Jean-Paul Sartre's concept of freedom.
JEAN-PAUL SARTRE'S CONCEPT OF FREEDOM

by

Stephen L. Merrill
(A. B., Whitman College, 1958)

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
1961
APPROVED

by

First Reader  \[\text{John H. Lawsley}\]
Professor of Philosophy

Second Reader  \[\text{Raym V. Kohle}\]
Assistant Professor of Philosophy
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to present an exposition and interpretation of Jean-Paul Sartre's concept of freedom, as expressed in his major philosophical writings. This purpose will call for consideration of the relationship between freedom and some of Sartre's other basic phenomenological and ontological concepts.

2. Limitations

Three limitations of the thesis should be noted. First, the thesis will not be concerned with Sartre's literary works. It is concerned with Sartre, the

1. Robert Champigny's book, Stages on Sartre's Way (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959), is devoted entirely to an examination of Sartre's major literary work from 1938-1952. This book offers an excellent commentary on various moral questions and imagery found in Sartre's literary work. However, since this work's central study is the literary Sartre, it does not provide the exact philosophical definitions of Sartre's concepts with which this thesis is concerned. On the other hand, the book offers enlightening comment on Sartre's literary existentialism. An entire chapter is devoted to the concrete pattern of imagery which Champigny uncovers in Being and Nothingness.
philosopher, the author of Being and Nothingness, The Transcendence of the Ego, and occasionally with The Emotions, The Psychology of Imagination and, the essay, "Existentialism." Being and Nothingness and The Transcendence of the Ego are not only Sartre's major philosophical works, but they contain the necessary groundwork and presuppositions for an understanding of all the philosophical concepts found in the rest of Sartre's works, both literary and philosophical. Sartre's concept of freedom is treated most extensively in Being and Nothingness.

Second, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to present either a detailed account of the origins of


Sartre's phenomenological method or an historical development of the phenomenological movement. Thus it will not deal with the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, from which much of Sartre's phenomenology is derived, or with pre-Husserlian phenomenology. Any remarks about or interpretation of Husserl's phenomenology will be made from Sartre's point of view. Sartre's phenomenology will be drawn upon only to the extent that it bears on the examination of Sartre's concept of freedom.

Third, the texts used in this thesis for the exposition of Sartre's thought are the English translations from the French.

3. Methodology

Any attempt to understand Sartre's concept of freedom requires consideration of the relation between freedom and some of Sartre's other phenomenological and ontological concepts; the meaning of freedom pervades several of these concepts. And the attempt to understand any of these concepts requires a suspension of much traditional definition and terminology and the acceptance and familiarity with Sartre's own terminology. Therefore, much of this thesis is given over to analytic exposition and definition of Sartre's technical and special vocabulary. The "other" concepts under consideration are those relating specifically to Sartre's notion of consciousness. To
explore and make explicit the fundamental structures of Sartre's theory of consciousness is to take the front door into an understanding of Sartre's concept of freedom. Chapter II is an attempt to clear the path to Sartre's concept of freedom by sweeping clear some traditional notions of freedom. This leaves the way open for a discussion of Sartre's existential theory of consciousness in Chapter III. Consciousness, however, cannot be fully understood until it is contrasted with all that which is not consciousness. Chapter IV attempts to define what Sartre means by that which is not consciousness. Although it is difficult to discuss Sartre's interpretation of that which is not consciousness without reference to that which is consciousness and vice-versa, it is felt that a separate chapter should be devoted to that which is not consciousness in order to heighten Sartre's emphasis upon the distinction between these two realms. Therefore, an analysis of that which is not consciousness is given a chapter of its own, and this chapter is significantly placed between two chapters devoted almost entirely to an analysis of consciousness. Chapter V concretely defines the fundamental structures of consciousness, thus preparing the way for an identification of freedom with certain of these structures. Chapter VI is predominantly definitional and evaluative.
Section one deals with two separate meanings which the author of this thesis assigns to Sartre's concept of freedom. Section two interprets and evaluates two criticisms which Wilfrid Desan urges against Sartre's concept of freedom. A final section has been devoted to a systematic recording of the conclusions of the thesis regarding Sartre's concept of freedom.
CHAPTER II
WHAT FREEDOM IS NOT

The purpose of this chapter is to show that the meaning of Sartre's concept of freedom can be gotten only after a thorough examination of consciousness. To describe freedom and consciousness concretely at this point would be anticipating the purpose of the rest of the thesis. Here, however, it is possible to clear the path a bit by explaining in general terms what Sartre's freedom is not and by indicating a few popular, general, and vague uses of the term.

1. External Freedom

Near the close of World War II Sartre said,

Never were we freer than under the German Occupation. We had lost all our rights, and first of all our right to speak. They insulted us to our faces every day—and we had to hold our tongues. They deported us en masse—as workers, as Jews, as political prisoners. Everywhere,—upon the walls, in the press, on the screen,—we found that filthy and insipid image of ourselves which the oppressor wished to present to us. And because of all this, we were free.

"Never were we freer than under the German Occupation."

At first glance this is a strange use of the word freedom,

or its derivative freer. It is a strange use because, in
time of war or upheaval, one usually considers his freedom
as limited and controlled by the oppressing force; one is
not free to act in the manner which he has been accustomed.
When Sartre says, "Never were we freer," he is implying
that the French were more free (or "freer") when they had
their freedom taken away. This statement is not meant to
be a contradiction, nor is Sartre talking in riddles. What
is needed is an exact definition of Sartre's word "freer"
and a statement of the way the word "freedom" functions in
the above context.

The freedom that was denied the French during the
war was, what we have preferred to call, external freedom.
In one sense, external freedom refers to one's practical
activity, the ability to do a certain thing. It may also
refer to the success of that which one has chosen, the
ability to obtain what one desires. Now Sartre's use of
the word "freer" eliminates the possibility of interpreting
Sartre's meaning of freedom in either of the above senses.
First, it eliminates the possibility of interpreting freedom
as the ability to do a certain thing. Freedom, for Sartre,
does not mean the lack of physical restraint or political
repression. If it were, then Sartre would be talking in
riddles. Restraint, political or physical, was certainly
characteristic of the pattern of life during the German
occupation in France. Yet Sartre is claiming that the political oppressions, the life in the underground, the tortures, and the deaths, are precisely the kind of restraints that makes one more free rather than less free. The kind of restraint, the lack of freedom, during the Occupation, was characterized by its externality; it is the lack of freedom from the outside, from the natural or physical and social world. It is the lack of freedom imposed upon man by an other.

The same pattern of reasoning will show that Sartre's use of the word "freer" eliminates the possibility of interpreting his meaning of freedom as the ability to obtain what one has chosen. "Obtaining" suggests external success, that is, reaching the goal to which one's choice is directed. The Germans externally thwarted many a Frenchman's attempt to successfully undermine the German invasion and occupation.

From these remarks a very simple, but basic conclusion may be drawn. The meaning and significance of the word freedom for Sartre will be found only by an examination of the internal context; that is, it will be from the internal dimension of man that a positive definition of freedom will emerge. It may be stated that Sartre's only concern with external freedom, or the lack of it, is in its ability to
individualize, develop, and further the other and more important kind of freedom.

2. Internal Freedom

This "other kind of freedom" refers to man's choices or man's nature or, in short, man's inward condition. We can approach this other kind of freedom by examining an implication of the phrase "freedom to choose." This implication is that freedom to choose means the lack of a determining motive in an act of choice. That is, that man has the capacity or ability to choose or not choose whatever he pleases, that man's choices are not determined for him; in short, there is no determining motive.

The meaning of a determining motive may be illustrated by what happens when one is faced with picking up a hot pan from a stove. One chooses to use a pot-holder to lift the pan rather than the bare hand so as not to get burned. The anticipated consequences, either favorable or unfavorable, become the motive which determines one's choice of using the pot-holder. When a government uses capital punishment it is hoping it will serve as a deterrent for wrong-doing. One's freedom in choosing possible alternatives, then, may be determined, or partly determined, by the fear, or love, of external consequences. The fear or love is an
internal motive.\textsuperscript{1} And it is the lack of this internal motive which constitutes, what we have called, internal freedom.

The lack of internal motives constitutes what has often been called a "free will." The question which now must be asked is whether the lack of internal motives is what Sartre means by freedom and whether this lack of internal motives constitutes a "free will." For purposes of illustration we shall look at one internal motivation, namely, the emotions as a deterministic activity, and ask whether a lack of these emotions or a separation of them from the "will" constitutes a "free will," or, more appropriately in the Sartrian context, freedom.

i. Psychology and Emotion

A psychologist who believes that the emotions determine our choices finds no separation or break between the decision to act and the act itself. As Sartre phrases it, "the motive provokes the act as the physical cause the

\textsuperscript{1} Why and how external consequences become internal motives in man's choosing lends itself to more detailed analysis than we have space for here. Why these are not adequate motives for Sartre will become clear as we progress.
effect.¹ Sartre rejects this deterministic position for two reasons. And the rejection itself is crucial for an understanding of his position.

Sartre feels that

the ultimate meaning of determinism is to establish within us an unbroken continuity of existence in itself. The motive conceived as a psychic fact—i.e., as a full and given reality—is, in the deterministic view, articulated without any break with the decision and the act, both of which are equally conceived as psychic givens.²

The word emotion may be substituted for the word motive here. It results in the same claim for Sartre. That is, to conceive of the emotions as deterministic psychic givens or facts leaves no room between the decision and the act. The emotions would penetrate one's psychical structure and determine one's consciousness and action. This sort of interpretation of motive and act leaves absolutely no room for any kind of freedom.³

To save freedom Sartre rejects this deterministic view and he rejects the so-called "internal motives" simply

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1. Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 440.
2. Ibid. The term, "existence-in-itself," in this quotation is one of Sartre's very special technical terms. "Existence-in-itself" may be identified with another of Sartre's special terms, "being-in-itself." Being-in-itself is introduced and discussed in Chapter IV.
3. There is one exception to this statement. Freedom might be interpreted as acting according to certain determinations, acting according to what one is, or acting according to one sort of motive or another. This conception will be discussed in Chapter VI.
because they result in a deterministic view, which, in turn, leaves no room for freedom. But Sartre's ultimate motive for rejecting determinism rests upon his acceptance of something else. This something else is his conception of "motives" as something which cannot act as a deterministic activity. First we will look at Sartre's claim that the emotions are not a "motivating" or deterministic activity and then see whether this view results in the notion of a "free will."

Psychology, says Sartre, draws its material from "only two types of well defined experiences, that which gives us the spatial-temporal perception of organized bodies, and the intuitive knowledge of ourselves that is called reflexive experience." But whatever its method its material or data are facts; and our investigation here is concerned with the fact of emotion. The psychologist, Sartre feels, is interested in more than just assembling and accumulating facts. As a scientist he is interested in


2. Sartre defines a fact as "that which one should meet in the course of an investigation" (Sartre, The Emotions, p. 2). Sartre's use of the word meet here is a bit unclear. He may mean one of two things. First, that the fact of emotion is the unreflective meeting of an empirical phenomenon, i.e., undergoing (meeting) the process of emotion itself, or, second, that the fact of emotion is the bracketed, i.e., reflected, process of emotion. The latter, which might be called the "reflected meeting," is possible, and, to be sure, the very condition which
accumulating facts, but since this in itself does not bring a full and useful science of psychology he becomes interested in interpreting and synthesizing these facts. But he does not concern himself with examining the structures which make possible these facts, except where he has moved over into "meta-psychology."

As for studying the possible conditions of an emotion, that is wondering whether the very structure of human reality makes emotions possible and how it makes them possible, that would appear useless and absurd to a psychologist: what good is it to ask whether emotion is possible precisely because it is? 1

Yet Sartre does not attempt to seek the explanation or the laws of emotion in the general and essential structures of human reality, but in the processes of the emotion itself, with the result that even when it has been duly described and explained it will never be anything but one fact among others, a fact closed on itself which will never permit either of understanding a thing other than itself or of grasping by means of it the essential reality of man. 2

Sartre will in neither case, then, be guilty of post hoc ergo propter hoc, because, as will be discovered, the fact or emotion which appears or which we meet as fact does not lend itself to a discovery of its essence or any other essence and the fact as fact is not an explanatory principle.

makes Sartre's phenomenological method possible. The following section develops briefly the idea of bracketing of empirical phenomenon and Sartre's phenomenological method.

2. Ibid., p. 9.
Why an emotion is, how it is, and what it is cannot be explained by collecting and isolating several emotions and then analyzing them. An emotion is and will remain one fact among many. Sartre feels that his phenomenological method alleviates the inadequacy of beginning an inquiry with facts.

ii. **Phenomenology and Emotion**

What are emotions other than simply facts, yet facts by which nothing else can be interpreted? Why does Sartre "isolate" facts or emotions so that antecedent activity and actions cannot be interpreted in terms of them? Simply to "isolate" facts does not prove to us why a fact or emotion is not the cause of a particular action. It still could very well be. Sartre has simply told us that the previous methods used to investigate facts have been inadequate, that essences, which will explain why an emotion is possible, are not found by beginning with an analysis of emotion, and that an emotion, once explained, will not shed any explicable light upon other emotions. But this is something other than saying that an emotion is not the cause of a particular activity. What is needed, then, is an adequate method which will lead to some sort of ontological position which will show that an emotion is or is not the cause of a particular activity, and if it is not, then
what sort of ontological status does it have in relation to the rest of human activity.

The following quotation is an introductory statement by Sartre of his phenomenological method:

Without giving up the idea of experience (the principle of phenomenology is to go to "things themselves" and the basis of these methods is eidetic intuition), it must be made flexible and must take into account the experience of essences and values; it must even recognize that essences alone permit us to classify and inspect the facts.

If we did not have implicit recourse to the essence of emotion, it would be impossible for us to distinguish the particular group of facts of emotivity among the mass of psychic facts. Since one has had implicit recourse to the essence of emotion as well, phenomenology will therefore prescribe that we have explicit recourse to it and, by concepts, that we set up the content of this essence once and for all. . . . Psychology, considered as a science of certain human facts, could not be a beginning because the psychic facts we meet are never the first one. They are, in their essential structure, man's reactions against the world. . . . If we wish to found a psychology, we shall have to go beyond the psychic, source of man, the world, and the psychic: the transcendental and the consecutive consciousness which we attain by "phenomenological reduction" or "putting the world in parentheses."

Sartre's method is clearly indicated by the above.

"Phenomenology is the study of phenomena--not facts. And by phenomenon must be understood 'that which manifests

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1. Ibid., pp. 10-11. "Husserl," says Sartre, "has shown how an eidetic reduction is always possible; that is, how one can always pass beyond the concrete phenomenon toward its essence" (Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 1).
itself,' that whose reality is appearance.\(^1\) Since phenomenology

seeks not facts but significations, it will abandon the methods of inductive introspection or external empirical observation to seek only to grasp and fix the essence of phenomena.\(^2\)

A phenomenology of emotion, then, is necessary to arrive at the essence of emotion. A phenomenology of emotion will "put the world in parentheses" and then "study emotion as a pure transcendental phenomenon." Now one will study emotion ("in the processes of the emotion itself"). But, says Sartre, this will not be done by "turning to particular emotions but by seeking to attain and elucidate the transcendental essence of emotion as an organized type of consciousness."\(^3\) In the essential structure of consciousness we shall find the key to the transcendental essence of emotion. A phenomenological description of emotion will shed some light upon the essential structure of consciousness, "since an emotion is precisely a consciousness." It would be most accurate to say that a phenomenological description of emotion is, in part, a description of the structure of consciousness since

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2. *Ibid.**, pp. 19-20.\(^\text{P}\)
emotion is consciousness itself in the form of emotion.

Emotion, says Sartre,

has its essence, its particular structures, its laws of appearing, and its signification. It cannot come to human reality from the outside. On the contrary, it is man who assumes his emotion, and consequently emotion is an organized form of human existence.¹

One thing is clear, an emotion is not something added to consciousness from the outside. It is not a thing which affixes itself to consciousness and determines its choices. Rather, emotion is something which consciousness chooses or "assumes." The structure of consciousness, then, must be such that it will allow consciousness to choose its mode of living in the world. Freedom cannot be further understood without probing Sartre's theory of consciousness, to which we will turn in Chapter III. Here, however, it must be understood that emotion is not adequate as a deterministic activity or motivating force in the activity of consciousness.

iii. Free Will and Consciousness

Earlier it was asked whether Sartre's view of the emotions as not a motivating or deterministic activity results in the concept of a "free will" for him. At this point it can be said that Sartre rejects this interpretation.

¹. Ibid., p. 17.
of a "free will" for two reasons. One of the reasons
is given by Sartre in the following quotation:

There is a fairly common tendency to seek to
identify free acts with voluntary acts and to
restrict the deterministic explanation to the
world of the passions. . . . In this case it
would be necessary to conceive of man as simul­
taneously free and determined, and the essential
problem would be that of the relations between
this unconditioned freedom and the determined
processes of the psychic life; how will it
utilize them for its own benefit?¹

Such a concept Sartre will not accept. Man not only "can
not be sometimes slave and sometimes free,"² but he cannot
be somewhere slave and somewhere free. Otherwise a duality
would exist "at the heart of the psychic unity."³

How in fact could we conceive of a being which
could be one and which nevertheless on the one
hand would be constituted as a series of acts de­
termined by one another--hence existents in ex­
teriority--and which on the other hand would be
constituted as a spontaneity determining itself
to be and revealing only itself?⁴

Sartre wishes to save the unity of the psychic structure.
To oppose a free "will" to a series of determined psychic
events not only destroys the unity of consciousness, but
it sets up, according to Sartre, an inconceivable working
dualism. How, asks Sartre, could a free will modify or

¹. Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 441.
². Ibid.
³. Ibid.
⁴. Ibid.
affect a series of present determined facts which by
definition are and can only be what they are?¹

The second reason Sartre rejects the notion of
a "free will" is simply a matter of definition. The will,
for Sartre, is not something other than consciousness;
on the contrary, the will and consciousness are one and
the same thing for him. Thus the remarks above which
applied to a free will likewise apply to a free conscious-
ness. If Sartre is going to conceive of a consciousness
which is free, it will not "have" its freedom in the sense
that it stands opposed to a series of determined facts
which cannot affect consciousness. And if consciousness
cannot affect the determined facts then consciousness
should not be defined as free. Since Sartre does not
conceive of a series of determined or determining facts
at the heart of the psychic structure, then he may very
well conceive of a free consciousness. But it would be
more proper for Sartre to speak of consciousness as free,
rather than a free consciousness, since the latter suggests
a "freed" consciousness, i.e., some determining structure
standing opposed to consciousness and something which con-
sciousness should be able to modify if it is to be called
free.

¹. Ibid.
3. Summary

From the foregoing considerations these summary statements may be drawn. First, a definition of Sartre's concept of freedom will not be found by examining the notion of external freedom. Sartre's notion of freedom cannot be understood by the popular conception that freedom means the lack of political, physical, or social restraint. Secondly, the term freedom is intimately bound up with Sartre's conception of consciousness. Thirdly, Sartre's phenomenology is not only a method which describes the facts which appear to consciousness, but a description of the fact of emotion is a description, in part, of the fact of consciousness itself. Fourthly, a consciousness or a will which is free is, first, free because no determining motives affect the activities of consciousness and, second, consciousness is able to choose the "motives" which it pleases. Consciousness is free from determined and determining psychical facts, but only by an analysis of the essential structure of consciousness can it be known what it means to choose the way we want to live in the world. In other words, it must now be discovered what the structure of consciousness must be in order that freedom is not simply interpreted as a freedom from.
CHAPTER III

FREEDOM AND CONSCIOUSNESS

The preceding chapter has shown that Sartre's concept of freedom cannot be understood without a further analysis of the fundamental structures of consciousness. This analysis Sartre gives in considerable detail in The Transcendence of the Ego. In this chapter we shall examine Sartre's phenomenological theory of consciousness.

Sartre's phenomenological conclusions in this work are set forth positively only after his rejection of two other positions, namely, "the theory of the formal presence of the I" and "the theory of the material presence of the Me."

For most philosophers the ego is an "inhabitant" of consciousness. Some affirm its formal presence at the heart of Erlebnisse, as an empty principle of unification. Others--psychologists for the most part--claim to discover its material presence, as the center of desires and acts, in each moment of our psychic life. We should like to show here that the ego is neither formally nor materially in consciousness. ¹

Sartre is claiming that the view of either the Ego as a "formal presence" or as a "material presence" is a descriptively inadequate account of the true nature and function

¹ Sartre, The Transcendence of the Ego, p. 31.
of consciousness. The following two paragraphs indicate Sartre's interpretation of the theory of the formal presence of the I.

Sartre suggests that both Kant and Husserl hold the theory of the formal presence of the I. According to Sartre, Kant is not concerned with proving the existence of the I, but in looking for the conditions which make possible our experience. Sartre says that he agrees with Kant that the existence of the I does not need to be proved because it always accompanies all our representations. Similarly, says Sartre, Husserl has a transcendental I which stands behind consciousness, and it not only unifies, but also individualizes our experience. But why does Sartre claim that the formal presence of the I is an "empty principle of unification?" What, then, does unify our manifold representations if it is not a transcendental I or "permanent seat" standing behind consciousness?  

Sartre agrees with Kant that the I "must be able to accompany all our representations," but, he asks, "does

1. We have not suggested here that the "material Me" might be the principle of unification simply because Sartre rejects this theory for the same reason he does the theory of the formal presence of the I. Both the I and the Me are permanent seats standing behind consciousness. Sartre states that the material me is a "magnetic pole" or "reference to myself" for all my acts. The me acts as an end, the object as a means. "The me seeks ... to procure the object in order to satisfy its desire" (Sartre, The Transcendence of the Ego, p. 55).
it in fact accompany them?"¹ And further, if, in fact, it does accompany them, does this necessarily make the I the unifying principle? Is Kant's original synthetic unity of apperception the condition of the I's presence in consciousness or is it the I which actually does the synthesizing of our manifold representations? Must we, asks Sartre, "conclude that an I in fact inhabits all our states of consciousness and actually effects the supreme synthesis of our experience?"² First, "to solve the problem of the existence in fact of the I in consciousness, we meet on our path the phenomenology of Husserl."³ Husserl's phenomenology introduces the concept of the "Intentionality of Consciousness," and it is this concept by which Sartre justifies his starting point.

1. Intentionality of Consciousness

Since "consciousness is defined by intentionality"⁴ Sartre does not need an I which unifies and individualizes.

² Ibid., p. 32.
³ Ibid., p. 35.
⁴ See Sartre's definition in The Transcendence of the Ego, p. 38, and Being and Nothingness, p. lxiii.
By intentionality consciousness transcends itself. It unifies itself by escaping from itself. ¹ An intentional consciousness is always consciousness of something.

This means that there is no consciousness which is not a positing of a transcendent object, . . . that consciousness has no "content." A table is not in consciousness . . . A table is in space, beside the window, etc. All consciousness is positional in that it transcends itself in order to reach an object, and it exhausts itself in this same positing. All that there is of intention in my actual consciousness is directed toward the outside, toward the table; all my judgments or practical activities, all my present inclinations transcend themselves; they aim at the table and are absorbed in it.²

Consciousness, then, is intentional and points to an object which is something other than itself. And it is in this pointing or "escaping" that consciousness unifies itself, but it is in the transcendent object that we find this unity of consciousness. "The object is transcendent to the consciousnesses which grasp it, and it is in the object that the unity of the consciousness is found."³ While the unity of consciousness is found in its transcendent object, the individuality of consciousness is rooted in the very nature of consciousness. "Consciousness can be limited only by itself."⁴ If we think of consciousness in this manner the

2. Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. liii-liv.
4. Ibid., p. 39.
I becomes a manifestation of this consciousness rather than its condition. Hence, Sartre's "phenomenological conception of consciousness renders the unifying and individualizing role of the I totally useless."\(^1\) It is for this reason that Sartre considers the formal presence of the I an "empty principle of unification." The I is no longer the subject which predicates consciousness; consciousness itself becomes the condition for unification and individualization of experience. The first cardinal activity of consciousness, then, is that since consciousness is intentional it effects its own unification by "intending" its objects; it is in the "intending" that it unifies itself, and it is in the intended or transcendent object that this unification is manifested. It can be said that "intentionality" is the "constitutive structure of consciousness."\(^2\)

Sartre has defined consciousness as intentionality; "all consciousness is consciousness of something."\(^3\) But before we examine the condition which allows consciousness

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 40.

\(^2\) The translators of The Transcendence of the Ego have quite appropriately spoken of consciousness as "a spontaneity, a sheer activity transcending toward objects" ("Translator's Introduction," p. 21).

\(^3\) Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. liii)
to be intentional, to be able to transcend itself, to be always consciousness of something, it will be helpful to point out the distinction Sartre makes between reflective consciousness and unreflective or pre-reflective consciousness.

2. Reflective and Pre-reflective Consciousness

The only necessary condition for the existence of consciousness is that it become aware of itself, and "consciousness is aware of itself insofar as it is consciousness of a transcendent object."¹ But for consciousness to be aware of itself, i.e., consciousness of consciousness, it does not need to posit itself as a transcendent object. At this level consciousness is not characterized by "intentionality," it is "non-positional."

Consciousness is not for itself its own object. Its object is by nature outside of it, and that is why consciousness posits and grasps the object in the same act. Consciousness knows itself only as absolute inwardness. We shall call such a consciousness: consciousness in the first degree, or unreflected consciousness.²

Every conscious existence exists as consciousness of existing. . . . The first consciousness of consciousness is not positional; . . . because it is one with the consciousness of which it is consciousness.³

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2. Ibid., p. 41.
The first stage of consciousness, then, is consciousness of existing, which in turn establishes an existing consciousness. This consciousness of existing Sartre terms "unreflected" consciousness; unreflected because it "is not for itself its own object."

Unreflected or pre-reflective consciousness, then, does not admit to intentionality. To say that pre-reflective consciousness is intentional would be to say that it was consciousness of consciousness; the latter consciousness would be an object for the former consciousness. This would place the object consciousness in space, in the world. Consciousness would be at the same time inside itself and outside itself. It would be for itself its own object.

This would be a complete consciousness directed toward something which is not it; that is, toward consciousness as object of reflection. It would then transcend itself and like the positional consciousness of the world would be exhausted in aiming at its object. But that object would be itself a consciousness.

The pre-reflective consciousness is known or is aware of itself by what Sartre terms an "absolute inwardness." 2

1. Ibid., p. liv.

2. Sartre says nothing else to explain what he means by the term "absolute inwardness." It can only be suggested that pre-reflective consciousness is known by some sort of irrational, intuitive insight. Pre-reflective consciousness "confronts" itself, but, and this can only be stated, not in the same sense that reflective consciousness "confronts" its objects.
Reflective consciousness, on the other hand, is intentional. This is the consciousness which thinks. It "is aware of itself insofar as it is consciousness of a transcendent object."¹ The pre-reflective consciousness never becomes reflective, rather it becomes reflected upon. It is because of the distinction Sartre finds in the ordering of consciousness that he objects to the primacy which Descartes assigned to the cogito. In fact, says Sartre, "all writers who have described the Cogito have dealt with it as a reflective operation, that is to say, as an operation of the second degree."² In this sort of operation consciousness would become an object for consciousness. But when the Cogito is effected, maintains Sartre, this is not what happens; the reflective consciousness does not become its own object. Rather, and this is precisely what he objects to in Descartes' formula, "the consciousness which says I Think is precisely not the consciousness which thinks,"³ or as Hazel Barnes puts it, "the consciousness which says, 'I am,' is not actually the consciousness which thinks."⁴ The consciousness which

2. Ibid., p. 44.
3. Ibid., p. 45.
thinks belongs to the second order; it is reflective consciousness and, therefore, does not deserve the primacy which Descartes and others have assigned it. "It is obvious," concludes Sartre, "that Descartes passed from the Cogito to the idea of thinking substance because he believed that I and think are on the same level."¹

Since all consciousness is intentional it "is directed toward the outside," toward an object. However, "not all consciousness is knowledge, but all knowing consciousness can be knowledge only of its object."²

The necessary and sufficient condition for a knowing consciousness to be knowledge of its object, is that it be consciousness of itself as being that knowledge. . . . If my consciousness were not consciousness of being consciousness of the table, it would then be consciousness of that table without consciousness of being so. In other words, it would be a consciousness ignorant of itself, an unconscious— which is absurd.³

Consciousness of consciousness does not mean that "to know is to know that one knows." Rather, it is the non-reflective consciousness which renders the reflection possible; there is a pre-reflective cogito which is the condition of the Cartesian cogito. At the same time it is the non-thetic consciousness of counting which is the very condition of my act of adding. . . . Thus in order to count, it is necessary to be conscious of counting.⁴

2. Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. liv.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. lv
The I, for Sartre, only appears "on the occasion of a reflective act;" put negatively, the pre-reflective consciousness is non-personal. The I appears or comes into existence only after the pre-reflective consciousness has been reflected upon, i.e., "has been made the object of reflection." The I has been taken out of consciousness, which leaves the latter as an absolute, non-personal, unreflective existent. The I or Ego becomes an object for consciousness as any other object; it is out there in the world. "There is never an Ego-consciousness but only consciousness of the Ego." The Ego has its beginning and its place on the reflective level of consciousness just as the non-personal life has its beginning and its place on the pre-reflective level of consciousness. "The Ego is an object apprehended, but also an object constituted, by reflective consciousness."  

3. The Significance of Intentionality and Freedom

Sartre's concept of the intentionality of consciousness is crucial in his rejection of a transcendental Ego which unifies and individualizes. The first important activity of consciousness is this intentionality. Sartre's rejection of the theory of a transcendental Ego shows how

far he is willing to go with the concept of intentionality. Not only is consciousness always consciousness of an object, which it "posits," in the world, and "grasps," but the Ego becomes an object for consciousness like any other object; it is out in the world.

In Chapter II it was pointed out that emotion is not something added to consciousness from the outside, but that it is something which consciousness chooses or "assumes"; that consciousness is free to choose the "motives" which it pleases. The analysis in this chapter has shown that consciousness chooses, i.e., posits and grasps, its own objects, and the Ego is one of these objects. The Ego is not a determining structure just as the emotions are not a determining structure. Consciousness, then, is free to choose or "assume" any of its objects, whether it be an emotion, the Ego, or a chair; it is free to choose how it wants to live in the world. It can be said that the concept of intentionality is identifiable with the notion that consciousness is free to assume its own way of living in the world. Intentionality is "sheer activity," and "sheer activity" is that in which consciousness is engaged when it chooses or "assumes" its own objects.

One formulation or preliminary definition of freedom may be derived from the claim that consciousness chooses, "assumes," or intends its own objects. This
formulation may be made in two ways. First, that consciousness possesses freedom in the sense that it is a freedom from. It is free from emotions and free from a transcendental I. Second, that freedom consists in the ability of consciousness to choose its objects, i.e., to choose or intend the way it wants to live in the world. It is free to choose and it is free to choose precisely because of the activity of intentionality. The doctrine of intentionality means that consciousness is always consciousness of something. It is free to choose or to be aware of a transcendent Ego or emotion; a transcendental Ego or emotion does not choose and affect a consciousness.

The preliminary and first formulation of the meaning of Sartre's concept of freedom may be summarized as follows: Man or consciousness possesses a freedom from and a freedom to. It is a freedom from in the sense that it is able to choose or intend its own "deterministic activity" or its way of living in the world. In short, consciousness exercises its freedom from anything to choose or assume its own anything.
CHAPTER IV

THE CONCEPT OF FREEDOM AND BEING IN-ITSELF

To understand fully the fundamental structure and activity of consciousness it is necessary to understand what Sartre means by all that which is not consciousness. This could be put in the form of a question: What is the nature of all that which stands opposed to consciousness? All that which is not consciousness is the transcendent world, of which we spoke in Chapter III. Below we will examine the nature of the transcendent object and try to discover whether any intelligible relationship exists between it and consciousness.

1. BEING WHICH IS

There is a being of the transcendent object. Although Sartre calls the transcendent object an appearance or phenomenon, it nevertheless has a being.

Even if I wished to reduce this table to a synthesis of subjective impressions, I must at least remark that it reveals itself qua table through this synthesis, that it is the transcendent limit of the synthesis, the reason for it and its end. The table is before knowledge and can not be identified with the knowledge which we have of it.1

1. Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. lix.
It is precisely because Sartre has assigned a being to the phenomenon as phenomenon that he makes the distinction between the phenomenon of being and the being of the phenomenon. It is crucial to point out that the being of the phenomenon is not its 

appearing. The appearance "is as it appears." The "fact that it appears" determines and conditions "the being of the phenomenon." Sartre wants to escape Berkeley's formula, "Esse est percipi," and hence will not "say that the being of the appearance is its appearing."¹ The existent, then, is an appearance; "this means that it designates itself as an organized totality of qualities. It designates itself and not its being. Being is simply the condition of all revelation,"² just as Kant's thing-in-itself, ultimately, is the condition of all experience. Knowledge of the phenomenon of being does not create the being of the phenomenon, but makes it "appear."³

Sartre's statement that the being of the transcendent object "is as it appears" is very crucial for understanding

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1. Ibid., p. lii.
2. Ibid.
3. What ought to be noted here is that Sartre is identifying being and existence. Sartre uses the French word être as an equivalent for both being and existence, rather than the two French words, être (being) and existence (existence) or exister (to be in existence). To be and to exist are one and the same thing.
his claim that the being of the transcendent object has a certain ontological priority over consciousness. Sartre rests his entire case upon this particular notion, i.e., that the phenomenon is as it appears.¹ Since the being or existence of the phenomenon is neither reduced to a series of "subjective impressions" nor to the knowledge which we have of it, Sartre assigns a special term to the being of the phenomenon, namely, "transphenomenal" being. "Transphenomenal being" is simply another name for the being of the phenomenon. Sartre hopes to convey by the use of this term that the being of the phenomenon "gives itself as already existing when consciousness reveals it."² Thus, in a "transphenomenal" sense, the being of the phenomenon has ontological priority over consciousness.

"Transphenomenal being . . . is itself in itself (lui-même en soi)."³ It "is," "is in-itself," and "is what it is."⁴ That "being is" means that it is uncreated. "It assumes its being beyond the creation."⁵ That "being is in-itself" means it is not the cause of itself and it

¹. See Sartre's "ontological proof," Being and Nothingness, pp. lxii-lxiv.
². Ibid., p. lxiv.
³. Ibid.
⁴. Ibid., p. lviii.
⁵. Ibid., p. lxvi.
is "neither passivity nor activity." "The self-consistency of being is beyond the active as it is beyond the passive." This does not mean, says Sartre, that being is a connection with itself. It is itself. It is an immanence which can not realize itself, an affirmation which can not affirm itself, an activity which can not act, because it is glued to itself. But if being is in itself, this means that it does not refer to itself as self consciousness does. It is this self. It is itself so completely that the perpetual reflection which constitutes the self is dissolved in an identity. In fact being is opaque to itself precisely because it is filled with itself.

In short, the transcendent object possesses a being, and this being is characterized by Sartre as being what it is. Sartre prefers to call a being which is what it is "being-in-itself" (être-en-soi). Being-in-itself is a "pleni-tude," a "massive full being;" it is everything that is not consciousness.

2. Existence and Essence

Sartre defines existentialism as a philosophy which believes existence precedes essence. An examination of this statement will sharpen and clarify, in part, the relationship which exists between consciousness and being-in-itself. In the essay "Existentialism," where this statement was first boldly asserted, Sartre says,

1. Ibid., p. lxvii.
2. Ibid.
There is at least one being in whom existence precedes essence, a being who exists before he can be defined by any concept, and that this being is man.

What is meant here by saying that existence precedes essence? It means that, first of all, man exists, turns up, appears on the scene, and only afterwards, defines himself. If man, as the existentialist conceives him, is indefinable, it is because at first he is nothing. Only afterward will he be something, and he himself will have made what he will be. . . . Not only is man what he conceives himself to be, but he is also only what he wills himself to be after this thrust toward existence.

Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself. . . . We mean that man first exists, that is, that man first of all is the being who hurls himself toward a future and who is conscious of imagining himself as being in the future. Man is at the start a plan which is aware of itself.¹

A linguistic confusion presents itself when Sartre says that man "is also only what he wills himself to be after this thrust toward existence." The phrase, "after this thrust toward existence," seems to imply literally that previously to this thrust man had no existence. Yet also included in the above quotation is Sartre's statement that "first of all man exists."

The confusion here, with the word existence as well as with the word essence, is due to the fact that Sartre is using these two terms in a traditional sense, yet, within the same paragraph, and sometimes within the same line, he is redefining them for his own purposes.

without adequate clarification for the reader.¹ He uses, for example, the words "exists" and "existence" almost side by side; now given the context above, these two words function differently for Sartre. And Sartre makes it more confusing by not clarifying whether the word "nothing" belongs to and defines "exists" or "existence." If it defines "exists" then this is a strange use of the word "nothing" or vice-versa. And further, does Sartre want us to understand the word "essence" as belonging to and defining "existence?" If so, then Sartre's use of the word essence is quite different from the traditional concept and various contemporary uses of it.

Sartre wants it understood that essence does not precede existence. This means, for Sartre, that there is no essence, idea, image, of a thing before it comes into existence. Similarly, in Sartre's atheistic philosophy, there is no God who creates and hence no mind to contain the concept or image of man before he turns up in the world.

1. William Earle has accurately pointed out that "in the present philosophical scene, 'existence' is no longer the name for that mode of being which everything shares simply insofar as it is, its traditional meaning, but rather the name for the being of human beings. It is, therefore, a hermetic synonym for what is elsewhere called 'life'." (William Earle, "The Concept of Existence," The Journal of Philosophy, 57 (1960) 734-35.)
Man just finds himself in-the-world and is confronted with the world; in different terminology, consciousness simply appears on the scene and is confronted with the transcendent world. To simply appear on the scene is what Sartre means by the word "exists" in the statement "man first of all exists."

On the other hand, to understand what Sartre means by the "thrust toward existence," it is necessary to understand what he means by essence. Sartre does not simply think of essence as an idea or image which does not precede existence. He also wants to emphasize that essence is prior to essence. He wants to limit the word essence to mean what consciousness becomes after its initial appearance in the world. When man turns up in the world all we can say of him is that he is, not what he is. Existence or consciousness simply is; for it to become something, for it to become essential, is subsequent.

Sartre interprets essence as a being-in-itself. The identification of essence and being-in-itself is crucial for understanding all of Sartre's philosophy as well as simply the statement "existence precedes essence." Thus Sartre's departure from a traditional concept of essence hinges upon his definition of essence as a being-in-itself and, further, a being-in-itself which does not precede existence. Sartre's statement concerning man's "thrust
toward existence” may be interpreted as consciousness thrusting itself toward existence in-itself or being-in-itself; in short, toward its essence.

There still exists a confusion concerning Sartre’s use of the word existence. Above it has been shown that Sartre uses the word existence in connection with both consciousness and being-in-itself or essence. Sartre does this intentionally. Since existence is identified with being and vice-versa, and since existence has been identified with consciousness (as well as being-in-itself), it can be concluded that there must be some sort of identification of consciousness and being. To this we shall turn in Chapter V.

Freedom cannot be identified with being-in-itself. Being-in-itself has been interpreted as block identity; it is neither passive nor active. To identify freedom with being-in-itself would be beyond comprehension. Thus we are forced back to an examination of consciousness; it is here that the meaning of freedom will be found.
CHAPTER V

FREEDOM AND BEING FOR-ITSELF

1. Man and Existence

Sartre not only assigns a being to the transcendent object, but he assigns a being to consciousness. The discussion in the preceding chapter indicated that Sartre would probably assign a being to consciousness; but from the analysis of Sartre's existential theory of consciousness in Chapter III it is questionable whether Sartre has left anything in consciousness that would allow being to be assigned to it. Sartre has emptied consciousness of all its content. To speak metaphorically, a catharsis of consciousness has taken place; as Sartre puts it,

The conception of the ego which we propose seems to us to effect the liberation of the Transcendental Field, and at the same time its purification.\(^1\)

The Transcendental Field, purified of all ego-logical structure, recovers its primary transparency. In a sense, it is a nothing, since all physical, psycho-physical, and psychic objects, all truths, all values are outside it; since my me has itself ceased to be any part of it.\(^2\)

Sartre has, by emptying consciousness of its content, made consciousness "transparent," he has made it a "nothing."

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2. Ibid.
And it is precisely this transparency, this nothing, that characterizes the being of consciousness.

Sartre says that "consciousness is consciousness through and through." To say that consciousness is empty of content, that it contains no transcendental unifier, does not mean that consciousness is anything less than consciousness. Nor does it mean that Sartre is left with a semi-consciousness or a passive consciousness. Consciousness has being and consciousness has existence; it is "consciousness through and through." Sartre also hopes that by saying "consciousness is consciousness through and through" we will not think of consciousness as a genesis," or a "becoming." "That would force us to suppose that consciousness is prior to its own existence." Consciousness does not precede its existence; rather, it "is derived from being." It is "derived from being" in the sense that "the existence of consciousness comes from consciousness itself." Consciousness is existence; consciousness is being; consciousness is itself.

Consciousness is not only itself, but it is for-itself. Sartre calls consciousness being-for-itself (etre-pour-soi). Sartre wants us to understand clearly that a

1. Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. lvii.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
being which is for-itself is not a being which is in-itself. Being-in-itself is full being; being-for-itself is empty being. Sartre is not satisfied with simply defining consciousness as not a being which is or being-for-itself as not being-in-itself. Since consciousness is both total emptiness and pure existence (being) Sartre prefers to define consciousness as a being which is not. Some consideration of what Sartre means by "notness" and empty being is given below.

i. Man and Non-being

A being which is not is non-being. Non-being is empty of being. Sartre wants it understood, and in contrast to Hegel, that non-being is the contradiction of being, not its opposite.¹ To interpret non-being as the contradiction of being logically implies, says Sartre, that non-being "is subsequent to being since it is being, first posited, then denied."² This once again shows the ontological priority of being-in-itself over being-for-itself.

It is through consciousness that negation or non-being is introduced into the world. Man is a questioning being, and it is through this questioning that he introduces non-being into the world. The very structure of questioning

¹. Ibid., p. 14.
². Ibid.
itself, says Sartre, does not vary, nor does the being of the non-being introduced. What varies, however, in a questioning situation is our attitude toward what is being questioned. And since our attitude or form of questioning may vary, so likewise will the way non-being will appear in the world. Our attitude in questioning may take the form of, what Sartre calls, Destruction, Negative judgment, or Interrogation.¹ The form or way which non-being appears under these three questioning attitudes will vary. But fundamentally the being of these three forms of non-being remains the same. The unvarying structure of these different questioning attitudes may be identified as follows:

In every question we stand before a being which we are questioning. Every question presupposes a being who questions and a being which is questioned. . . . This being which we question, we question about something. I question being about its ways of being or about its being. . . . I expect from this being a revelation of its being or of its way of being.²

What I expect is a positive or negative reply, a "yes" or a "no." And the reason I can expect either one of these replies is because I have already posited them as possibilities (by the very attitude of questioning). "The world does not disclose its non-beings to one who has not first posited

¹. For a further discussion of these three attitudes of questioning see Sartre, Being and Nothingness, pp. 3-12.

². Ibid., pp. 4-5.
them as possibilities."¹ Non-being does not exist by itself in the world. It is "supported in existence" by the operation of questioning; that is, by first positing the expectation of an appearance of non-being as a possibility. "It is because a physicist expects a certain verification of his hypothesis that nature can tell him no."²

A look at some of the different forms of non-being introduced by consciousness into the world will show that non-being is not reduced to pure subjectivity. When man makes an "interrogative" judgment or statement at least three forms of non-being are implied. The very fact of a question implies a certain ignorance on the part of the questioner. This "ignorance" on the part of the questioner is, for Sartre, a form of non-being. The question might be: Is Peter in the cafe? If Peter is not in the cafe, then another form of non-being is implied. If Peter is in the cafe, still another form of non-being appears. Peter is known and the cafe is known by all that they are not. Sartre says that the relation between the first two forms of non-being "is a bridge set up between two non-beings: the non-being of knowing in man," i.e., the "ignorance" on the part of man, and "the possibility of non-being of being in

¹. Ibid., p. 7.
². Ibid.
transcendent being," i.e., in the expected object for consciousness. The third form of non-being mentioned above Sartre calls "the non-being of limitation."

The question implies the existence of a truth. By the very question the questioner affirms that he expects an objective reply, such that we can say of it, "It is thus and not otherwise." . . . What being will be must of necessity arise on the basis of what it is not.

The above considerations are not an attempt to analyze in detail Sartre's exhaustive examination of the processes or attitudes out of which non-being arises or the various and sundry forms under which non-being appears. The important point is to establish the fact that man is the origin of non-being. To say that man originates non-being in the world means that consciousness has a negating capacity or activity. This negating capacity "generates" non-being or makes non-being happen to things. Man "generates" or makes non-being "happen to things" in the sense that man first posits the possibility of non-being appearing in the transcendent object.

ii. Man and Nothingness

Sartre's inspection of the being of non-being, or the being of negation, shows us that non-being is fundamentally

1. Ibid., p. 5.
2. Ibid.
a Nothingness. The being of non-being is nothingness. It would be accurate to say that non-being derives its foundation from nothingness.

The necessary condition for our saying not is that non-being be a perpetual presence in us and outside of us, that nothingness haunts being.¹

To say that nothingness haunts being means that nothingness derives its efficacy from being. And for this reason Sartre says that nothingness "exists only on the surface of being." Nothingness has, what Sartre calls, a sort of "borrowed existence," or even, a borrowed being, since it derives its being from being.

Nothingness cannot be conceived outside of being, yet it cannot be explained in terms of being. Since nothingness is precisely the being of non-being, Sartre will not grant to nothingness the property of negating or "nihilating" itself. Therefore,

there must exist a Being (this can not be the In-itself) of which the property is to nihilate Nothingness, to support it in its being, to sustain it perpetually in its very existence, a being by which nothingness comes to things.²

When Sartre says there must exist a Being to support nothingness in its being he is looking for an ontological foundation for the being of non-being. In other words, he is not looking for another negating activity, for this activity

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1. Ibid., p. 11.  
2. Ibid., p. 22.
would again require a foundation. For Sartre, only like generates or supports like: being generates being and non-being or nothingness generates negation. Therefore, the ontological foundation and support of a generating non-being must be non-being. As Sartre puts it: "The being by which Nothingness comes to the world must be its own Nothingness." This being is man.

To say that man is not means that he is pure existence existing for-himself; in short, he is a being-for-itself. It must be clearly kept in mind that the "notness" of man has a being of its own. The nothingness of man is his ontological foundation. In short, man is nothingness. This statement is the most crucial conclusion in all of Sartre's philosophy.

2. Man and His Structural Activity

It is now time to discuss in some detail Sartre's statement in "Existentialism," that "man makes himself." An understanding of this statement is crucial for an understanding of the total structure and activity of consciousness and is crucial in its application to Sartre's concept of freedom. It was indicated much earlier that consciousness was void of content. This can now be understood in terms of the nothingness of consciousness. Void of content means

1. Ibid., p. 23.
empty of being. Man, then, must make himself be. He must make himself be in the sense of being-in-itself. Man already has a being, but this is the being of nothingness. This is his existence, not his essence. His essence must be made to be. Man's existence is prior to his essence.

It has been shown that being-in-itself has a certain ontological priority over being-for-itself, and that this does not mean that being-in-itself either effects or affects being-for-itself. It does not effect being-for-itself simply because like can only effect like; being can only generate being. It cannot affect being-for-itself simply because it is passive, block identity. It does not have the property of activity. Being-for-itself, on the other hand, does have the property of activity. One of these activities occupied our attention at the outset of this chapter, namely, the generation of non-being. Thus it can be concluded prematurely that only and alone can man make himself be.

1. Man and Desire

It has been pointed out that consciousness is empty of being. This emptiness of being Sartre terms lack.

This lack does not belong to the nature of the in-itself, which is all positivity. It appears in the world only with the upsurge of human reality.1

Not only is "the existence of desire as a human fact . . . sufficient to prove that human reality is a lack,"2 but

1. Ibid., p. 36. 2. Ibid., p. 87.
the notion of desire in Sartre's philosophy is explained in terms of this lack. The for-itself lacks being; it lacks its self. It lacks itself as in-itself. "Everything which is lacking," says Sartre, "is lacking to--for--."1 Similarly, everything which is desiring is desiring to something, for something. This something Sartre calls a "possible" or possibility.

The possible is the something which the For-itself lacks in order to be itself. The Possible is not, the possible is possibilized to the exact degree that the For-itself makes itself be.2

Two important conclusions should be drawn from the above quotation. First, the for-itself necessarily lacks or desires to be in-itself. In short, being-for-itself necessarily lacks and desires being-in-itself. Being-for-itself is defined precisely as not being-in-itself, thus if it were ever to obtain or fulfill its lack, or its desire, it would lose its most characteristic feature: It would no longer be for-itself, but in-itself. Second, Sartre wants it understood that the possible exists as a real lack of being which is beyond being. It belongs to reality as a quality put into the heart of being as soon as consciousness emerges, or as Sartre said above, "the possible is possibilized to the exact degree that the For-itself makes itself be." Putting this in practical terms, Sartre says:

The non-reflective consciousness (of) thirst is apprehended by means of the glass of water as desirable, without putting the Self in the centripetal position as the end of the desire.3

1. Ibid. 2. Ibid., p. 102. 3. Ibid.
Things become possible because my consciousness has already posited them as possibilities.

ii. *Man, Bad Faith and Sincerity*

Man is not only the origin of negation, but he is the origin of particular attitudes of negation, one of which is different from those discussed above. The for-itself is not only able to introduce negations into the world, but it is able to direct its negation toward itself. One attitude of negation which directs itself inward is what Sartre calls *mauvaise foi* (Bad Faith).¹

Bad faith is an attempt "at establishing that I am not what I am."² To illustrate, Sartre gives an example³ of a woman who has consented to date a man whom she knows very well has other intentions than just dating her. She knows that she will soon have to make a decision regarding these other intentions. She prolongs the urgency of the decision by concerning "herself only with what is respectful and discreet in the attitude of her companion. She does not apprehend this conduct as an attempt to achieve" the other intentions. She apprehends objectively only what his conduct

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2. This paragraph is a paraphrase of Sartre's example. Direct quotations are indicated. See Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 55.
signifies on the surface. "The man who is speaking to her appears to her as sincere and respectful as the table is round or square, as the wall coloring is blue or gray." She knows very well his real intentions but is still prolonging as long as possible her moment of decision.

Sartre's concept of bad faith may be clarified by an understanding of what he means by "sincerity," which is the "antithesis of bad faith." To be sincere means to be what one is. In this case bad faith is impossible, for one "becomes instead his being." However, as was indicated above, to be what one is is to be a being-in-itself and a being-in-itself is not what one is ontologically. Sartre illustrates his point by the example of a waiter in a cafe:

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... All his behavior seems to us a game... He is playing at being a waiter in a cafe... The waiter in the cafe can not be immediately a cafe waiter in the sense that this inkwell is an inkwell.1

If I represent myself as him, I am not he; I am separated from him as the object from the subject, separated by nothing, but this nothing isolates me from him... I affect him with nothingness. In vain do I fulfill the functions of a cafe waiter... Yet there is no doubt that I am in a sense a cafe waiter—otherwise could I not just as well call myself a diplomat or a reporter? But if I am one, this can not be in the mode of being-in-itself. I am a waiter in the mode of being what I am not.2

1. Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 59.
2. Ibid., p. 60.
The aim of sincerity and bad faith seem to be similar in their outcome; both are "a continual game of mirror and reflection." Sincerity is the "passage from the being which is what it is, to the being which is not what it is and inversely from the being which is not what it is to the being which is what it is."\(^1\) Similarly, bad faith causes "me to be what I am, in the mode of 'not being what one is,' or not to be what I am in the mode of 'being what one is.'"\(^2\)

Since sincerity is unable to accomplish its project it becomes the condition for the possibility of bad faith.

Ontologically speaking, one never becomes sincere. To be sincere ontologically means to be what one is, that is, to be a being-in-itself, and man is defined precisely as not a being-in-itself (not being his essence). This being the case, why does Sartre even speak of man becoming sincere when sincerity is impossible for man? Sartre himself points out that the meaning of sincerity "is in contradiction with the structure of . . . consciousness."\(^3\) He further points out that the "original structure of 'not being what one is' renders impossible in advance all movement toward being in itself or 'being what one is.'"\(^4\) In

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1. Ibid., p. 66.  
2. Ibid.  
3. Ibid., p. 62.  
4. Ibid.
what sense, then, does, or can, man become sincere? Although Sartre's terminology becomes somewhat ambiguous at this point it is helpful to point out that a very subtle distinction exists between Sartre's statement that sincerity is the "passage from the being which is what it is, to the being which is not what it is" and the statement that sincerity is the passage from "the being which is not what it is to the being which is what it is."

First, it must again be remembered that one's mode of existing (being-for-itself) never passes ontologically to another mode of existing (being-in-itself). The kind of "passage" which is involved in sincerity seems to be a "psychological" passage; that is, man reflectively constitutes himself as a being which is what it is. It is suggested that this "psychological" mode of existing is what Sartre means by the word "sense" in the statement quoted above—"Yet there is no doubt that I am in a sense a cafe waiter--otherwise could I not just as well call myself a diplomat or a reporter?" The only conclusion possible is that sincerity belongs to this "kind" of being precisely because Sartre has previously indicated that one cannot be a cafe waiter in the sense that an inkwell is an inkwell. The reason, then, that sincerity becomes the condition for bad faith is that by assuming the functional being of the waiter one has denied the being which one is, namely, a
being which is not. Sincerity is not the passage, ontologically, from a being which is not to a being which is (in the sense of essence), but the passage from a being which is not to a "kind" of being which, it is suggested, is the denial of the fact that one is a being which is not and the fact that one can never become a being-in-itself. Sartre clearly points out that the consciousness of the impossibility-of-becoming-a-being-in-itself is the "very stuff of consciousness." Thus when one denies the consciousness or fact of this impossibility one has assumed a "kind" of being which Sartre calls sincerity. And it must be kept clearly in mind that a denial of the impossibility-of-becoming-a-being-in-itself does not ontologically constitute one as a being-in-itself. Sincerity involves, what we have preferred to call, a "psychological" passage from a being which is what it is (in this case, non-being), to a being which is not what it is (in this case, a denial of non-being). At this point Sartre's discussion of sincerity becomes almost unintelligible. He does not clearly and precisely indicate what he means by a denial of non-being; in other words, what it is that is really involved in a denial of non-being and, further, how this denial (sincerity) fundamentally differs from being-in-itself. In short, when Sartre says that one is in a sense a cafe waiter and then identifies this "in a sense" with sincerity he has neither clearly nor
adequately indicated what he means by "in a sense." One thing is certain, however, sincerity is never possible as long as it is conceived as a passage from being which is not (existence) to being which is what it is (essence). If, on the contrary, this is what Sartre means by sincerity, then not only is sincerity impossible, but it is impossible by his own definition and thus he has contradicted himself when he says that man may become sincere.

It might be objected that man is necessarily in bad faith since he can never become a being-in-itself. However, bad faith must be interpreted along a similar line as sincerity. When Sartre says that bad faith is an attempt "at establishing that I am not what I am," he means that one is in bad faith when one denies that one is a being which is not or when one denies the fact of the impossibility-of-becoming-being-in-itself. When Sartre says that bad faith is the attempt "at establishing that I am not what I am," he does not mean that one is trying to establish themselves as a being-in-itself. Bad faith is a lie to oneself; it is a lie about one's fundamental and ontological condition. Bad faith is simply the denial of the fact that one is a being which is not, and included within this lie is the denial of the fact that one is a being which necessarily lacks or desires being-in-itself.
In conclusion it can be said that when one denies to himself the fact that he is a being which is not (existence, being-for-itself) then one is in bad faith. In assuming bad faith one has assumed a "kind" of being which is something other than a being which is for-itself and something other than a being which is in-itself. Sartre calls this being of bad faith sincerity. Due to the unintelligibility of Sartre's definition of this being of bad faith (sincerity) the author of this thesis has ventured only to speak of this being as a "kind" of being, as something other than the purely ontological mode of being for-itself and being in-itself.

3. Summary

In conclusion it can be said that being-for-itself is nothingness. This nothingness is lack. It is the lack of being and the desire of being. And although being-for-itself necessarily desires being-in-itself it can never be completely identified with being-in-itself, for "its being is always at a distance" and the for-itself is not. The for-itself's "first relation with being-in-itself is negation." Further, its presence to being is characterized by a flight from being.

The for-itself's being is on both sides of it.

1. Ibid., p. 123.
Behind, it was its past; and before, it will be its future. It is a flight outside of co-present being and from the being which it will be. At present it is not what it is (past) and it is what it is not (future).¹

The for-itself is a lack and its future is what it has "to be insofar as it can not be it." The for-itself is always a flight out of the past and into the future. It is a flight from its being and toward its being. Yet it will never be what it lacks, for, again, its being lies outside, at a distance, and beyond; it is defined as not being that being. We will now turn in Chapter VI to the way freedom is defined in terms of consciousness, in terms of both its existence and activity.

¹. Ibid.
CHAPTER VI
DEFINITION AND CRITICAL EVALUATION

1. Definition

This section will concern itself with tying together the results of our previous considerations into an intelligible definition of Sartre's concept of freedom. It is felt by the author of this thesis that a definition of the concept of freedom results in two main areas of generalization, namely, freedom as ontology and freedom as activity. Each will be dealt with respectively below. Criticism and evaluation of Sartre's concept of freedom will be taken up in Section Two.

i. Freedom and Ontology

Freedom is on the side of consciousness and consciousness is on the side of freedom. To establish the proper meaning of the being of consciousness there must be included in this meaning the notion of freedom. And to establish the proper meaning of freedom implies a definition of the being of consciousness. In short, the ontological status of freedom implies being-for-itself; freedom may be identified with the being of consciousness. The being of consciousness appears to us as freedom.
In the previous chapter we saw that man must be nothing in his being "in order that through him nothingness may come to being." To "be nothing" means for Sartre to "be freedom" or to be free. To be outside of being also means to be free. And, Sartre says,

it is in anguish that man gets the consciousness of his freedom, or if you prefer, anguish is the mode of being of freedom as consciousness of being; it is in anguish that freedom is, in its being, in question for itself.1

This statement of Sartre's can be restated in two ways. First, that it is through the feeling of anguish that freedom manifests itself and, second, it is in anguish that one discovers his being, that is, his freedom. It is for this reason that Marjorie Grene speaks of "dreadful freedom."2 Being or freedom is so dreadful in its appearance, i.e., an appearance of emptiness or nothingness, that one is anguished by this appearance or manifestation.

In Chapter IV we spoke of Sartre's well known dictum: existence precedes essence. We referred part of the difficulty of clarification of this statement to linguistic confusion. In Being and Nothingness Sartre

1. Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 29.

replaces the word existence with the word freedom. Since this thesis is concerned with the concept of freedom the substitution of the word freedom for existence ought to give linguistic clarity rather than linguistic confusion.

The relation of existence to essence is not comparable to what it is for the things of the world. Human freedom precedes essence in man and makes it possible; the essence of the human being is suspended in his freedom. . . . Man does not exist first in order to be free subsequently.\(^1\)

Freedom has the same ontological status as existence or the being of consciousness because it is identical with these two. When Sartre says that "man does not exist first in order to be free subsequently" he is concluding two things. First, that existence or being takes no ontological priority over freedom because freedom is precisely the same thing as existence and being. Second, that because freedom belongs to being and existence it does not refer to essence. Freedom does not define essences. "To be free subsequently" suggests that one first exists and then becomes free. And this would imply that one would become \textit{something}, i.e., his essence, a being-in-itself. And freedom belongs on the side of being-for-itself and not on the side of being-in-itself.

\(^1\) Sartre, \textit{Being and Nothingness}, p. 25.
One might inquire of Sartre why he has not throughout *Being and Nothingness* employed the word freedom to describe the "nature" or being of consciousness. The reason is that the word freedom does not, in normal usage, usually refer to being; nor does it refer to being in the sense Sartre has defined being. In short, the word freedom does not usually refer to the *nothingness* of being.

It might be conjectured that Sartre himself once experienced, what he calls, an existential awareness or feeling of "aloneness" or "emptiness." In order for him to talk about and communicate this "feeling" to others he had to choose, what T. S. Eliot calls, an "objective correlative." An objective correlative is a word or words which best correlate or approximate an emotional experience; it is a word, etc., which in its referring orders a similar experience, emotional or ideational, to the one which is trying to be communicated or reduplicated. If Sartre first had tried, as he does in his literary work, to use the word freedom to describe the "emptiness" and "nothingness" of being which he felt, he would have failed to make the appropriate communication to his readers. In fact, right after Sartre introduced the notion of freedom in *Being and Nothingness* he says, "But freedom is only a name. . . .

We ought to ask now, what is human freedom.\footnote{1} As was suggested above, the word freedom is not normally, in most people's experience, an objective correlate of or for a feeling of emptiness. It is probably for this reason that Sartre found it necessary to write \textit{Being and Nothingness}. Throughout \textit{Being and Nothingness} Sartre seems to be searching for the objective correlates of the various aspects and levels of what is basically an attitude of feeling.\footnote{2} And it is for this reason, and not because he is a Frenchman, that \textit{Being and Nothingness} is such a voluminous work. In short, \textit{Being and Nothingness} is an uncensing search for an objective correlate of an experience which can only be felt. Only after an exhaustive examination of \textit{Being and Nothingness} can one conclude that the word freedom best describes the being of consciousness. And the only reason it becomes the best word is simply because Sartre has consciously identified it, in this work, with the "nature" or being of consciousness. In short, it becomes purely a matter of definition.

We can conclude this section on Freedom and Ontology by suggesting that it could have been titled, Ontological

\begin{enumerate}
\item Sartre, \textit{Being and Nothingness}, pp. 24-25.
\item One's being or one's existence or one's freedom is first felt, then reflected upon. See Chapter III, Section 2, for the distinction between reflective and pre-reflective consciousness.
\end{enumerate}
Freedom. This claim is possible if we think of the word ontological not as referring to the notion of Being in general, but specifically to the being of consciousness (and as Sartre has defined it). We have already identified this being with freedom. And because of this identification it can be concluded that the first meaning of Sartre's concept of freedom refers to something which man possesses, something which man has, or something which man is, namely, the nothingness of being. This is what allows Sartre to speak of man as "having freedom." In short, man is freedom, and it is this freedom, the ontological freedom, which constitutes the "framework" of man. "There is no difference between the being of man and his being-free." The term ontological freedom suggests that this "framework" means being-free. And being-free carries with it the notion that one is unable to decide whether he wants to be free. "We do not choose to be free. . . . we are condemned to freedom." 

1. See Sartre, Being and Nothingness, Part IV.
2. Ibid., p. 432.
3. Ibid., p. 25.
4. Ibid., p. 435.
11. Freedom and Activity

We do not choose to be free, but "we are a freedom which chooses."¹ If we are a freedom which chooses then we are a freedom that does something; we are a freedom with activity. Not only is Sartre's concept of freedom tied to his concept of the being of consciousness, but it is similarly tied to his theory of the activity of consciousness. Further, the concept of freedom as ontological freedom provides the condition for freedom as activity. For Sartre, one's lack of something provides the condition for the desire of this something; this is man's ontological condition. Now for Sartre, and this is a key point, to desire something means to intend something, and to intend something means, at the same time, to act upon this intention; there is no separation between the intention and the act.² It is precisely the being of consciousness as freedom that provides the condition for man's free activity or autonomy of choice.

The activity which is important here is man's inevitable, unceasing, yet interminable, striving and struggling to become a being-in-itself. It is the attempt by consciousness to become full being or to assume block identity. But

¹. Ibid., pp. 484-485.
². See Ibid., p. 433, pp. 483-485. Sartre would say all "conscious projects" (actions) are intentional and all intentions (desires) are "conscious projects."
what is meant here by free activity? The question might be asked of Sartre, how he can speak of free activity if this activity is inevitable and interminable? Where does freedom come in?

Showing the inevitability of this activity is one of Sartre's major themes in Being and Nothingness. It is precisely the For-itself's choice of the In-itself that helps close the separation or gap between Sartre's two realms of being. It is important now to show that just because it is the inevitable nature of freedom to desire or to choose the In-itself that the being of consciousness does not destroy itself as free activity. It is free precisely because it is following certain determinations. It is following its own determinations or limitations as freedom, as a being which is not enough. Let us look at this more concretely.

Ontological freedom can neither modify nor escape its being-free nor its necessity to choose or desire the In-itself (which is implied by the very definition of being-free). The only way man can escape ontological freedom and its inevitable desire of the In-itself is by suicide. In suicide one escapes his ontological freedom forever, but the possibility of escape from or abandonment of ontological freedom is precisely a free choice. The For-itself is choosing to become something other than what it is, namely,
an In-itself. Freedom is choosing not to choose any more. Strictly speaking, then, man is unable to escape completely his freedom. It is of cardinal importance to point out that this is the only place where man is not free. The importance lies in the fact that freedom is not being limited by anything outside of itself. It is not being limited by an In-itself. It is its own limitation.

This fact may be compared with the fact of the In-itself being a limitation or obstacle to freedom. Precisely speaking, the In-itself as an obstacle for freedom is not a limitation of freedom. The significance of this statement lies in the notion that the In-itself is an obstacle for freedom, not an obstacle to freedom. Freedom must choose whatever In-itself it pleases as an obstacle to be overcome, to be assumed, etc.

The resistance which freedom reveals in the existent, far from being a danger to freedom, results only in enabling it to arise as freedom. There can be a free for-itself only as engaged in a resisting world. Outside of this engagement the notions of freedom, of determinism, of necessity lose all meaning.¹

If there is no obstacle then there is no freedom. The considerations in Chapter V should be enough to remind us that this does not mean freedom by itself creates its own

¹. Ibid., p. 483.
obstacles. It has been shown that the In-itself has a
certain ontological priority over the For-itself. ¹ The
For-itself simply reveals the In-itself as an obstacle,
that is, as something for it to become or something
physical and external for it to overcome. Sartre offers
a particularly clear example of freedom positing its own
limitations or its own ends.

A particular crag, which manifests a profound
resistance if I wish to displace it, will be on
the contrary a valuable aid if I want to climb
it in order to look over the countryside. In
itself...it is neutral; that is, it waits to
be illuminated by an end in order to manifest
itself as adverse or helpful... Even if the
obstacle, that is, as something for it to become or something
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itself...it is neutral; that is, it waits to
be illuminated by an end in order to manifest
itself as adverse or helpful... Even if the
crag is revealed as "too difficult to climb," and
if we must give up the ascent, let us note that
the crag is revealed as such only because it was
originally grasped as "climbable"; it is therefore
our freedom which constitutes the limits which it
will subsequently encounter.²

If the crag is revealed as "too difficult to
climb" one might object that this limits our freedom. In
other words, if I am unable to make the climb then my free-
dom is limited; I am not free to climb the crag. In
Chapter II it was suggested that this notion—obtaining
what one desires—has nothing to do with Sartre's inter-
pretation of the concept of freedom and determinism. At
the outset of this section it was said that the For-itself

¹ See ibid. See also Chapter IV.
² Ibid., p. 482.
was not only an inevitable desire of the In-itself, but that this desire is interminable; this meant, in short, that the For-itself can never become In-itself. It is defined precisely as something other than In-itself; it is not enough; it is a nothingness. And in vain is the For-itself "abandoned to the intolerable necessity of making itself be."¹ If, for example, the In-itself is a physical being, such as the crag, the success of climbing the crag does not constitute free activity. The free activity of consciousness refers to the autonomy of choice, whether the choice is of my self, my environment, others, etc., and not to the ability to obtain the ends which one desires or has posited as ends to be desired. Sartre sums up the free-project of the For-itself very well.

Thus by its very projection toward an end, freedom constitutes as a being in the midst of the world a particular datum which it has to be. Freedom does not choose it, for this would be to choose its own existence; but by the choice which it makes of its end, freedom causes the datum to be revealed in this or that way, in this or that light in connection with the revelation of the world itself.²

In Chapter II the terms motive and motivation were introduced. It was suggested that the emotions are often traditionally interpreted as a conditioning or

1. Ibid., p. 483.
2. Ibid., p. 487
motivating factor in human action. Sartre, on the other hand, has defined emotions and consciousness in such a way that the emotions are no longer a motivating force; they are not something which sweep over man and determine his choices. Here, it is possible to be a little more explicit. And it will become evident why Sartre wants us to understand motives in terms of the In-itself.

The for-itself discovers itself as engaged in being, hemmed in by being, threatened by being; it discovers the state of things which surrounds it as the cause for a reaction of defense or attack. But it can make this discovery only because it freely posits the end in relation to which the state of things is threatening or favorable.¹

The remark in Chapter II that man chooses or assumes his motives means, then, that man is freely choosing or assuming motives which he has already posited as motives to be chosen. And it is "not because I am free that my act is not subject to the determination of motives," rather, "the structure of motives as ineffective is the condition of my freedom."² As soon as man is conscious of the "causes" or "motives" which induce his action the "motives" are already a transcendent object for consciousness. They are outside of consciousness. They are objects or motives for consciousness. Consciousness is always beyond its essence. This is what it means to say that consciousness precedes its essence. Consciousness or freedom

¹. Ibid., pp. 487-488.
². Ibid., p. 34.
is always beyond the causes and motives of its action.

There are two reasons why we have preferred to speak of freedom as activity in this section rather than freedom as autonomy of choice and freedom as doing, making, or acting. It was felt that the word activity would best refer to both intention and act; intention suggests activity on the part of consciousness and action suggests activity on the part of man as a whole or in part. However, Sartre makes no distinction between intention and act. Strictly speaking, Sartre's notion of the autonomy of choice refers to both intention and act. I intend to climb the crag, and though the crag may be too slippery, too steep, or I too weak, to climb, I am still free to try to climb it. I intend or choose this climb and learn the value of this choice by undertaking some action. The reason that the term activity has been employed in this section was, first, simply to distinguish it from ontological freedom, which is the essential structure of the being of consciousness and, second, to let it be known that this "framework" of man has a necessary movement. And this movement is characterized by the notion of the "intentionality of consciousness," which was introduced in Chapter III. In this section we have spoken of the "intentionality of consciousness" as freedom as
activity, and which Sartre prefers to speak of as the autonomy of choice. The freedom which is expressed, for Sartre, by the phrase autonomy of choice is the freedom popularly known as freedom of action (excluding the success of this action) and the freedom of choice or intention (including the necessity of this action).

iii. Summary

The best way to summarize the two meanings given to Sartre's concept of freedom is by reference to his statement that "we are a freedom which chooses, but we do not choose to be free." A freedom which chooses suggests freedom as activity and a freedom which does not choose to be free suggests ontological freedom. Sartre's description of ontological freedom not only provides the condition for free activity, but it is, according to Sartre, the only ontological condition which provides the basis upon which a technical and philosophical concept of the autonomy of choice can be established. Ontological freedom has a certain ontological priority over free choice since it is the condition out of which a meaningful concept of free choice arises.

It would be possible to conclude, as many of Sartre's commentators have, that Sartre's concept of

1. Ibid., pp. 434-485.
freedom consists fundamentally in "having to choose." This conclusion is possible only if the reader grasps first the significance of the words "having to choose." Freedom means "having" and freedom means "choosing." In this thesis we have preferred to call freedom as "having" ontological freedom and freedom as "choosing" freedom as activity. It is perfectly proper and perfectly accurate, if the above distinction is kept in mind, to conclude that Sartre's concept of freedom consists fundamentally in the notion of "having to choose."

Part of the purpose of this thesis was to determine the relation between the concept of freedom and some of Sartre's other phenomenological and ontological concepts. To do this is simply to have the thesis turn back upon itself. For almost all of Sartre's phenomenological and ontological concepts are only technical descriptions of one underlying and fundamental notion, namely, freedom. The relation then between the concept of freedom and the other phenomenological and ontological concepts is simply the relation of the parts to the whole. The concept of freedom is the whole and a description of any of its parts is not complete except by reference to the whole; yet at the same time the whole is illuminated by a description of the parts. The notion of freedom conditions and inspires
the entire philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre. And it is for this reason that it was said at the outset that the meaning of freedom pervades all of Sartre's phenomenological ontology.

It is slightly inaccurate even to speak of freedom as a concept in Sartre's philosophy, except where a conceptual analysis of his philosophy is being made. As has been indicated, only in anguish is ontological freedom and the necessity of the possibility of a free choice first given to man. It is for this reason, and contrary to the remarks above concerning the word freedom as an objective correlative, that *Being and Nothingness* is not wholly adequate for an understanding of freedom. It is only adequate for a conceptual understanding. Since freedom is first felt, it is necessary for one to first feel it in order to grasp the full impact and significance of freedom. One of Sartre's attempts in his literary works is to let his reader see various ways that people confront this freedom and their possibility of choice. He puts the characters in a situation which helps induce the discovery of their being and their choice of being. This is also Sartre's attempt in *Being and Nothingness*, but people seem to be so psychologically disposed as to more easily identify emotionally with a character in a work of fiction, than
with the dry and technical description of the action of a character in a philosophical treatise.

This thesis opened with what the author of the thesis thought was a significant paragraph by Sartre:

Never were we freer than under the German Occupation. We had lost all our rights, and first of all our right to speak. They insulted us to our faces every day—and we had to hold our tongues. They deported us en masse—as workers, as Jews, as political prisoners. Everywhere,—upon the walls, in the press, on the screen,—we found that filthy and insipid image of ourselves which the oppressor wished to present to us. And because of all this, we were free.1

The German Occupation, with its various forms of oppression served as an In-itself. Sartre, along with most Frenchmen, found themselves hemmed in and threatened by the years of occupation. The reason that Sartre could even discover that the German ideology and tortures were threatening, that they were something to be escaped and overthrown, was because Sartre had already freely posited other ends which in relation to German ideology were something to be desired. The German Occupation was not a threat in itself. It was a threat simply because Sartre had posited it as a threat. To the degree that the Occupation kept trying to force its being upon Sartre, the more threatening it became. To say that it became more threatening means that Sartre kept choosing

it as a threatening being. Sartre became freer in his own decisions; he had to continually choose his ends as desirable and the German ideology and tortures as undesirable.

2. Critical Evaluation

Various criticisms have been directed against Sartre's philosophy as a whole. However, it is the purpose of this section to look specifically and concretely at certain criticism directed against Sartre's doctrine of freedom. After careful consideration two criticisms suggested by Wilfred Desan in his *The Tragic Finale* have been picked for analysis. Desan's criticisms are relevant to our purposes for two reasons. First, they are typical of the criticism directed against Sartre's doctrine of freedom; second, the confusions and problems which arise as the result of this type of criticism can be clearly seen. The first criticism once again involves us in a discussion of "existence precedes essence." The second criticism is directed against, what Desan calls, Sartre's notion of "absolute freedom."

1. Freedom and Essence

Wilfred Desan feels that Sartre's doctrine of freedom "involves an insoluble contradiction." Desan acknowledges that, according to Sartre,

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Human reality cannot be considered as an essence, since the For-itself is pure and undefinable freedom. But here precisely appears the antinomy. If the For-itself is pure freedom one is in fact presented with an essence of human reality. Sartre does not escape the necessity of defining that about which he is talking.\(^1\)

To speak about the 'condemnation' and the 'necessity' of freedom \(\ldots\) is simply to return to the philosophy of essences from which Sartre has tried so energetically to escape. \(\ldots\) If \(\ldots\) a human being is free by nature, freedom is its essence. Sartre himself does not really succeed in explicitly eliminating the notion of human reality or of essences preceding (logically) existence.\(^2\)

Desan adds support to his argument by quoting, what he thinks, are damaging statements by Sartre. One of these quotations is from *Reflexions sur la question juive*. Part of this quotation reads:

> Men differ from one another as their situations differ and also according to the choice they make of their own person. What men have in common is not a nature, but a condition, i.e., an ensemble of restrictions and coercions: the necessity of dying, or working in order to live, of existing in a world together with other people.\(^3\)

Desan next refers to the place in "Existentialism" where Sartre says, "There does exist a universal human condition."\(^4\) By condition Sartre means, "more or less definitely, the a priori

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2. *Ibid*.
limits which outline man's fundamental situation in the universe." Briefly, these are Desan's arguments in support of his contention that Sartre has made freedom the essence of man. Let us see exactly what Desan is getting after and if, in the final analysis, Sartre's notion of freedom can be subjected to this claim. Before Desan's criticism can be applied to Sartre it is necessary to understand what Desan himself considers the word essence to mean.

Desan's formula for essence seems to run simply like this. Metaphysically speaking, an essence is what makes a thing what it is; it describes the nature of a thing. It is the individualizing or distinctive characteristic; it is not an accidental characteristic. It might, therefore, be suggested that Desan thinks of essence in an Aristotelian sense. He gives essence an Aristotelian interpretation in the sense that essence is something which resides in the existence of a thing. This is in contrast to Plato's conception that essence exists apart from particular existence and that essence is something in which particular existence participates. Since, according to Desan, Sartre has defined the nature of human reality as freedom, this freedom becomes man's essence. And then he adds, this essence logically precedes existence. Let us now look at Desan's criticism and see if it may be applied consistently and internally to Sartre's position.
On one level, given Desan's definition of essence, it is not categorically wrong, or a complete misrepresentation of Sartre's position, to say that freedom is the essence of man. Sartre, in his attempt to say something about freedom, that is, by defining freedom as the fundamental structure of man, has made it the nature of man, and Desan prefers to call this nature of man the essence of man. On this level Sartre would probably have no quibble with Desan, or if he did, it would simply be a quibble.

Sartre would prefer to avoid even a quibble, and for this reason he has tried, except when popularizing his philosophy, to avoid using the word nature. For when one talks about the nature of something it usually evokes an immediate reference to its essence. Desan ought to be aware that only in defining freedom has Sartre made it the essence of man. And if this statement holds, then Desan is only criticizing Sartre on a verbal level. A statement quoted above illustrates how cautious Sartre is when talking about freedom or human reality—the human condition, says Sartre, is "more or less definitely, the a priori limits which outline man's fundamental situation in the universe." Sartre prefers the term fundamental situation or "condition" to the word nature. And it is precisely this move from essence or nature to condition or situation which gives Sartre's
philosophy its distinctive flavor. Desan, after his exhaustive treatment of *Being and Nothingness*, should understand that even Sartre is aware of the problem involved in defining freedom. Sartre acknowledges that by defining freedom he makes it become what most people think of as the nature of man and therefore the essence of man. The only thing Sartre can then do, and he does do, is to say that it is not the nature of man. In other words, he then carefully defines it as not the nature of man. To be sure, he defines it as the existence of man, the nothingness of man. And then he defines this nothingness of man as something which cannot be defined, precisely because it is nothingness, yet he continues to positively define it. Indeed, a confusion exists.

On a definitional level Sartre has certainly made freedom the essence of man. But two other important considerations arise at this point. First, if Desan thinks that in reality the freedom that Sartre is trying to point

1. Sartre might even be defended at this point by saying that essence or nature refers to a *metaphysical* something and not an *ontological* something and that condition or fundamental situation refers to an *ontological* something and not a *metaphysical* something. If this judgment is accepted then Desan's criticism could be dismissed by simply saying that Desan is making a categorical mistake by trying to make freedom, which belongs on the ontological level, the essence or nature of man, which rightly belongs on the metaphysical level.
to is the essence of man, then he is wrong. In other words, that human reality, as Sartre would like to have it appear (as freedom, as existence) is the essence of man. Desan would then be misinterpreting Sartre, for Sartre believes this freedom to be bare existence, nothingness, etc., and that freedom makes itself a particular freedom by becoming or assuming its essence (its being) subsequently. Existence precedes essence. This is a problem of fact, not of definition. It is suggested that Desan does not accuse Sartre of making freedom, in fact, the essence of man. However, Desan may be saying something very close to this; and this is our second consideration. Does our conclusion above, that in defining freedom Sartre has made freedom an essence, imply that in fact, or in reality, freedom is the essence of man. In other words, is a "definitional essence" enough to destroy, in fact, freedom as not an essence? Is Sartre's dictum, existence precedes essence, actually reduced in fact to essence precedes existence just because the former is reduced to the latter on a definitional level? This seems to be the result of Desan's criticism. If Desan does not mean this then his criticism is simply external and superficial. It is simply one of definition. But if his criticism is what is suggested above, then it is penetrating and significant; for it includes the problem not only of trying to
talk about something that cannot be defined, but it includes the claim that a definition modifies, in fact, that of which it is a definition.

The difficulty in interpreting Desan's criticism is due partly to the nature of the material to which Desan's criticism is directed. Sartre's philosophy is just plain hard to talk about. And it is also due to the lack of clarity on the part of Desan. For example, Desan is not just saying that essence precedes existence, but that essence is logically prior to existence. It is unclear what Desan means by logically here. He seems off-hand to be making a categorical mistake in saying that essence takes logical precedence over existence. And he would be making the same mistake if he were to say that existence took logical precedence over essence. Desan seems to mean by logical essence "abstract possibility." For Sartre, however, essence does not, whether interpreted as prior or subsequent to existence, refer to a purely abstract possibility. Yet, Desan is not wholly wrong if he is giving ontological status to the abstract or logical category. Possibility, in Sartre's philosophy, is not purely logical, but ontological. Possibility refers to being and existence, and being and existence have ontological status.
The attempt in this section has not been to resolve, in fact, Desan's criticism of Sartre. Our purpose has not been nor will it be, to say whether Desan is right or wrong. The above considerations have simply been an attempt to clarify the confused issues hidden in Desan's criticism. It is hoped that the clarification of Desan's criticism shows, first, some of the problems which Sartre's concept of freedom gives rise to and, second, that because of the nature of Sartre's philosophy it does not lend itself easily to criticism.

ii. **Absolute Freedom**

Sartre's notion of freedom is often termed *absolute* freedom and sometimes pure freedom. It may very well be a mistake to apply the word absolute to Sartre's notion of freedom. Once we term Sartre's freedom absolute it is easy to conclude, as Desan has done, that

there is no unlimited and absolute freedom: either freedom limits itself (we are condemned to be free) or we are free from all things, even from freedom itself. Suicide is *proof* of the latter, but also the end of freedom.\(^1\)

The trap Desan is trying to set for Sartre is a trap which will catch anybody who advocates a notion of absolute or unbounded freedom. Certainly there are restrictions on

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freedom. But they are implied in the fact of freedom itself. It might be suggested that a similar contradiction exists when one speaks of absolute equality. If two things are absolutely equal they are usually thought of as one and the same thing. The word equality was not originally introduced to mean that two things are really one thing, but that two things have similar capacities, accidents, qualities, etc. The word equality loses all its intelligible meaning if it does not imply more than one. The word equality, by definition, implies that there are at least two distinct things. When the notion of absolute equality is introduced the meaning of equality is expanded to mean that two things are so similar that they are really one. Hence a contradiction exists. Once the word equality is qualified by the word absolute the word equality loses its meaning, or in its referring it becomes a contradiction. A similar confusion exists when freedom is qualified by the word absolute.

The only restriction on Sartre's freedom is that it is a condition of human reality. This condition is a restriction simply because it is posited as the fundamental, ontological foundation of human reality; thus, man is condemned to be free." Now if absolute freedom means, as Desan says it does, that "the climax of freedom is to be free from
all things except from freedom itself,"¹ then of course Sartre's absolute freedom involves a contradiction; for an absolute freedom would mean freedom from all things. Desan also says that it is just as fatal for Sartre's absolute freedom to say that "the climax of freedom is to be free from all things including freedom itself."² In this case, one would escape freedom by committing suicide and would be absolutely free from all things. According to Sartre, when one is dead he no longer possesses freedom.³ In short, the concept of absolute freedom is involved in a contradiction; for, according to Desan, absolute freedom means freedom from everything, including freedom itself, and the only way to achieve the latter is by suicide, and the the meaning of freedom loses all its intelligibility in the Sartrian context.

The simple way to avoid this contradiction from arising is to avoid terming Sartre's freedom an absolute freedom. When Sartre talks of pure freedom he does not mean pure in the sense of absolute, at least to the degree which we spoke of it above. Sartre introduces pure freedom

1. Ibid., p. 165.
2. Ibid., p. 166.
3. See Sartre's discussion, Being and Nothingness, pp. 544-556. On page 509 Sartre says, "I am never free except in situation." For Sartre, death does not constitute "in situation."
to distinguish it from freedom of choice. Pure freedom is a term with a narrower meaning than absolute freedom. Pure freedom refers to ontological freedom. And ontological freedom refers to **being-free**. And since **being-free** includes its own restriction, that is, **being-free** (an ontological restriction), and since, for Desan, the introduction of any restriction whatsoever is a destruction of the notion of absolute freedom, then the best policy is simply to avoid applying the notion **absolute** freedom to **being-free**. Sartre's freedom is probably as "absolute" a doctrine of freedom as can be found, since it means freedom from all but one thing, namely freedom itself. This restriction is not a contradiction **in fact**, but a contradiction **in definition**. Avoid defining freedom as absolute and we have avoided all contradiction.

iii. **Conclusion**

The exposition above of Desan's two criticisms of Sartre's doctrine of freedom should be enough to indicate that these criticisms imply something far more penetrating and fundamental to Sartre's philosophy than the **prima facie** problems raised by the criticisms themselves. The attempt above was to try to manipulate Desan's criticisms in such a way as to make these criticisms questions of **definition**, not of **fact**. Sartre's philosophy and philosophizing contain an unavoidable conflict, and the nature of this
conflict is such that it gives rise to the linguistic confusions shown above.

The unavoidable conflict between Sartre's philosophy and philosophizing is the conflict between fact and definition. It is the conflict between the fact of freedom and Sartre's definition of this fact. Freedom, as fact, is indefinable. To even say why it is indefinable is, in part, to define it. Sartre spends 700 plus pages of Being and Nothingness telling us not only that freedom is indefinable, but what it must be that it cannot be defined. Desan is right when he says that Sartre has in defining freedom made it the essence of man. But he has only made it a "definitional essence." And if the distinction between definition and fact is kept in mind, it cannot be hurriedly concluded that freedom is, in fact, the essence of man.

From these considerations the reader can conclude one of two things. Either there really is a freedom (in fact) which by nature is such that it cannot be talked about or defined and, therefore, one can and will say nothing about it, or, if freedom, in fact, cannot be defined, then it does not deserve a place in serious philosophical considerations and study. The latter seems the most plausible since Sartre's freedom, in fact, stands in opposition to freedom defined. In short, the fact of
freedom does not lend itself to conceptual communication and philosophy always presupposes the intelligibility of that about which it is talking.
CONCLUSIONS

1. Sartre’s statement: "Never were we freer than under the German Occupation," suggests that the meaning of Sartre's doctrine of freedom is found only by looking at the internal dimension of man. It has been shown that this statement eliminates the possibility of interpreting freedom as the lack of physical, social, or political restraint.

2. Sartre's phenomenology is not only a method which describes the fact of emotion which appears to consciousness, but a description of the fact of emotion is a description, in part, of the fact of consciousness itself.

3. A consciousness or a will which is free is, first, free because no determining motives affect the activities of consciousness and, second, free to choose or assume the "motives" which it pleases.

4. The cardinal activity of consciousness is its intentionality. Consciousness is intentional in the sense that consciousness is always consciousness of something. The Ego may also be this something. Consciousness is always consciousness of its transcendent field.
5. When Sartre says that existence or consciousness precedes essence he is concluding two entirely different things. One is the rejection of a Platonic Form or an image in the mind of God which exists prior to man and defines him, i.e., acts as man's essence. Secondly, he is accepting the existential fact that one's existence is ontologically prior to one's essence; that is, that the being of consciousness precedes the being of essence, precisely because the being of consciousness is defined as non-being or nothingness and thus consciousness must make itself be.

6. Freedom has the same ontological status as existence or the being of consciousness. Freedom may be identified with the being of consciousness. Because of this identification it can be concluded that the first meaning of Sartre's concept of freedom refers to something which man possesses. This allows Sartre to speak of man as "having freedom." Man is freedom.

7. The term ontological freedom suggests that there is no difference between man's being and his being-free.

8. Not only is Sartre's concept of freedom tied to his concept of the being of consciousness, but it is similarly tied to his theory of the activity of consciousness, namely, intentionality. This allows Sartre not only to say that man is a freedom, but that he is
a freedom which chooses, that is, a freedom which must intend its own objects (essence, being-in-itself).

9. The activity of consciousness may be called free activity precisely because it is following certain determinations. It is following its own determinations or limitations as freedom, as a being which is not enough. Free activity does not mean the success in obtaining the ends chosen, rather, it means the ability of freedom to posit whatever ends it pleases, whether desirable or undesirable.

10. Freedom can never be enough, for this would mean becoming a being-in-itself. And freedom is defined as not being a being-in-itself.

11. Sartre's two meanings of freedom may be summed up in the phrase, "having to choose," but only if it is kept in mind that freedom means "having" and freedom means "choosing."

12. Wilfrid Desan has objected that Sartre has made freedom itself into an essence and that this is the very thing Sartre has tried to avoid. This thesis concluded that only in defining freedom has Sartre made freedom an essence. Thus he has made freedom an essence only if one identifies the notion of man's ontological "condition" with the traditional notion of man's
fundamental "nature." Sartre has not made freedom the
the essence of man as long as the word essence is inter-
preted as a being which is.

13. The objection that Sartre's freedom is a doctrine of
"absolute" freedom and therefore results in a contra-
diction since absolute freedom means unlimited and
Sartre's freedom is limited by itself may be escaped
by simply not applying the word "absolute to Sartre's
notion of freedom. This is a sensible approach be-
cause Sartre himself recognizes that freedom is limited
by itself and thus never applies Desan's interpretation
of the word absolute to his doctrine of freedom.

14. Sartre's philosophy and philosophizing contain an
unavoidable conflict. It is the conflict between fact
and definition. It is the conflict between the fact
of freedom and Sartre's definition of this fact.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to present an exposition and interpretation of Jean-Paul Sartre's concept of freedom, as expressed in his major philosophical writings. This purpose calls for a consideration of the relationship between freedom and some of Sartre's other basic ontological concepts. The "other" concepts are those relating specifically to Sartre's theory of consciousness. To explore and make explicit the fundamental structures of consciousness is to take the front door into an understanding of Sartre's concept of freedom.

Chapter II shows that the meaning of Sartre's concept of freedom widely diverges from various traditional and popular interpretations of freedom. It is concluded that the term freedom is intimately bound up with Sartre's conception of consciousness and that a consciousness which is free is, first, free because no determining motives affect the activities of consciousness and, second, consciousness is able to choose the "motives" which it pleases. In Chapter III it is learned that the cardinal activity of consciousness is its intentionality, that consciousness is always consciousness of something. The distinction is made between reflective and pre-reflective consciousness. It is
further indicated in this chapter Sartre's rejection of a transcendental unifying and individualizing Ego and his replacement of it with a transcendent Ego, which, for Sartre, becomes an object for consciousness like any other object. In Chapter IV Sartre's ontology is developed by an analysis of all that which is not consciousness, or in Sartre's terminology, a being-in-itself. The in-itself is any transcendent object and its being is characterized by a massive, full identity with itself; being-in-itself is self-consistent, uncreated, and neither passivity nor activity. In Chapter V consciousness is identified with being-for-itself. Being-for-itself is empty of content, must make itself be, is its own nothingness, and introduces negations and temporality into the world. Consciousness will never be what it lacks, for its being lies outside, at a distance, and beyond; it is defined as not being that being. Ontologically speaking, man's being is nothingness.

Chapter VI identifies Sartre's notion of freedom with the being of consciousness. Thus one meaning of Sartre's notion of freedom takes on an ontological dimension; man is freedom. The other meaning of freedom is assigned to the necessary activity of consciousness. This activity is characterized by the necessary, unceasing, yet interminable, desire of consciousness to choose or assume its own being,
its essence. It has been objected by Wilfrid Desan that Sartre has made freedom itself into the essence of man. This thesis concludes, however, that only in defining freedom has Sartre made freedom an essence. Even in this sense, Sartre has made freedom an essence only if one is willing to identify man's ontological "condition" with the traditional notion of a fundamental "nature" of man. Desan further objects that Sartre's notion of "absolute" freedom results in a contradiction since absolute means unlimited, and Sartre's freedom is limited by freedom itself. The thesis concludes that this contradiction may be avoided by simply refraining from calling Sartre's concept of freedom "absolute" and accepting, along with Sartre, the existential condition that freedom is limited by one thing, namely, freedom itself. A final critical evaluation is made concerning the unavoidable conflict between Sartre's philosophy and philosophizing. It is asserted that this conflict is a conflict between fact and definition. It is the conflict between the fact of freedom and Sartre's definition of this fact.