of course, the same objection could be raised against Sartre himself when he later describes "obligation" as the prime concept in an ethics.[27]

At the other extreme, another class of the inauthentic is what Sartre calls "positivist ethics." He likens it to structuralism in that both approaches ignore the historical dimension of properly ethical normativity; rather, in his view, they collapse normativity into moral imperatives – that is, into the practico-inert. Sartre had been combating structuralism since it emerged in the 1950s and began to supplant existentialism in the French philosophical scene. He remarked to Michel Sicard that the Cornell lectures, which they were discussing, had been intended to address Lévy-Bruhl and Lévi-Strauss, especially the former, because Sartre wanted to treat the concept of moral constraint among these sociologists and anthropologists, whose views on the concept he considered "lamentable," but that he set the project aside and never returned to it.[28]

Sartre's position is still "Marxian" insofar as it considers need, labor and class struggle to be "the motors of history."[29] He states "that the root of morality lies *in need*, that is to say in the animality of man. It is need which posits man as his own end, and praxis as domination of the

[26] This is most obvious in the *Notebooks*: for example, sounding like Nietzsche, Sartre proclaims: "The ethics of duty is the ethics of slaves" (*NE* 267). For authority as the Other in us, see my "End to Authority," 50–65.

[27] See *Hope* 69, where he seems to be speaking of ethics in general, making no distinction between the authentic and inauthentic as he does in the Rome and Cornell lectures.

[28] Jean Paul Sartre, interview with Michel Sicard, *Oblique* nos. 18–19 (1979): 14b.

[29] Elizabeth Bowman and Robert Stone, "Making the Human in Sartre's Unpublished Dialectical Ethics," in William L. McBride (ed.), *Sartre and Existentialism*, vol. V, *Existentialist Ethics* (New York: Garland, 1997), 274. Asked about his claim that the *Critique* was opposed to Communism but endeavored to be Marxist, Sartre responded: "Marxist is a word that I used a bit lightly then . . . Today, I consider that in certain areas, the *Critique* is close to Marxism, but it is *not* a Marxist work." Schilpp, "Interview with Jean-Paul Sartre," 20.

universe of man *to be effected through work*."[30] Indeed, he focuses on man's animality as years before he attended to the "coefficient of adversity" that the laborer experienced in overcoming the resistance of physical nature via his labor. On Sartre's reading, even in *BN*, this led the worker to visualize his freedom in the sense of liberation from oppressive work as a matter of counterviolence. That figures centrally in his analyses of the capitalist and colonialist "systems,"[31] which he takes to be practico-inert phenomena based on violence and racism.

But Sartre's position here differs from "orthodox" Marxism in at least two ways. It denies that the base/superstructure model is applicable to morality. Admittedly, what he calls "inauthentic ethical systems," such as those of imperatives and values, count as "ideologies" in accordance with that model. But we saw that he would later insist to his "Maoist" friends that morality (*la moralité*) is not limited to the ideological "superstructure," but exists "at the very level of production" (*ORR* 45). He is obviously talking of a "true morality," one that opens a pure future for creative praxis.

The second way in which this dialectical ethic differs from "orthodox" Marxism is only implicit in these lectures, but was stated in a previous lecture on "Marxism and Subjectivity" that Sartre delivered at the Gramsci Institute on December 12, 1961.[32] Broadly speaking, Sartre had elsewhere insisted that a concept of subjectivity could be found in the works of Marx, and this lecture was his attempt to make good on that claim. Without pursuing his interesting argument in detail, suffice it to note that he relies on a concept of subjectivity (not a substantial subject) that builds on his earlier notions of the prereflective consciousness and purifying reflection as

30 Bowman and Stone, "Making the Human," 274.

31 See "Le Colonialisme est un système," *Sit* V:25–48 and other writings in that volume; "Colonialism is a System," in *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*, trans. Azzedine Haddour, Steve Brewer and Terry McWilliams (London: Routledge, 2001), 30–47.

32 Jean-Paul Sartre, "Marxism and Subjectivity," La Conference de Rome, 1961, ed. Michel Kail, *LTM* no. 560 (1993), 11–39; hereafter MS.
It should be admitted that this lecture, consisting of notes recorded at the conference, typed and revised for stylistic purposes by Kail, was not reviewed by Sartre and so should be considered unpublished (*inédit*). Still, it does build on and expand claims made earlier in his work or in the next Gramsci (Rome) lecture that we are now discussing.

not objectifying. It joins a number of other attempts to "materialize" our prereflective awareness by introducing a dialectical relation between that awareness and the situation which it conditions and which dialectically conditions it. (This, in turn, builds on Sartre's notion of "situation" as an ambiguous mix of facticity and transcendence, the given and the taken.) One should note that in *BN* he had removed the substance (*en-soi*) from subjectivity, leaving us with the "immanence of self to itself" (*BN* lvii). This is yet another description of prereflective consciousness as presence-to-self, but it adds the distinctive note of a *limit* to reflective withdrawal, for Sartre describes immanence as "the smallest recoil (*recul*) which can be made from self to itself" (*BN* lxv; F 32). In other words, "subjectivity" is another word for the impossibility for a man's being an object for himself: "I am the one who cannot be an object for myself" (*BN* 241). Years later, in his brilliant study of Jean Genet, Sartre will explain that what he is calling "presence-to-self" is "this vague sense of a want of exact correspondence between the subjective and the objective" (*SG* 592); in other words, it is the *difference* to which he is about to appeal in the following paragraphs of his lecture.

Sartre discusses various examples to show that "I recognize subjectivity best in the results of work and of *praxis* in response to a situation. If subjectivity can be discovered by me, it's because of a difference that obtains between what the situation demands of me commonly and the response that I give to it" (MS 23). Unlike in the previous reflections, his vocabulary has shifted from consciousness to "praxis" as epitomized in physical work. He wishes to draw a social lesson from this arrangement – namely, that our social situation (our class) modifies our subjectivity, our way of being in the world, if you will, at a prereflective level. We are witnessing once more an important modification of the unblinking eye of Sartrean consciousness as described in *BN*. Indeed, Sartre admits: "There are several dimensions of subjectivity for a man" (MS 33.) Two such dimensions of subjectivity that are constantly retotalized, without our knowing it: the *past* and *class being*. To this he adds a third, *repetition*, and a forth, *invention*, which, as we shall see in the next Rome lecture, distinguish inauthentic and authentic moralities respectively. And to these last two he adds another essential character of subjectivity, namely, *projection* (MS 33–34). One begins to see what Jean-Bertrand Pontalis meant when he called Sartre's

thirty-year-long relationship with psychoanalysis "an ambiguous mixture of equally deep attraction and repulsion."[33]

His thesis is that our class consciousness modifies/enriches our consciousness in a manner that is more basic than our reflective knowledge. In other words, it is *nonknowledge* tied to praxis. Sartre is taking issue with Georg Lukács, who defended a notion of proletarian consciousness that was independent and determining of the individual worker's consciousness. This is the kind of "collective consciousness" that Sartre had rejected since *BN*. True to the primacy of free organic praxis, he now enlists class consciousness into the praxis (comprehension, he says in *CDR*) of individual workers:

> The concrete, social reality is not this machine [the inert exigencies of the physical object] but the person working at the machine, payed, married, having children, etc. In other words, one has to be this social being, worker or bourgeois, and one has to be it in a manner that is first of all subjective. That means that class consciousness is not the primitive given, far from it, and that at the same time, one has to be [a class member] in the very conditions of the work.
>
> (MS 36–37)

A socialist humanism and its morality?

Returning to Foucault's critique of dialectic because of its apparently necessary link to bourgeois humanism and its ethics, it seems that the battle lines were drawn as early as *Anti-Semite and Jew*, when Sartre distinguished "synthetic" (later, dialectical) from "analytical" reason. That abstract difference carries numerous concrete consequences for Sartre. It emerges, at a still admittedly abstract level, in his remark in the *Critique* that "at a certain level of abstraction class conflict expresses itself as a conflict of rationalities" (*CDR* 1:802). But it appears concretely in the inability to recognize the existence of social wholes such as "class" with its concrete expression in practices and impersonal processes like capitalism, colonialism and racism.

Again, Francis Jeanson captures the contrast between Sartre's ethics of authenticity and his dialectical ethics when he observes: "for a practice of the self oriented toward a personal conversion to authenticity [in *NE*]

[33] See Jean-Bertrand Potalis, *BEM* 220.

is substituted a *collective practice* aiming at the humanization of men [in *CDR*]."[34] This humanizaton of man, or what Sartre elsewhere in the same text calls "making the human" (*faire l'homme*), in Robert Stone's felicitous rendition, is the project of an authentic ethics as long as one does not see "man" as a Platonic ideal, essence or form waiting on the horizon. It is tempting to do so, especially when Sartre showcases "integral man" (*l'homme integral*) as the counterconcept to our present condition of "subhumans" and the end of incomplete man. Rather, Sartre explains that man is "the end, *not knowable but graspable as orientation*, of a being who defines himself by praxis – that is, the incomplete, alienated man who we are."[35] This resembles the practical nonknowledge that was subjectivity in the 1961 lecture. "Our present situation is this: we know more or less obscurely *what whole man is not. What he certainly is not is* ourselves" (MH 271).

Remember that Sartre is a dialectical nominalist in the sense that "there are only men and real relations between men" (*SM* 76). So the integral man is going to emerge by our directing our praxis toward the minimization of practico-inert ethical principles and values as we work toward creative autonomy, the "free future" mentioned above. Given the impossibility of conceiving this end as Sartre observed in *Search for a Method* so long as we have not freed ourselves from the institutions and systems that generate alienating ethics, it seems that our only option lies with creative (and I would add *imaginative*) praxis. This is Sartre's much employed "as if" that enables us to orient ourselves Kant-wise toward the goal of "humanity" that we glimpsed in the group, be it the athletic team or Sartre's revolutionary cell, but which eludes our collective grasp in our current condition.[36]

With this dialectical, socialist humanism comes a concomitant struggle against racism and the colonialism that assumes and promotes it. We shall not pursue Sartre's (and Jeanson's) active involvement in the Algerian revolution, except to say that the ethical discourse which is being employed in these texts is directly relevant to the struggle for social justice that brought Sartre further into the public eye. It led him to visit Castro's Cuba in 1960 and 1961, to support the Algerian revolution,

[34] "L'Exigence" 893, emphasis his.
[35] Ibid., 894.
[36] See Peter Bürger, *Sartre: Eine Philosophie der Als-ob* (Frankfurt-on-Main: Suhrkamp, 2007).

and prompted him to take a leadership role in the War Crimes trials that he shared with Bertrand Russell. The basis of colonialist exploitation, in Sartre's view, is the belief on the part of the colonists that the natives are necessarily taken for "submen" to justify their exploitation whereas the cry of the freedom fighter is that "we too are men."[37]

Ends and means: fraternity and terror

We discussed the issue of ends and means in Chapters 10 and 11 above, where it was a matter of relating ethics to politics. Sartre frequently stated the end–means problem in terms of ethics and politics, since his notion of the ethical before *Saint Genet* and even there, was anti-Machiavellian, as we saw. In fact, it was his "amoral realism" that led him to adopt a more utilitarian stance in all but name, with his view that "bourgeois" or "idealist" ethics, such as those analyzed in the *Notebooks for an Ethics*, were at best naive in the present state of our inauthentic society and at worst the breeding ground of oppressive and exploitative practices masquerading as bourgeois "justice." The "realist" issue was whether one could pursue justified violence, that is counterviolence, to dismantle socioeconomic structures that were themselves violent or promoters of violence. Sartre's preface to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*,[38] addressed to the European beneficiaries of colonialist exploitation, marks the extreme form of Sartre's ambivalent attitude toward physical violence.[39] And yet, there is a constructive strain even

[37] At the invitation of philosopher-pacifist Bertrand Russell, Sartre joined and ended up chairing a gathering of public intellectuals as an "International War Crimes Tribunal" to hear and assess evidence of "genocide" and other crimes against humanity leveled against the American military during the Vietnam war. A summary of the evidence and the judgments is presented by Sartre's adopted daughter, and a brief essay, "On Genocide," by Sartre concludes the work. Jean-Paul Sartre and Arlette Elkaïm-Sartre, *On Genocide* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1968). For a collection of relevant essays by Sartre, see *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*.

[38] Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*. For an excellent comparison of Sartre and Fanon on antiracism, anticolonialism and the politics of emancipation, see Erik M. Vogt, *Jean-Paul Sartre und Frantz Fanon: Antirassismus, Antikolonialismus, Politiken der Emanzipation* (Vienna: Verlag Turia + Kant, 2012).

[39] See Ronald Santoni, *Sartre on Violence: Curiously Ambivalent* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), esp. chapter 10, "Justificational Ambivalence: Problematic Interpretation." See also Linda Bell, *Rethinking Ethics in the Midst of Violence: A Feminist Approach to Freedom* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993).

in Sartre's most "violent" remarks. In *Wretched*, for example, he allows that "this irrepressible violence [the counterviolence of the colonized] is man recreating himself" (21).[40] This positive attitude would continue in the Rome and Cornell lectures, as well as in what we know of *Power and Freedom*.

This "humanist" strain brings us to the counter-concept of violence (terror), namely *fraternity*. Among the "specific modalities" of the group listed in the *Critique*, Sartre mentions violence and fraternity (*CDR* I: 510). Both are features of the organic praxis of a group member. "In the group, the individual's existence is not, or is no longer, the temporalization of organic need in a project; rather, it arises in a field of *violent but nonantagonistic tensions*, that is to say, through a web of synthetic relations by which it is profoundly and fundamentally constituted as a mediating relation, that is to say, as *terror and fraternity* for all and for himself" (*CDR* I:510). So it seems that "fraternity and terror" are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, they may serve complementary roles, at least in an inauthentic society.

Since fraternity emerges when seriality (alienation) is overcome or at least kept in check, the concept of moral creativity recommended in *EH* and promoted in the Rome and Cornell lectures seems both to aim at and to presume (dialectically) a certain equality of possibility/freedom at the start, even as it intends to expand the field of our possibilities and thereby achieve a richer degree of freedom. This is the "unconditional possibility" that Sartre's "socialist" ethics (*morale*) proposes. Under the aspect of "fraternity," this possibility forms the ethical dimension of that equality and reciprocity that characterizes "the reign of freedom," and that reign marks the advent of "integral man" in a society of material abundance which, for Sartre, is our guiding ideal.

[40] See *SFHR* II:236–237, where Sartre will develop this concept of a positive, constructive strain in his most violent remarks. In a revealing interview with Madeline Chapsal in 1959, he admits apropos his student days at the ENS: "Most of us were very mild and yet we became violent beings. For one of our problems was this: could a particular act be described as one of revolutionary violence or did it rather go beyond the violence necessary for the revolution? *This problem has stayed with us all our lives – we will never surmount it*" (*BEM* 23, emphasis added). He was and remains opposed to "an absolutely pure and unconditioned violence. Such a brand of violence," as what he witnessed among the Facists in the 1930s and 1940s, "never calls itself into question" (*BEM* 24).

So what of Machiavelli, or the saying that one can't make an omelette without breaking eggs? It seems that two distinctions may soften the problem of coordinating fraternity and terror, though they do not resolve it. One would be to speak of a violence that is nonantagonistic. That could include the fear of legal sanctions that maintains order in our society. It may be a necessary condition for the "fraternity" of nonalienating social action and authentic ethics (think of traffic police in the classless society). Another distinction would be that between necessary and meaningless violence (taking terror and violence as roughly synonymous). We might think of the "counter-violence" that is required to overcome structural violence such as colonialism, but which is not in excess of commonly recognized limits. Still a third possible distinction can be made between means that are inconsistent with the end itself (in this case expanded freedom as maximization of possibilities) and those that respect that goal in their very pursuit. Sartre recognizes this limiting principle on violence when he writes that "all means are good except those that *denature* the end."[41] While these attempts at fine-tuning the problem may seem to be bordering on casuistry, which Sartre explicitly rejects in the Cornell lectures (CSC, 27; *Making the Human* 337), it seems plausible that Sartre is employing a solution characteristic of the pragmatism of John Dewey – what he famously calls "the means–ends continuum" – when Sartre asserts that "revolution contains its own criterion in itself."[42]

[41] Cited from the *1964 Rome Lecture* (typescript, 139) by Bowman and Stone in their informative and apt essay "The End as Present in the Means in Sartre's *Morality and History*," *Sartre Studies International* 10, no. 2 (2004): 2–3. As Sartre explains in a somewhat dialectical manner: "Morality is control of praxis in light of itself, that is to say, in light of its goal. [There is a] rule of efficacy: all means to attain the goal are good on the condition that they do not alter the goal in producing it. Morality is a supplementary control of efficacy: the goal, being the synthetic ensemble of means, socialist morality is none other than the goal itself returning to its means to control them in light of itself, which is to say, to demand of those means that they be absolute means, that is, at once the means of the means (hence linked mediately to the goal) and means to the goal, linked directly to it. [Such means may be understood] as at once respecting the final demand and producing humanity in the negative form of sub-humanity negating its sub-humanity" (typescript, 138). For a critique of this thought regarding "Communist utilitarianism" in aesthetics, see *WL* 213.

[42] Cited by Elizabeth Bowman and Robert Stone in "The Alter-Globalization Movement and Sartre's *Morality and History*," *Centenary* 278. For the continuum, see John Dewey, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (New York: Henry Holt, 1938), 496–497.

The Cornell lectures: "Morality and History"

Because much of the Cornell material builds on the Rome lecture notes, without precisely repeating them, I shall discuss briefly the remarks that elaborate or add to what was presented the year before.[43] The manuscript is divided into five sections, of which the fifth was scarcely begun. (The Rome lecture notes were divided into four sections.) Sartre's introduction to the text lays out his intention to pursue his topic according to the progressive–regressive method introduced in *Search for a Method* and also used in *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions*.[44] The first two sections of this text offer a phenomenological description of moral experience and its actual efficacy in our daily lives. The third section offers a regressive movement to the basic structures of our ethical conduct and their internal laws, while the fourth section elucidates the factors that progressively *mediate* our moral experience in a concretizing synthesis. The final section seems intended to deal with the paradox of structural causality (e.g. Lévi-Strauss or Althusser), as examples of the then current confrontation of structure and history.[45] But this section is quite brief and is followed by an appendix on need, desire, moral negatives, "Man as the son of man" and the imperative.

"1. The Specificity of the Ethical Experience"

As with *BN* and the pretheoretical ontological experience of Being (inspired by Heidegger's *Being and Time*), the Cornell lecture begins with a "preontological and immediate experience of the ethical as such" (CSC 35). This implies that Sartre's phenomenology in the first two sections will be *hermeneutical*, though he does not use the term here. His reading of common usage reveals a kind of ambiguity, "perpetual dialectic," between fact and right (*droit*). He sees the categorical imperative as irreducible to any set of facts. Such is the popular understanding

[43] The Cornell lectures are presented as "Morale et Histoire" (MH): 268–414.

[44] *STE* 96. One finds a similar distinction in Kant.

[45] Robert Stone and Elizabeth Bowman offer the first reading of this text in English. See their "Sartre's 'Morality and History': A First Look at the Notes for the Unpublished 1965 Cornell Lectures," in *SA* 53–82. The other close reading, which I shall also consider, is by Juliette Simont, who presented the uncorrected (*inédit*) typescript of the text MH. See her commentary on this material, "Autour des Conférences de Sartre à Cornell," in *Sur les écrits posthumes de Sartre* (Éditions de l'Université de Brussels, 1987), 35–54; hereafter CSC.

of moral obligation that Sartre is describing. Still, he is aware of a certain flexibility between homage to a strict imperative and the day-to-day observance. He cites here and in the Rome lecture a study of schoolgirls who believe that lying is wrong and yet admit to sometimes having told lies. One might speak of a certain gray (*louche*) area between accepted rules and their practical observance – scarcely news to us.

"2. The Essence of Ethical Normativity"

Still on the descriptive and interpretive level of his argument, Sartre begins to cite distinctions already introduced in the Rome lecture notes. "The pyramid of customs (*moeurs*) and institutions constitutes the real object of the ethical" (CSC 41). "Unconditionality" is set forth as the distinctive feature of the ethical, for Sartre, as it is for many ethicists: it trumps other, conditional claims as being unethical or amoral.[46] Among ethical terms, Sartre lists values, goods, examples and ideals. As instances of each he offers respectively: sincerity (value), life (good), ethical creations that have slipped into habit (example), and "the crystallization of moral habit in the charisma of a person" (ideal). The ethical paradox now reappears in the following guises: the good/value, fact/right, the given/the inaccessible, coincidence with self/nihilating pulling away (from self). These are among the many aspects of the ethical paradox for Sartre (CSC 42). It is in terms of this ethical paradox that one must understand what Sartre means by "example" (CSC 43). He allows that one can live a moral life in the midst of these paradoxes, for example by casuistry – what he calls "the effort to condition the unconditional" (CSC 43), that affords a person what he terms "moral comfort" (MH 337). But in the Rome lecture these are what he called "inauthentic" forms of morality.

"3. On Unconditional Possibility as the Structure of the Norm"

The existence for the schoolgirls of an unconditional imperative against lying "guarantees their security: human life has a meaning" (MH 351). We saw in the Rome lecture that one source, perhaps the basic source, of

[46] We shall be using the expressions "ethical" and "moral" as roughly synonymous in view of the ambiguity of the term "*La morale*" in French, which is echoed in standard English usage.

ethical ambiguity was the ambiguity of the *norm* itself: it can guide both autonomous and heteronomous moral actions, the authentic and the inauthentic.

Sartre now speaks of a blossoming of unconditionality so that it "would render the historical act and the ethical act homogeneous" (MH 353). "But such an opening out of unconditionality does not seem possible in the current state of affairs . . . *unless* we discover/create a *dialectic of the unconditional and the conditional* by a praxis, whether successful or not, that would affirm itself as ethical while rediscovering its historical [condition]" (MH 354–355). As an example of such confluence of the ethical and the historical, Sartre cites the Resistance movement during the Nazi occupation of France. Read in this regressive stage of the argument, it appears that "the ethical is a constitutive moment of the historical action – that of creation/discovery (*invention*) and that this moment presents itself as a *pure ethics* by opposing history, that is to say, realizing certain ends regardless of their historical consequences" (MH 361). The unconditionality shows itself in my willingness to pursue this end or die trying. The nonnegotiables of life and death underscore the absoluteness of the action at hand. (The battle may be lost but I still have my honor.) The point of this regressive analysis was "to put in relief the necessity of establishing the bases of a dialectic of ethics and history as soon as the ethical appears and in practice claims to be the essence of praxis" (MH 386).

To recapitulate briefly his argument thus far, the dialectical interchange just described would yield a historical action that was moral and a moral action that was historical. This seems to be his vision of the "revolution": as the threshold whereby the practico-inert deviation is checked, if not completely destroyed, by socioeconomic changes (history) that render possible the "free future" that guides all action insofar as it aims to an absolute end. This would constitute the end of prehistory (in the Marxist sense), the dawning of one truth of History (with a Hegelian *H*, as in the *Critique*), the emergence of "integral man" out of subhumanity, and the advent of "the ethical" in its full sense.

Such a line of analysis leaves us with the question whether it is a utopian dream, the expression of unrelenting optimism or a pessimistic *adieu*. Or perhaps, as Sartre suggested at the close of *Saint Genet*, the reconciliation of the physical violence, moral evil, callous exploitation

and oppression that scarcity (and human agents) have inflicted on human history as we know it – whether, in sum, the contradiction between Ethics and History can be resolved, *be it only once and in the realm of the imaginary* (*SG* 599). This remains a lingering option not to be ignored.[47] The imaginary is emerging as both a beacon of hope and a counsel of despair.

"4. The Paradox of the Ethos"

Sartre's second ethics might well have been called the ethics of paradox, except that the paradoxical nature of ethics had been a staple in his philosophical diet for years. As early as *What is Literature?* (1948) he reflects:

> The contemplation of beauty might well arouse in us the purely formal intention of treating men as ends, but this intention would reveal itself to be utterly futile in practice, since the fundamental structures of our society are still oppressive. Such is the present *paradox of ethics* . . . For good will is not possible in this age, or rather, it can only be the *intention* of making goodwill possible.
>
> (*WL* 221–223, emphasis added)

As we have seen, the ethical paradox is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon. In this progressive section of his argument, Sartre is considering the mediating factors that will bring this paradox to a head. This is a concrete issue, even if it does not so much resolve the paradox as enable us to live with its ambiguity, ideally in a creative manner. Juliette Simont states the matter concisely: "Historicity of ends, inert permanence of ethical action," this is what Sartre, under various descriptions, has called the "ethical paradox" (CSC 51). As we saw in the Rome lecture, it is a matter of transcending (*dépasser*) the historical givens of a society or tradition that are repetitious or inert, closing off the possibility of pursuing an "open future." This echoes the abiding mantra of Sartrean existentialism: "You can always make something out of what you've been made into" – even as it recalls Sartre's ontological dualism of spontaneity and inertia.

[47] See CSC 48, and *Saint Genet*, cited above in Chapter 11 page 299.

Still Simont raises an important objection: can this unconditionality apply equally to what Sartre considers inauthentic ethics, such as Kantian deontology or Marxist amoral realism? She sees this as "the point of non-return for Sartre's reflections on ethics and the reason why he abandoned the project," namely, "that the unconditional of the free ethics hits the wall of inertia and, worse, shows itself to be that very wall of inertia itself. The paradox of ethics," she warns, "could well come from the fact that a human product (*une chose ouvrée*) presents itself to freedom as its law, and from the fact that the very unconditional is after all the thing (*la chose*) in its inert imperatives" (CSC 51).

"5. Paradox and Marxist Structuralism"

Reference to "the thing" reminds one of the "machine" of Stalinist Communism, so berated in Eastern Europe in the 1950s and 1960s. Of course, its connotation expanded worldwide to include capitalism and the "military-industrial complex" in the 1960s, but Simont's reference (and Sartre's) is probably to so-called structuralist Marxism (Louis Althusser) or Marxist structuralism (Claude Lévi-Strauss). Sartre's claim is that structuralism and history are polar opposites; their approach to ethics is to offer abstractions, like the "codes" of texts or the "kinship trees" for permissible marriage in a particular tribe. Whether Sartre's understanding of structuralism is accurate (and he did respect structural causality – which is one role of the practico-inert), he continues robustly to defend free organic praxis from its perceived attacks.

Sartre's third, "Dialogical" ethics

We have previewed some features of Sartre's third ethics in his interview with Leo Fretz. His remarks in the Schilpp interview confirm the change of perspective that is evident in the conversations between Sartre and Benny Lévy, his young friend and secretary, that we are about to examine in detail. Both Raymond Aron and Simone de Beauvoir, in a rare confluence of opinion, expressed shock at the three essays that were serialized in the major weekly *Le Nouvel Observateur*, presenting the initial fruit of these exchanges. They saw the interview as an aggressive

young man in the process of moving from his early revolutionary Maoism to the strictures of his rediscovered Orthodox Jewish faith, taking advantage of a blind and failing old man.[48]

Lévy, of course, has a different opinion on the matter, which he expressed in a "Final Word" to the revised published volume of these essays.[49] But however one interprets the texts in dispute, it is clearly a hermeneutical challenge that has yet to be resolved. The majority of the tapes of their conversations were in Lévy's possession when he died of cancer in Israel years later, and remain unavailable, which only adds to the complexity of the matter.

What I hope to accomplish in the concluding portion of this chapter is to summarize the basic claims that Sartre introduces in support of the "Dialogical" ethics, to determine what is novel about them in comparison with his previous writings when he was unhampered by blindness and possibly weakened mental powers, and to offer a plausible assessment of the nature and significance of these differences.

Respecting his view of his own apparent contradictions, Sartre remarked: "I've changed like everyone: within a permanence."[50] What remained constant within these fluctuations was the conviction that "History has no reality except by human praxis; it makes men only to

[48] Though Lévy abandoned his Maoist alias, Pierre Victor, in favor of his family name, Benny Lévy some time after the interchange with Sartre and Gavi, published as *On a raison de se révolter*, Beauvoir insisted on calling him "Victor" to the end of her life. Her criticisms and that of the "family" of *Les Temps Modernes* were substantive as to the incompatibility of the thinker interviewed in *Hope Now* and the man whose thought they knew, or thought they knew, so well over the years. An example is Aron's reported challenge to Lévy on television after Sartre's death: "Sartre always chose to think against himself. But this was never done to flounder in easy answers. This vague and flabby philosophy that Victor ascribes to him doesn't suit him at all." (*Cér* 151 and note). But some of the arguments were shockingly *ad hominem*, as Beauvoir's quote attests: "Victor did not express any of his opinions directly; he made Sartre assume them while he, by virtue of who knows what revealed truth, played the part of prosecuting attorney. His tone, the arrogant superiority that he adopted with Sartre, outraged all the friends who saw the text before it was published" (*Cér* 150). Bernard-Henri Lévy offers a more sympathetic account of Benny Lévy's role in this controversy. See his *Sartre, The Philosopher of the Twentieth Century*, trans. Andrew Brown (Cambridge: Polity , 2003), Epilogue, 476–502.

[49] See *Hope*. Those interested in pursuing the matter in his defense should consult the following: Lévy, *Pouvoir et liberté*; Benny Lévy, "La Double posterité de Sartre," in *La Cérémonie de naissance* (Paris: Verdier, 2005), 113–119; and Benny Lévy, *Le Nom de l'homme* (Paris: Verdier, 1984).

[50] Quoted by "L'Exigence" 558.

the extent that they make it by surpassing (*dépassement*) what it has made of them."[51] Again, this is an expression of what I've been calling "the primacy of *praxis*" in Sartre's later philosophy; it pervades his earlier thought under another name (individual freedom and responsibility).

The basic claims

Unlike his earlier remarks on the topic, this dialogical ethics is the product of a conversation between two allegedly independent thinkers. It is more open-ended than conclusive, despite several agreed-upon principles and conclusions. It remains "socialist" in orientation, building on the social ontology of the *Critique* as does the dialectical ethics, but is less concerned about phenomenological insights with its distinctions between the certain and the merely probable nature of its claims. Of course, if the two previous attempts were incomplete, this one was barely begun. The unifying concept of dialectic is scarcely mentioned. In that respect, *Power and Freedom* resembles the lecture, "Existentialism is a Humanism" in being a series of insights (*aperçus*) rather than an extended argument. Despite that feature or perhaps because of it, the work is quite suggestive, serving to enrich as well as challenge the claims made in the previous undertakings.

A further claim is this: "I don't believe that the relationship of production is the primary one." Rather, the family relationship is the primary social relationship (*Hope* 86). Relegating socioeconomic considerations to second place by comparison with the relative autonomy of ethical considerations saves Sartre's position from being dismissed as "idealist" in character, as the *Notebooks* were. But its reference to "moral consciousness" or *conscience* (what John Locke called "the internal forum") brings it back into the mainstream of moral philosophy as commonly understood – and that, I believe, is news.

What is distinctive about this approach

As an ethic of the "We," it is plural rather than singular in its number and thus generates alternatives and tensions in its expression. Lest one

[51] Cited ibid., 559. This echoes a similar remark made in the *Critique*: "The men history makes are never entirely those needed to make history" (*CDR* II:221). See *BEM* 35.

see the plural as an invitation to a totalizing dialectic, the "We" underscores its "dialogical" nature. The ethic seems satisfied with agreement rather than bent on knock-down demonstrations.

When asked what he means today by "ethics" (*La morale*), Sartre responds: "there is a *dimension of obligation* in each consciousness, a kind of *requisitioning* that goes beyond the real; a kind of inner constraint that is a dimension of consciousness (*conscience*) . . . And that for me," he adds, "is the beginning of the moral . . . In my opinion, each consciousness has this *moral dimension* that one never analyzes but which I would like us to analyze." After explaining that this self-consciousness is also consciousness-for-another, he adds the insightful remark that this self considering itself as self for-the-other (*soi-même pour l'autre*) "is what I call conscience [(la conscience morale]."[52] Not coincidentally, it bears a distinctively Levinassian mark. Benny Lévy was especially interested in the work of Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas during his "Orthodox" years. Bernard-Henri Lévy concludes his assessment of this controversy with the assertion that "the last Sartre . . . was a Levinassian obviously, indisputably and profoundly."[53]

The differences, their nature and significance

These can be summarized briefly in three remarks from *Hope Now*, each of which challenges or at least qualifies his previous positions.

First, "obligation" now emerges as the specific feature of moral consciousness (as Sartre admits, this is a difficult term which he refuses to define but which seems roughly synonymous with "exigence," "requisition," and "inner constraint" (*Hope* 69–71). It is significant that Sartre fails to mention the terms "unconditional" or even "norm," though they were essential to his dialectical ethic. In fact, the term "dialectic" is missing from the index of the book.

Second, the issue of humanism recurs when Sartre simply denies that he is a humanist. In fact, he speaks of moving "beyond" humanism,

[52] Cited by "L'Exigence" 567–568. This mélange of lines from the articles in *Le Nouvel observateur* recur in *Hope*, on pages 69–71. As Van den Hoven remarks in the translator's note, "It must not be forgotten that Benny Lévy made a significant number of changes and additions to the version published in book form as *L'Espoir maintenant*" (43). In this case, however, the quotations in the book faithfully render the journal article.

[53] Lévy, *Sartre. The Philosopher of the Twentieth Century*, 495.

much as he had spoken in *Search for a Method* of moving beyond Marxism at some future time. His reasons are the usual ones – its association with bourgeois values, class identity and racism. But then he restates his position, admits that we are all "submen," and speaks of a presumably "true" or "authentic" humanism as something to be achieved:

> If one considers living beings as finished, closed totalities, humanism is not possible in our time. If, on the other hand, one considers that these submen have in them principles that are human – which is to say, that basically they have certain seeds in them that tend toward man and that are in advance of the very being that is the subman – then, we can describe as humanism the act of thinking about the relationship of man to man in terms of the principles that prevail today. Essentially, ethics is a matter of one person's relationship to another.
>
> (*Hope* 68)

When Benny Lévy interjects that Marx too said that in the end man would be truly whole (integral?), Sartre deftly uncovers the Machiavellian assumption latent in that claim: "Ah, well, yes, but that's absurd. It is precisely the human side that already exists in the subman, precisely those principles that tend toward the human being, that forbid his being used as raw material or as a means in order to achieve an end. *Ethics begins exactly at that point*" (*Hope* 69, emphasis added). He elaborates: "We experience humanism only as what is best in us, in other words, our striving to live beyond ourselves in a society of human beings. We can prefigure people in that way through our best acts" (*Hope* 69). That goal called "humanity" (as an achievement word) will be realized when we have "true fraternity," understood as the actualization of our "self for the other" (*soi-même pour l'autre*), which is precisely what Sartre calls conscience (*la conscience morale*),[54] a truly remarkable expression in its implicit correction of the socially handicapped ontology of *BN*.

Then occurs the quiet existential contradiction that has been the Achilles heel of all three Sartrean attempts at an ethics. It can be summarized as "fraternity versus terror," and is perhaps the major flaw in his sketch for a theory, as he finally confesses:

> So there are two approaches, and both are human but seem not to be compatible; yet we must try to live them both at the same time. There is the effort, all other

[54] "L'Exigence" 568.

conditions aside, to create Humanity, to engender Humanity; this is the ethical relationship. And there is the struggle against scarcity.

(*Hope* 91)

"To tell you the truth," he admits, "I still don't clearly see the real relationship between violence and fraternity" (*Hope* 93). Two obstacles he finds especially pressing. An adequate definition of fraternity without terror has yet to be achieved before we can tackle the fraternity-terror issue itself.[55] And in the meantime, as Lévy puts it, "If the idea of revolution becomes identified with the idea of terrorism, it's done for" (*Hope* 96).

Sartre's third attempt at an ethics seems stalled or balanced precariously between these two existential promises and threats. If the ethic of authenticity in the *Notebooks* exploited the nonobjectifying model of the aesthetic gift, the Dialectical ethics faced the unpleasant challenge of constructing a method to achieve such a society where positive reciprocity could be realized. The third attempt harkens back, if only out of hope in the face of despair, to the *imaginary*, as our sole possible resource foreshadowed so starkly in *Saint Genet*.[56]

Let us conclude our discussion of Sartre's three attempts at sketching an ethical theory with his words in memory of his former friend and colleague, Albert Camus. In view of the foregoing reflections in this chapter and earlier, they could easily have served as his own epitaph:

He represented in this century and against History the current heir to that long line of moralists whose work constitutes perhaps what is most original in French letters. His stubborn humanism, narrow and pure, austere and sensual, battled against the massive and deformed events of the day. But inversely, by the persistence of his refusal, against Machiavellians, against the golden calf of realism, he reaffirmed the existence of moral fact at the heart of our age.

(*Sit* IV:127)

[55] See *Hope* 80.

[56] See above, Chapter 11.

15

Existential biography: Flaubert and others

Toward the end of his biography of Jean Genet, Sartre pauses to issue the following warning to anyone considering a similar task:

> In a good critical work, we will find a good deal of information about the author who is being criticized and some information about the critic. The latter, moreover, is so obscure and blurred that it has to be interpreted in the light of all that we know about him.[1]

Sartre's caveat to the contrary notwithstanding, his critical biographies yield a considerable amount of information about the critic himself. Still, his caution that a necessary condition for avoiding the "obscurity and blur" of this information is that it be interpreted in the light of *all* that we know about him invokes an ideal that is clearly impossible to attain. Of course, the caution is Hegelian in tone: anything less than the whole truth is false.[2] Without venturing along that dark path, let us be satisfied with the insights, less than complete but cumulatively informative, that the previous chapters afford us as we begin to read Sartre's interpretation of three giants of nineteenth-century French literature. Our goal is to "totalize" these studies and the earlier chapters, in our reading of his

[1] *SG* 563 n.

[2] Consider Hegel's famous and famously misinterpreted claim: "The truth is the whole" ("Die Wahrheit ist, die ganze," *Phenomenology of Spirit* § 384). On this account, anything less, if not false, is at least inadequate. What William James might have called the "weasel word" in this case is "only." Recall the fable of the six blind people describing an elephant. The moral of the story was that they were correct in their affirmatives but wrong in their negatives (their exclusions: "It's only like a tree trunk, a snake, a fan, etc." depending on the part of the animal that each was touching).

massive Flaubert "biography" as a summation of his metaphysical, aesthetic, political and ethical pursuits described and analyzed in the previous chapters.

The end of the story? Scarcely, as the lively dispute over Sartre's "dialogical" ethics reminds us. But we are seeking a perspective from which to interpret a life, while keeping to a minimum the "obscurity and blur" that threatens a briefer inquiry. Remember that Sartre's "totalization" is a process word. Of course, employing his distinction between totality and totalization, we could regard his former life as a "totality" subject to our totalizing accounts. As *Being and Nothingness* warns and *No Exit* dramatizes, "the dead are prey to the living."

Baudelaire: an essay on bad faith

This existential biography, written in 1944, appeared in print in 1947 (also the year in which Sartre's *What is Literature?* was serialized in *Les Temps Modernes* and was dedicated to Jean Genet, whose biography Sartre would publish five years later. Sartre never liked his short book or its subject.[3] Originally conceived as an introduction to Baudelaire's *Intimate Writings*, just as the Genet volume was intended to introduce his collected works, this essay "caused a scandal and was violently attacked on all sides."[4] In short, Sartre was rather cavalierly dishonoring one of the icons of French poetry. Beauvoir explained:

> Of course, Sartre was still far from having understood the fecundity of the dialectical idea and of Marxist materialism; the works he published that year are proof of that. His study of Baudeaire's *écrits intimes* written two years earlier, is a phenomenological description; it lacks the psychoanalytical dimension that would have explained Baudelaire on the basis of his body and the facts of his life . . . [Alluding to "Materialism and Revolution," published two months after *Baudelaire*, she

[3] When asked by an interviewer from the *New Left Review* about his book on Baudelaire, Sartre, joined his critics in responding that the book was "very inadequate, an extremely bad one" (*BEM* 42). Still, it does exhibit what one critic called a "dynamic potency" (Michael Scriven, *Sartre's Existential Biographies* [New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984], 119; hereafter *EB*).

[4] Contat and Rybalka II:147. The eminent Baudelaire scholar Georges Blin remarks perceptively: "One often asks whether Sartre, playing the inquisitor rather than the investigator, is not taking up the Baudelaire case to provide the example that a judgment of guilty would furnish a preface to a future treatise on ethics" (George Blin, *Le Sadisme de Baudelaire* [Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1948], 123).

continues] he indicated what status revolution necessarily and effectively grants the idea of freedom. At that point his line of thought stopped short, for he had not determined the freedom-in-situation relation and was even more vacillating about history.[5]

In effect, she is claiming that the combination of existential psychoanalysis formulated in *BN* the year before and of historical materialism built on an expanded notion of being-in-situation elaborated in his writing of the late 1940s and early 1950s would yield an account of the artist's concrete "choice" of the imaginary (the *irreal*). That choice was already present in the Baudelaire study, though in bad faith,[6] problematically functioning in the *Mallarmé*,[7] clearly articulated in *Saint Genet* as we saw in Chapter 11, and fully realized in *The Family Idiot*. This, at least, is my development of her remark and the thesis of this chapter.

Since the Baudelaire was written the year after *BN* was published, it comes as no surprise that the philosophical core of this essay is the metaphysics of that work.[8] That is both its strength and its limitation. In his valedictory interview with Beauvoir, Sartre acknowledged that his interest in criticism was primarily metaphysical: "Basically, my critique looked for the metaphysics through the [author's] technique. When I found that metaphysics, then I was satisfied. I truly grasped the totality of the work . . . His way of seeing the world" (*Cér* 269).

Of course, his interest is not only metaphysical. Sartre's diagnosis of his version of the "progressive-regressive" method in *Search for a Method* assures us: "Everything took place in childhood" (*SM* 59–60). There his example was Flaubert. But when the example is the marriage of Baudelaire's mother to General Aupick – a perceived betrayal similar

5 Beauvoir, *Force of Circumstance*, 44–45, emended; F 56–57. The English translation omits the hyphen between "freedom" and "situation" that Beauvoir employs and on which Sartre insisted, when he claimed on several occasions that human reality is concretely free only "in situation." That omission leaves the expression "freedom situation relation" weaker or even unintelligible. I characterize Sartre's critical style in this work as "rather cavalier" in view of his famous jibe at François Mauriac early in his career: "God is not an artist. Neither is Monsieur Mauriac" ("François Mauriac and Freedom," *LPE* 25).

6 *Baudelaire* (Paris: Idées/Gallimard, 1963), 101 and 125; hereafter *B*.

7 See *M* 86–87.

8 As we explained earlier, despite the clear distinction between metaphysics and ontology that he draws in *BN* and occasionally elsewhere, Sartre often uses the terms interchangeably. I shall do the same when describing the conceptual structure of his arguments and the fundamental terms of his theories, respecting the distinction when he actually employs it.

to Sartre's view of his mother's "abandonment" of him by marrying Joseph Mancy – the parallel (see *EB* 47) is striking, though less surprising in view of what had become a matter of methodological principle for Sartre whenever the evidence was available.

Beauvoir claimed that Sartre's favorite fantasy as a child and adolescent was that of "the *poète maudit* (misunderstood by all during his lifetime and struck by fame's lightning only beyond the grave)."[9] In his introductory note to Sartre's study, Michel Leiris, the editor in charge of poetry for *LTM*, calls Baudelaire "the quasi legendary prototype of the 'poète maudit.'"[10] But for our purposes, what matters is to see how Sartre's reading of the poet exhibits the newly fashioned ontology/metaphysics of *BN*, specifically the ontological conditions for his basic category of disvalue which he called "bad faith." We know that the most common form of such self-deception consists in denying our ontological make-up, our freedom and responsibility: that is, collapsing our transcendence into our facticity, our existence into our being, in the futile attempt to be what we are in the inert way that a stone is a stone. George Bauer observes that "[Sartre's] evaluation of Baudelaire's life and work is ferociously negative because he finds in *Les Fleurs du Mal* a basis for his interpretation of the poet's quest for permanency in the myth of bronze and marble."[11] Echoing Roquentin in *Nausea*, Sartre's Baudelaire is seeking salvation from an anguished contingency in the work of art, the irreal. In Baudelaire's case, this occurs in the extreme: making his life into a (physical) poem – an imaginary construct and a style of life. This is the incarnation of the "futile passion" that defines human reality in *BN*: Baudelaire chooses to be a "*freedom-thing*" (*B* 84). This suggests Sartre's remark in *BN*: "One puts oneself in bad faith as one goes to sleep and one is in bad faith as one dreams" (*BN* 68; *EN* 109). Here he insists that Baudelaire's "bad faith is so deep that he is no longer its master" (*B* 103) – no longer but, presumably, he once was in charge, hence the bad faith. Still, this is but one of numerous claims, increasing in frequency as "lived experience" (*le vécu*) replaces

9 Beauvoir, *Force of Circumstance*, 41.

10 *B* 9. Stéphane Mallarmé received "official" recognition by being one of three poets presented in the first edition of Paul Verlaine's *Poètes maudits* (1884) while Baudelaire was not included until the next edition (1888).

11 George Howard Bauer, *Sartre and the Artist* (University of Chicago Press, 1969),166; hereafter Bauer.

"consciousness" in Sartre's works, that betray a sense of something like the unconscious invading his theory.[12]

How, then, is Baudelaire to escape this lived contradiction between being and existence, "the intolerable feeling of being *de trop* in the world" (*B* 241), an emotion Sartre designates "metaphysical anguish" (*M* 145)? Suicide, Sartre suggests, is always an option for Baudelaire, but it would destroy the contradiction without resolving it (in this respect Beaudelaire anticipates Camus in the next century). Perhaps a poetic objectification of his being in his own eyes and in the eyes of others might save him from his contingency. In Sartre's terms Baudelaire "chose *to exist* for himself as he *was* for others" in their memories (*B* 243, emphasis his). In effect, it was the being-in-itself (what Sartre would later call the practico-inert) of the past that enabled Baudelaire to live the contradiction that his bad faith entailed: namely, to be a freedom-thing – "I am another" (*je suis un autre*) (*B* 24).

Sartre calls this symbolic expression of the impossible synthesis of freedom and thing, the Baudelairian "poetic fact" or the "spiritual," denoting his particular way of sustaining the poem (or his dandyish manner of living) midway between being and nothingness, presence and absence (*B* 220). In view of Sartre's earlier characterization of the aesthetic object (the imaginary) as possessing the specific quality of "presence-absence," it seems likely that Sartre's poets, and the poetic way of existing generally, are beings of the imaginary, however "realist" they may purport to be. This is true of Baudelaire, "who reads himself in the eyes of others and delights in the *irreal* of that imaginary portrait . . . [This original choice] implies an extraordinary, constant concern with the opinion of others" (*B* 193, emphasis added). From the beginning to the end of his essay, Sartre has not lost sight of this self-defining "choice" that creates and sustains Baudelaire the poet in his singularity as the author of just these works. "The free choice that a man makes of himself is identified absolutely with what one calls his destiny" (*B* 245). Sartre's aim is to uncover the necessity that inhabits the contingency of the lives of each of his subjects as they "choose" to become what he reveals they are (destined to be).

[12] In view of Pontalis's observation about Sartre's love/hate relation with the Freudian unconscious, we shall note such shifting tendencies as they occur.

Mallarmé: the shadowy side of lucidity

Sartre's study of Mallarmé,[13] considered one of his masterpieces, is one of the large number of torsos scattered across the landscape of his published work.[14] In his last interview with Beauvoir, he claims that "around two hundred pages" of the Mallarmé study were lost – perhaps in the explosion and confusion that followed the second bombing of his residence by the OAS during the Algerian revolution.[15] She confirmed this: "Oh yes! There were very detailed explanations of all of Mallarmé's poems."[16] Sartre presumably drew on that unpublished research when he answered Michel Sicard's question about his fascination with Mallarmé's later works, such as *Un Coup de dés* (*A Throw of the Dice*), which involved spectacular typographical arrangements: "Yes, I was amazed by that. But though I like "*Un coup de dés*," it is still Mallarmé's "classical" poetry that especially pleases me; that is, the alexandrine or octosyllabic verses joined in sonnets or otherwise. There is where Mallarmé presents his essential self."[17] In other words, Sartre's assessments are made from a careful reading of the works under consideration, though he seems as coolly disposed to spatialized poetry as he is to some forms of contemporary music, despite his quite positive view of abstract painting and the plastic arts.[18]

[13] Arlette Elkaïm-Sartre, who edited this volume, used this passage from the text as the subtitle of the French edition: *La Lucidité et sa face d'ombre* (*The Shadowy Side of Lucidity)*.

[14] For a brief discussion of his uncompleted works, see Michel Sicard (ed.), "Sartre," *Obliques* nos. 18–19 (1979): 13b.

[15] Organisation de l'armée secrète (OAS): the group using armed struggle to resist the Algerian revolution. They called for Sartre's execution as a traitor and on two occasions detonated a bomb at the entrance to his apartment. After the second explosion, Sartre never returned to his residence; he left it to others to salvage whatever materials he had left behind.

[16] *Cér* 234. She speaks of his having written "several hundred pages [on Mallarmé] that he afterwards lost" (*Force of Circumstance*, 162 n.; F 179 n.).

[17] Sicard, "Sartre," 9b. Later in the interview, Sartre admits that it was only later on that he discovered "the spatial order proper to Mallarmé on which he has never written" (20b).

[18] See Bauer, chapters 5, 6, and appendix "Music and Musicians." On Sartre's early love affair with jazz, especially with its improvisations, see Michel Contat's entry "Jazz" in *Dictionnaire Sartre*, ed. François Noudlemann and Gilles Philippe (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2004), 260, and Michel Sicard, *Dictionnaire Sartre*, s.v. "Musique," 339. Gifted with a fine baritone voice, the young Sartre even dreamt of being a jazz singer (Hayman, *Writing Against*, 42). The most helpful collection of interviews with Sartre and essays by others on his relation to the fine arts appears in *Sartre et les Arts*, a special issue of *Obliques* nos. 24–25 (1981); hereafter *Obliques-Arts*. See also François Noudelmann, *The Philosopher's Touch: Sartre, Nietzsche and Barthes at the Piano*, trans. Brian J. Reilly (New York: Columbia University

Michael Scriven argues that in all his biographies (his "biographical project"), Sartre aims to promote and exhibit "the belief that the value of literature is to be found not in its institutionalized status within a sacrosanct literary tradition but in its ability to disturb the consciousness of the contemporary reader."[19] To the extent that the artwork holds a critical mirror to society, one could say that Sartre is engaged in a kind of "committed" literature even prior to *What is Literature?* The creation of the imaginary object, the *irréal*, for instance, depends on the cooperation of two consciousnesses (author and reader/audience) to "derealize" the analogon in an attitude that suspends our disbelief (the canonical expression) and opens us to questioning the "reality" that we otherwise take for granted.

No doubt the aesthetic attitude must be sensitized to moral values and disvalues to achieve Sartre's goal of commitment. Admittedly, this is redolent of the "idealist" perspective that he will later reject, once he has discovered the dialectic of historical materialism that is so evident in his Flaubert study. But it does not preclude the possibility that the properly "aesthetic" suspension, a refinement of the phenomenological *epochē*, may open the door to critical assessment based on other criteria. In fact, a moral dimension is clearly present in Sartre's claim that theater, literature in general and the writings of Flaubert in particular exercise the function of "uncovering" (*dévoilement*) our bad faith, our "mystification."[20]

Press, 2012). Expressing his dislike for "noise" made by "sound effects" introduced into contemporary orchestral pieces, Sartre affirmed his preference for the "classical" over the avant-garde when it came to making "music." His generation, he admits, sees music as the art of sounds, whereas "contemporary artists conceive of music as the art of noise, sound being one noise among others introduced at a certain moment but capable of being replaced by [more] noise." Insisting that he is not opposed to new and creative music (for example, he likes serial music and the works of composers like Schönberg, Webern, Berg and Boulez), he wonders what has become of beauty in these new art forms. "I no longer know what this new beauty is; do they even care about it any more?" (*Obliques-Arts*, 243b–244a.). Remember his preference for the early, "classical" poetry of Mallarmé over the spatialized arrangements of *The Throw of the Dice* (*Le Coup de dés*) which attracted more linguistically oriented philosophers like Foucault.

[19] Scriven, *EB* 123.

[20] See Christina Howells, *Sartre's Theory of Literature* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 1979), index, s.v. *Dévoilement*. The expression "unveiling" or "uncovering," as a translation of "Truth" in the Greek "*alētheia*" (Heidegger's "uncoveredness"), appears throughout Heidegger's work, and not just in the French translation of his *Vom Wesen der*

One could call this a Janus-faced view of aesthetic critique – namely, that the tilt of *l'art pour l'art* toward aestheticism can be corrected, once it is seen that "art for art's sake" carries within itself the seeds of its own critical relevance if pursued to its extreme of indifference in the face of socioeconomic exploitation, oppressive practices and gratuitous violence. It may satisfy itself with "shocking the bourgeoisie" as did *les poètes maudits*, or subjecting their values and institutions to a cynical laugh, as did Flaubert, or by issuing in a kind of disgust with the impotence of art itself in the face of oppression and exploitation, as with Sartre's famous turn from imaginative literature to direct political action in the 1960s.[21] In other words, the close interrelation between the good and the beautiful, first invoked in classical antiquity and later reintroduced with Kant, is arguably haunting Sartre in *What is Literature?* and in these biographies as well. Witness his admission to PierreVerstraeten in 1965, that the ethical and the concrete universal coalesce in a domain larger than that of language.[22]

In a 1975 interview, Roland Barthes credits Sartre with effecting a fundamental change in the status of Literature with a capital *L*:

> There is a man ... who is situated at the exact point of historical disintegration of literature. This man is Sartre. There can be little doubt that he has exercised an extremely influential kind of cultural and literary leadership, and continues to do so; yet since, as it happens, his work may be defined as a destruction of the affectation of literary prose, he has accordingly made an important contribution to the destruction of the myth of literature.[23]

And one might add that he thereby strengthened the case for committed literature.

Wahrheit, which occasioned Sartre's *Truth and Existence*. As a sign of the Heideggerian presence in Beauvoir's thought as well, consider her use of the term in "man also wills himself to be a disclosure of being" (*Ethics of Ambiguity*, 23, 12, 30, 80).

[21] See *Words* 212; F 159, for a similar realization ascribed to Flaubert: "And the Latins' greatest fault lay in failing to understand that their reign was only a moment of history, that their slogan 'power to the imagination' was merely a mystification; for the imagination is in principle *powerless* and its advent had not produced an abeyance of reality but, in fact, corresponded to their determination to ignore reality, and particularly their own insertion in universal reality" (*FI* v:552; *IF* iii:593).

[22] *Sit* ix, "L'Écrivant et sa langue," 74. On the wider extension of the "philosophical concrete universal" than language, see pages 62–76.

[23] "Radioscopie: Roland Barthes," interview with Jacques Chancel, 17 Feb. 1975, in Jacques Chancel, *Radioscopie* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1976), 255–256, cited in *EB* 20.

The two-pronged nature of Sartre's biographical method – namely, the co-presence of existential psychoanalysis and historical materialism – is moving more into the foreground in this work. As the translator of the text remarks: "Sartre insists that Mallarmé's singular *poesis* grew out of a series of conscious choices exercised on the basis of prior conditions. Sartre does not minimize the immense weight of these conditions or the strenuous efforts required to overcome them."[24] This problem of the "given" and the "taken" in each existential situation, which had already been introduced in *Anti-Semite and Jew*, remains as problematic as it is essential to Sartre's growing sense of the historical dimension of any concrete existence. We shall return to it in detail in *The Family Idiot*.

Of the many features that mark Sartre's approach to these texts,[25] let us note three topics that seem especially important for our study of Sartrean biography in the light of his ontology, aesthetic interest, moral thought and political commitment. We find each of these categories enlisted in a way that expands and refines their application in our previous chapters. This will be especially evident in his Flaubert volumes to which we shall turn shortly, but it is worth considering them in regard to the Mallarmé study because they mark an advance and an opening of topics that will be considered at much greater length in Sartre's massive biography of Flaubert.

Objective spirit

This Hegelian term is absent from the Baudelaire piece, probably because that text was written before Sartre began his serious rereading of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and two years before Hyppolite's two-volume commentary on that classic appeared (1946). Sartre offers two descriptions of "objective spirit." On the one hand, he offers a semantic description: objective spirit is "the medium for the circulation of

[24] *M* 9.

[25] Actually, the book consists of two texts. The first, "Engagement de Mallarmé" ("Mallarmé or the Poet of Nothingness"), comprises two parts, called by its editor Arlette Elkaïm-Sartre "Les Héritiers de l'Athéisme" ("The Atheist Heritage") and "L'Élu" ("The Chosen") respectively. The second text is a concise entry in an anthology simply entitled in French "Mallarmé (1842–1898)," but in English "Requiem for a Poet." The latter appears in slightly altered form in *Sit* IX.

significations" (*CDR* I:776). On the other, he employs a term from the *Critique* to describe objective spirit ontologically as "culture as practico-inert" (*FI* III:44). These features were shared by Mallarmé's entire generation: "The incestuous eroticism, the taste for failure and for non-Being, the desperate idealism, the Manicheanism, the preciocity, the nihilism: these themes pervade the *objective spirit* of the period, and all of them express the historical and social connection as much as, if not more than, the history of a particular individual."[26] Again, it is the family which mediates that objective spirit and its concrete incarnation in the individual lives of its members.

Sartre is employing what has emerged as a methodological principle: the relation between the individual and his sociohistorical milieu. It builds on the root concept of "situation" that is introduced in *BN*

[26] *M* 83. For example, he speaks of "the bourgeois brand of Manicheanism known as "distinction" (*M* 37). In *The Communists and Peace*, in the *Critique*, and again in the *Family Idiot*, Sartre cites three generations of industrial families and their behavior as they strive to distinguish themselves from the lower classes. The exchange of calling cards, the Victorian mores, the wearing of uncomfortable clothing to exhibit the importance of self control and the like, Sartre takes as a sign to the workers that they should be more thrifty and rest content with their wages;

> Within this bourgeois Manichean framework the poets transform themselves into pure souls. Their asceticism is the very image of Victorian cant. Never do they resemble the bourgeoisie more closely than when they attempt to set themselves apart from it; for they wish to prove their superiority through denial, through their contempt for life and nature, through negativity; whereas the bourgeoisie, unable to ground its privileges in Being, claims to distinguish itself from the people by means of self-inflicted privations and taboos, that is, through Negation. This *fin de siècle* poetry holds itself up as a mirror in which the ghosts of defunct aristocrats can admire themselves. But what it really reflects, despite itself, is the image of the great industrial and commercial families. (*M* 56)

This genealogical argument is a favorite of Sartre's, whether to critique the generations of industrialist capitalist families (in *The Critique* and *The Communists and Peace*) or to be pursued in tandem with the generations of poets and novelists, as we see here and will observe again in the Flaubert study. Again, there is a common infection that afflicts these three authors. Its symptoms are a misanthropy, a self-hatred that ends in a negative relation to humanity in general, a metaphysics of pessimism, and an anti-Semitism. "These hollow civil servants are receptacles for the whole society's prejudices. They are its temporary incarnation" (*M* 59). They imbibe the objective spirit of their time, especially their status in the generational genealogy and their relation to the Second Empire with which they sustain a love/hate relation: attacking its mores while seeking its favors: Baudelaire seeking public recognition, Mallarmé in pursuit of the civil servant's pension, and Flaubert coveting the rosette of the Legion of Honor, which he refused to wear after the debacle of Sedan where the French Army was defeated wholesale and Napoleon himself captured by the Prussians.

but becomes more marked as the key to his emerging social ontology in "Materialism and Revolution." In the Flaubert study, let us call it "the principle of totalization," namely that "a man – whoever he is – totalizes his epoch to the precise degree that he is totalized by it."[27] This is the perfect vehicle for gaining an understanding of the author and his time. In Sartre's hands, it demands a "dialectical" relationship that is more than just the endless back-and-forth of Hegel's "bad infinite" or the circle of Genet's "tourniquet." Sartre's claim is that "personalization" advances in spirals that interiorize and exteriorize the situation in which the agent finds himself (*SM* 106). But Sartre remains committed to the primacy of free organic praxis, lest he get stuck in the mire of historicism. So he insists in the *Critique* that "The men history makes are never entirely those needed to make history" (*CDR* II:221). This is an expanded version of his existentialist mantra: "We can always make something out of what we've been made into." But both sayings call for serious refinement when encountering "objective impossibility" such as Heinrich faced in *The Devil and the Good Lord*. This brings us to the next theme.

Pessimistic metaphysics

This is the antihumanist ghost that stalks Sartre's personal optimism. It reappeared in his Dialogical Ethics, *Hope Now.* We find it at work in all three writers (and also in Genet, which we discussed earlier because of the widespread belief that this book was to be Sartre's long-awaited Ethics). It comes down to the claim that a fully human "man" is impossible in our present socioeconomic condition. The best the "system" can produce is a class of "submen" who are structurally exploited and personally oppressed. We have observed this line of argument in *The Communists and Peace* and in the *Critique*.

While this "Marxist" interpretation is Sartre's, the materialist metaphysics that Mallarmé embraced is analytical, not dialectical, and "vaguely Spinozist" in its determinism. On Sartre's reading, the poet's impotence symbolizes man's impossibility. "What is man? A volatile illusion flittering over matter in movement" (*M* 135). In sum,

[27] *FI* V:394; *IF* III:426.

> Mallarmé's pessimistic metaphysics [claims that] within matter – that shapes infinity – there seems to be some deep-seated need to turn back on itself in order to know itself. To shed light on its obscure infinity, matter seems to produce those shreds of fire, those tatters of thought, called man. But infinite dispersion takes hold of the Idea and scatters it. Man and contingency arise simultaneously and engender one another.
>
> (*M* 136)

They are destined to disappear together.

With Mallarmé's "conversion" to critical poetry and the notion of creating a "poem without men" which "must refuse to subordinate words to a preconceived meaning, [it follows that] on the contrary, he must arrange them so that a specific meaning emerges from their juxtaposition" (*M* 138). It appears that the poet in his later work, at least, is anticipating Foucault's famous "death of the author" and its replacement with the "author function," commonly seen as a structuralist move.[28]

The hero in spite of himself

Our third theme is complex and pervasive because it addresses the problem of the unconscious that has plagued Sartre's thought at least since *Being and Nothingness*. Here its focus is Sartre's view of Mallarmé's "conversion." We have mentioned his materialism and the determinism that it entailed. Sartre is alive to the threat of crass materialism, the kind not softened by a dialectic. We see it in his call for the poet-hero or martyr which Mallarmé's generation requires but that his contemporaries cannot produce: "Superstructures which are little more than reflections of the existing social order . . . If such passive objectivity were to be transcended, someone was needed who could internalize it, impose his personal stamp on it, and live out the Paradox in all its contradictions to the point of dying for it" (*M* 64). What is called for is a "dialectic" of interiorization/exteriorization by an artist who will be drawn by "certain

[28] Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?," in Donald Bouchard (ed.), *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), 120. It also gestures toward the "automatic writing" of the surrealists, another reason why Sartre might have preferred the early Mallarmé.

empirical modifications of his environment [which] may lead him to alter his original project" (*M* 97). Such, for Mallarmé, is the death of his mother and his father's remarriage. Sartre sees a more positive poet emerge from this crisis. "No has become transformed into Yes. Since his impotence will not allow him to write poetry, he will write poetry about his impotence" (*M* 117). What Sartre sees as "a constant and silent appeal to authenticity" (*M* 116) might well exemplify a recurrent Sartrean motto: loser wins. Mallarmé decides to write tragedy.

In a note, Sartre used an expression from Mallarmé that Arlette Elkaïm-Sartre added as a subtitle to the published text: "The Shadowy Side of Lucidity" (*La lucidité et sa face d'ombre*). Without explicitly appealing to an unconscious, Sartre sees this "shadowy side" of our consciousness as making the secrets of Mallarmé's life available to an existential "hermeneutic" such as he introduced in *BN*. The following admission is crucial to our sense of Sartre's growing acknowledgment of a quasi-unconscious dimension to our lived experience. We saw this in his open appeal to "lived experience" (*le vécu*) and saw it again in the distinction between knowledge and understanding in his discussion of Flaubert. Now he seems ready to flesh out this concept with the following admission:

> There is, indeed, an unconscious lodged in the heart of consciousness. This is not some obscure power [he continues to caution], for we know full well that consciousness is consciousness through and through; it is *introjected finiteness*. Mallarmé was deeply tormented by things we understand *today* but which were beyond his ken in his own time. "Our aim," he continues, "is to comprehend his images (gaps in his knowledge, biases, unjustified choices, etc.) – in short, the negative features of the poet, rather than the positive characteristics he unwittingly possessed. What he then considered normal or self-evident or natural is no longer so for us now."
>
> (*M* 83 n.)

Let us add this to our list of indicators of what Pontalis called Sartre's "love–hate" relation to psychoanalysis. That list will continue in *The Family Idiot*.

> Hero, prophet, wizard, tragedian – it is fitting that this discreet and effeminate man with little interest in women should die at the threshold of our century; he is its herald. More profoundly than Nietzsche, he experienced the death of God. Long before Camus, he felt that suicide was the fundamental issue facing man. Later, others would take up his ceaseless struggle against contingency without ever going

beyond his lucidity; for his basic question was: "Can we ever find within determinism a way out of it?" Can we reverse *praxis* and rediscover our subjectivity by reducing both the universe and ourselves to objectivity? He systematically applied to Art what was still merely a philosophical principle which later would become a political maxim: "Create and by creating, create yourself"
(*Faire et en faisant se faire*).[29]

Flaubert: the final triumph of the imaginary?

Throughout our investigation we have underscored the decisive presence of the imaginary in Sartre's life and works. It should come as no surprise, then, that he would describe his massive "biography" of Flaubert's life and times as a sequel to *The Imaginary.* The intervening writings exploit this propensity, whether it be his early likening of imaging consciousness to consciousness in general as the locus of negativity, possibility and lack,[30] his appeal to the reconciling of contradictories "if only in the imaginary" (see *SG* 599), his critique of the French Communist Party as lacking imagination, or his pragmatic appeal to the "as if" (*comme si*) as an imaginative reenforcement of his arguments. Accordingly, his "biographies" focus on distinguished artists who "choose" the imaginary dimension to communicate their views and values. It is as if their choices are ours: even if we find ourselves mired in the prosaic world of the factual, the dimension of the imaginary as the realm of negativity, possibility and lack remains poised to challenge and even undermine our received opinions. Such was Sartre's Flaubert, who brought the Sartrean search for the concrete to full term as the singular universal – the choice to create *Madame Bovary*, his alter ego ("Madame Bovary is me").[31] Christina Howells phrased it nicely: "We are witnessing the transformation of the

[29] (*M* 144; F 167). Benjamin Suhl has plausibly proposed this as Sartre's existentialist maxim as well. See Benjamin Suhl, *Jean-Paul Sartre: The Philosopher as Literary Critic* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 264. We noted its role on the positive dimension of Sartre's second ethics.

[30] For an extended treatment of these claims, see Flynn "Role of the Image in Sartre's Aesthetic," 431–442.

[31] Sartre ascribes this to Flaubert's "androgynous" nature, adding: "I'm certainly androgynous (*androgynie*) myself, which is not a flaw" (Catherine Clémont and Bernard Pingaud, interview with Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'Arc* 79 [November 1979]: 37).

kind of imagination evoked in *Madame Bovary* into the kind of imagination which produced *Madame Bovary*."[32]

The argument of The Family Idiot, *volumes* I–IV[33]

Comprising Sartre's overwhelming response to the question "What, at this point in time, can we know about a man?" these volumes offer an object lesson in Sartrean anthropology.[34] He announces the work as a sequel to *Search for a Method*, and to the extent that it makes generous use of the progressive-regressive method, this is a plausible claim. By a subtle and exhaustive use of this method, he examines those childhood and family relations that he believes necessarily mediate socioeconomic conditions and individual projects. Indeed, the practical application of this method should prove to be one of the lasting achievements of this work. In a defensive response to his "Maoist" discussants, Sartre promotes this undertaking as "a socialist work in the sense that, if I succeed, it should enable us to understand men from a socialist point of view."[35]

The starting point for his regressive analysis is Flaubert's protohistory – that is, his early childhood and intrafamilial relations. This phase establishes the crucial fact that Flaubert was constituted capable of merely *passive activity*, a phrase from the *Critique* signifying a subject as "reflector" of others' actions and not a true agent in his own right. "He

[32] Howells, *Sartre's Theory of Literature*, 156.

[33] A typescript of some one hundred and thirty pages of notes seems to be all that is available of the fourth volume. Beauvoir dates its composition to have begun in the fall of 1971 and to have been abandoned with the onset of Sartre's partial blindness in 1973. Arlette Elkaïm-Sartre published "Notes sur *Madame Bovary*" as an *annexe* to the 1988 edition of volume III of *L'Idiot*, 661–823. The opening pages of this material are published along with an English translation by Philippe Hunt and Philip Wood in *Yale French Studies: Sartre after Sartre* no. 68 (1985): 165–188.

[34] *FI* I:ix; *IF* I:7. We noted his project of "Reintroducing Man into Marxism" (*SM* 83). Now, with the three volumes of *L'Idiot* in hand, he assures his Maoists interlocutors, who are skeptical of this digression from direct action: "Let's say that the Flaubert is a concrete application of the abstract principles that I presented in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* to ground the intelligibility of History" (*ORR* 77).

[35] Sartre continues: "I hope that these books belong to a long-term undertaking, that they be part of another culture, a people's culture, on the condition that there be mediations" [presumably lest one slip into the ham-fisted "economism" of party hacks criticized in "Materialism and Revolution"] (*ORR* 73–74).

is deprived *from the start* of the cardinal categories of *Praxis*."[36] Denied his mother's love and his father's preference, young Flaubert reads family romance and sibling rivalry in terms of being and nonbeing. If father and family name represent the realm of being, Gustave "will distinguish himself from his older brother in direct proportion to the quantity of nothingness he could incorporate."[37] So begins the odyssey of Flaubert's self-derealization, in which, in Sartrean fashion, he makes himself into the nonentity that others have prepared and expected him to be – the family idiot.

A new term enters Sartre's lexicon, *personalization*, meaning that "the individual is nothing more than the surpassing and preservation (assumption and inner negation) at the core of a project to totalize what the world has made – and continues to make – of us."[38] Sartre calls it by another name for "this totalization which is endlessly detotalized and retotalized."[39] The progressive method now traces four turns in the spiral of Flaubert's personalization: the imaginary child, the actor, the poet, and finally the novelist. These are all forms of self-derealization wherein his ego remains an alter ego, reflected off family, friends and the public. Sartre interprets the final turn from poet to novelist as follows:

> The *poetic* attitude was merely the flight from the real into the imaginary; *artistic* activity consists of devalorizing the real by realizing the imaginary. In state-of-the-soul poetry, the flight left reality intact: you escaped into the nonreal; the negation concerned Gustave's being-in-the-world and not the world itself. Now the movement [of personalization] inverts itself: Flaubert reconsiders the world in order to annihilate it, which can be done only by totalizing it.
>
> (*IF* II:1488; *FI* III:375)

[36] *IF* I:136; *FI* I:143. Elsewhere he claims that "Gustave suffers from truth sickness (*une maladie de la Vérité*); he lacks its cardinal categories: praxis and vision" (Flynn, "Praxis and Vision," 21).

[37] *IF* II:1140 *FI* III:36

[38] This claim to originality is not quite true. As early as *Transcendence of the Ego*, Sartre refers to a "prepersonal" consciousness as a refinement of his "impersonal" consciousness, and "person" occurs in *Being and Nothingness* (*EN* 665, 662), and "common person" in *CRD* I:391. We must distinguish "person from the process term "personalization" described as a "spiral" movement quite appropriate to the progressive dimension of the P-R method.

[39] *IF* I:657, 656; *FI* II:7, 6. Constitution and personalization are reciprocally related in a manner similar to but more markedly reciprocal than that previously ascribed to facticity and transcendence in *BN* (see *IF* I:654, 659; *FI* II:3, 9).

At last Flaubert's self-hatred and resentment converge with his project of personalization: in derealizing himself as artist, he will derealize the world.[40] His vocation crystallizes on that traumatic night in late January 1844 near Pont-l'Évêque, when he has an epileptic seizure,[41] falling at his brother's feet in symbolic death to rise as artist, *l'homme imaginaire*. Freed from the hated family burden of continuing his law exams, Flaubert is allowed the leisure, afforded by his poor health, to pursue a career in art. Such, in brief, is Sartre's reading of the formative events in Flaubert's biography.

Before we turn to four issues that bind *The Family Idiot* to Sartre's other studies to form a kind of totalizing compendium of his entire oeuvre, two questions must be answered: What is the link between Flaubert's concept of art and his personal neurosis? And how does this concept reflect the general condition of French society in the last three-quarters of the nineteenth century? These are the existential psychoanalytic and the historical materialist (Marxist) questions respectively.

In response to the first query, one must assume that the clear eye of Sartrean consciousness seems to preclude unconscious motives on Flaubert's part. (We have already cast suspicion on the accuracy of this claim. As we proceed in the text this misgiving may be confirmed, leaving the existential psychoanalytic vision somewhat clouded.)[42] Flaubert's neurosis, therefore, is conscious, chosen in the sense that one "chooses" one's meaning/direction (*sens*) by the practical projects that one sets for oneself. Still, we must acknowledge the concepts of "comprehension" – as in "Flaubert did not know himself and . . . at the

[40] "To imagine is at once to produce an imaginary object and to become imaginary (*s'imaginariser*); I did not stress that adequately in *The Imaginary*" (*FI* I:912 n.; *IF* II:251, n. 11).

[41] Sartre considers it an attack of "hysteria" or "Pithiatism," which would fit better into his emphasis on Gustav's autosuggestion, the psychosomatic and the "responsibility" of the ill for their maladies. But that doesn't seem to be the received view. One biographer points out that it was "temporal lobe epilepsy," a form unknown in France at the time, possibly a hereditary ailment. It left Flaubert without the easy flow of words that had been his delight till than. (See Benjamin F. Bart, *Flaubert* [Syracuse University Press, 1967], 95.)

[42] Remember Sartre's reference to the *non-knowledge* that led the Communist to be a practical anti-Semite when theoretically (reflectively) he was tolerant toward a Jewish Party Comrade ("Marxisme et Subjectivité"), in Chapter 14 above, page 365. This could be a somatic version of the "shadowy side of lucidity" previously discussed. But in the earlier case, something like Merleau-Ponty's "operative intentionality" might be involved. It would easily conform to Sartre's theory of Flaubert's "autosuggestion," "hysteria" and "Pithiatism" at Pont-L'Évêque. See *SFHR* I: chapter 8, "Biography and History: *The Family Idiot*."

same time understood himself admirably"[43] – and lived experience (*le vécu*) or "life aware of itself" – of which Sartre said: "I suppose it represents for me the equivalent of conscious-unconscious."[44] When joined to the remark that "Subjectivity is by definition non-knowledge at the level of consciousness" ("Marxism and Subjectivity") and Sartre's frequent appeal to Freudian "technical" terms and his expressed sympathy with Lacanian emphasis on the unconscious being structured like a language, all this does leave Sartrean "consciousness," even in a multilayered sense, to bear a large theoretical load. Beauvoir's adopted daughter Sylvie Le Bon de Beauvoir, in her introduction to *La Transcendence de l'ego*, remarks that the only position in that early work that Sartre changed completely concerned psychoanalysis. "He totally reversed his previous conception – his refusal – of the unconscious and of psychoanalytic understanding and no longer defended his past prejudices in that field."[45]

Flaubert's personalizing project is to be a literary artist, a practitioner of the black art of the "lie," whether for its own sake (*l'art pour l'art*) or to tell the truth (realism). If art is derealization, then Sartre's Flaubert must derealize himself; if it is a realm of its own, then he will be its sovereign, "the Lord of Nonbeing";[46] finally, if art employs the real as analogon, then Flaubert will "imagine being" itself, viewing everything *sub specie phantasiae* by a sustained adoption of the aesthetic attitude.[47] Sartre claims that Flaubert's conception of art *necessarily implies* his neurosis, that it is no mere de facto concomitant: Flaubert chooses the life of a neurotic, *l'homme imaginaire*, in order to be able to write. Such were the "bases and structures" of his choice.

[43] Interview with Sartre, "On *The Idiot of the Family*," *L/S* 127–128; *Sit* x:110.

[44] Yet Sartre waffles somewhat when he adds: "I want to give the idea of a whole whose surface is completely conscious, while the rest is opaque to this consciousness and, without being part of the unconscious, is hidden from you . . . This notion of the lived (*le vécu*) is an instrument that I use but which I have not yet theorized . . . For Flaubert, the lived is when he speaks of illuminations that he has and which suddenly leave him in the dark so that he cannot find his way. He is in the dark before and after, but there is a moment in which he has seen or understood something about himself" (*L/S* 128–129; *Sit* X:111).

[45] *TE* 8. On the evidence for the growing influence of "non-knowledge" bordering on, if not slipping into, the "unconscious" emerging in Sartre's writing, see *SFHR* 1:306–307, nn. 2, 3 and 6.

[46] *FI* 1:438; *IF* 1:452.

[47] *FI* IV:159–170; *IF* II:1932–1942.

Lest we conclude that Flaubert's concept of art as the imagining of being is merely the subjective outpouring of a disturbed mind, the last move in Sartre's argument links this concept with the "objective neurosis" of French society in the 1830s and 1840s, which left its artists no choice but "neurotic art" (*l'art névrose*), namely, a complex of attitudes that stressed detachment, solitude, derealization, failure (*l'échec*),[48] misanthropy and nihilism – features we recognize from Sartre's depiction of the world of Baudelaire and Mallarmé. The French under Louis-Philippe were developing a self image that was positivist and utilitarian, as personified in Flaubert's father.[49] Not surprisingly, Sartre sees the younger son's choice of neurotic art in the crisis of 1844 both as an anti-utilitarian reaction and as a prophetic anticipation of France's opting for the unreal in the person of Napoléon III, the latter in flight from the dark side of its image as revealed by the massacres of 1848.[50] For Sartre, this is the deep reason for Flaubert's popularity in the Second Empire: the unreal was addressing the unreal. "At Pont-l'Évêque a cycle was initiated; at Sedan, it was completed."[51] In a manner that we have come to expect from Sartre, biography has broadened into social criticism; analytic individualism has been subsumed into the concrete universal of dialectical reason.

It is in this context, and armed with the concepts of *The Imaginary* and *Search for a Method* as well as the terminology of *Being and Nothingness* and the *Critique*, that we address five topics that pervade

[48] *Conduit d'échec* (failure behavior) is "behavior with two objectives, the more superficial being to reach a definite goal and the more profound being to fall short of it" (*FI* V:p.no.;*IF* III:173, emended).

[49] See *FI* V:618; *IF* III:656–657. The table conversation between Flaubert's father and mother (skeptical scientism versus a weak but traditional religious belief) echoes Sartre's childhood recollection of similar exchanges between his grandparents (see *Words* 63 f.). "At first, then, the contradiction is not in him but rather in family structures. There is a collective Flaubert pride but also a Flaubert anxiety, which translates the objective conflicts of the period." The industrialization of society "meant economic and social transformations demanding a complete overhaul of institutions" (*FI* I:487).

[50] The "June Days" of 1848 refer to the violent uprising of the workers on June 23–26 when the National Workshops that gave them employment at public expense were closed. The government called on General Cavaignac, a successful military leader in Algeria, to quell the riots, which he did with severity. It is believed that ten thousand people were either killed or injured. The general sent four thousand of the insurgents into exile in Algeria. Sartre reads this as the unmasking of the violence inherent in capitalist society.

[51] *FI* V:559; *FI* III:595.

much of Sartre's published work but, I would argue, reach their most compelling form in *The Family Idiot*.

The ambiguity of being-in-situation (the given and the taken)

From its introduction in *Being and Nothingness*,[52] the relation between facticity and transcendence, the in-itself and the for-itself, has been recognized as an "ambiguous mixture" – only after the fact can one distinguish their respective contributions. But if that "mixture" is ineluctably vague, the advance from an "idealist" emphasis on what could pass for "noetic freedom"[53] toward a more "materialist" emphasis on the force of circumstance exhibits a gradual "thickening" of Sartrean freedom. Concrete freedom respects the growing importance of socio-economic conditions in the Sartrean "situation." That was true of his "Existentialism is a Humanism" lecture, where the word "concrete" denoted a freedom with a specific content. It was the apparent down-playing of this "materialist' aspect that led Sartre to resist publishing his so-called "first" ethics because of its "idealist" leanings. As he became increasingly sensitive to dialectical reason with, its negative and double negative relations, his sense of the "factical" dimension of our social life grew accordingly. History entered the picture as did "historialization," a concept he had already introduced when discussing Kaiser Wilhelm's inability to think beyond his life context but equal failure to embrace it authentically.[54] The dialectical interrelation in the *Critique* assumed the

[52] Though "transcendence" figures centrally in *Transcendence of the Ego* and "facticity" occurs in *STE*, the two terms appear initially as essential ingredients of our being-in-situation in *BN*. "Situation" is discussed in some detail in *WD* notebook 14, 311 and 320.

[53] I have been calling "noetic" freedom what Sartre sometimes calls "Stoic" freedom, denoting an attitude adopted in the face of apparently insuperable resistance.

[54] We have noted that Sartre uses "*s'historialiser*" quite often in his reflections on history in the mid to late 1940s. Introduced in his reflections in the *War Diaries* and what he calls a possible "internal relation of comprehension" between Germany's English policy and the kaiser's congenitally withered arm (*WD* 301; F 365), the term recurs in *BN*, in "Materialism and Revolution" (MR 227; *Sit* III:181), and frequently in *What is Literature?* (*WL* 80, 147, 148, 175 and 190). The topic was obviously on his mind in the late 1940s because it appears often in *Notebooks for an Ethics* and received explicit treatment in his posthumously published meditation on Heidegger's *On the Essence of Truth*, after its appearance in French translation (written in 1948 and published in 1989). He continues to use *historialisation* in *The Family Idiot* (for example, *FI* V:397; *IF* III:429). For a discussion of this term, its derivatives and their role in Sartre's philosophy of history, see my *SFHR* I:19–22, 82–83 and 269 n. 31.

character of "totalization" in the Flaubert text.[55] But now the vocabularies of *BN* and the *Critique* were superimposed, if not synthesized, to yield a totalizing praxis that brought the "materialist" or "realist" side of facticity into creative tension with the "idealist" (read "phenomenological") component of the lived situation (*le vécu*). But it did so at the price of moral probity – authenticity – in the sense that the "givens" of at least some situations seemed to render ethical action nearly impossible – the lesson of *Saint Genet*.

A jaundiced view of bourgeois society had infected Sartre from the moment he met his stepfather. We watched it surface in *Nausea* and in several of his novellas and plays – in fact, in most of them. But if the idealist strain was overpowered by Communist "realism" in the early 1950s, did the rediscovery of "the ethical" with the Maoists suggest a gesture toward idealist principles once more? Or was it merely a version of Sartre's political search for a "third way" between the Soviet and capitalist ideologies in the immediate post-war years, now played out in the ethical field? What *Saint Genet* taught us was a lesson at least as old as Aristotle: the difficulty (if not impossibility) of being a moral person in an immoral society. In Sartre's terms this became the seeming corruption of the practico-inert and its poisoning of the "creative freedom" of the individual agent. Still, the existentialist light shines through, however dimmed it may be by institutional greed and individual oppression. That becomes clear in the dialectical ethics and, as we saw, illumines the "dialogical" ethics as well.

The ambiguous relation between the "given" and the "taken" is writ large in the guiding methodological principle of the Flaubert text: what we called "the principle of totalization." This is dialectical reason in the grand style. It functions not only in the relation between author and work (*Madame Bovary*) but also in a curiously "prophetic" reading of the Pont-l'Évêque incident that symbolically foretells the rise and demise of Second Empire society. The degree of this mutual totalization is as ambiguous as was the initial situation in *BN*. In the Flaubert case, one may ask whether we are dealing with some kind of "preestablished harmony," minus a divine organizer. Is Sartre indulging in the discredited practice of "foretelling the past" (*vaticinium post eventum*)?

[55] Granted that "totalization" is absent from *Notebooks for an Ethics*, its anticipation via Hegelian dialectic pervades these notes. For example, see *NE* 464, and *CM* 480.

Or, more plausibly, is he interpreting Flaubert's "falling" symbolically into the oneric world of the imaginary (as its eventual master) as prefiguring the slide into the irreal world of Second Empire political and social life, itself occasioned by its "fall" into institutional violence with the massacres of 1848. This exhibits Sartre's maximal effort to discover "what we can know about an individual in the present state of our knowledge," where *à la* Aristotle, we learn more from the poets than from the historians.[56]

The actor and the stage

In his adaptation of Alexander Dumas' story, *Kean*, as we saw in Chapter 5 note 22 above, Sartre raises what Diderot called "the paradox of the actor."[57] Who is this person who seems to find his true identity when playing roles on the stage? Sartre distinguishes the "actor" from the "player." The latter returns home after the performance and becomes a person like anyone else, "whereas the actor plays himself every second of his life . . . He is no longer able to recognize himself, no longer knows who he is. And finally is no one."[58] This theme of role-playing has pervaded Sartre's works: from childhood pretense, through phenomenological description of impersonation (Maurice Chevalier) in *The Imaginary* and so forth.[59] It frequently serves to illustrate bad faith

[56] At least regarding human nature: Aristotle. *Poetics*, chapter IX, 1451b.

[57] Sartre develops his remarks about playfulness two days later when he writes:

> It's not possible to grasp oneself as consciousness without thinking that life is a game. For what is a game, after all, but an activity of which man is the first origin: whose principles man himself ordains and which can have consequences only according to the principles ordained. But as soon as man grasps himself as free, and wishes to use his freedom, all his activity is a game: he's its first principle; he escapes the world by his nature; he himself ordains the value and rules of his acts, and agrees to pay up only according to the rules he has himself ordained and defined. Whence the diminished reality of the world and the disappearance of seriousness.
>
> (*WD* 326)

The question he faces in that regard is whether authenticity, which he claims to be pursuing, is going to reinstill in him the spirit of seriousness. But by distinguishing the person from the ego, which he had rejected in his first philosophical publication (*Transcendence of the Ego*) as being a thing amongst things in the world, he insists that "to grasp oneself as a *person* is quite the opposite from grasping oneself in terms of the world" (*WD* 327). See above, Chapter 5, note 43.

[58] *ST* 240 and 243.

[59] See Robert D. Cumming, "Role-Playing: Sartre's Transformation of Husserl's Phenomenology," in Howells, *Cambridge Companion to Sartre*, 39–66.

(self-deception), as with the "perfect waiter" in *Being and Nothingness.* It obviously plays a major role in *Saint Genet: Actor and Martyr*, and it figures in Sartre's discussion of Baudelaire. Sartre devotes two portions of the first volume of *The Family Idiot* and several passages thereafter to Flaubert's "play-acting." In fact, references to Genet are implicit especially in these portions of *L'Idiot*, where Sartre is speaking of Flaubert's "personalization" as "imaginary child," starting the spiral movement to the actor, continuing to the writer and finally issuing in the author.[60] We observed a somewhat analogous uncoiling in Genet's "conversions" from thief to aesthete to writer. Sartre calls these turnings "metamorphoses" rather than "conversions," but they could more properly be called "conversions," a term used in *BN* for a change of life-orienting project but elaborated in *NE* to denote a change toward authenticity, "an ethics without oppression; a new 'authentic' way of being oneself and for oneself, which transcends the dialectic of sincerity and bad faith."[61] Genet seems to be the most "authentic" individual on Sartre's biographical roster, except perhaps for Mallarmé.

Sartre's analysis of Flaubert's illness repays careful reading because it seeks to support his basic claim that human reality (humans) are ontologically free/responsible in any situation when the evidence of practical limits is increasingly obvious. The following passage distinguishes prereflexive (*préréflexive*) from irreflective (*irréfléchie*) consciousness in an attempt to arrive at a "middle" level (dimension) between his standard distinction between the prereflective (common awareness that precedes our reflective knowledge) and reflective knowledge. This seems to be the level at which Flaubert's "understanding" is wider than his (reflective) knowledge. It also introduces a somatic aspect that was present in emotional consciousness (e.g., bodily changes to "magically" resolve a challenging situation). This psychosomatic awareness was mentioned, equivalently, in Sartre's first Gramsci lecture on "Marxism and Subjectivity."

[60] "A life develops in spirals it passes again and again by the same points but at different levels of integration and complexity" (*SM* 106; see *FI* III:341).

[61] *NE* 9 and 474. Referring to *BN* 377–379 and 399–406, Sartre remarks: "Sadism and masochism are the revelation of the Other. They only make sense–as, by the way, does the struggle of consciousnesses–before conversion" (*NE* 20; *CM* 27). A recurrent theme in (what we have of) his *War Diaries* is Sartre's search for "authenticity" in line with "transcending the dialectic of sincerity and bad faith" (as described in *BN*).

Now these aspects of Sartre's ontology and epistemology come together, whether comfortably or not.

Gustave is driven to know himself, but the analytic method deserts his enterprise, and the premature passage to the universal is a veritable swindle. As counterpart to an impossible *self-knowledge*, he possesses an exceptional *understanding* of his inner impulses. We need hardly emphasize the abyss that separates the two. Understanding is a silent adjunct to live experience (*du vécu*), a familiarity of the subjective experience with itself, a way of putting components and moments in perspective but without explanation; it is an obscure grasp of the meaning (*sens*) of a process beyond its significations. In other words, it is itself lived experience (*vécue*), and I shall call it *prereflexive* (and not unreflected) because it appears as an undistanced redoubling of internalization. Intermediary between nonthetic consciousness and reflexive thematization, it is the dawning of a reflection, but when it surges up with its verbal tools it frequently falsifies what is "understood": other forces come into play (in Flaubert, for example, the denial of the singular), which will divert it or compel it to replace meaning with a network of significations, depths glimpsed through verbal and superficial generalities.

(*FI* III:429; *IF* II:1544)

Concerning the psychosomatic phenomenon exemplified in Flaubert's "crisis" of 1844, Sartre generalizes:

In cases of autosuggestion, "thought" has two faces: it is consciously lived as passive activity because it is realized as active passivity in the very functions of life; and, conversely, the conscious effort to *believe in it*, to make it a vital determination of the person, accelerates its organic realization. I have said that it all happens *unbeknownst* to the pithiatic subject; but it must be understood that this unknowingness is not unaware, it is an intentional unknowingness that is *play-acted* as the necessary condition of the process. In the depths of this reflexive intimacy, meditative thought *conceals itself* and by the same token *senses* that it is *suffered*, that without the body's docility it would remain imaginary, that it finds its *seriousness* and its reality in the way the organism receives it and by conforming to it, gives it a dimension of *nonthought*.[62]

We are left to ask with Merleau-Ponty: what are the intentionalities of the nonthought? Sartre is certainly trying to unravel the phenomenon of what Merleau-Ponty called "operative intentionality" and doing so with a concrete example. But his "dualism" remains intractable to any dialectic – so it seems.

[62] *FI* III:628; *IF* II:1749–1750 reading "conformant" for comformant in English text.

Four years before his death, Sartre gave an insightful interview to the distinguished theater critic Bernard Dort. He insisted that "theater is the essence of the imaginary" but that it essentially operates in a tensive relation with the "real." He believes that Genet "radicalizes that [tension] in favor of the imaginary ... He tries to demonstrate that nothing happening on the stage is real; everything topples into the imaginary."[63] This is Sartre's chief difficulty with Genet's plays. But one can recognize this same "tension" at work in all of Sartre's discussions of the imaginary. It centers on the analogon, which is introduced in *The Imaginary* but never analyzed to the degree that its pivotal use in Sartre's corpus calls for. So when we encounter references to "derealization" and the constitution of "imaginary man" in the Flaubert, we must never lose sight of the insuperable facticity (practico-inert) ingredient in the "irreal." That ineluctable factor will break forth in its material forcefulness with the debacle of Sedan and the billeting of Prussian soldiers in Flaubert's home.

The ever-present moral question

In an earlier interview, Dort confronted Sartre with his own words defining the "theater of situation": "The most moving thing the theater can show is a character creating himself, the moment of choice, of free decision which commits him to a moral code and a whole way of life" (*ST* 48). When asked if he still assented to the terms of this definition, Sartre replied: "Yes and no. Yes, because I do not see any reason not to show in the theater freedoms which in fact demystify." As an example of this he cites Heinrich in *The Devil and the Good Lord*, a character "completely destroyed by his situation, someone who, no matter what he does, invariably does harm, because he is in a false position."[64] And now he qualifies this by saying: "This is what I failed to take into consideration in the definition you quoted to me: the limits of freedom." The dramatist may bring such limits to the fore in portraying the character of the actor. Sartre believes that "Brecht has been the only dramatist to raise problems of theater in their true terms, the only

[63] Bernard Dort, "Sartre on Theatre: Politics and the Imagination," *Canadian Theatre Review* 32 (1981): 32–43.
[64] See above, Chapter 11.

one who has understood that any people's theater [the topic of the conversation] could only be a political theater, the only one to have pondered a *technique* of people's theater."[65]

But note that the "unveiling" (*dévoilement*), a term that we saw Sartre adopt from Heidegger, is not merely ontological in character – it is the manifestation not merely that "there is" (*il y a*) Being, but that it is correspondingly *moral* in significance. What is being "unmasked" is equally our bad faith, our self-deception about our ontological freedom and its corresponding responsibility – the traditional "existentialist" message that earned Sartre the title "the conscience of his day."[66]

The final volume of *The Family Idiot* treats the sociohistorical context of Flaubert's generation and his work. It is no coincidence that hell, as depicted in *No Exit*, is furnished in Second Empire style. The objective spirit of the age was incarnate in "the imperial mirage" of the Second Empire.[67] Among the features of "neurotic art" (*l'art-névrose*) described in his Flaubert piece, Sartre includes a description of the broader situation that fostered this kind of art. If these artists were "imaginary" men, it was because, in Sartre's view, their society was "oneric." Like Heinrich in *The Devil and the Good Lord*, it was impossible to make an authentic choice because the entire society was bankrupt. As we see from his second ethics and his "Maoist" discussions,[68] it is with those presumably few individuals who retained an ethical core that hope lies – on the condition that they commit themselves to effecting fundamental socioeconomic change.[69]

The real/unreal (aesthetics and politics)

"The reason I wrote *The Words* is the reason why I have studied Genet or Flaubert: How does a man become someone who writes, who wants to speak of the imaginary? This is the question I sought to answer in my own case, as I sought it in the others."[70] Sartre often remarked that the artist is one "who must lie to tell the truth" (*WL* 158, n. 12). His

[65] *ST* 48–49 and 53.
[66] "La Conscience de son temps," *Magazine Littéraire* 176 (Sept. 1981): 11.
[67] *FI* V:509; *FI* III:548.
[68] See *ORR* 45–48.
[69] See *ORR* 45 and above, Chapter 14.
[70] *Sit* IX:133–134.

Flaubert study, which he characterized as "a novel which is true" (*un roman vrai*), can be read as a work of art in this sense. The "lie" comprises hypotheses about Flaubert's infancy, inner states, and the like, as well as that imaginative reconstruction, the "novel" itself, which Sartre has built from these fragments (*ex pede Herculem*). The truth to be exhibited is what we can know about a man nowadays. So the writing of *L'Idiot*, far from constituting the aesthetic "flight from reality" which some have taken it to be, can itself be read as a *political act*. As he assures his "Maoist" friends, it is a matter of consciousness-raising, of revealing the implicit hatred of man that grounds both *l'art pour l'art* and the bourgeois humanism that feeds, and feeds upon, it – standard themes of the politicized Sartre.

Perhaps the main conclusion about Flaubert to be drawn from *L'Idiot* that mirrors Sartre's thought across its various categories, is the *ambivalence* shared by these three authors toward the real/unreal. The unreal (specifically the *irreal* or imaginary) is both an escape and a weapon for each. As with a theatrical piece, literary artwork must be sufficiently other than the real (which Sartre sees as truth, utility)[71] to provide a genuine alternative, yet real enough to be taken seriously (believed). Sartre underscores "that curious relation between imagination and truth, affirmed a hundred times since [Flaubert's] youth, that truth reveals itself only to imaginary beings as the meaning (*sens*) of their derealization."[72] The meaning of Flaubert's derealization (consummated at Pont-l'Évêque) is that he is forever barred from the essence of man (praxis), but that this very *échec* is the necessary condition for great art. For Sartre's Flaubert, *l'homme imaginaire* from inception to term is *l'homme-échec*. Again, "loser wins."

Or does he? The imaginary is always the derealization of some reality, which takes ontological priority. In the present case, it triumphs in the end. Flaubert's disgust at the powerlessness of the imaginary after the Prussian victory is echoed by a similar conclusion in Sartre's autobiography: "For a long time, I took my pen for a sword: now I know we are powerless."[73]

[71] See *BN* 320; *EN* 384.
[72] *FI* v:505; *FI* III:543.
[73] *Words* 212; F 159.

Conclusion: the Sartrean imaginary, chastened but indomitable

With a simile that could be read as the summation of his philosophic anthropology, Sartre remarks late in his career: "Man is like a leak of gas slipping into the imaginary" (*BEM* 46). We have witnessed this slippage in its various occurrences throughout his career. Describing the arguments that often arose between Sartre and Aron as young adults, for instance, Simone de Beauvoir noted how aggressively analytic was Aron's approach: "'There are two alternatives, *mon petit comarade*,' he would say. 'Take your choice' . . . Sartre struggled hard to avoid being cornered, but as there was more imagination than logic in his mental processes, he had his work cut out" (*Prime* 33). Of course, Sartre's imagination was never "free-floating."[1] It always built on a perceptual core that it could "derealize" as he saw fit. His existential biographies confirm this tension between the imaginary and the real – the "novel which is true."

Michel Sicard observed that "one can never emphasize sufficiently how Sartre's first philosophy is grounded in a theory of the image."[2] That theory, we have argued, found a ready home in the "eidetic"

[1] His relation to the surrealists in the 1920s and 1930s was tangential and after the war it became quite critical in *What is Literature?* (see William Plank, *Sartre and Surrealism* [Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International Research Press, 1981]). On the other hand, the world Roquentin presented in *Nausea* is "peopled with images in the style of Dali," *Dictionnaire Sartre*, ed. Noudlemann and Philippe, s.v. "Surréalisme."

[2] Michel Sicard, "Là où le réel fulgure: matiérisme et immatérialité dans l'esthétique sartrienne," in *Lectures* 73. Sicard is the author of several interviews with Sartre and numerous essays on his aesthetics, such as *Essais sur Sartre. Entretiens avec Sartre* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1989).

reduction (free, imagination variation of examples) central to the descriptive method of phenomenology. And when conjoined with the phenomenological concept of intentionality, it saved him from the "illusion of immanence," with its thesis that the image is a mental likeness of an extramental phenomenon. Rather, for Sartre, intentionality effects a "*re*-presentation" of the "presence" of Chavalier in an impersonation, for example, or the Renaissance in viewing Michelangelo's "David," or the living thing by simply regarding a tree in its physical reality.[3] In other words, intentionality is Sartre's antidote against idealist epistemology and aesthetics.

Sicard perceptively extends this value concept of "presence" to the historical concept of "incarnation" and its cognates that we have encountered throughout Sartre's later work: "*sens*," "personalization" and "singular universal."[4] They transmuted from the phenomenological to the dialectical as Sartre shifted his basic methodological concepts from consciousness to praxis and the lived (*le vécu*). But in the process, we witnessed a certain "clouding" of the translucency that marked Sartrean consciousness at the outset. If not a full surrender of his opposition to the unconscious, it certainly suggested a weakening of his early rejection of that idea.

Sartre's political commitments moved steadily leftward, crossing the positions of Aron, Camus and Merleau-Ponty along the way. This too was a function of his loyalty to the ideals of "Socialism and Freedom," as he envisioned them. He admitted this proclivity in his final interview with Beauvoir before his death: "I invented mythical societies: good societies in which one ought to live. It was the non-real (*non-réel*) that became the meaning (*sens*) of my politics; it is [for] something like that that I entered into the political (*la politique*)" (*Cér* 479). And when asked in another interview "whether, in some sense, lived experience (*le vécu*) would be a kind of imaginary," Sartre quickly replied "Exactly" (Schilpp 23).

[3] "Venice is present in each canvas [of Guardi] . . . as it has been experienced by everyone and seen by no one," Jean-Paul Sartre, "The Underprivileged Painter: Lapoujade," *Essays in Aesthetics*, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), 105–106. On the relation between *sens* (meaning) and *presence* in Sartre's aesthetic, see Chapter 6 above.

[4] See *SFHR* II:160–166 where "incarnation" is discussed both in aesthetics and in the anthropology of the second volume of the *Critique*.

Lest we take this tendency toward the imaginary as evidence that Sartre was an innocuous "dreamer" who had never fully freed himself from the childhood heroes in his grandfather's library, we must keep in mind that he was a moralist – the social conscience of his age – and that his keen sense of injustice suffered by the oppressed formed the deep source from which his "dreams" were fed. Yes, there was street theater aplenty – the events of May 1968 fit that category well, as do photos of Sartre in the middle of the street selling copies of a banned Maoist journal. That was simply a courageous act of "consciousness-raising." Sartre was not a finger-wagging moralist, but someone who valued social justice and strenuously opposed injustice wherever it surfaced. This was the kind of "dreaming" that brought him to the site of striking mine workers and that led him to denounce exploitation of the vulnerable wherever he encountered it. His political ideals displayed an ethical dimension that often clashed in the aesthetic – plays, novels, short stories where the inevitable contest between means and end was played out, if not fully resolved. But if their "resolution" was "in the imaginary," this was not the fantasy of "art for art's sake" but the "down and dirty" dealings of individuals trying to achieve something like an authentic life in an inauthentic society.

And yet we find Sartre and his Flaubert admitting that, in the final analysis, the imaginary had succumbed to the real – the pen to the sword, Napoléon to the Prussians. His friend and collaborator on *LTM*, André Gorz (Gérard Horst) diagnosed their situation well: "The most radical and strenuous work of liberation may be able to be carried out only in the imagination, because it cannot suppress the original constitution of total alienation."[5]

Is it in despair, then, that Sartre undertook his anomalous third ethics in full knowledge of his approaching death, of the eclipse of his creative powers, and of the seductive vision of his youth (a return to the works of the 1930s, to *Nausea*)? His response, I believe, occurs in an admission made to Lévy and to himself toward the end: "Such is the calm despair of an old man who will die in that despair. But the point is, I'm resisting, and I know I shall die in hope. But this hope must be grounded" (*Hope* 110).

[5] André Gorz, *Le Socialisme difficile* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1967), quoting Sartre to himself.

And that ground? Perhaps Sartre glimpsed it when he mused in *Saint Genet*:

> Only a being which is not entirely can have the sense of nonbeing . . . In order to form an image, one must disconnect oneself from being and project oneself toward that which is not yet or that which is no longer. In short, one must *make oneself a nothingness*. What a galling amusement it is to find in our most authentic product the reflection of our finiteness: the same insufficiency enables man to form images and prevents him from creating being.
>
> (*SG* 359)

This "insufficiency" (the imaginary) would be the ground of that hope "that is part of man,"[6] "that has always been one of the dominant forces of revolutions and insurrections,"[7] and that is the very locus of our possibility, negativity and lack.

[6] *Hope* 53.
[7] Ibid., 110.

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  Childhood & Early Life: Born on June 21, 1905 in Paris to Jean-Baptiste Sartre, 1; and Anne-Marie Schweitzer, 1; father dies of fever, 1; importance of mother, 7n22; mother moves back to her parent's house in Meudon and then to 1, rue Le Goff, 1; mother marries Joseph Mancy, 1, 385; and moves family to La Rochelle, 16, 20–21, 58, 75; "Poulou" (childhood nickname), 3, 5–6, 327n16; sexuality, 7n19; abandons faith, 12n30; develops interest in philosophy while reading essay of Henri Bergson, 12; attends Lycée Henri IV, where he and Paul Nizan develop a lifelong friendship, 2, 14, 17, 20, 22, 164, 285; then *Lycée Louis-le-Grande*,(1922-24), 21–23, 285; attends the *École Normale Supérieure*, 2; begins a close but shifting relationship with Raymond Aron, 2; becomes acquainted with Simone de Beauvoir at the Sorbonne, 2; fails *Agrégation* on first try, (1928), 2; passes first on his second try just ahead of de Beauvoir the following year; eighteen-month tour of military service as a meteorologist (completed in February of 1931), 2; appointed to the Lycée in Le Havre (1931), 2; studies phenomenology during research fellowship in Berlin (1933–34), 77; teaches in Lycées in Laon (1936) and in the Parisian suburb of Neuilly (Fall 1937), till his call to active duty in September 1939, 2; becomes important French literary figure with publication of *Nausea* (1938), based on his time in Le Havre, 2.
World War II: Works as a conscript in the French Army on the Alsatian front during the "Phoney War," 7, 158; captured by German troops; nine months as a prisoner of war initially in Nancy and then in Stalag 12D, Trier, 11; in camp writes first theatrical work titled *Bariona, fils du tonnerre*, 172; reads Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* in April, 1939, 129; released thanks to a forged certificate of declining health, returns to Paris from the Stalag (March, 1941), 19, 359n16; played a major part in founding the Resistance group named, "Socialisme et Liberté," 152, 232, 287; writes three major works in 1943: *Being and Nothingness*, 175; *The Flies*, 226; *No Exit*, 229, 228; writes for *Combat*, *Le Figaro* and *Les Lettres françaises* after the Liberation, 231; founded *Les Temps Modernes* with Beauvoir and others, 11; introduced his philosophical work in a "scandalous" lecture called "Existentialism is a Humanism" (March, 1946), 160, 233, 236; writes of his war experience in his trilogy of novels titled *Les Chemins de la Liberté*, 4, 141, 148, 154, 160, 168, 236
Post-War Politics: Writes *Notebooks for an Ethics* (1947-48), 165; *Dirty Hands*

(1948), 286n6; becomes more actively engaged with French Communist Party (1952-56), 263; protests French conduct in the Algerian war, 305; apartment bombed by OAS., 163n4; opposes the Vietnam War; joined and then headed "International War Crimes Tribunal," 304, 306–307, 358n10, 364n37; writes *Questions de méthode* in 1957, 322; which serves as quasi-introduction to second major philosophical work, *Critique de la raison dialectique*, (*Volume One*, 1960), 322; visits Cuba in order to meet Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, 305, 368

Later Life: Renounces literature in *Les mots*, 314n11; declines Nobel Prize in Literature, 1964, x; Adopts Arlette Elkaïm, his Algerian Jewish mistress as his daughter and literary executrix, 243; "Events of May, 1968," 290, 307, 310, 312, 411; drug use, 335n4; after a serious stroke becomes almost completely blind, 357; dies on 15th April 1980 in Paris, 313

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