A critical analysis of Jean Paul Sartre's existential humanism with particular emphasis upon his concept of freedom and its moral implications.

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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF JEAN PAUL SARTRE'S EXISTENTIAL HUMANISM WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS UPON HIS CONCEPT OF FREEDOM AND ITS MORAL IMPLICATIONS

A THESIS

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies through the Department of Philosophy in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts at Assumption University of Windsor

by

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ABSTRACT

The term 'existentialism' is extremely vague as is the term 'humanism'. However, existentialism may be generally characterized as a protest against moral or physical determinism in regard to man. And 'humanism', in its most general application may mean any system centered on the concepts of dignity and freedom of man. Thus Jean Paul Sartre makes his existentialism a humanism through the fundament of human freedom. He does this by drawing from and synthesizing notions of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Heidegger. The result is a unique concept of freedom.

Sartre begins, in the manner of Husserl, with a phenomenological description of reality. This kind of analysis reveals only a consciousness, "the being subject", existing solely as the consciousness of something, "the being object". It is a consciousness situated in the midst of objects which constitute the world. Between subject and object stands a continuous rapport of opposition, of impossible synthesis. For, to see itself as an object is for consciousness to negate its own existence. Self-determination is the way consciousness maintains itself but only at the price of perpetual annihilation. It can never reflect or return upon its subjectivity without by that fact ceasing to exist as consciousness. Therefore consciousness must remain in a continual tension of detachment from any concrete determination. This
attitude of consciousness is the basis of human freedom. For
Sartre human freedom comes to be a capacity of the being-for-
itself to make itself be in a positive way by pursuing what it wishes to be without binding itself to any of its own de-
terminations. Consciousness, in fact, transcends by its free-
dom every determination imposed on it: natural, biological,
or physical.

In its free realization of itself consciousness is given primacy over the world of objects, which includes all others outside the individual. What value they have is freely as-signed to them by consciousness. Since consciousness is not limited by a particular form of being, the subject strives continually to go beyond what it is at any moment. This is expressed as a fundamental drive which implies an infinite possibility of being for the subject, and hence signifies a will to be God himself. But since there is no God, "man is a useless passion". This can only be a humanism on its own terms but its own terms are those of psychological description. But it fails as a psychology for the extremes of feeling and experience are taken as the normal condition of man. What was meant to be a practical philosophy comes to be anti-phil-
osophical. Man is simply an irrational hole in being.
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Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Jean Paul Sartre calls his philosophy of existentialism a humanism. He defends this position chiefly in a lecture published under the title *Existentialisme est un Humanisme*. But the word "humanism", like the word "culture", has a diversity of meanings, most of them very broad. To encompass all of these meanings within the ambit of the present work is unnecessary. It is sufficient to contrast Sartre's use of the word humanism with the traditional Christian meaning of the word.

Essential to Sartre's 'existential humanism' is a unique concept of freedom. It will be the work of this paper to ascertain Sartre's notion of freedom and to note some of its consequences in the realm of situation ethics. To this point no attempt has been made to show the fundamental accord of existential ethics and situation ethics in its extreme form and this accord can only be hinted at in this limited work. However, it can be stated here that certain motives and factors which Sartre pursues to the point of absurdity have been heartily endorsed by the situationists. If one were to take away the phenomenological frame and the atheistic presuppositions proper to the existentialism of Sartre, one could say that the two ethics agree in their general expression, that is, with regard to the moral values of conscience (consciousness) and its autonomy respecting external norms.
I will proceed by pointing out the development of those movements and attitudes upon which Sartre draws, and, more particularly, by briefly explaining the chief sources of Sartre's philosophical position. In the course of the work it will also be shown how Sartre answers, philosophically, his own humanist questions. The legitimacy of Sartre's claim to humanism will be questioned. Doctrinal inconsistencies and historical distortions will be pointed out and, finally, the consequences for morality of Sartre's notion of freedom will be explored.

Of the foreign works consulted certain standard translations were used for clarification. These include the Barne's translation of *L'être et la Néant* (Being and Nothingness) which will be referred to in the text as B.N. I also used Bernard Frechtman's translation of Sartre's lecture *Existentialisme est un Humanisme* hereafter cited as *Exist*. Further translations used are the Swenson-Lowries translation of Kierkegaard's *Final Unfinished Postscript*, Alexander Dru's edition of Kierkegaard's *Journals* and the Macquarrie and Robinson translation of Heidegger's *Zei und Zeit* (Being and Time).

I would like to acknowledge my appreciation and gratitude to Professor Flood of the Philosophy Department of the University of Windsor without whose patience and kind attention this work could never have been completed.
The term "existentialism" has been applied to many different reactions to both rationalism and idealism in literature and traditional philosophy. However, the contemporary existentialists are not in agreement on essentials. Some even prefer not to be called "existentialist", and even if those generally held as belonging to the existentialist "school" or "movement" were in agreement and their thoughts were reducible to a few basic tenets, it is of the very nature of existentialism to deny the priority of any essential note over existence, even in a mere consideration of the doctrine. To add to the confusion the word existentialism is the name of a "system" of thought. The meeting point of all sincere existentialists, possibly excluding Thomists who call themselves existentialists, seems to be in their avowal of individualism.  

Because existentialism has so many definitions it can no longer be defined. It is better described as a tendency

1 "The refusal to belong to any school of thought, the repudiation of the adequacy of any body of beliefs whatever, and especially of systems, and a marked dissatisfaction with traditional philosophy as superficial, academic and remote from life - that is the heart of existentialism." Wilhelm Kaufmann, Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre (New York: 1955), p.12.

2 As Sartre himself says: "The word existentialism ... has been so stretched and has taken on so broad a meaning, that it no longer means anything at all." Jean Paul Sartre, Existentialism, Trans. B. Frechtmann (New York: 1947), p.14.
or attitude with a few doctrines common to all its exponents.

Taken as an ethico-social phenomenon, existentialism may be generally characterized as a protest against views of the world and policies of action in which individual human beings are regarded as helpless playthings of historical forces or as wholly determined by the regular operation of natural processes. This aspect is negative, as are the protestations of existentialists against reason. This is manifested in a kind of crypto-voluntarism. All of this throws some light on Sartre's existentialism. The negative elements are present in Sartre as they were from the beginning in Kierkegaard. In fact, the Kierkegaardian lexicon is basic in the vocabulary of Jean Paul Sartre.

It was from Kierkegaard's use of it that the word "existence" gained the significance that it now bears as a technical term in existentialist philosophy. In non-technical language anything concretely actual may be said to exist, but in existentialism it is primarily human beings who are said to have existence. When Sartre uses the word existence it is in this sense that he uses it.

The central tenet of Sartre's existential humanism is Kierkegaard's concept of freedom which he arrived at by an analysis of becoming. Says Kierkegaard:

If a plan is coming into being, is changed in itself, it is not this plan that comes into being; but if it comes into being unchanged, what is the nature of the change by which it comes into being? This change is clearly not a change in essence, but in being. But this non-being which the subject of becoming leaves behind must itself have some sort
of being.\textsuperscript{3}

The solution to this, according to Sartre, is the concept of possibility which refers to a being which is nevertheless a non-being.\textsuperscript{4} Becoming is the transition from possibility to actuality. In this becoming there resides a freedom, for that which becomes must be possible before it becomes actual and the possible can never be the necessary. The necessary is a determination of essence - that which is necessary is so by its essence. But the difference between the possible and the actual is not of essence but of being; or, not a difference of essence but of existence. Necessity is therefore not a synthesis of the possible and the actual but something that is essentially different from both, and, since that which becomes changes from the possible to the actual, that which becomes cannot be necessary.

Freedom, then, is established at the very core of the existent situation. It is a continual becoming of possibility for man, since for man everything becomes. Within the limited amount of time allotted to each individual he must go about his task of choosing continually his course of action, continually effecting his own becoming as it were, but doing so in anguish and dread because, fully realizing that since "freedom" is at the core of choice (the core of existence itself),


\textsuperscript{4} Jean Paul Sartre, \textit{Being and Nothingness}, Trans. Hazel Barnes (New York: 1956), p.17. Hereafter \textit{Being and Nothingness} will be referred to in the text by the abbreviation BN.
the individual can never know what the outcome of his choice will be, can never know what will become of him. Kierkegaard points out⁵ that Hegel's attempt to demonstrate that the world is a rational system, that "the real is the rational and the rational is the real," is not only presumptuous but ridiculous, for it rests upon the assumption that a particular part of an as yet uncompleted scheme which is not in process of being created by itself could know what its completed form must be. It follows, then, according to this theory, that no one can know his place, no one can have his duty proved to him, but that each must take his courage in both hands and choose as best he can. Kierkegaard conceives himself as having to choose before God with no possibility of knowing whether the outcome will be his salvation or his damnation.⁶ But Sartre's philosophy of engagement presupposes and transcends Kierkegaard's choice because he is conscious of his commitment even as he writes.⁷

Kierkegaard wrote that "Sickness is the natural state of the Christian,"⁸ and Sartre, throughout his works, implicitly changes this to read: "Sickness is the natural state of the conscious existent." For Kierkegaard God is discovered neither


by abstract reasoning or demonstration or in nature; religion is a matter of choice and since men must choose in partial ignorance they are, therefore, in a condition of anxiety and must, if they become Christians, pass through despair. For Sartre, however, one must accept this despair; one cannot pass through it. That is why "the existentialist thinks it very distressing that God does not exist." (Exist. p.26).

In a word, Kierkegaard's insight into "existence" was essentially a religious protestation. He saw man as confronting God. Sartre, however, emerges as a humanist who has re-located Kierkegaard's religious protest on a moral and purely temporal plane. Sartre leaves man, bewildered, in a strange world. Through Husserl's phenomenology, Sartre engages in metaphysical problems according to their ethical connotations. He is principally a moralist analysing metaphysical problems with moral or ethical overtones. He seems to be concerned with the humanist questions: What is man? What is his nature? How can he know what he should do? Is he free to do whatever should be done?

Before letting Sartre answer these questions, however, it must be shown that the elements of his existentialist hu-

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9 Subjectivity can be truly subjective only in the confrontation of the individual with God, since only the absolute is completely indescribable beyond the inroads of abstraction and objectivity. Only before God is a man really himself, because it is only before God that he is finally and irretrievably alone. But before God the finite individual is as nothing; and it is the bitter realization of that nothingness that marks the religious stage of existence.
manism are not simply "taken" from Kierkegaard but that they are Kierkegaard's notions which have been reworked by Martin Heidegger in the light of Husserl's phenomenology. In fact, Sartre's main work is subtitled a "Phenomenological Ontology".

Husserl affirmed that a really significant philosophical renaissance could not consist in merely reviving a system of Cartesian meditations, let alone in adopting them as a whole: nevertheless, in the spirit of Descartes, its real direction must be upon the deep significance of a radical return to the pure *Ego cogito* and in reviving the eternal values which spring from it. As Husserl says: "The world originates within us, as Descartes led men to recognize." He held that philosophers should turn their attention away from the world and toward the inner experiences which are, he says, basic for our apprehension of the natural world and our thought about it. For Husserl, truth, the object of thought, is really or merely an inner experience.

Heidegger follows this course to the extent of claiming to describe fundamental experiences which are behind our everyday and scientific knowledge, but his account of what he finds when he exercises this method is very different from Husserl's conclusions. Husserl was in quest of a "pure logic" of meanings; phenomenology would accordingly deal with "pure meanings in their logical interrelations, that is, with pure

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ideal content only.¹¹ As a philosophy, its task would be to
study the necessities and laws and identities resident in
the pure experiences of the Ego. For a phenomenologist true
to Husserl's view the essentials of everyday experiences as
well as of scientific investigations are intuited contents,
that is, data of pure consciousness.¹² The guiding axiom for
Husserl was that things are as they appear, as they seem to
be.¹³

Heidegger, on whom Sartre relies most, using Husserl's
method, inverts it so that the emphasis is not on the "thing
itself" but on existence. Heidegger's human existence is de­
ined as being-in-the-world or Dasein, "being-there," a being
which, without being anything in particular, yet is there,
directly, necessarily bound to the world of objects. Being-
in-itself is intuited directly, but is without potentiality
or purpose, and consequently refers to nothing beyond itself.¹⁴
This is the fundamental insight of Sartre, namely that the
world in which man finds himself is contingent, gratuitous,
and meaningless. Order is projected into the world by man,
and is not guaranteed by a God (BN, p.424).

¹¹ W. R. B. Gibson, The Problem of the Real and Ideal
¹² Pari Welch, The Philosophy of Edmund Husserl (New
¹³ See Husserl, Phenomenology, p.702.
¹⁴ Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, Trans. J. Macquar­
referred to as BT.
For the purposes of this analysis the most important aspect of Heidegger's philosophy is its underlying fundamental feeling of Dasein as being-thrown into the world without having chosen or willed it. When it begins to take notice, human existence is already there, already 'embarked', and so it feels itself precarious, penniless, abandoned. Besides, the adventure will end up in the abyss of death. Meanwhile man, if he takes his existence seriously, recognizes the nothingness, the absolute non-sense of things. This is dread.15

The meaning of the world, for Heidegger, comes entirely from oneself, from one's project, that is to say, from the original and free manner in which one sets out, in which one realizes himself in the world. One exists in an authentic fashion when, in expectation of ultimate death, one conceives 'projects' which will be at once his meaning and the meaning of objects, and all for nothing (BT, p.301).

Thus man is described as cast into an unsympathetic world in which he tries to achieve purposes all of which will inevitably come to nothing in death. He may try to evade the thought of his own coming dissolution by living his life in terms of impersonal and conventional generalities, but he can

15 Martin Kerr, in his glossary for Roger Troisfontaines, Existentialism and Christian Thought, trans. M. J. Kerr (London: 1949) p.vi says that the word "angoisse", appearing frequently in the philosophy of Heidegger, is taken over from Kierkegaard's "Angst" (anguished dread), the deep-down restlessness, questioning element in man's selfconsciousness which is aware of freedom, contingency and the awful terror of annihilation.
only be true to himself by living constantly with the thought of his eventual death. 16

Heidegger's account of man as inevitably given over to care and subject to a fate to which he can close his eyes but which he cannot evade is rooted in Kierkegaard and incorporated in the works of Sartre. Sartre, however, who believes that Husserl's phenomenology is the method for all philosophical discoveries, does not remain in the sterile world of Husserl and Heidegger. Theirs is the world of mere phenomenal description which Sartre sees as a result of starting with a reflexive cogito. For all of the phenomenologists, the cogito is nothing but consciousness, a consciousness in which, through reflection, one notices several phenomena and the description of these phenomena constitutes the phenomenological method. In using the phenomenological method, Sartre avoids Husserl's idealistic procedure. He goes beyond Husserl and begins his ontology with his so-called pre-reflexive cogito. What is at stake is the straight and simple affirmation of external reality (Exist, p.43).

It is from the position of the Cartesian cogito that Sartre will invaluably show the inconsistency of a belief in natures and in God. But it is the Cartesian God that Sartre is refuting, not truly the Christian God. But just how can Cartesian mathematicism be reconciled with individualistic liberty in Sartre's existentialism? It seems that mathemati-

cism implies a universe of inalterable essences hardly consistent with the free and autonomous existential man. But Sartre solves this problem by pointing out that the entire mathematical edifice raised by Descartes is subject to the purely arbitrary whims of a free God: Who is, for Sartre, merely a projection of human freedom of choice.

... c'est la liberté qui est le fondement du vrai, et la nécessité rigoureuse qui paraît dans l'ordre des vérités est elle même soutenue par la contingence absolu d'un libre arbitre créateur.\(^*\)

For Descartes, ideas do not testify to the truth of God, rather the truth of God guarantees the validity of ideas. This, for Sartre, is the position of any Christian; he sees the problem of God only as a Cartesian construct. Sartre construed Descartes' description of the freedom of God as a dislocated intuition of human liberty. The Cartesian doctrine of divine liberty was, according to Sartre, a mere hypostatization of human liberty of choice.\(^*\)

Sartre believes his own position to be the logical outgrowth of Descartes' system, (Exist., p.45). Just as divine liberty is a hypostatization of human freedom of choice, so

\(^{17}\) J. P. Sartre, Descartes, (Paris: 1946), p.48 "... it is freedom which is the basis of truth, and the strict necessity which appears in the order of truth is itself maintained by the absolute contingency of the free will of the creator."

\(^{18}\) Sartre, Descartes, pp. 50-51. "... Descartes finit par rejoindre et par expliciter, dans sa description de liberté divine, son intuition première de sa propre liberté, dont il a dit qu'elle 'se connaît sans preuve et par seule expérience que nous en avons'.
God is a principle necessary for the Cartesian system and can be dispensed with if the system is dissolved. God vanishes if there is no system that needs him as a principle. Thus the positing of God is purely gratuitous and superfluous. This becomes clear if man is free and without a nature. To say that man has a nature is to say there is a God. To say that man is free and without a nature is to say there is no God. Sartre feels that the same reasoning is basic in both Descartes' and his own argument. The identification of Descartes' position with Christianity is cavalier. To understand this one need only consult Sartre's introduction to selections he has made from Descartes' works. 19

Sartre, leaving out the verification of God, assumes the extreme anti-rational position that the source and elements of knowledge are sensations as they exist in our consciousness. There is no difference between the internal and the external, as there is no natural phenomenon which could not be examined psychologically; it all has its "existence" in states of mind. There is only intuitive knowledge for Sartre and, "... intuition is the presence of the thing in person to consciousness." (B.N., p.172). This intuition for Sartre is the free creativity of the artist, though Frenchmen today still interpret intuition as Descartes did in terms of freedom of thought. 20 Nevertheless, Descartes

19 Sartre, Descartes. These selections emphasize the autonomy and freedom of man. See especially pp. 55-56 and 83-84.
20 Sartre, Descartes, p.10.
remains the original exponent of libertistic humanism.

Il faudra deux siècles de crise-crise de la Foi, crise de la Science - pour que l'homme récupère cette liberté créatrice que Descartes a mise en Dieu et pour qu'on soupçonne enfin cette vérité, base essentielle de l'humanisme.21

Having located himself in a Cartesian world and drawn from Kierkegaard, Husserl and Heidegger, Sartre has a propensity for psychologizing social relationships from a Nietzschean point of view. As will be seen in the next chapter when examining Sartre's analysis of man's relationship with the "other", Sartre substitutes appropriation for love, utilensility for co-operation, and retaliation in place of sympathy for the 'other'. It is sufficient here in the introduction to indicate Nietzsche as another possible unacknowledged source of Sartre's existential humanism. Gabriel Marcel has also seen the striking similarities in Sartre's work and says explicitly: "... at the root it is Nietzsche far more than Kierkegaard who is the source of Sartre's existentialism - in spite of the fact that he never mentions Nietzsche's name."22 The "Will to Power" sets up every individual against every other individual and this is Sartre's world of "No Exit."23

21 Sartre, Descartes, p.51.


By means of his plays and stories, Sartre is the maker of a new way of life which he has not yet identified. In them his characters never know why they should do what they do. They seem to be acting morally without reason. Sartre considers this problem anthropologically. There can be no ready-made code of morals for Sartre, because he regards the death of God as a cultural fact. Once Nietzsche had proclaimed that "God is dead," Sartre saw man as confronted with the profound responsibility of deciding for himself, choosing for himself, acting for himself, and being himself. That is, man has to choose authentic existence rather than becoming non-authentic and escaping reality. The crisis comes about with the loss of faith in reason, science and logic as well as revelation.24

Thus without commands, man has neither a past nor a future; nothing behind him or before him; he is not provided with anything that can legitimize his behaviour: "man is

24 Modern loss of faith is not religious in origin; it cannot be traced to the Reformation and counter-reformation, and its slope is by no means restricted to the religious sphere. Moreover, even if we admit that the modern age began with a sudden and inexplicable eclipse of transcendence, of a belief in a hereafter, it would by no means follow that this loss threw man back upon the world. The historical evidence, on the contrary, shows that modern men were not thrown back upon this world but upon themselves. One of the most persistent trends in modern philosophy since Descartes and perhaps its most original contribution to philosophy has been an exclusive concern with the self, as distinguished from the soul or person or man in general, an attempt to reduce all experiences, with the world as well as with human beings, to experiences between man and himself.
condemned to be free."  

What is meant by the statement that, "man is condemned to be free?" In Sartre's view for man to be free really means to be free of God. This freedom from God imposes upon man's shoulders the unbearable liberty of pitiless atheism. There are those who comfortably hold a doctrine of atheism by preserving laws of nature which they can fall back on for standards and norms. But Sartre, along with Nietzsche, feels that this comfortable position is impossible. For Sartre it is impossible to hold for natures if there is no God. He perceives an annihilation of nature as a necessary consequence of atheism.

Sartre does not deny that there are physical things ruled by constant laws; his point is that, because man is free, natural laws do not apply to men. For if there were a God, nature would be his work and then one would have to follow nature in order to follow God. But man is free, therefore what is true for nature is not true for men.  


26 This type of reasoning is the result of a necessitarian view of nature. It parallels the Graeco-Arabic necessitarianism in which there had to be a stable relation between things. This was necessary for there to be a science. Therefore, there had to be stable natures. As a result, their worlds were described as being eternal and necessary. Historically, Duns Scotus opposed these views. St. Thomas made an adjustment where he showed that there could not be a free nature as is found in man. On the other hand, Ocham felt that there could not be any natures for that would restrict the freedom of God. And, so also, Sartre does not see the compatibility of liberty and nature.
world. Neither one, says Sartre, can be true.

This is the heart of Sartre's existential humanism: men are free, and human life starts on the far side of despair. Once men have realized they are alone, then life begins - in despair. Man must accept that he is doomed to have no other life than his own. He has to make his own way. If life begins in despair, then the problem is to know how to live with it.

According to Sartre, this despair is really a consequence upon the seeming probabilities of our actions. We can only hope in our freedom. Man is limited to some form of action which makes that action feasible, and he overcomes the despair by hoping in his freedom. Sartre seems to be returning to classical stoicism.

Sartre has confronted himself with the philosophical problem of necessity and contingency. In his essay "Existentialism is a Humanism", God is not even an adversary. Yet, one must remember, Sartre's position is not a naturalism either, for its center is not nature. He refuses to deal with man as a thing determined from without. Sartre is not a philosopher of man's nature. He is not a theist or a naturalist, but a "humanist." That is, in a general sense, Sartre is below God and above nature, his concentration is upon man. However, in the history of European thought, the term humanism has had much more specific meaning than merely a concent-

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trating on man. When one uses the term humanism its meaning is usually derived from this historical tradition and implies certain attitudes and values as applied to human nature. Now it may be discovered that the connection of Sartre’s use of the word with the traditional meaning of humanism is very ten­
uous. However, that is a judgment which cannot be made here but which will be seen through the development of this paper. One should begin, at least, with generally accepted views of just what humanism means.

In its narrowest sense humanism, as a term, is used to describe that kind of study of the Greek and Latin Classics which is accompanied by the conviction that these classics contain the highest expressions of human values. This has been extended to include subjects which were considered to be most directly relevant to the right conduct of life. These subjects were regularly distinguished from natural sciences and from metaphysical and theological speculation. In its most general application, humanism may mean any system centered on the concepts of dignity and freedom of man.28

The great age of Greece issued in an anthropocentric concentration subsequently adopted by Rome and the thread of this classical tradition continued to exert an influence during the middle ages. However, the great age of humanism is generally accepted to be associated with the Renaissance begin­ning with Petrarch and Boccaccio in the fourteenth century.

These men developed a new attitude toward the classical past and gave an immense prestige to a literary sensibility formed on the conscious cultivation of this past. According to Bab- bit, this was due to:

... the type of scholar who was not only proficient in Greek and Latin, but who at the same time inclined to prefer the humanity of the great classical writers to what seemed to him the excess of divinity in the Medievals.29

It was against a distorted view of man's natural condition that the Humanists of the Renaissance, rediscovering the pagan authors, asserted the intrinsic value of man's life before death and the greatness of his potentialities.

The interest in this philological movement was in attaining the kind of knowledge which would make men grow in virtue, and so there had to be included a better understanding of the Christian traditions as well as the Classics. The lessons of history were also needed as a basis for politics and ethics. Although these were the preoccupations of humanistic thought, the earlier humanists scorned the philosophy of the schools and considered the subjects of scholastic science as a perversion of the true ends of philosophy. From the time of Pet-rarch onwards, the humanists argued for a philosophy which would teach men wisdom rather than an arid art of disputation, and when they finally did turn to philosophy, it was to the Platonic30 rather than to the Aristotelian tradition.


30 The Platonic tradition of philosophical thought
"In the Renaissance itself what the humanists came to emphasize was the principle of mediation between extremes, of pro-

Continuation of Footnote 30
started with a reversal and this determined to a large extent the thought patterns into which Western philosophy almost automatically fell wherever it was not animated by a great and original philosophical impetus. Academic philosophy, as a matter of fact, has ever since been dominated by the never-ending reversals of idealism and materialism, of transcendentalism and immanentism, of realism and nominalism, of hedonism and asceticism, and so on. What matters here is the reversibility of all these systems, that they can be turned upside down or "downside up" at any given moment in history without requiring for such reversal either historical events or changes in the structural elements involved. The concepts themselves remain the same no matter where they are placed in the various systematic orders. Once Plato had succeeded in making these structural elements and concepts reversible, reversals within the course of intellectual history no longer needed more than purely intellectual experience, an experience within the framework of conceptual thinking itself. These reversals already began with the philosophical schools in late Antiquity and have remained part of the Western tradition. It is still the same tradition, the same intellectual game with paired antitheses that rules, to an extent, the famous modern reversals of spiritual hierarchies, such as Marx's turning Hegelian dialectic upside down or Nietzsche's revaluation of the sensual and natural as against the supersensual and supernatural.

The reversal we deal with here although it has frequently been interpreted in terms of the traditional reversals and hence as integral to the Western history of ideas, is of an altogether different nature. The conviction that objective truth is not given to man but that he can know only what he makes himself is not the result of skepticism but of demonstrable discovery, and therefore does not lead to resignation but either to redoubled activity or to despair.

The world loss of modern philosophy, whose introspection discovered consciousness as the inner sense with which one senses his senses and found it to be the only guaranty of reality, is different not only in degree from the age-old suspicion of the philosophers toward the world and toward the others with whom they shared the world; the philosopher no longer turns from the world of deceptive perishability to another world of eternal truth, but turns away from both and withdraws into himself. What he discovers in the region of the inner self is, again, not an image whose permanence can be beheld and contemplated, but, on the contrary, the constant movement of sensual perceptions and the no less constantly moving activity of the mind. Since the 17th century,
portion and measure." The whole question raised by humanism was: what is the character of man as such, what is the nature of man? Through the recognition of intellect and will, as distinct from matter, three basic positions on this question of the nature of man are distinguishable in humanist tradition. The first is the stoic position that man may easily learn and follow the laws of nature which concern the achievement of a well-ordered human life. In other words, "Know thyself," for knowledge is virtue. Opposed to this is the view that man has difficulty discovering these laws and even when he knows them he does not necessarily follow them. The third position is the Rousseauian view that the analytical intellect is a hindrance to man who is instinctually good. All three views are concerned with human nature and although Sartre denies the existence of human nature, it will be seen that he is closest to the stoic point of view though strangely enough accepting the second position as the condition of man. Historical roots for these positions are vague.

It is the second position, that of the depraved state of human nature which is the most significant in the later

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Conclusion of Footnote 30
philosophy has produced the best and least disputed results when it has investigated, through a supreme effort of self-inspection, the processes of the senses and of the mind. In this aspect, most of modern philosophy is indeed theory of cognition and psychology, and in the few instances where the potentialities of the Cartesian method of introspection were fully realized by men like Pascal, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche, one is tempted to say that philosophers have experimented with their own selves no less radically and perhaps even more fearlessly than the scientists experimented with nature.

31 Mercier, p.3.
development of Christian Humanism. For the Christians the fall of Adam had disorganized the original natural tendency of man's intellect, will and sensual appetites to virtue. To achieve order, the Christians believed that they needed the help of the grace of God. In other words, man needed God to lead even a well-ordered human life in this world, let alone the next. It is the inversion and degeneration of this notion into bourgeois humanism and naturalism that Sartre accepts as the present condition of man. It is this "accepted" condition which Sartre hopes to resolve through a phenomenology dealing with humanist questions.

Sartre uses the word existentialism, then, to emphasize the claims that each individual person is unique and inexplicable in terms of any metaphysical or scientific system; that he is a being who chooses as well as a being who thinks or contemplates; that he is free, and because he is free he suffers; and that since his future depends in part upon his free choices, it is not altogether predictable. There are also "overtones" in this special usage of the word which suggest that existence is something genuine or authentic by contrast with insincerity, and that a man who merely contemplates the world is failing to make the acts of choice which his situation demands. As M. Natanson says:

Existentialism emerges as a deeply felt concern with and for the concrete reality of the individual; it is his existence that is vital, and it is he who must define himself. It is no longer possible to lose oneself in the system or hope to reveal existence by analytic procedures used in the investigation of "life" or the "cosmos". The individual as such, in
his unique subjectivity, in his personal existence, is at stake; and existentialism holds that the essence of a person may not be revealed by reference to an a priori theory of man or any religious interpretation that speaks of man prior to and apart from his actual existence.32

It is this notion of human nature as being defined by freedom which has become the cornerstone of a new ethical structure whose proponents have as yet presented only an outline of how it might be constituted. The specifically atheistic branch of this ethics is implicit throughout Sartre's works.

The chief characteristics of Sartre's ethical position can be summed up briefly in the following points: the individual, in an isolation imposed upon him by his freedom and in response to the requirements of his unique situation, must make his moral choices and bear responsibility for them. There are no acts which are good or bad in themselves, no goals that are automatically worthy. There are no structures of physical nature, reason, or history above which man cannot rise freely by his self-transcending consciousness of himself. To this point Sartre does not differ from modern "situationist" thinkers, such as Reinhold Niebuhr for example.

What is new in Sartre's ethics is his version of the existentialist virtue of authenticity, which replaces the Christian love commandment. Authenticity requires of man not a code of conduct but a way of life. An ethics based on an essentialist view of man tends to take the form of universally valid content-filled norms, or specific rules of conduct.

32 Maurice Natanson, A Critic of Jean Paul Sartre's Ontology (Lincoln: 1951) p.2
which Sartre cannot and does not admit. Instead he emphasizes the obligation to live in a certain way. The term existence as used by Sartre therefore sometimes takes on a second meaning, that of true or authentic existence as opposed to the absurd existence revealed by the experience of nausea. Existence here is equivalent to the pursuit of transcendent goals, an important part of the authentic life, (Exist., pp. 59-60).

For Sartre then, authentic existence is directly related to the being of man. It is a way of life which is in accordance with a realistic grasp of the ambiguous nature of human reality. Authenticity is a kind of honesty or a kind of courage. The authentic individual faces something which the unauthentic individual is afraid to face. That which he faces is the fact that he is nothing apart from his actions, the necessity to pursue transcendent goals, the realization that these goals are of his own choice and that he is responsible for what he has done in their pursuit.

Sartre does not envisage authenticity as simply the acceptance of a certain attitude toward human reality and the world. This is necessary and he says that man must assure his freedom. But true existence, for Sartre, is something beyond the assumption of an attitude; it is the making of free decisions.

. . . if man has once become aware that in his forlornness he imposes values, he can no longer want

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but one thing, and that is freedom, as the basis of all values. . . . the ultimate meaning of the acts of honest men is the quest for freedom as such, (Exist., pp. 53-54).

This 'free', self-conscious commitment to a preoccupation with one's integrity will be more clearly understood after a closer examination of the condition of man and the concept of freedom in Sartre's view.
In order to view the condition of man from Sartre's point of view it is necessary to place oneself within the context of an existential epistemology. For the existentialist real knowledge must always refer to the knower as an existing individual. Now one consequence of this demand is that there is a basic opposition between abstract thought and the real being, for reality cannot then be conceived or grasped in a concept. In other words, the concept of existence is an ideality and the difficulty is, whether existence can be reduced to a concept. For it is precisely because I exist and the things among which I exist also exist that I am separated from them. So existence separates, and since it is the function of thought to unify, thought finds resistance to

34 As Kierkegaard so well states it: "That essential knowledge is essentially related to existence does not mean the above-mentioned identity which abstract thought postulates between thought and being; nor does it signify, objectively, that knowledge corresponds to something existent as its object, but it means that knowledge has a relationship to the knower, who is essentially an existing individual, and for this reason all essential knowledge is essentially related to existence." Soren Kierkegaard, The Final Unfinished Postscript, Trans. Swenson-Lowrie, (Oxford: 1948), p.177. Hereafter referred to as F.U.P.

35 "To do so is to reduce it to possibility, but in that case it is impossible to conceive it, because to conceive it is to reduce it to possibility and consequently, not to hold fast to it as reality." Soren Kierkegaard, The Journals of Kierkegaard, Trans. Alex Dru (London: 1957), #1054.
its activity in the very fact of existing. For that reason an existential system is a radical impossibility (F.U.P., p.107).

In terms of the individual who must lead his life in very precise and unique circumstances, this means that reason is really cut off from existence and life:

It is perfectly true, as philosophers say, that life must be understood backwards. But they forget the other proposition, that it must be lived forwards. And if one thinks over that proposition it becomes more and more evident that life can never really be understood in time simply because at no particular moment can I find the necessary resting place from which to understand it - backwards. (J., #465).

In actual living, Kierkegaard goes on, the individual is required to make decisions, choose and act. His reason, however, tells him he can do one thing just as well as another and that is tantamount to telling him that he cannot act at all. Reflexion is simply an equilibrium of possibilities and one cannot act on such a basis. He is then caught in the incongruity between action and reflection; he must do that which is literally absurd to his reason. In the concrete, then, reason always comes to grief in absurdity. Recourse must be had, then, to something other than rational knowledge and to means other than reason for attaining it.

Sartre's analysis and the view of man that results from it are really inspired by Heidegger's search for an answer to the question: what is Being? At the beginning of his main work Sein und Zeit, Heidegger stresses the need for a return to ontology. Being, he states (B.T., p.25) occupies a
central role in all of our thoughts and activities; it is the most universal of concepts; it is incapable of being defined, it includes man in its universality; we live within it and yet its meaning is always shrouded in darkness. Investigating the meaning of Being is, then, the basic question in philosophy (B.T., p.23; p.48). But Being has certain demands to make of that investigation. The investigation cannot be pushed arbitrarily, the question can only be asked and answered by one who is a Being. So of all the things to which we apply the term "Being", only one can properly handle the investigation, that is, a Being that looks at or examines itself. Man is just such a Being. Heidegger calls him Dasein. A correct and clear formulation of the meaning of Being demands, then, a preliminary explanation of the Being of man (B.T., p.29): the nature of Sein must be determined by analysing Dasein. What Being is will be determined by what the Dasein is, and for Heidegger the "essence" of Dasein rests in its existence. "Existence" being used not in the traditional sense of existentia, he says (B.T., p.65), nor as a property of an actual Being but as the Sein des Daseins, that is, human existence. So the answer to our ontological question must come from a Being that reveals itself to itself and man is such a self-revealing Being. In this sense, man is ontological to the core.

If, however, this is true then Being is to be found in the phenomenon. Heidegger (B.T., p.50) points out that the Greek word ἔχειν, to which our word goes back, means "to
be revealed" or "to show itself". So a phenomenon is that which reveals or shows itself. Man, then, is a phenomenon and the nature of being will be revealed in penetrating the meaning of phenomenon and discovering just what it implies. In a word, for Heidegger, phenomenology as a study of phenomenon and ontology (the study of being) are not two distinct disciplines belonging to philosophy. Rather the two titles stand for philosophy according to its method in one case, according to its object in the other. Philosophy is a universal, phenomenological ontology taking its point of departure in an interpretation of man's Being, an analysis of whose existence provides the clues needed in all philosophical questions.

It is likewise with an analysis of phenomena that Sartre begins his L'Être et le Néant and with an analysis of human existence that he goes on to determine the meaning of being. Realizing that Being is phenomenon is, he tells us, (B.N., p.XLV) the great advance made by modern thought, inasmuch as it allows us to reduce the existent to the series of appearances that reveals it. Thus, he says (B.N., p.XLVI), we attain the notion of phenomenon as it can be encountered in the phenomenology of Husserl or Heidegger, for example. (The existent, then, is what reveals itself. Notice that it does not reveal anything within itself, it simply reveals itself.) There is not something real inside it which the appearance manifests; its appearing is precisely what is revealed. The dualism of being and appearing can no longer have a rightful claim on philosophy, for here we are confronted with a
phenomenon that is an absolute. Phenomenon is the real (B.N., p.XLVI). In short, phenomenology is a direct looking upon or inspection of the givens of sensory experience. Such inspection confronts one, first of all, with "appearances". In the sense that one is presented with them, these appearances are. They would not be appearances unless they appeared. But if these appearances are, then, according to Sartre, we have located Being; for appearance is being. "It is. That is the only manner of defining its manner of being." "Being is simply the condition of all revelation." (B.N., p.XLIX).

Now just what does phenomenon reveal? Well, if there is to be appearance there must be that which appears and that to which it appears: an act of being perceived and one of perceiving; the perceived and the perceiver; the object and the subject. In referring the components of these pairs one to the other, does the perceiving constitute the perceived so that the object's esse would be percipit? No, says Sartre (B.N., p.L). Every idealism, he points out, seeks to reduce being to the knowledge that is had of it, but to be well-founded it should first establish the being of knowledge on which being depends. Failure to do that means the esse est percipit rests on nothing at all. Consequently, Sartre feels that in any solid doctrine, the being of knowledge must rest on something beyond knowledge, something that escapes the percipit (B.N., p.LI). Otherwise knowledge itself falls into nothingness. So to his mind the relation between perceiver and perceived must be an entitative or transphenomenal
reference of object to subject, subject to object (B.N., p.LI).

On the side of the subject, such transphenomenal dimension is constituted by consciousness in self, for as Husserl has seen so well, all consciousness is consciousness of and is intrinsically intentional (B.N., p.LI). It is, therefore, referred to object entitatively. Pleasure, for example, is an event before it is a representation of a pleasant object (B.N., p.LV). In a word, the phenomenon implies an intentional subject, the so-called "consciousness-self", which is the subject of the most concrete experiences but which is more truly identical with those experiences than related to them. It has nothing substantial about it; it is a pure appearance in the sense that the subject is a pure self-awareness identical with an awareness of (B.N., p.LV). As for the object, its percipi does not depend on reflexive consciousness so as to be constituted what it is by being known. It depends, rather, on the pre-reflexive consciousness in that it is demanded transphenomenally as the object of intentional consciousness. In the manner of Husserl, the being of the cogito pre-reflexively requires the intentionality of the ego and the being of the object: not, as Sartre very carefully points out, (B.N., p.LIX) as the noema is the simple correlative of the noesis, for then the object would be constituted by being known, but as something transcendentally demanded by the very

being of consciousness. Its independence of the subject is, indeed, indicated by the constant stress Sartre places on its being active, never passive, (B.N., p.LVIII). In short, being or phenomenon demands a subject and object intrinsically related one to the other: a being or phenomenon which is phenomenon because it is aware of itself in all appearing, that is, it is a self-awareness or "being-for-itself"; and a being or phenomenon appearing to consciousness as a transphenomenal object of that consciousness but not reflexively aware of itself, that is, a "being-in-itself". There are, then, two orders in phenomenon, the pour-soi and the en-soi, (B.N., p.LXV). The pour-soi is consciousness in its most simple sense. For Sartre, speculation begins in subjectivity; more specifically, it begins with the Cartesian cogito, which is taken to be the root of all judgments and all cognition. It is "an absolute truth founded upon the immediate grasp which consciousness has of itself, and as such is the basis for all other certain truths." 37 Sartre recognizes, however, a pre-reflective as well as a reflective cogito, and through an examination of the pre-reflective cogito he tries to give a general understanding of the en-soi, the other pole of being.

The pre-reflective cogito is the basis for the reality of consciousness; for there can be no consciousness where there is no reference to an object. This is "... the only mode of existence which is possible for a consciousness of

"something", (B.N., p.LIV). Consciousness cannot exist apart from its active unfolding in the acts of consciousness.

Consciousness has nothing substantial, it is pure appearance in the sense that it exists only to the degree to which it appears. But it is precisely because consciousness is pure appearance, because it is total emptiness (since the entire world is outside it) - it is because of this identity of appearance and existence within it that it can be considered as the absolute, (B.N., p.LVI).

Consciousness is thus the cause of its own manner of being and is the identity of appearance and existence. Sartre's recourse to the pre-reflective cogito enables him to escape from the infinite regress of "knowing known"; for the coincidence of existence and appearance indicates that the pre-reflective cogito is an absolute in the order of existence and a condition of all knowledge.

However, consciousness is more than self-reflection; all consciousness is consciousness of something. Consciousness intends some object in the world. What is intended, says Sartre, is some "trans-phenomenal" being beyond consciousness. The realm of trans-phenomenal being is the realm of the en-soi. For Sartre, the en-soi is the rough "is-ness" of being, the brute confrontation of being; the "stuff" of the world. Thus the being of consciousness faces the being of the phenomenon: the pour-soi faces the en-soi, and although both may be identified by a subjective analysis, they remain in alien and severed realms. If the pour-soi can be identified or defined as consciousness, then the en-soi may be defined as the trans-phenomenal being of the object.
Consciousness implies in its very being a non-conscious, trans-phenomenal being. "Consciousness is a being such that in its being, its being is in question insofar as this being implies a being other than itself," (B.N., p.LXII). The pour-soi (consciousness) is nothingness.

What, then, does the pour-soi as consciousness reveal to us of the nature of being? Well, it is the self-revealing, and since our basic ontological situation demanded that being question itself, let us see what the pour-soi tells us of being in the experience of questioning. Any question, as distinct from an affirmation, demands that a yes or no answer be possible. In asking a question one must accept the possibility of the non-existence of the being he questions. In addition, he reveals himself to be in a state of indetermination in even asking the question. A question, then, is a bridge between two non-beings: the non-being of knowing on the side of the questioner, the non-being of the transcendency on the side of the one questioned. So in merely asking: what is being? a new dimension of being has been revealed — non-being, (B.N., p.5).

On the side of the pour-soi such "non-being" is not only revealed as a condition of my confronting myself so as to be able to question myself, but also of questioning other men or things. To question them the pour-soi must in some way remove itself from being. On the side of the en-soi as object of the conscious attention involved in questioning, it must appear capable of giving a negative reply. For if a question is
aroused in a questioner by anything that just is, then it is occasioned by something completely and universally determined and the question would cease to be even conceivable. Therefore, the en-soi must appear capable of not-being. It must appear haunted by "non-being." According to Sartre (B.N., p.8-12), it is by the attention of the pour-soi, in this case illustrated by questioning but just as well by expectation or any other conscious attitude, that "non-being" comes into being. But for our present purposes, the important thing to note is that a fundamental note of being, its "non-being", has been revealed by analysing human existence. That "non-being" is just as transphenomenal and objective as is being; subject and object are just as transcendentally nothing. We have, then, in the case of Sartre, a definite conception of being taking shape even though it is properly man that is under examination. In a word, man's existence proves a key to the nature of being itself.

In developing his notion of the pour-soi Sartre was recasting in his own way the Dasein of Heidegger which is found identified with human existence. Man is a "being-for-himself," a phenomenon and a "consciousness-self." At the extreme of that consciousness, through the attention man pays to the object of his consciousness, negativity or "non-being" enters being. It is through man as pour-soi that non-being comes to be. His being is, properly speaking, to negate being; negate it as by a positive, concrete act of negating. In short, man is really the link in being. The apparent hiatus in being
caused by the distinction between *pour-soi* and *en-soi* is bridged by a synthetic bond which is nothing else but the *pour-soi* itself, (B.N., p.617). The *pour-soi* is, indeed, but a pure negating of the *en-soi*. It is like an entitative gap in being. It is a creative gap, for by its negating attention the *pour-soi* makes a nothing of the individual *en-soi* and out of this overthrowing of the *en-soi* a world is made, (B.N., p.LXV). In a word, man's attention singles out of a vast background certain *en-soi* that now become objects of his consciousness and constitute 'his' world. Man creates a world by his attention. It is, then, out of his negativity that a world appears, a negativity that Sartre attempts to express, (B.N., p.LXV) by saying of the *pour-soi*: it is not what it is, and it is what it is not.

The "facticity" of the *pour-soi* is its pastness, (B.N., p.118). The facticity of the *pour-soi* is threatened and encroached upon by the *en-soi*; the "in-itself" attempts to swallow up the "for-itself." The "was" characterizes the type of being of the *pour-soi*; it characterizes the relation of the *pour-soi* to its being. The past is the *en-soi* which I am, considered as passed beyond. The past is "in itself" and "I am for-myself," therefore the "Cartesian *cogito*" ought to be formulated rather, "I think; therefore I was," (B.N., p.119). In other words, I am the man who "was" the man. But in the same sense in which I am the man who was, I certainly am not the man who was, for I am the man I am.

The *pour-soi*, when it becomes pastness, is seized by the
en-soi and rendered "facticity", but since the present is pour-soi, a paradox is involved. Although, for Sartre, the present must be defined in terms of being, whenever the attempt is made to specify the present there is left only an infinitesimal instant, a nothingness. This, Sartre points out, is the fundamental contradiction of existence: there is always the indissoluble pair, being and nothingness.

The pour-soi, as present, cannot be seized as such because the present is a perpetual flight in the face of being. The present cannot truly be seized in any of its instants, for these instants themselves are in flight.

Yet the pour-soi exists only because it has a future. The pour-soi of the present reveals the pour-soi yet to be. The "project" is held before the pour-soi as its image-to-be. The future world, says Sartre, "has meaning as a future only insofar as I am present to it as "another" who I will be, in another position, physical, emotional, social, etc., (B.N., p.127). Sartre concludes that "I must become what I was, but in a world that has become from the standpoint of what it is. This means that I give to the world its own possibilities in terms of the state which I apprehend on it," (B.N., p.127).

The totality of the self then, arises from the unity of past, present and future with the liaisons of "was-ness" and "flight" which bind them together dialectically.

The self holds within it the problem of its freedom, for the flight of the pour-soi toward its future is its measure of freedom to become what it will be. This freedom, for
Sartre, is unique. The pour-soi does not accept or reject its freedom in a purely conceptual way.

The future constitutes the meaning of my present pour-soi, as the project of its possibility, but that in no way pre-determines my pour-soi which is to come, since the pour-soi is always abandoned to the nihilating obligation of being the foundation of its nothingness, (B.N., p.128).

Sartre concludes then, that the pour-soi cannot avoid its "problematicity" since the pour-soi itself is problematic in the sense of continually being faced by an uncertain future. This is what Sartre means when he asserts that man is a being whose meaning is always problematical. And so, the pour-soi can never be anything but problematically its future, for it is separated from that future by a nothingness which it itself is. The pour-soi is free and its freedom is to itself its own limit.

The nothingness of the pour-soi, is for Sartre, the possibility of freedom. Freedom is the "possibility for the human reality to secrete a nothingness which isolates" and "freedom is the human being putting its past out of play by secreting his own nothingness," (B.N., p.23).

It is in virtue of that negativity (particularly its creative, projecting tendencies) that man is not said to be, but to be towards being, (B.N., p.LXV). And because he is such a negative, projecting being, he is free. It is by his negativity that he escapes causal laws, (B.N., p.23), it is by projecting that nothingness into other beings in expecting them to be other than they are that they too are seen to
escape those same causal laws in some measure. Every human attention, be it question, expectation, imagination or emotion is really a judgment that "non-being" is possible in things, that they can be other than they are, that they escape rigid determinism. So negativity is the root and foundation of human liberty, (B.N., p.24). In short, negativity, being towards and standing outside being all add up to one thing: liberty.

It is this identification of man with freedom that Sartre has in mind in speaking (Ex., p.18) of man in pure subjectivity and as a being that just appears in the world: to be free man must just appear, exist and then freely define himself in existing. In this sense his existence is a primary fact, his essence must come from what he wills to make himself. The constant exercise of that freedom, that is to say his constant existing, is attested by the feelings of anguish, forlornness and despair that in some degree or other accompany every choice he makes.

Nothingness reveals freedom and also reveals our anguish.

... 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, (B.N., p.22).

Anguish should be distinguished from fear. Fear is of things of the world, whereas anguish is anguish before oneself; it is the fear of having fear or the consciousness of freedom. In other words it is fear of the non-specific or a fear of possibles. But inasmuch as he is a pour-soi, he is properly
man in choosing rather than allowing his decisions to be made for him impersonally: he is condemned to be free, but to be free he must choose. Thus, liberty becomes the only value that really guarantees humanity to man, it is the link that binds together all 'human' phenomena, (Ex., p.56). In this sense freedom is the essence of man.

These notions of Sartre being established, it is now possible to delineate his concept of freedom which is a necessary establishment for positing Sartre's ontology as a condition for humanism.

According to Sartre, every action is, in principle, intentional. True action implies a consciousness of acting on the part of the actor. Since action is necessarily intentional, no political or economic fact can cause action in the individual. "The indispensable and fundamental condition of all action is the freedom of the acting being," (B.N., p.436).

Freedom is evidenced in the *pour-soi* insofar as the *pour-soi* exists as "lack". The lack of the *pour-soi* is its nothingness. Because the *pour-soi* "exists" itself through flight, it is nothing, for its existence is always non-static. The *pour-soi* is not that which it is and is that which it is not.

Choice, freedom and action are inextricably bound together in the existence of the *pour-soi*. There can be no freedom if there is no choice; there can be no choice if there is no freedom; there can be no action where there is no freedom. And yet, as Sartre says:

To choose ourselves is to nihilate ourselves; that is
to cause a future to come to make known to us what we are by conferring a meaning on our past. Thus there is not a succession of instants separated by nothingnesses - as with Descartes - such that my choice at the instant I can not act on my choice of the instant I. To choose is to effect the upsurge along with my engagement of a certain finite extension of concrete and continuous duration, which is precisely that which separates me from the realization of my original possibles. Thus freedom, choice, nihilation, temporalization are all one and the same, (B.N., p.465).

Sartre does not accept the common notion of freedom which is a description of those conditions external to man which allow him to choose among alternatives but rather freedom for Sartre is a state of being of the pour-soi to which it is condemned. "We are a freedom which chooses, but we do not choose to be free. We are condemned to freedom, as we said earlier, thrown into freedom or . . . abandoned." (B.N., p.485). Since the pour-soi is in question in its being, freedom is its condition. "Freedom . . . is not a quality added on or a property of my nature. It is very exactly the stuff of my being," (B.N., p.439).

To comprehend Sartre's freedom, one must keep in mind that for Sartre human reality is its own nothingness. The pour-soi, in order to be, must choose itself. There is no a priori essence or God-given human nature that the pour-soi can depend on or cling to. The pour-soi, "without any help whatsoever . . . is entirely abandoned to the intolerable necessity of making itself be - down to the slightest detail. Thus freedom is not a being; it is the freedom of man - i.e. his nothingness of being," (B.N., p.441).
Taken ontologically essence is a necessary determination, and in this present case would mean that man must be man. But existentially man can be "not-man" by being inauthentic, that is to say he can simply go along with the crowd, so to speak, in his ordinary daily existence. In fleeing personal responsibility he is not properly man. Existentially, then, man does not have to be man, 'human' does not exercise a necessary determination. But what is existentially necessary is that for man to be man he must choose. In that sense freedom makes man to be man, it is the definition of man, (Ex., p.54) - but surely it is a moral definition.

The constant insistence that phenomenological analysis is descriptive, is noteworthy. Husserl has called it "a new, descriptive, philosophical method" and has suggested its use in completely revising the sciences. It is a search for essences but it is primarily psychological in object and in method, hence the strong atmosphere of psychology in Heidegger and Sartre. Now recognizing that most of our contemporaries are trained to handle psychological data rather than the subtleties of theology and metaphysics, one might well consider using such phenomenological analysis in searching for and the defence of a doctrine of essences. But a reworking of such basic notions as experience, consciousness, intentionality, meaning and evidence would certainly be a prerequisite.

Further, the investigations that have been examined here

are basically moral, and in this ontological considerations are secondary to moral ones. For Sartre being is meaningful in terms of man and man is defined by what he chooses; he exists in action; freedom is the supreme value and freedom is found in the transcendence of negativity that explains our knowing or being conscious. In short, moral questions command the phenomenological analysis which then becomes a search for negativity. To find it one is forced to examine phenomena, for a being that is other than phenomena will have a structure; it will just be and thereby resist freedom. It is not surprising then, that Sartre himself should conclude: "thus, existential psycho-analysis is a moral description because it gives us the ethical meaning of different human projects," (B.N., p.626). In short, the being in question is moral being. In that perspective the notion of man being uncaused, making his own nature, creating his own world, being his past and the mystery of his being are all meaningful. Consequently, analysing such conclusions as are presented by Sartre should be the work of the moralist primarily.

If that is so it is obvious that the constant insistence on concreteness as opposed to abstraction becomes understandable. What is actually here is an appeal that moral being be treated as a distinctive kind of being, that is a free movement towards an end rather than a being centered in its own metaphysical act. To complicate matters further, however, the greatest stress is laid on considering such being at its most circumscribed and individual level: the point where
choice initiates the act towards its end, a point that must be experienced and is strictly incapable of formulation. One should insist, however, that even here there is a radical intelligibility to be recognized. Unfortunately, for Sartre, the Kantian antithesis of speculative and practical reason has cast its shadow over his analysis as it has been followed, so that his resulting treatment of moral being is a non-intellectual one. Thus, the moral order becomes an order of magic for Sartre. One must strive to reintegrate intellectual principles into the moral order without destroying the formal character of moral being: the moral must be shown to be "intelligible" and at the same time "free." To do this it is necessary to remove the illusion that intellectual principles, since they guide speculative reason, bring physical necessity in their wake and are antithetical to freedom.

And finally, to do so it would appear necessary to insist on the fundamental difference between physical and spiritual nature. The former is closed by matter and determined in operation; the latter open and free in operation, containing rather than being contained.

But since the analysis of Sartre's investigation of being shows his consideration to be basically moral, there is one more concept in his phenomenology which must be looked at before attempting to assess his existential humanism. It is the relation of the "self" to the "other".

For Sartre the "other" is immediately known or "encountered". It has the nature of a contingent but irreducible
fact, and therefore Sartre says that the existence of the "other" cannot be derived ontologically. And yet, for Sartre, there is in everyday reality an original relation to the "other" which can be constantly sought and which is disclosed outside of all reference to God.

The basis for this original relation to the other is the very "appearance" of the other. As Sartre says, "the very appearance of the other in my universe of an element of disintegration of this universe is what I call the appearance of a man in my universe," (B.N., p.225). The other shocks this world of self in an original, unique and irreducible manner. "I cannot be the object of an object," says Sartre, and yet, "... at each instant the other looks at me," (B.N., p.257).

The basis of the solution to the problem of the other will be the "look". But what does it mean, for Sartre, to be seen? "The other's look hides his eyes; he seems to go in front of them," (B.N., p.258). What Sartre is referring to, here, is the conscious look of another - which has already been shown to be a nothingness which nihilates.

What I apprehend immediately when I hear the branches crackling behind me is not that there is someone there; it is that I am vulnerable, that I have a body which can be hurt, that I occupy a place and that I can not in any case escape from the space in which I am... in short, that I am "seen", (B.N., p.259).

As long as one is a pure consciousness of things to be done or to be used, he is safe. "I do what I have to do. No transcending view comes to confer upon my acts the character of a given on which a judgment can be brought to bear," (B.N.,
Shame reveals to the self the look of the other. "I see myself because somebody sees me," (B.N., p.260). Shame, for Sartre, means that "I am the object the other is looking at," (B.N., p.261). To apprehend himself as seen is, for Sartre, the alienation of the world which he organized. The other is the hidden death of his possibilities in the world. The other looks at him and in the look, shocks or haemorrhages his inner unity, his inner world, his subjectivity. The recovery of this inner world of the self is possible by a retaliation against the other, i.e., by making the other the object of my look and destroying his inner unity. By the look of the other Sartre has been made an object for the other's subjectivity and the other knows him only as object, never as subject. In the same manner, Sartre knows the other as object, never as subject.

This very notion extended to include a social consciousness leads men through bad faith, to postulate the existence of God by the experience of being an "us-object".

This experience occurs when a group identifies itself as such in relation to another group or person who looks at them as objects. A number of persons see themselves as forming a definite group or community when they find themselves so classed in the view of a third party. If the third party is a foreigner, the reaction is a consciousness of nationality. For example, the presence of the bourgeois is required for the class solidarity of the proletariat.39

This effort at recovering the human totality can not 
take place without positing the existence of a "third", 
who is on principle distinct from humanity and in 
whose eyes humanity is wholly object. . . this con­ 
cept is the same as that of the being-who-looks-at 
and who can never be looked-at; that is, it is one 
with the idea of God, (B.N., p. 423).

Bearing these notions of the totality of the self, the 
nihilation of God, the shock of the "other", the anguish of 
choice and the condemnation to freedom, it is time now to 
determine the implications for modern morality of Jean Paul 
Sartre's concept of freedom as made explicit in his existen­ 
tial humanism.
CHAPTER III

CONCLUSIONS AND CRITICISM REGARDING JEAN PAUL SARTRE’S EXISTENTIAL HUMANISM

Given the essential ambiguity of the "human condition", of a freedom — situated, two alternatives remain open to consciousness: to lose self in the objective or to establish self in pure freedom by renunciation of fixed determinations, of every form of concrete existence. According to Sartre the only authentic attitude, the only morality which can save the true nature of consciousness is neither of the alternatives mentioned, but the engagement of self with objects without at the same time becoming the slave of the en-soi, an engagement in freedom that is always active and repudiative, constantly engaged with the world yet never estranged from self, ever disposed to new realizations but never moulded to some static, definite manner of being.

The freedom of ambiguity represents a conquest which each one must reach by himself through personal and painful effort. From the initial, spontaneous encounter with the world by which one is enticed and disarmed by it one must pass through the phase of the reflection which is complicity to that of the reflection which is purification. In this final stage is placed the moral problem of fidelity to the authentic demands of the human condition. Man must continually make choices, create for himself his particular essence,
form his personality. It is not something already constituted by a natural determinism but something demanding discovery or invention by each person: in this consists man's particular moral duty.

The idea of a totally personal solution of moral problems, a solution "created" from situation to situation, is a focal point common to some extent to all existentialist theorists. In it there is nothing absolute or universal which would be valid for all individuals, since the real is always the concrete and particular. Man can never appeal to universal norms to escape the obligation of judging for himself what conduct he ought to assume in this instance of existence.

Sartre is adverse to all that is fixed, definite or impersonal. These are in fact characteristics of the "absurd" to which the dynamism of the "being-for-itself" is opposed. Sartre invokes an "existential psychanalysis" which controls behavior and the projected ends of the individual and places him on guard against the enslavement of freedom in a mode of being which is not authentic, that is, not ambiguous.

Every objective value which man seeks to realize is lost in the effort if he makes it his goal. Even the attempt to become God "that is, to be of oneself the conscious foundation of one's own en-soi" is a self-contradictory project inasmuch as it would necessarily bring one to a fixation of consciousness in a determinate state and therefore to the extinction of freedom.

For Sartre, consequently, the good or evil of acts does
not derive from an external norm. The will itself bestows good or bad upon them by willing them freely. Man can will everything and never reject anything, because by the very fact that he wills anything at all that thing becomes fully licit. Sartre's ideal of an authentic realization of the "conscious being" is that of a freedom which is totally intoxicated with itself, which refuses none of its possibilities of being, which is permitted everything, which rejects every restriction that pretends to bind it, and at the same time a freedom which attaches itself to nothing, which binds itself to none of those things which it chooses to be or which it does.

The affirmation of a total and gratuitous human freedom as opposed to a superior and all comprehensive moral order, both divine and natural, releases man from any directive bond whatever and crowns him with an autonomy as absolute as it is vacuous. No value can now impose itself upon him as obligatory. The individual becomes the creator of his values, his own internal law. It is clear that this is an ethic of the arbitrary and hence no ethic. Human life according to Sartre, with all the moral values by which humanity lives and is nourished, is simply impossible. Without God man cannot comprehend even himself.

The extraordinary appeal of Sartre is witness to his ability to grasp and interpret the spiritual situation of the post-war generation. To young people who place no hope in anything, he has cast a new anchor of salvation, however
strange it may seem, their very desperation. He says: live as you like, without willing anything. This is freedom. Desperation is itself a way of life, indeed, the one most consonant with the insignificance of life. A lucid despair, an implacable pessimism about man's condition and the presumed values and ideals he has always sought, and an acute sense of the vanity of things is what pervades every page of Sartre. Cast willy nilly into an absurd world, one must engage in life without hoping for anything from it while enjoying with full freedom the rare moments of pleasure that it offers. In to-day's world where many do not believe in anything or hope for anything, why meddle with unverifiable prescriptions or metaphysical creeds which can only induce self-torture and unrest? It is to the present existential reality that one must attach himself, not to find support in it, since it is inconsistent, but to take only that little good which it has to offer.

The impossibility of an existential ethics has its metaphysical basis in the exaltation of "being" as antecedent and opposed to thought. To ontological phenomenalism logically

40 A compendious view of Jean Paul Sartre's philosophy can be had by reading the lecture he gave in Paris in 1945. This work later published, is grounded on the "metaphysic" developed by his larger work, L'être et le néant. Even Sartre's more popular stories and his plays are less literary than they are doctrinaire. For just as Being and Nothingness provides an ontological roost from which he may jump into the void of his own creating, so also the characters in his writings, who seem to be absolutely irrational at times, are really graphic demonstrations of Sartre's brand of existentialism put into action. His characters are "humanistic" in the highest Sartrean sense of the word, and the short works in which they appear are catechetical expositions of an atheistic theology which is specifically a humanism.
corresponds an ethical atomism, both presented in the light of a false horizontal transcendentalism.

The question may now be asked whether Jean Paul Sartre's existentialism would have to conform to traditional notions (as pointed out in the introduction to this paper) of humanism in order to call itself a humanism. It would seem not, for the problem here is to see whether Sartre's existentialism is a humanism on its own terms or whether it is guilty of its own "bad faith."

"Bad faith" means, for Sartre, dishonesty. However, dishonesty without any moral criteria, simply means a certain inconsistency in the face of "reality". Here then, are a few of Sartre's inconsistencies.

In the first part of his essay, "Existentialism is a humanism", Sartre implies that he is struggling against the powers-that-be; that he is resisting authority and trying to rise above his station. He is a romantic who leaves to man the possibility of choice. And yet Sartre maintains that "we do not believe in progress. Progress is betterment, but man is always the same. The situation confronting him varies. But the choice always remains a choice in a situation," (Exist., p.52). So, man rises above his station, but he cannot progress.

For Sartre, "there does exist a universal human condition," (Exist., p.45). The limits are neither subjective nor objective; rather they have two sides. They are objective because found everywhere, and subjective because they are
non-existent unless lived by man; as he says, "There is a uni-
versality of man but it is not given, it is perpetually be-
ing made," (Exist., p.47). Then, man is a mystery who can
never be what he is until he is dead.

Again Sartre says that there is no reality except in ac-
tion, for man is nothing else than his plan; he exists only to
the extent that he fulfils himself. Man is nothing else than
a series of undertakings; he is the sum, the organization, the
ensemble of the relationships which make up these undertakings.
In other words, "... the coward makes himself cowardly, and
the hero makes himself heroic," (Exist., p.41). It is because
of this flux that a man can never be a being-in-itself in the
present. It is only the past that can be grasped or stati-
cized. That is why a man both is and is not what he is and
he cannot totally be what he is until he is dead.

Since the project in the future will involve new condi-
tions, man can never really know what he will be and yet Sar-
tre states that "there is no doctrine more optimistic, since
man's destiny is within himself," (Exist., p.42).

Sartre starts with the so-called simple, subjective
truth that "outside the Cartesian cogito, all views are only
probable," (Exist., p.44) and he elaborates a theory of prob-
ability based on it. For Sartre, "this theory is the only
one which gives man dignity, the only one which does not re-
duce him to an object," (Exist., p.43). But man reduces him-
self to an object in continually striving to be the project
that he has created for himself.
Man must accept the situation in which he finds himself, and yet he is responsible for this situation. "Existentialism's first move is to make every man aware of what he is and to make the full responsibility of his existence rest on him," (Exist., p.19).

For Sartre, man is a choosing, a self-creating subjectivity and therefore every choice is not only the best choice for him but also contains the image of what he wills to be. At first sight this does not seem to be consistent with his notion that man chooses in anxiety because he is not only choosing what he will be but also legislating what all mankind ought to be, (Exist., p.20). But where is the anguish in making a choice which is necessarily good or the best? Could it be that anguish in this existential system stems from the fact that there are no standards for comparative degrees of choice since the choice is simply subjective? It would seem then that such words as "the good" or "the best" are meaningless and that anguish is a result of this meaninglessness. But Sartre points out that his anguish is a correlative of the question which each man must ask himself before making a choice. "Am I really the kind of man who has the right to act in such a way that humanity might guide itself by my actions?" (Exist., p.24). The anguish here is a result of the fact that there is no answer to the question. This question does not, and is not, supposed to indicate a sympathy for one's fellow man. It simply must be asked because the new world which "I" am about to create by "my" choice
will involve the other in a new situation and, of course, one does not know what this situation will be. There is certainly no concern here for the "other" "I" can never get to know as subject, who shatters "my" inner unity, who objectivizes "me", who is an intruder into "my" world, and whom "I" must look at, objectivize, in order to regain equilibrium.

There is a paradox involved here for Sartre says that he perceives all others as the "condition of his own existence," (Exist., p.24). In order to get any truth about oneself, one must have contact with another person. But the contact shatters one's inner unity; one is no longer oneself. "Every man who sets up a determinism is a dishonest man," (Exist., p.53).

And yet, just previous to this statement, Sartre had said: "This inability to not make a choice is absolute," (Exist., p.47). If a man in making a choice does so in anguish because he does not know how it will turn out or what he will be and yet his future depends upon this choice, is this not an irrational and non-deliberate determinism? But for Sartre man is freedom.

Every action of man is subject to a moral interpretation. "Nothing is excusable, man is responsible for his passion," (Exist., p.27). But there are no objective moral principles. "Moral choice is to be compared to the making of a work of art. In choosing his ethics, man makes himself," (Exist., p.49).

The fundamental relation of man with others is conflict. "Hell is other people." "The other haemorrhages my inner
unity. " The other is an element of disintegration in my universe. And yet Sartre says:

"... the subjectivity that we have thus arrived at, and which we have claimed to be truth, is not a strictly individual subjectivity, for we have demonstrated that one discovers in the cogito not only himself, but others as well, (Exist., p.44).

In fact a man cannot know himself except as objectivized by the other. In spite of the conflict, man must commit himself to others.

In spite of the apparent contradictions and ambiguities of an essentially negativistic, pessimistic philosophy of irrationalism, Sartre has built a rational system centered upon man and his condition. He has tried to answer the questions: What is man? Where is he going? and How shall he go about getting there? As such, Sartre's work is a brand of humanism. Traditional Christian humanism, which regards man as provided by God with certain graces, talents and gifts which must be used to obtain eternal happiness, for Sartre, is an arbitrary determinism and therefore nonsense. Nor does Sartre completely agree with an atheistic humanism which regards man as being subjectively responsible for developing individual "grace" and talent for the purpose of creating a certain personal happiness as well as uplifting mankind while reaching for immortality. As Sartre says; "This... theory takes man as an end and as a higher value. "... that I, as man, shall personally consider myself responsible for, and honored by, acts of a few particular men. This kind of
Humanism we can do without." The meaning of humanism, for Sartre, is this:

Man is constantly outside of himself; in projecting himself, in losing himself outside of himself, he makes for man's existing; and on the other hand, it is by pursuing transcendent goals that he is able to exist; man being this state of passing beyond, is at the heart, at the center of this passing beyond. There is no universe other than a human universe, the universe of human subjectivity. This connection between transcendency, as a constituent element of man - not in the sense that God is transcendent, but in the sense of passing beyond - and subjectivity, in the sense that man is not closed in on himself but is always present in a human universe, is what we call humanism.

Humanism, because we remind man that there is no law-maker other than himself, and that in his forlornness he will decide by himself; because we point out that man will fulfil himself as man not in turning towards himself but in seeking outside of himself a goal which is just this liberation, just this particular fulfilment, (Exist*, p.60).

Given his principles, then, Sartre has constructed a system which illuminates choice and probability, which stresses the essential freedom of man and a certain function of the other in conditioning choice and freedom. He has developed a theory which centers upon and makes possible the existence of man, given the situation of man and man's condition as Sartre understands them. Thus the work is not without value. On the contrary the very impetus for this existentialism seems to be founded upon the essentially religious experience of a man having come from nothing and going towards nothing -- and as such it has humanistic implications.

But what of the inconsistencies, the apparent "bad faith?" Well, if man comes from nothing and for no reason, then he has an irrational beginning. He lives a life about
which he has only an historical knowledge and moves towards his own total annihilation. The only salvation for Sartre, then, is the rational recognition of irrationalism. As Norman Greene puts it, this is "... a sort of reverse stoicism, the living by man of the life determined for him by his project." 41

In other words, man lives in a condition of indefinite compounding. The important thing is not to lose, yet one never wins. The essence of liberty lies in the uncertainty and risk involved in the necessity of action. This new stoicism like the old commands man to look within, to recognize the universal in himself, but unlike the old stoicism it cannot believe that "no natural desire is in vain." 42 This stoicism of Sartre's is designed not only to confront external desolation but also the powerful contradictory impulses from within as well. In anguish man will see himself, his contradictory condition, and his freedom to act "as if" he were God.

Thus Sartre's doctrine may properly be called an atheistic theology for, though it is diametrically opposed to a God-centered world, nevertheless, it rests its case upon God or at least upon the "non-existence" of God. The very impetus and drive for all of men's actions, according to Sartre, is


42 Simone de Beauvoir, Pyrrhus and Cyneas, Trans. Catherine Freemantle, Partisan Review, Summer, 1946.
found in the longing to be and the attempt to become God. In
fact, Sartre implies that the philosophy of existence is im-
possible without first annihilating God. He says that:

Atheistic existentialism, which I represent, is more
coherent. It states that if God does not exist,
there is at least one being in whom existence pre-
cedes essence, a being who exists before he can be
defined by any concept, and that this being is man,
or, as Heidegger says, human reality. 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 will have made what he will be. Thus, there is
no human nature, since there is no God to conceive
it. 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, (Exist., p.18).

As was shown previously, Descartes, in his search for
"clear and distinct" ideas, ignored the immediate fact of ex-
istence. The dualism of res extensa and res cogitans is
founded essentially on a separation of man's essence from his
existence, and Descartes never succeeded in synthesizing or
welding them together again. The reaction of the existential-
ists was to expose man as a feeling creature, a finite crea-
ture caught in the paradox of his search for the infinite.
A creature that must believe his heart because his reason is
inadequate.

Since the very basis of our action is founded upon an
assumed impossibility, i.e. the existence of God and the tend-
ing of man toward God, Sartre's chief effort is to get man to
face squarely the implications for personal action in a uni-
verse without purpose. Starting with an assumed first
principle, that of the non-existence of God, and denying the existence of a fixed human nature, man is allowed no external support and is therefore fully responsible for his own character, judgments and choices.

Kierkegaard, for example, understood man as a creature who cannot prove the existence of God but who leaps to Him in an act of ultimate faith. Sartre, however, leaps away from God. The fact of God for Sartre is an illusion caused by certain basic aspects of the total human condition. In fact, belief in God, for Sartre, is detrimental to human welfare and is caused by a form of "bad faith" or refusal to face the fact of human freedom. "... the first act of bad faith is to flee what it cannot flee, to flee what it is," (Exist., p.15). Bad faith is a response to a situation in which man faces the difficulty of conquering himself as a self in a world created by others, but which he, by virtue of the necessity of his dependence accepts as his own. He must assert the world as it appears to him. The recognition of freedom is inseparable from anguish and the recognition of solitude is accompanied by nausea. Desire breeds frustration and satisfaction is impossible. It is the "human condition" with its inner conflict and struggle which leads to "bad faith", (B.N. p.49).

Sartre admits that in claiming to be an atheist he is going beyond the certainty of experience to the realm of the hypothetical and probable. The existence or non-existence of God is a metaphysical question for him, and he regards
metaphysics as an imaginative enterprise incapable of yielding certainty. Sartre’s ontology differs from a metaphysics in that it is a description of facts, and thus, he believes, it is subject to the criteria of truth or falsity. He seems to have a basic reluctance to assume more than is justified by the "clear" testimony of experience.

Sartre is preoccupied essentially with men-in-situations, with man and the human condition of man, but he seems to be looking at man from the point of view of a psychologist or sociologist, even though his work is couched in quasi-philosophic language. First, let it be kept in mind that one studying Sartre is dealing with a phenomenology and as such the work is limited to subjective description. For this reason it cannot be a philosophy either of being or of nothingness, for the intuition of either of these notions must necessarily be outside of any particular phenomenon. By the same token it cannot be a humanism in the traditional sense, because traditional humanism draws upon principles, norms and criteria obtaining in a penetrating analysis of the human person. In spite of the fact that Sartre makes the "human condition" the central theme of his "description", this could never take the place of a philosophical analysis any more than the confessional could take the place of psycho-analysis or sociology could take the place of moral theology.

The final metaphysical breakdown is forced upon Sartre by his own phenomenological criteria when he attempts to discuss existence prescinded from essence. This destroys the very
existences, the starting point of Sartre's system because of an all exclusive concentration upon existence. One is speaking of nothing if he attempts to speak of an essence which does not exist in some way, and so, also, Sartre is speaking of nothing when he attempts to talk about individual existents which are not some-things, which have no form or nature; which, in other words, are unspeakable. By throwing out natures, Sartre also destroys existence and from then on his existents have, strangely, many essential characteristics. (For example, existence is essentially free.)

Rather than a metaphysic or even a philosophy of nature, what Sartre has here is a description of the interplay of environmental factors conditioning the man (psychology) or his collectivity (sociology), which description is itself involved in this "human condition".

Further, Sartre not only destroys existence but he also destroys discourse. Plato saw the need of constructing something other than being (non-being), in order to talk about being. The attempt of Sartre to create a rational system of description of totally involved personal irrationalism, using terms which invalidate themselves, communicating the incommunicable and speaking about an unspeakable subject is ambiguous.

The obvious moral breakdown of Sartre's existential humanism is a result of the ambiguity of measuring without a measure. The culmination of a vain and pretentious humanism which attempts to seal man off from God and make the creature
instead of the creator the measure of all things, is precisely this kind of ultra-personal individualism.

There can be little doubt that much of the success of Sartre and his philosophic and theological offspring is due to the new way of propagating ideas through literature especially the novel and the drama. The exponents of existentialism, particularly in France, immediately saw the advantages of literature over any formal scientific exposition for presenting the individual in his concrete existence. Sartre's drama, *Les Diablos et Le Bon Dieu*, for example, has had far greater influence than his treatise *Being and Nothingness*. Sartre passes from philosophy to the novel, to tragedy and to comedy without shifting his ground, because for him the theatre is nothing more than phenomenology played out on a stage.

In his dramas Sartre portrays the indetermination of human freedom, the contingency and absurdity of an existence in which human acts are disconnected, of no logical or moral significance, or in Sartrian terminology, wholly gratuitous.

It is evident that psychoanalysis, both as a method of psycho-therapy and as a branch of empirical psychology, has had tremendous influence everywhere and holds the interest of countless individuals. One consequence of this new science of man has been the desire to institute new norms which are independent of natural and Christian morality. Unconscious dynamisms and determinations lie beneath the apparent calm of consciousness and are guided by their own laws according to psychology. These laws and their dynamisms are imperious in
their demands upon man's conscious behaviour. Conscience is not, as it may appear, a clear and placid realm where judgments of moral value regarding individual acts are reached. It is rather a bundle of psychic energy rooted in instinctive and unconscious soil.

It is further affirmed that the evolution of conscience in its intellectual and affective formation is an extremely complicated phenomenon whose harmonious development and perfect maturation is found only in rare instances. In its efforts to adapt itself to the real, the ego is barraged and battered by unbridled impulses of pleasure on one hand and by the inhibitions of external morality on the other. If this conflict of the ego with the id and superego is not happily resolved, we then have one or the other complex or arrestation of the psychic dynamism. This degenerates progressively into nervous disorders, into intellectual, affective, and sensual regressions which fetter for one's entire life the perfection and freedom of moral acts.

Nearly all persons, according to the psychoanalysts are afflicted with some such psychological devolution. If the psychic equilibrium is not evident, it is because the defects have been compensated by other capacities and resources of the individual. Hence some inclinations, even though the most noble and moral, can be found to be related to disturbances and regressions in the depth of the psyche. The particular tone of one's affections, of one's manner of seeing and judging, is always linked to this mysterious part of oneself.
One must be careful not to confuse virtue with what might be merely a defective development in a part of the personality.

If this is carried to its logical limit, the unconscious dynamisms could not only inhibit the free exercise of the will, they could actually exclude it altogether. These forces bring such extrinsic pressure to bear on the subject, that although the will remains free to offer its theoretical consent to the moral judgment of conscience, it is nevertheless physically impossible to actualize that judgment.

Man to-day has a horror of the fixed, the determinate, the eternal. Three persons seated upon divans in a parlour look out of painted windows with no other amusement than their mutual self-torture carried on in a delirium which always returns to where it began. This, according to Sartre, is man's hell, and it is shared by all those who cannot discover the true sense, at once human and divine, of man's fleeting and painful existence on earth.

Criticism of Sartre

But even as a psychology, Sartre's existentialism disintegrates thought more than promoting or enriching it, and those who have written defensive critiques of Sartre's work, such as Maurice Nathanson, have been very subtle in negating the most positive assertions of Sartre whose logic ends up by destroying itself.

A philosopher who considers rationality the supreme illusion of human consciousness is a priori not even worthy of
criticism. Therefore it is a moot question whether Sartre is right or wrong, whether he is a charlatan of genius or a poor fellow caught in the trap of his own dialectics.

The fact that Sartrean existentialism expresses itself in a whole series of morbid literary works seems to corroborate the opinions of critics such as Roger Troisfontaines,\textsuperscript{43} that this is not simply a reaction against the rationalistic and idealistic trends which too long dominated philosophical thought in the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century, cutting that thought off and making it sterile. Rather, they recognize that this noisy explosion of existentialism had emotional roots and arose out of the frightful cataclysm of war.

It is well that Sartre has raised the question of the meaning of human existence for all reflection should take into account the destiny of man himself. Philosophy is not only a scheme of ideas; it is the establishment of a position with regard to the absolute and each one of us, at every moment, irrevocably stakes infinite values. But one should not allow the abuse of deadening abstractions to throw one into the sticky subjectivity of the hard existent, as the exaggerated systematization of Hegel drove Kierkegaard to clench his fists in a fit of fideistic despair. Philosophy, which is an understanding of reality, is not based upon the particular, sunk into itself, nor upon bloodless generalities.

When, with regard to action's internal springs, one tries to describe the interlocking links of action, one should never do it as if analysis were sufficient of itself, or as if description could be gratuitous. There are over-all structures, supra-individual standards, organic wholes, and intelligible syntheses. In short, there are regulative and judicative truths without which Sartre could not realize that physical being constantly becomes stickier, like a homogeneous mass, nor that consciousness expands like a fullness overflowing, nor, above all, that the two oppose each other, either painfully to prolong their separation, or to project themselves, discovering in the unexpectedness of this leap forward the very essence of freedom from any value. If Sartre's phenomenology has continued to develop contradictory dialectics, it is because he has revived the divorce between the individual and the universal. He starts by making the individual sacrosanct and to this one point, chosen arbitrarily, he then tries to bring all the facets and values of existence into this perspective, cost what it may. This is the worst of all abstractions: to seek to reduce to an identical norm—arbitrarily conceived—the diverse reactions and needs of human beings which can be integrated only in a hierarchy of principles and values. If Sartrian humanism is only true for Sartre, then it may be said that it is no longer true, even for him; truth and universality are one.

Once the initial perspective of humanism is distorted, the vision of the whole remains disturbed. What are these
notions of "factitiousness", "utility", "existential choice", and even, of equivocal "transcendence"? The simple statement of a "pure" fact is unintelligible; the most elementary fact is always in some degree elaborated so that the penetration of the object by the subject began long before Sartre declared that it was impossible. Similarly, what clear-cut idea is one to understand when Sartre, in the mode of pragmatism, speaks of the artificiality of the world? This notion turns back upon its creator to prove to him that, if the world is relative to his ability to construct it, far from being enslaved by "mundaneness", he can dominate "mundaneness" by the absoluteness of the spirit. As for the idea of "pure choice", identified with the blind existential urge, it means only an obscure tendency, radically biological, with utilitarian or hedonistic fruits. If no coherent science can be worked out concerning existence, and freedom is conceived without an inwardness that is both demanding and sanctioning, not only does all metaphysics or morality become impossible, but all reason becomes impossible too. Finally, what can be said of the caricature of transcendence that is offered by Sartre to designate in turn the exterior position of the existent with regard to himself, his privacy over nothingness, his very precarious control of the world and his "project" within an illusory freedom. Nowhere is the authentic transcendence of the immanent and demanding Absolute discussed, and, fundamentally, it is logical that this system which has brought the mind down to the level of the irrational should
bring transcendence down to the level of the unreal.

From Sartre's existential humanism the idea to be retained is that a practical and militant philosophy is necessary, since in the question, "What is man?", Sartre is included and compromised to the point where he can no longer answer objectively without taking a stand for or against his own existence. It has been the goal of philosophical effort to show that the idea of an act and the act itself are not the same thing and that a proper place in philosophy must be given to that which until now seemed impossible to identify in the extreme diversity of the elusive contingency which attends concrete existences. But what can be retained of the negative Sartrean humanism? Its psychoanalytical explorations have revealed as yet unplumbed depths of egoism and perversity in man, rather than treasures of generosity. Can Sartre be said to have enriched one's knowledge of humanity by his contribution of cynical "totalism"? Definitely not, for the truth is always of the spirit. It disintegrates in descriptive complacency and the workings of an unhealthy imagination disturbed by animal cravings. It seems that Sartre does not really wish to solve the problems of existence but rather to curb one's right to raise the real problems. This may be why he destroys, \textit{a priori}, any relationship between the subject and the object, between the subject and himself, between the subject and other subject. But then, whom will he convince that man lives only for this disgusting "mess" and that he dies merely to prove the absurdity of life? Why must the
irrational be the favourite food of man's reason, rather than that which transcends it and fulfils it? Could it be because reason can juggle with the unreasonable, while it must show itself humble before standards that go beyond it? It is time now for the mind, after this sortie into the Darkness, to re-affirm its rights to universality and inwardness, instead of allowing itself to be deceived by an overly visceral imagination.

Sartre has tried to construct a radical philosophy of freedom. Yet by it one is not led down the road to the deification of man. On the contrary, the freedom of which Sartre speaks is not a positive and creative freedom. It is a destructive, annihilative freedom. Sartre looks upon man as the being that is the source of nothingness. Had not human reality sprung up, like an erosive canker, in the very heart of being, being would always be unchanged; nothingness would not exist. If nothingness has come to exist it is due to this most singular act, human reality, which is consequently the sole basis of nothingness in the heart of being. And why is man the source of nothingness? Because he is free, unique among all beings in the world. Freedom is the condition of the work of annihilation carried out by man in the heart of being. Thus freedom is not merely a sentence passed on man, in the sense that he himself has not chosen it; it is also the fundamental condition of the nothingness which is man and which he has carved out of being, like a hole that may never be filled in. Sartre's man is the sheer antithesis of
God, who creates the world out of nothingness; he creates nothingness out of the world.

No more radical and paradoxical inversion of humanism could be imagined. In traditional humanism man builds and enriches the world through his works. In Sartre's conception, man delves within the world like a worm, grinding it into fragments, corroding it and impoverishing it. Man is a useless passion, (B.N., p.615).
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An Existential – Humanistic Approach to Movement: An East/West Dialogue

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Abstract

This article considers existential-humanistic (EH) psychotherapy in relation to concepts in Chinese culture and shows how those approaches are experienced in the body. An embodied form of EH group dance movement therapy called “KinAesthetic Imagining” can bridge West and Eastern philosophies through symbolic nonverbal communication. In the following article, the philosophical foundation and training of KinAesthetic Imagining is described. It is followed by a dialogue and observations from a student from China whose background in existential philosophy, and Yalom group therapy gave her a philosophical perspective on becoming embodied. She describes her own experience of a theme central to existential psychotherapy, death, and rebirth and how she experienced this in her body in a new and profound way.

Keywords: Existential-humanistic therapy, embodiment, existential dance movement therapy, life and death education, group psychotherapy, KinAesthetic Imagining

Introduction

In this article, Ilene Serlin and Chloe Liu explore the relationship between an existential approach to group psychotherapy and traditional Chinese culture and how the experience of an existential approach to group psychotherapy is amplified by bringing in the language of the body.
What is an existential-humanistic approach to movement?

Serlin: Although an existential-humanistic (EH) approach is one that has not received much attention from dance and movement therapists (Levy, 1992), it was one of the first to have an experiential, embodied approach to psychotherapy. Hanna (1970) created the field of somatic psychology, which is now a separate field of its own. Selver and Brooks (1986) introduced body awareness at Esalen, where humanistic psychology came of age during a time of cultural freedom and exploration in America. As a reflection of the times and in contrast to Freudian and more traditional approaches, humanistic psychology emphasized personal freedom, expression and creativity.

Humanistic psychologist Bugental (1964, 1987) trained his students in “presence,” a particular kind of energy to be embodied by the therapist. Presence has nothing to do with what the therapist says, but it is about the quality of energy that the therapist projects. The therapist must train in a type of meditative consciousness to develop a clear, focused, and empathetic awareness. The subjectivity, emotions, and caring of the therapist get communicated primarily without words. Bugental rejected the psychoanalytic model of the therapist as a blank screen and the Rogerian model of the therapist as a mirror. In his EH model, the therapist is asked to be authentic, modeling for the client how to be fully alive and human, with a full range of emotions and motivation. The human relationship is the healing agent, with the verbal and nonverbal dialogue in what Buber (1963) called an “I–thou” relationship. Dance movement therapy (DMT) also uses presence to create a holding environment. In addition, it can bring a systematic, articulated set of observations that can be integrated into the verbal therapy work (Laban, 1971).

Gestalt therapy is another form of EH therapy. My own psychotherapy training was with Dr. Laura Perls, wife of Fritz Perls and one of the co-developers of Gestalt therapy. Laura had been a dancer in Germany and was very familiar with the arts, so Gestalt as a language of process and interaction was a perfect framework for me to understand my dance therapy experience (Serlin, 1992).

What is existential-humanistic psychology?

According to a brief summary of the history of EH psychology, May (1967, 1975; May et al., 1958) is the bridge between a European phenomenology and existentialist darkness after World War II. The suffering and destruction of the war profoundly affected existential philosophers in Paris such as Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre. Simone de Beauvoir, with her groundbreaking book on the empowerment of women (1997), profoundly appealed to me and to many women of my generation. European philosophers developed phenomenology, a study of the natural state of things, not reducing a person to a set of symptoms or a passive category like a patient or diagnostic category (Boss, 1963; Buber, 1963; Frankl, 1984; Heidegger, 1962; Husserl, 1931; Jaspers, 1963; Kierkegaard, 1980).
Some faced death and came through with resilience and renewed will to live (Frankl, 1984). In the United States, Rogers (1951, 1961) developed “client-centered” therapy, in which the therapist was nondirective and met each client with unconditional positive regard.

Maslow (1954) stressed the “higher reaches” of human nature, especially “peak experiences.” However, May thought that the unconditional positive regard of Rogers was too naïve and saw human nature and reality as darker. May and Bugental also placed more value on the role of the unconscious and early childhood experiences than Rogers, and their theories were sometimes called “existential-depth.” However, the term “existential-humanistic psychologist” also does convey both depths and heights of human experience.

**What is existential-humanistic psychology and how does it relate to Chinese culture?**

Existential philosophies have similarities with some aspects of Chinese poetry, literature, and philosophies. Both existential philosophies and Chinese culture concern themselves with the fundamental themes of life: suffering and finding a way out of suffering (Hoffman et al, 2009; Hoffman et al, 2019; Lu Xun, 1961; Yang, 2016). From an existential point of view, we need to confront death (our own mortality) in order to live fully (Bakewell, 2017). The emphasis from an existential approach is to be fully human, fully present in the moment. With a balance of body, emotion, energy, and spirit, one can make wise choices and create a meaningful life. From a Chinese perspective, all three major Chinese philosophies, Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, contain strong existential themes (Yang, 2017).

There was a growing interest in existentialism among scholars and psychotherapists in China when China opened to the West in the 1980s and 1990s. Nietzsche, Heidegger, Kierkegaard, and others were read in Chinese universities. Lu Xun, a philosopher and writer, is called the “Nietzsche of China” (Wang, 2019, p. 580). The heroic warriors described by Western writers, from Socrates to Christ (“warriors of the spirit”), were reflected Chinese characters called the “backbones of China” (Wang, 2019, p. 580).

Ro explored these issues of similarities and differences between an EH psychology and Chinese culture, and a conference was held in Nanjing in 2010. The First International Conference on Existential Psychology, titled “An Intellectual Dialogue between East and West: How to Face Suffering and Create Value of Life,” was organized by American and Chinese existential therapists Louis Hoffman, Mark Yang, and Xuefu Wang and hosted by Nanjing Xiao Zhuang University, the China Institute of Psychology (CIP), and the ZhiMian Institute for Psychotherapy.

I was a part of a group of more than 40 existential psychology experts from the United States, China, Europe, Greece, and Southeast Asia who assembled in Nanjing to engage in the mutual exploration and dialogues on the basic themes between existential psychology/psychotherapy and Chinese philosophy/cultural psychology. During this time, training programs in Yalom group therapy were established at CIP and an indigenous form of EH psychotherapy was established at the ZhiMian Institute and at CIP.
My own interest in the cultural exchange came from years of studying and practicing Tibetan Buddhism, mindfulness practices, and existential psychology. Folk dance and travels through many parts of the world taught me that dance and nonverbal communication can be powerful methods of communication and mutual understanding. In an age of people’s migration, dislocation, and trauma, movement can help people find stability and resilience within themselves. Here was an opportunity to explore these interfaces between Western and Eastern psychologies through verbal and nonverbal modalities.

After the conference in Nanjing, I was invited to lead a workshop at CIP in Beijing on an EH approach to movement therapy. After the workshop, I was asked to start a 2-year training program. I brought in Dr. Marcia Leventhal (Leventhal, 2008), a fellow student of Irmgard Bartenieff, to help organize the training. We are now in our seventh year, and students are already beginning to lead groups under supervision. Since we were not training dance therapists but rather therapists who wanted to learn to use the body as a medium for expression and were already credentialled, we called the training Whole Person Health: The Art of Embodiment. The students go through the training as a strongly bonded cohort group, experiencing personal transformation as they understand themselves and others through movement. Their process group follows a structure based on a Gestalt and Yalom (1985) group therapy model. This combination of verbal and nonverbal existential approaches to group psychotherapy was presented at the American Psychological Association meeting with Dr. Ruth Josselson of the Yalom Institute as a dialogue between East and West in 2015.

What is the art of embodiment?

The art of embodiment is a therapeutic process in which the body is a primary way of becoming aware of our most authentic self (Jourard, 1976) and of bringing this way of knowing into our work with clients. We learn how to perceive, access, and uncover our authentic selves as expressed through our emotions and physical expression (Criswell, 1989; Criswell & Serlin, 2014). We become able to discern how the personality is developed and expressed with and through use of expressive body movement directly. We learn to read and interpret the nonverbal communication of others and how to use this understanding in our everyday lives and apply it in our own work.

KinAesthetic Imagining

The training program begins with KinAesthetic Imagining (Serlin, 1996), a process by which the moving body creates meaning through images that can be understood like dream images. We start with the body as instrument, cultivating qualities of embodiment, and kinesthetic intelligence. Participants learn how to ground themselves, how to tune into their own bodies and those of others. They practice creating a safe space (usually a circle), mirroring, picking up movement cues, and supporting the emerging images. They learn a language of movement that describes nonverbal communication in terms of time, weigh, space, and flow. This language helps them articulate how they are experienced in relationship with others and in their everyday lives. Participants learned to ground themselves, practice relaxation, improvise, and growing more at home and
confident in their bodies. They understand their movements in terms of archetypal figures and symbols as well as the group process in terms of the existential dimensions of freedom and fate, being alone vs. being with others, life and death, and meaning vs. meaninglessness (Yalom, 1985).

KinAesthetic Imagining is an existential/depth form of movement in which bodily based images create a nonverbal narrative or text with metaphoric, symbolic, and transformative levels of meaning (Serlin, 1996). It is compounded from the Greek word *kinesthesia*, which means “sensation of movement” (Greek: *kinae* [movement] and *easthesia* [sensation]). “Imagining” is an active process by which images are generated and formed. Therefore, KinAesthetic Imagining is the process by which the perceptions arising from moving muscles generate and make explicit imaginative structures of consciousness. As embodied narrative or action poiesis, KinAesthetic Imagining is a dynamic process by which people often compose themselves and form their lives. Since grief often stays stuck in the body, moving through the images and feeling the feelings in the body is crucial for healing (Serlin, 2014). Based on Ricoeur’s (1976) linguistic theory, KinAesthetic Imagining first establishes a movement process as a nonverbal text with levels of meaning that include the phenomenological (metaphor, conscious), archeological (symbols, stories, archetypal, myths, unconscious), and teleological (future, spiritual, ritual, numinous), and that is dialogical and relational with a mover and a witness or witnesses.

KinAesthetic Imagining has a simple three-part structure that includes check-in and warm-up (the lived body), amplification (articulate body), and making meaning (action hermeneutics).

**Check-in and warm-up.** Use of breath, sound, stretching, and circle dance movements will warm up the body, bring body awareness and consciousness to self and others, create the container, and mobilize healing energies.

**Amplification.** Repetition and deepening the emerging themes help explore images and emotions that arise from individual, dyadic, and group movements. Participants have an opportunity to develop their own personal healing images, stories, and mythologies.

**Making meaning (action hermeneutics).** This is a time to wind down, internalize the imagery, represent it in paint or words, reflect on its meaning, let it go, and make a transition into real life.

**Existential themes**

The existential themes seemed to resonate with many members, especially the theme of freedom and fate (or constriction). Some yearned for freedom, some felt constrained by their fate. Embodying these themes through the Laban qualities of “free” and “bound” helped group members feel and express their responses to these themes. One group developed and performed a dance about freedom and fate that told a Chinese version of the story of Romeo and Juliet. Unlike the Western version where the protagonists die, the Chinese version contains an afterlife where the lovers are reincarnated as butterflies. Other students, discovering new freedom, expressed a yearning for authenticity and the
need to find meaning in life. Life for many was an effort to balance the Taoist influence of process and flow and individual development with the Confucian influence of strict roles, hierarchies, and restraint. One woman shouted, “I’m so tired of being Confucian good girl, good daughter, good mother…I want to be me! But I have no idea where to start—can you help me?”

All participants experience the terror of the blank page, the void or the unformed movement, but follow May’s (1975) Courage to Create with the “Courage to Move” in the face of the void (Serlin, 2012) and commit themselves to live deeply. Existential issues that arise in the group include the following: The life of a group goes through stages of existential responsibility, confrontation with mortality, freedom and fate, death and rebirth; each individual goes through existential choices about commitment, meaning, joining in groups; verbal and nonverbal relationships in the group are a reflection of relationships in the family, the community and the larger world; congruence between verbal and nonverbal expression in groups is a sign of psychological health, and participants in dance therapy can learn to experience and change how they move in the group and in life.

**Movement choirs**

Movement choirs bring DMT into a new setting (Bartenieff, 1980). Figure 1 shows the movement choir as an opening or closing ritual (Serlin, 1993) used to close the conference on Existential Psychology at Fudan University, Shanghai, in 2012.

**The dance of transcendence**

Further explorations about the relationship between existential psychotherapy and Chinese philosophy and the role of embodiment took place in a conversation between Ilene Serlin and Chloe Liu, a student at the CIP. Ilene asked the students to keep a journal and reflect on their experiences. Chloe came into the group with obvious skills in group leadership, but for her, the added dimension of the body brought new insight. Her reflections are below, as are her answers to the questions I posed.

**We approach the life wisdom of “being-towards-death” by dance therapy with an existential-humanistic approach**

Serlin: Do you think existentialism is related to Chinese philosophy? If so, how?

Liu: In traditional Chinese philosophy, the ultimate goal of life, or ultimate concern, is the question of “settle down and get on with one’s pursuit.” Everyone has her or his own understanding and cognition of life and the world, so that everything in life and the world has different meaning and value for different people. All the awareness and understanding of the life and world, to a certain extent, make the different meanings of the life and world to different people, which constitute a certain “state” of themselves. It is very similar to Sartre’s existentialism, which is the living and central fact of life. As an EH psychotherapist, when I delivered psychological service to clients, I found that existential and humanistic psychology, which I have been practicing for years, is...
These answers can only be obtained through in-depth personal introspection. Yalom (2012) said that these introspection processes require people to separate from the daily trivia that fills their world, and they may be catalyzed by emergency or boundary experiences facing one’s own death. Therefore, I began to search for the approach in China that integrates different perspectives from existentialism, existential psychology, humanistic psychology, and metaverbal expressive art therapy.

Serlin: Can you give us an example of the body bringing in a whole new way of knowing, of being and of perceiving? How is an existential moment in therapy experienced in the body?

Liu: I want to start from “existential issues” and transformation I experienced in the dancing group at the CIP. The experience has given me deep inspiration about how people develop profound self-reflection and insight through acute observation, whole-person companionship, and humanistic care. They develop the attitude and stance of dancing therapists and sincerely and poetically connect with their own experience in the treatment field to integrate body, mind, and spirit. Finally, they gain awareness of their own existence and death.
One morning, I asked Ilene how to experience death in movement? What kind of experience is death, how terrible is it? What is it after death, and what will I do? I am very curious. I was eager to get the answer from movement and Ilene, but the teacher did not give me a clear verbal answer. I do not remember how Ilene led and what the group did in the structure, in the next dancing link. I was totally immersed in the inner experience. At that time, one of my hands was held by the other hand. I followed the lead of that hand and danced. This hand was not someone’s hand. It was the energy that led me to follow. The energy of the group was transmitted to me through this hand. All of a sudden, my consciousness turned to my empty hand. I was a little flustered. I felt that this hand should also grasp the hand of another person. It did not matter who that person was, but it just let me feel that I was integrated with everyone. My inner needs were expressed through the flustered search of this hand. At this time, a hand was handed to me in time. The timing was just right, and the intensity was proper. At the moment when I needed it, I held a hand. I experienced that it was like when I was about to lose power, I was connected to the power supply, and I was able to live again. I opened my eyes and found it was Ilene. I felt a gentle holding and deep stare. I was just like a little baby when hungry; I was held by one hand to the breast and drank sweet milk. I closed my eyes and continued to immerse myself in the nourished life. I started to grow again from the stagnant state. I had many desires, aspirations and hopes for the future. However, I have also been feeling that I was thrown into an empty space, just like an astronaut, shuttling through space in a spaceship. Suddenly, I was thrown out of the cabin. With the separation from mankind, all future possibilities came to an abrupt end. The spirit was still there, but it floated alone in endless space and time again. I know I have experienced death, and I have also experienced my nostalgia for life. After experiencing all this, I discovered that the hand I was holding had been released.

In dance therapy, the miraculous experience of death made me realize that I chose to live, because I long for the diverse possibilities of the future. I was lucky to meet death by chance, and I experienced that life is like “possible possibility of the future” (Kierkegaard, 1980) and death is like “possible impossibility of the future” (Heidegger, 1962). I know that only when we are alive can it be possible to realize infinite possibilities even in our limited life.

The body and the mind are the carriers of the soul. Dance therapy combines the body, the mind, and the spirit closely, embodying the “whole-person” experience from multiple dimensions, including ordinary and nonordinary state of consciousness, self-actualization, diverse worldviews and perspectives, direct experience, and analytical intellect. Dancing should have a very important position in the journey of human being-towards-death awakening and healing, because it comes from the body wisdom of human instinct, and it touches and expresses a complete and complicated person from all levels of body, mind, and spirit. These are the three most essential dimensions of human beings and are the core and cornerstone of all treatments and changes.

All life will eventually die, and the tension between the awareness of dying and the will to live is with us all our lives. Death is the original source of human anxiety and the most stubborn denial of the human defense system. However, life and death depend
on each other and exist at the same time. Death always flows under the surface of life, strongly affecting our experience and behavior.

As I experienced death awareness in dancing, I was thrown from a safe spaceship into a universe without sound and light. This is like experiencing birth—a baby is thrown from its symbiotic state with its mother into this complicated and dangerous strange world from the womb and then lingers for the rest of its life in the choice of finding self-independence and connecting with others.

The therapeutic purpose of an EH orientation, therefore, is to help people peel off layers of defense in order to discover their authentic selves and the truth of life. When people explore the truth and define the authentic selves, they will definitely touch pain, suffering, fear, or shame (Koff-Chapin, 1996). Dance therapy cultivates the trust and application of intuition and nature, listens to organismic guidance, and reveals and discovers deeper truths that may not be available by other therapies (Serlin, 2019).

“Meaning” refers to the concepts underneath a superficial phenomenon. The Sutra of Consummate Enlightenment has the following paragraph: “And this could be compared to drilling wood for fire: By the use of two pieces of wood, each as the Reciprocal Cause for the other, the fire could then be produced; wherein the wood is to be incinerated; finally on the extinguished embers’ being blown away, the smoke would vanish into the thin air. It would be exactly the same with the cultivation on Phantasms by means of Phantasmic Dharmas: albeit all Phantasmata are eliminated, one would not be subjected to Nihilistic Extinction” (包祖晓, 2019, p. 261). The Buddha uses “wood” as metaphor to tell the people what is “being-towards-death” and why people need the meaning of life.

As therapists, how can we help our clients? Therapy, in ancient Greek _therapeuticus_, means “to be attentive to.” As therapists, we cannot fill in the emptiness of the clients or directly tell them what the meaning of life is. Only the client can discover and create the meaning of her or his own life, and this meaning is dynamic in terms of the current experience and situation (Moon, 2011). Searching for meaning is difficult because clients may face overwhelming fear, anxiety, and existential frustration. Dancing therapists accompany their clients with their whole existence. They guide them to explore themselves with metaphors that restore trust and openness to their body experience, assisting them to embrace their pain and struggle for life.

Although the life significance of everyone is unique, the significance cannot be produced in a personal, isolated vacuum (Moon, 2011). Life significance is not entirely an internal phenomenon and exists in the relationship of the individual and her or his world. A dance therapy group can explore the world with many different interpretations at the same time and produce dynamic and variable personal meanings for each group member. With this strong sense of themselves, they may not be completely hopeless and helpless to face existential frustrations. People become participants and viewers of their own experience process, not the supervisors of their experience. Their life will be reconstructed as an integrative whole, a one-piece story and life journey, and it will continue in the future.

The humanistic existential approach of dance therapy emphasizes the cultivation and unfolding of the bodily kinesthetic intelligence, enabling access to inner wisdom and knowing from a somatic sensitivity perspective (Serlin, 2019). Dancing is a kind
of perception or feeling, a kind of life, a new view of observing things in life, and a consciousness toward the soul.

Serlin: Do you think existential psychology might be a closer fit to Chinese culture than other forms of Western psychotherapy?

Chinese philosophy is a human-centered ideological system, believing that human is a spiritual subject that “The nature of everything is what I have.” That is, all nature is in communion with me.

For example, the yin and yang are a model that the faithful follow, an aid that allows each person to contemplate the state of her or his life. More a mode of living than an actual theology, Taoism asks that each person to focus on the world around her or him in order to understand the inner harmonies of the universe. Chinese philosophy emphasizes the dynamic change process of individual experience, which is similar to the EH psychotherapy that emphasizes people’s trust in experience, integrating the whole person and experience.

It is generally believed in Chinese philosophy that the mind is a dynamic process of self-realization whose ultimate goal has different expressions in the different philosophical systems. Confucianism calls it the “saint.” Taoism calls it “natural.” Buddha calls it “nirvana.”

Conclusion

Grounded in both Western and Eastern culture, a humanistic-existential approach to therapy focuses on the inevitable fact of death with the challenge to actively create, choose, and commit to a life of authenticity and meaning. The art of embodiment brings a strong experiential component in exploring these themes in a group process context. Using KinAesthetic Imagining, group members can explore existential themes of life and death, freedom and fate, being alone or in relationship, and meaning or meaninglessness.

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Existentialism, Ontology, and Mysticism in Clarice Lispector’s

_A descoberta do mundo_

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Abstract: This article aims to place Clarice Lispector as the inventor of a new type of newspaper chronicle. The style of her 468 chronicles published weekly in _Jornal do Brasil_, from 1967 to 1973, and collected in the book _A descoberta do mundo_ (1984), differs from that of her contemporary male chroniclers, such as Rubem Braga, Paulo Mendes Campos, Fernando Sabino, and Otto Lara Resende, or even women chroniclers, such as Rachel de Queiroz and Dinah Silveira de Queiroz. Mingling Sartre’s existentialism and Heidegger’s phenomenology with the Jewish mysticism learned as a child enabled Lispector to write in a style that pioneered modern women’s prose fiction in Brazil after 1970. This article argues that fragmentation and hybridization are the marks of her “discovery” of a new world as a woman writer, making her crônicas predecessors of today’s women’s blogs.

Keywords: Phenomenology, spirituality, chronicles, philosophy, Jean-Paul Sartre

This article examines the chronicles Clarice Lispector published in the newspaper _Jornal do Brasil_ between the years 1967 and 1973. After Lispector’s death in 1977, her son Paulo Gurgel Valente collected her _Jornal do Brasil_ chronicles and published them together in a volume titled _A descoberta do_
mundo.¹ My aim is to establish how existentialism and phenomenology were for Lispector a form of questioning life rather than a theoretical reading on her part. The idea of existence and of being was, for her writing, a kind of mystical search for God and the divine in nature. It did not correspond to Judaism or Christianity, but rather to a hybridization of both religions, mingled with mysticism and her own poetic perceptions of everyday life. Her constant pursuit of meaning resulted in an unceasing and refined search for words in her chronicles. Therefore, they stand as a personal journal written from a subjective viewpoint. They express her literary view of the world rather than a denotative description of everyday external events, as was usual for this genre during this period, especially among male authors. She employs metaphor, stream of consciousness and first-person narration to stress feminism.

In her generation in Rio de Janeiro, there were several important chronicle writers, such as Carlos Drummond de Andrade, and Lispector’s friends Paulo Mendes Campos, Fernando Sabino², Otto Lara Resende, Rubem Braga and Stanislaw Ponte Preta (pen name for Sérgio Porto).³ Among the women writers, Rachel de Queiroz and Dinah Silveira de Queiroz were very prolific (if unpretentious and realistic), and before them, Cecília Meireles.

Lispector worked as a professional reporter and editor of the newspaper A Noite in 1942. Nonetheless, she wrote most of her chronicles not as a journalist but as a fiction writer (see “Amor imorredouro,” Sept. 9, 1967, 20). A descoberta do mundo is a collection of the chronicles she published as a freelancer in the prestigious Caderno B, the cultural supplement of Jornal do Brasil, from August 19, 1967 to December 29, 1973. There is a total of 446 of these chronicles: 35 written in 1967, 122 in 1968, 84 in 1969, 70 in 1970, 56 in 1971, 61 in 1972 and 38 in 1973 (leaving out 50 others without explanation). Her dismissal from the

¹ Quotations refer to the 1984 edition. Although the new edition by Rocco is titled Todas as crônicas (2018) and presents about 50 new chronicles from Jornal do Brasil, it suppresses 30 literary ones that Lispector also published as short stories. These are published in Todos os contos (2018) to avoid repetition. This new volume places the dates only at the end, which is not convenient for chronicles.

² As a publisher, Fernando Sabino placed her stories and novels in Sabiá (former Editora do Autor), a publishing house he owned with Rubem Braga and Walter Acosta. While she lived abroad, he helped her find other publishers for her work.

³ Lispector wrote on Sérgio Porto’s death, in “As dores da sobrevivência: Sergio Porto”: “Oh, Deus, por que não eu, em lugar dele? […] Perdoe eu ter sobrevivido. Estou muito cansada” (A descoberta do mundo, 28 Sept. 1968, 201-02). She sounded depressed, as she was often, this time for not having called him up.
paper took place at the same time that other Jewish employees were dismissed, as anti-Semite General Geisel looked to assume the presidency of Brazil. As Moser (322-26) and Gaspari (49-50) point out, this was likely a failed attempt on the part of the newspaper to please the new president and escape its own imminent bankruptcy.

**Lispector’s Chronicles Innovative Style**

Lispector brought innovation to the genre of chronicle writing by leaving out the traditional description of events in a precise place and time and privileging the chronicle as an experimental piece of poetic art. She also tinted her almost confessional style with a philosophical tone. In this her chronicles differ from this usually matter-of-fact and realistic genre. She most often focused on events related to her own everyday life and thoughts, instead of political or social facts, as is often the case.

Lispector felt deeply connected to children, her home and family. She often referred affectionately to animals, including pets, such as her two dogs or her son’s rabbit. She was obsessed with chickens, and makes them her protagonists, as in “Um pintinho” (Feb. 10, 1968, 91-92) and “Atualidade do ovo e da galinha” (July 5, 12, 19, 1969, 313, 318, 322-24), and in the literary chronicles “A princesa (noveleta)” (Aug. 3, 9, 16, 23, 30, 1968, 328-46) and “Travessuras de uma menina (noveleta)” (Jan. 3, 10, 17, 24, Feb. 7, 1970, 393-410). In “Nos primeiros começos de Brasília” (June 20, 1970, 452-56), she employs Surrealist imagery to refer to the new modernist capital of Brazil, that “foi construída sem lugar para ratos. Toda uma parte nossa, a pior, exatamente a que tem horror de ratos, essa parte não tem lugar em Brasília” (453), and adds: “Fazem tanta falta cavalos brancos soltos em Brasília” (456).

Lispector constantly appeals to God, to metaphor and to poetic prose, so that she is rarely realistic in her style. She often asks: “O que está morrendo, meu Deus?—Não chorei nenhuma vez em Brasília. Não tinha lugar.—É uma praia

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4 This chronicle is a reprint of her short story “O ovo e a galinha” (*A legião estrangeira*, 1964).
5 See “Bichos I–II” (13 March 1971, 517-24), in which she comments on rabbits, owls, turtles, and especially Dilermando, the dog she found in Naples and later had to abandon to move to Bern, Switzerland, due to her husband’s new diplomatic post (524).
6 “Brasília de ontem e de hoje” (Oct. 7, 1972, 678-83) is another chronicle on the new capital.
sem mar.—Em Brasília não há por onde entrar, nem há por onde sair” (June 20, 1970, 454). She employs oxymorons and aporias to express her perplexity before Brasília’s fantastic tall buildings in the emptiness: “Vou embora para os meus outros crimes, os que Deus e eu compreendemos. Mas sei que voltarei. Sou atraída aqui pelo que me assusta em mim.—Nunca vi nada igual no mundo. Mas reconheço esta cidade no mais fundo de meu sonho […] é uma lucidez” (454); “Só Deus sabe o que acontecerá com Brasília” (455). And she concludes once again with a Surrealist metaphor: “A beleza de Brasília são as suas estátuas invisíveis” (456).

Another trait of her originality is to make her typewriter into the main topic of several of her chronicles, as in “Primavera ao correr da máquina” (Sept. 23, 1967, 27-29), “Insônia infeliz e feliz” (Sept. 23, 1967, 81-82) and “Ao correr da máquina” (April 17, 1971, 529-32). In “Gratidão à máquina” (20 January 1968, 82-83), she states that she always writes with her portable Olympia on her lap. In “Até a máquina?” (Feb. 5, 1972, 636-38), she is surprised to realize that the divine is always present, when the person who fixes her typewriter wrote “Que Deus seja louvado” on a sheet of paper to test it. As one can see in “A máquina está crescendo,” she fears that mechanization will dehumanize humankind, and she resorts to religion and to God:


In her innovative, modernist style, Lispector resorts to metafiction, a technique typical of theoretical texts, when she includes in her chronicles answers to criticism that she received on her writing, and introduces a second voice to

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7 In “Propaganda de graça” (Dec. 15, 1973, 763-64), she mentions her Olympia, then her Olivetti, and other typewriters as if they were family, and praises her Underwood: “Essa máquina eu amei mesmo: ela durou tanto que aguentou eu escrever sete livros” (764), and concludes: “Máquinas, qualquer uma, são um mistério para mim. Respeito-lhes o mistério” (764).

Metafiction even develops into an existential mode of self-questioning in “Sobre escrever”: “Às vezes tenho a impressão de que escrevo por simples curiosidade intensa. É que, ao escrever, eu me dou as mais inesperadas surpresas. É na hora de escrever que muitas vezes fico consciente de coisas, das quais, sendo inconsciente, eu antes não sabia que sabia” (Dec. 20, 1969, 390). By choosing an impressionistic point of view to approach intimate facts of everyday life, Lispector’s style shares a certain affinity with Katherine Mansfield’s own use of stream of consciousness.8 In these short texts, Lispector employs epiphany to express the surprise she feels at discovering or reinventing the world through language. Some of her chronicles are in fact explicitly famed as short stories still “in progress,” or “noveletas.”9 This allows her to bring together God, mysticism, and her more domestic sensations.10 Lispector’s style becomes in this way meaningfully experimental, both with respect to her fiction and her many chronicles, which were, in more than a few cases, essentially short stories “in progress.”

A good portion of Lispector’s chronicles in A descoberta do mundo have a direct link to the interviews she conducted with important cultural figures or famous writers of her time for the magazines Fatos e Fotos/Gente, Bula, and

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8 Lispector states that she discovered a book by Mansfield in a bookstore when she was 15 (Feb. 1973, 721-23), although it probably happened when she was 20. The fact that she always deducts five years from her real age is probably due to her fear of being expatriated, since she was a Russian Jew until she reached the age of 23, when she acquired Brazilian citizenship. The first exhibition showing her identity documents was held at Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil in Rio de Janeiro on August 29, 2008, and her manuscripts are now kept at Arquivo-Museu de Literatura Brasileira at Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa in that city.

9 Souza presents a complete study of alterations, revisions and reprints of the literary chronicles that also appeared in her books. These were not included in Todas as crônicas (2018).

10 For more on epiphany, see Olga de Sá; Romano de Sant’Anna; and Lobo (“Clarice Lispector e Virginia Woolf”).
Manchete.¹¹ She was always original, as when she switches positions between interviewer and interviewee, in “A entrevista alegre” (Dec. 30, 1967, 68-72). Among other instances, a young woman named Cristina visits the writer to interview her, and Lispector soon changes position and begins to interview the girl (70). She states an aporia, “E escrever é um dos modos de fracassar” (71), but when the girl asks her why, she is unable to explain. The chronicle ends, however, in a lighter tone: “Depois que li a entrevista, sai tão vulgar. Não me parece que eu seja vulgar. E nem tenho olhos azuis” (72).

**Feminism in Lispector’s Chronicles**

Like many women authors of her generation, Lispector worked with subjects that were considered “merely feminine.” However, she was able to make them into literary and interesting topics, by shifting description of the world of action to her own psychological state of mind, related to dealing with her children, her maids, her home, her dog, or the trifles of everyday life.

Rather than realistic description, she employs metaphor or hidden meaning to rephrase “feminine” topics, such as flowers, as in “Jasmim” (April 7, 1973, 733): “Mas falei em perfume. Lembrei-me do jasmim. Jasmim é de noite. E me mata lentamente” (733). Still other chronicles deal with these “feminine” topics that she makes meaningful, as in “Rosas silvestres” (May 25, 1968, 142-43), “Os perfumes da terra” (Sept. 7, 1968, 188) and De natura florum, Dicionário (April 3, 1971, 525-28).¹² She also revalues beauty and nature, themes which are often related to the “feminine,” but in a derogatory way.

Before a 1966 fire in her bedroom, Lispector was an extremely beautiful and successful woman. She bore an air of elegance in the somewhat exotic and old-

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¹¹ For cultural figures, see: “Chico Buarque de Holanda” (Feb. 4, 1968, 88-89; Feb. 10, 1968, 92); “Oi, Chico!” (March 23, 1968, 109-10); “Xico Buark me visita” (June 26, 1971, 556-58); “Tom Jobim” (July 3, 10, 17, 1971, 559-68) and “Trajetória de uma vocação” (Sept. 29, 1973, 752-54). The latter piece is on the conductor Isaac Karabchevsky, who shocked the audience at the Municipal Theater by playing Buarque’s popular music in a classical concert (754). For writers, see: “Entrevista-relâmpago de Pablo Neruda” (April 12, 19, 1969, 273-78); “Alceu Amoroso Lima” (Feb. 8, 15, 22, 1969, 255-63), a well-known Christian thinker of her time; “San Tiago” (Jan. 6, 1968, 75-77), on the diplomat and politician San Tiago Dantas; and “Desculpem, mas não sou profundo” (Dec. 16, 1972, 703-05), on Érico Veríssimo.

¹² Lispector wrote newspaper columns on “feminine” topics to survive, under the pen name of Helen Palmer and Teresa Quadros. Between 1959 and 1962, she wrote a column for adults called “Children’s Corner” for the magazine Senhor.
fashioned clothes she had brought from Europe. The cause of the fire was simple if tragic: Lispector had been smoking in bed after taking sleeping pills. The fire left her with physical as well as psychological scars. Her face, body and right hand were severely burned, and she spent several days in the hospital hovering between life and death, and her hospital rehabilitation took months. The accident divided her life into two phases. After it, she felt like a lonely woman separated from her husband and living in a Catholic country where divorce was unlawful. She felt she carried too many financial and familial problems on her shoulders, especially the schizophrenia from which her older son, Pedro, suffered. Subsequently, Lispector lived in a constant state of melancholia. She complained of mental and physical exhaustion, a condition that today would almost certainly be diagnosed as manic depression. Above all, the traumatic events of her life (see “Santiago,” Jan. 6, 1968, 75-77) culminated with the long-lasting illness and death of Lúcio Cardoso, her best and most beloved friend (Jan. 11, 1969, 243-45). She projects her own morbid feelings onto an animal, in “Morte de uma baleia” (Aug. 17, 1968, 177-80), in which a whale gets stuck in the sand on Leblon Beach, and while that “montanha de inocência” (180) is still alive, some poor people cut into its flesh to take it home and eat it (180). This sad event condenses her own sense of loss of sensuality and of physical decay (179). However, at the end of this chronicle, she resurrects herself and states: “Porque desistir de nossa animalidade é um sacrifício” (180).

Existentialism, Ontology and Religion for Lispector

Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir visited Brazil for two and a half months, from the middle of August until the beginning of November 1960. They received much attention from the press and became well-known to the Brazilian public. Existentialism was commented upon in all the papers. Its fundamental thesis is that existence precedes essence: it is one’s acts that prove one’s identity.

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13 Lispector also translated books to make ends meet. She often complained of feeling tired and lacking a subject in her chronicles (see “O ato gratuito,” April 8, 1972 648-50). She constantly turned to God in her loneliness and loss. In “Teosofia” (Dec. 13, 1969, 385-86), a cab driver “me dá uma lição teosófica” (385) and preaches to her about brotherhood. However, she states, “não me senti irmã de ninguém no mundo. Eu estava sozinha” (386).

14 She also comments on João Guimarães Rosa’s death (“Desculpem, mas se morre,” May 22, 1971, 539).
contradicting metaphysics. From Plato to the eighteenth century, metaphysicists believed that humans inherit an innate soul, or an essence. For existentialism, on the contrary, life is foremost, and it is one’s life and actions that define one’s self. Not many Brazilians read Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness* (1943), but his ideas were in the air. In a famous book, *O mundo de Clarice* (1966), later included as an article in *O dorso do tigre* (1969), Benedito Nunes links Lispector’s writing of *A paixão segundo G.H.* (1964) to Sartre’s novel *Nausea* (1938).

Derived from Husserl’s phenomenology, which stressed that reality exists as a phenomenon only when it is perceived by the human mind, existentialism held that one can interpret reality and choose one’s destiny. Life should be built according to one’s will, not to some universal or essential truth that precedes and dictates one’s existence outwardly. Existentialism questioned conventional truths and supported one’s freedom through action in relation to the “other,” or “being-for-itself” (pour soi). This is what distinguishes the latter (pour soi) from a being-in-itself (en soi), which would possess some innate or essential nature that is impossible to grasp.

Many Brazilian intellectuals became existentialists in the 1960s and 1970s, and Sartre’s fiction was widely read. Sartre’s *Existentialism is a Humanism* (1946) was a well-read book that defended this philosophy against the accusation of its being atheistic and nihilistic. Lispector blended these trends with Christian thought, then in fashion, as in Alceu Amoroso Lima (whom she interviews), Teillard Chardin, Paul Claudel, and Murilo Mendes.¹⁵

Sartre’s study *Anti-Semite and Jew* (1948) focused on the idea of “bad faith,” or self-deception, which he considered a moral defect. It consists of the intentional representation of oneself feigning being somebody else in order to hide some reproachable inner truth (being-in-itself, en soi) that is not good to expose in the apparent being-for-itself (pour soi). Fighting solipsism, or concentration on her own mind, Lispector became increasingly aware of the importance of questioning the meaning of the world. She wrote several passages about dropping one’s mask and facing life and death in order to reveal one’s true self. She was obsessed with the idea that people hide their consciousness by

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¹⁵ Her division between Christianity and existentialism explains why she reacts in shock when she interviews José Carlos de Oliveira and he declares almost cynically his disbelief in any truth and that he is an “existentialist” who lives day by day (“Quase briga entre amigos,” Jan. 17, 1973, 712-14).
wearing a social mask, and referred to the masks that actors wear in the Asian theatre or to the scars that a mask might hide, as in her short story, “A bela e a fera ou a ferida grande demais” (1977). This obsession led her to dedicate a long chronicle, titled “Persona” (March 2, 1968, 99-102), to Bergman’s film, in which she confesses that she also wears a mask. Revealing an existentialist choice, she states: “Escolher a própria máscara é o primeiro gesto voluntário humano” (100).

And she adds that a person, after years of wearing a social mask, may see it fall and his face become rigid, crest-like, and then he dies. The only way out of this suffering is resurrection, as in Christianity: “Como pessoa teve que passar pelo caminho de Cristo” (101). Now here, instead of keeping to Existentialism, she turns to religion, mysticism or the supernatural.

Lispector often contemplates the idea of God, despite showing metaphysical doubts. In “Medo da eternidade” (June 6, 1970, 446-48), the author reduces the idea of eternity for her as a girl to her fear of dying by chewing a gum that would never end. Her chronicle “Sou uma pergunta” (Aug. 14, 1971, 575-78) launches a series of metaphysical questions that she does not answer because they are unanswerable. She thus resorts to concrete, existentialist imagery to deconstruct metaphysics about the world, religion, clichés or certain beliefs: “Quem fez a primeira pergunta? Quem fez o mundo? Se foi Deus, quem fez Deus?” … “Quem fez a primeira cadeira? Por que se lava roupa?” (575) “Por que há a raiz quadrada? Por que há flores?” (576). The chronicle ends inconclusively, with the question “Por quê?” (578) left in suspense.

“Descoberta” (Feb. 21, 1970, 414-15) also points to apparent truths in everyday reality that one takes for granted, but which can be questioned through existentialism and phenomenology. A man sees a woman in the street and smiles: “Ele sorriu porque ela não sabia que ele sabia que, assim como um cachorro é um cachorro, aquela mulher era aquela mulher” (415). Thus, although the ontological problem of being remains, it is reduced to existence, to the consciousness about life, or “being there,” Heidegger’s Da-sein. Once again, she denies metaphysics and reduces it to simple everyday meals in “Comer, comer” (Nov. 16, 1968, 222-23), when she describes her home as non-metaphysical: “O fato é simplesmente que nós gostamos de comer. E sou com orgulho a mãe da casa de comidas. Além de comer, conversamos muito sobre o que acontece no Brasil e no mundo, conversamos sobre que roupa é adequada para determinadas ocasiões. Nós somos um lar” (223). More than witty or ironic statements, these
reductions of metaphysics to concrete life are at the core of Heidegger’s inquiry on ontology (Being) and Sartre’s existential or phenomenological approach to philosophy.

Lispector lived 16 years in Italy, Switzerland and England, a period when she was able to read at ease. She certainly read Heidegger’s *Introduction to Metaphysics*, as well as his very poetic *Off the Beaten Track*. Heidegger’s idea of *Da-sein* (Being here and now) is present in her novels, short stories and chronicles as a constant experience of “being there.” She always expresses the need to focus on the deep consciousness of one’s being, opposite to unconscious objects or to people that only lie in the world (being-in-itself) without exerting an existence of their own. In *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger mentions that there are “mobs” of people who are not real beings, but mere objects that lie there, and who therefore fall into nothingness. Lispector’s approach to language derives from Heidegger’s idea of *re-velation*, or illumination, as in her constant grasp of being and her etymological *re-discovery* of words.

From her chronicles and other writings we can conclude that Lispector’s knowledge of Sartre’s existentialism or Heidegger’s ontology was far from being deep, but she drew inspiration from their ideas, not only by reading some of their works, but also because they circulated in newspaper articles and were topics of conversation among her intellectual friends.

*Mysticism and the Discovery of the Sacred World*

Even though we see traces of existential and ontological thought in Lispector’s chronicles and fiction, she repeatedly denied being an intellectual: “Sou feliz de pertencer à literatura brasileira por motivos que nada têm a ver com literatura, pois nem ao menos sou uma literata ou uma intelectual” (“Pertenecer,” June 15, 1968, 151-53, 152). Later in this chronicle she recalls the sad demands made on her, based on some old Ukrainian legend, such as healing her mother just by being born, in which she failed: “Minha mãe já estava doente, e, por uma superstição bastante espalhada, acreditava-se que ter um filho curava uma mulher de uma doença. Só que não curei minha mãe. E sinto até hoje essa carga de culpa: fizeram-me para uma missão determinada e eu falhei” (153).

She never assumed a Jewish identity, nor did she belong to the Jewish community in Rio. It was a shock to her to be dismissed from *Jornal do Brasil*
for being a Jew. In fact, her main inclination remained not with religion, nor with a specific faith, but rather towards a mystic and general idea that permeates Judaism, Catholicism, and ends in astrology and esoterism. She was more mystical than either Jewish or Catholic, although she often refers to the Old Testament, which belongs to both religions. As Nelson Vieira argues in the newspaper Zero Hora (RS, reprinted in Remate de males, 1989, 207-09), she did not consider herself a Jew in the least, but a Brazilian. She studied in Catholic, Jewish and non-confessional public schools in Recife. Most important is that her childhood upbringing was non-sectarian.

Lispector blended her Jewish upbringing with the Catholic background in which she lived, and some of her chronicles show this religious hybridization. She never mentions Jewish thinkers, but she cites several Catholic ones, such as Georges Bernanos (“Aprendendo a viver,” Dec. 28, 1968, 235-37), and Alceu Amoroso Lima (Feb. 8, 15, 22, March 1, 1969, 255-59), whom she interviewed. In “Prece por um padre” (Sept. 16, 1967, 24), she prays for a priest, not the other way around: “Uma noite gaguejei uma prece por um padre que tem medo de morrer e tem vergonha de ter medo” (24); “Padre X... tinha me pedido para rezar por ele” (25). This chronicle shows how much more adapted to Catholicism Lispector was, in spite of Benjamin Moser’s stress on her Jewish origins in his biography of her (2009). In “Por detrás da devoção” (Dec. 2, 1967, 53-58) she again turns to Nossa Senhora da Aparecida, when she is advised by her cook.

On the same day as in her chronicle “Um fenômeno de parapsicologia” (July 24, 1971, 569-70), she published “Salmo de Davi, n. 4,” in Biblical language: “Ouve-me quando eu clamo, ó, Deus da minha justiça” (570).

In keeping with a tendency typical among immigrants to Brazil, Lispector’s father, Pinkhas, changed all his family members’ names upon arriving in Maceió (AL) in 1922. He, Pinkhas, became Pedro, Mania, their mother, became Maria. The daughters were renamed Elisa, Tania and Clarice (whose original name was Haia and was buried as such in Rio). Lispector’s utmost concern was to integrate into Brazilian society and into the Portuguese language for fear of being considered a Russian or a Jew and finding herself expatriated, as Olga Benário Prestes was. The latter was a Jew and the wife of the communist leader Luís Carlos Prestes. After being deported by the dictator Getúlio Vargas, the Nazis sent her to the gas chambers. Brazilian citizenship could only be applied for when one came of age, at 21. Lispector even wrote a letter to Vargas, in the hope of speeding up this process, but she only acquired Brazilian citizenship at the age of 23, by marriage.

In “Um pedido” (Feb. 10, 1968, 90), she advises a person who drinks too much to stop or at least drink less. On the same day, in “Deus” (Feb. 10, 1968, 90), she questions: “Mesmo para os descrentes há a pergunta duvidosa: e depois da morte?” (90). Changing from religion to psychology, she asks God’s help because she is destructive, and then adds: self-destructive (90-91).
Jandira to light a candle for the saint, since she had been inadvertently calling another maid, whose name was actually Aninha, by the name Aparecida (54).

The chronicle “As grandes punições” (Nov. 4, 1967, 39-41) contains the Catholic idea of punishment, which derives from Judaism. Lispector confesses that she and Leopoldo, her best friend in school and a Jewish boy, behaved very badly in class. She then begins to fear punishment, which never comes, but she cries with fear all the same. Her chronicles “Das doçuras de Deus” (Dec. 16, 1967, 60-62), “De outras doçuras de Deus” (idem, 63), “As caridades odiosas” (Dec. 6, 1969, 381-384) and “Teosofia” (Dec. 13, 1969, p. 385-386) deal with the theme of charity, common to both religions. The latter tells of a mother who lives in the street with her three children. Many other texts move between the two faiths in a hybridized manner, as is usual in Brazilian culture, as in “Perdoando Deus” (Sept. 19, 1970, 484), “Salmo de David, nº 4” (24 July 1971, 570), “Dies irae” (Sept. 25, 1971, 593) and “Hoje nasce um menino” (Dec. 24 1971, 620).

Lispector’s knowledge of Judaism almost certainly came from her father, who had studied the Talmud, and from the year she spent in a Jewish school while the family lived in Recife. She was aware of the religious significance of numbers in the Kabbalah, and as a girl she taught private arithmetic classes. She was also aware that some Jewish religious secrets could not be shared: “Um homem me disse que no Talmude falam de coisas que a gente não pode contar a muitos, há outras a poucos, e outras a ninguém” (“Ao correr da máquina,” April 17, 1971, 529-32, 529).

Lispector’s family came from the region of Podolia, in Western Ukraine. This region was the site of hundreds of anti-Jewish pogroms during the turn of the twentieth century, and Lispector’s family emigrated in 1921. They went first to Germany before arriving in Maceió, Brazil, when Lispector was only two years old. Prior to the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and the subsequent rise of Ukranian nationalism, Podolia had been an important center of Jewish culture, and it was the fatherland of two important Jewish mystics, rabbi Baal Shem Tov (born around 1700 in Poland), and rabbi Nachman of Breslov (born in 1772 in

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19 The Lurianic Kabbalah, based on the Zorah, was spread by the sixteenth-century rabbi Isaac ben Solomon Luria Ashkenazi. He was born in Jerusalem and died in Syria. He wrote poems in Aramaic and the eight volumes of the famous *Tree of Life*. Jewish popular faith is full of *golems* (doubles, phantoms) and *dibbuks* (devilish spirits of the dead) that inspire the supernatural.
The former created the concept of *hased* which is linked to the Almighty (*Adonai*). It refers to the same God that was incarnated in Christ, as depicted in the book *The Imitation of Christ* (1418), a kind of second Catholic Bible widely read in Lispector’s time. In *A descoberta do mundo*, she often refers to Christ’s crucifixion, as well as in her novels *A paixão segundo G.H.* and *A via-crucis do corpo* (1974). In “Lembrança de um homem que desistiu” (Dec. 18, 1971, 618-19), she states: “O verdadeiro sentido de Cristo seria a imitação de Cristo. Só que o próprio Cristo foi a imitação de Cristo” (619). This aporia is so metaphorical that she can barely be accused of atheism or blasphemy.

The members of the Hasidic sect were known as “the drunkards of God,” as they were in a state of mind like that of Muslim Sufis, one of total dedication to the spiritual and magical. This kind of mysticism is present in Jewish didactic and popular tales. It can be found it Lispector’s style, in both her chronicles and fiction, and increasingly so in her life. For example, “Brain Storm” (Nov. 22, 1969, 374-76) contains a kind of repetitive mantra calling for happiness or reparation of the heart, and an eagerness to find God in all earthly things (but not beyond things, as in metaphysics). She mentions God 181 times in *A descoberta do mundo*. So many mystical references may give her chronicles and writings a certain resemblance to what would be later called self-help books. However, her mixed appeals either to the Christian God, to Jewish or even to Greek values, stand as evidence of her religious hybridization—that many would call assimilation—as in “Como uma corça” (Jan. 27, 1968, 84), or calling “o deus,” in *A paixão segundo G.H.*

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20 Lispector’s family emigrated from a Jewish community near Sawranh (Ukraine) to Maceió (AL) in 1922 and later to Recife. Elisa Lispector’s novel *No exílio* (1948) gives a touching picture of the horrible conditions of their escape from Ukraine. Clarice was born on the way, when her mother was already very ill (Moser), suffering from a paralyzing disease. During their childhood, their mother spent her days sitting in a rocking chair by the window, finally dying on Sept. 21, 1930. The remaining family members moved to Rio in 1935. Her father died from a surgery on Aug. 23, 1940. Lispector graduated in Law in 1943, when she became a Brazilian citizen and married the diplomat Maury Gurgel Valente. The couple lived abroad for 16 years. She had two children, Pedro and Paulo. She returned with her children to Rio in 1959 and officially separated from her husband in 1965.

21 “Desencontro” (571) is written as a small fable, comparable to a Hasidic tale: “Eu te dou pão e preferes ouro. Eu te dou ouro, mas tua fome legítimá é de pão” (571). Hasidism coincides in great part with Jesus’s teachings, for it links spirituality and simplicity with the acceptance of the differences among people and in the world.
Lispector’s attachment to everyday trifles may be considered an important tool against the universal metaphysical truths, as exposed in Existentialism, to grasp the meaning of existence in the times of turmoil during which she lived, personally and politically. First, her own fear of being deported to Nazi Germany, later, after 1964, the threat against intellectuals by the military regime. She often asks: “Oh, Deus, e eu que não sei rezar!” (“Que me ensinem,” Feb. 4, 1968, 87)—but, although feeling unable to pray, she does it all the time. She concludes this chronicle by complaining: “Oh, Deus, eu já fui muito ferida” (idem, 87). She is a pioneer in her interest in magic, esoterism and fortune telling, explicit in her last book published in her lifetime, A hora da estrela (1977).

While Lispector does not commit to any religion, she respects certain religious precepts. For example, in “Ao correr da máquina” (April 17, 1971, 529-32), she blames Virginia Woolf for not having gone “until the end” (like her suffering mother?): “Não gosto quando dizem que tenho afinidade com Virginia Woolf (só a li, aliás, depois de escrever o meu primeiro livro): é que não quero perdoar o fato de ela se ter suicidado. O horrível dever é ir até o fim” (529). The condemnation of suicide is of course common to both Christianity and Judaism.

The use of metaphors, aporias and contradiction is so frequent in her imagery style that Lispector disrupts Aristotelian logic and opens her writing to a whole universe of linguistic invention. This kind of apparently contradictory logic was later characterized by Jacques Derrida as logic of the supplementary, or inclusive logic. It is not based on Aristotle’s logic of the third exclusive, that is, something can only be affirmed or denied, but on the argument that theories complement or supplement one another, because there is not one definitive truth.

Lispector’s increasing melancholia and difficulty with social interactions even in such a lively city as Rio led her to increasingly search for seclusion in her apartment in Leme. She resented being labeled as difficult and eccentric in her relationships, and being criticized as hermetic in style, to the point of having been called a “sacred monster” (“Brain Storm,” Nov. 22, 1969, 374-76). At the same time, she became increasingly popular, and her magic, esoteric style became much appreciated by her women readers. She further elaborated on the theme of magic with her strange collection of short stories Onde estivestes de noite (1974), featuring witches and nightmares. To add to her notoriety, she dazzled the audience at a Witchcraft World Conference in Colombia, in 1975, by reading her short story “O ovo e a galinha.”
Her novel *A hora da estrela* (1977) deals with fortune telling and death prediction, but it resulted from a lasting appreciation of the supernatural on her part, as we read in *A descoberta do mundo*: “A Vidente” (Nov. 25, 1967, 51), “Descoberta” (Feb. 21, 1970, 414) and “Um fenômeno de parapsicologia” (July 24, 1971, 569-70). In the latter, a woman who is a medium is called to Lispector’s apartment, and she writes down a short story that was totally in Lispector’s mind, with her exact words, although she had never read her books. In “Análise mediúnica” (Dec. 15, 1973, 762-63), another medium, Maria Augusta, nicknamed Eva, visits Lispector and advises her to hold back her emotions, which the author resists. In “É sobrenatural” (June 28, 1968, 310), she concludes that she does not live “day to day”, but “life to life.”

By 1973, Lispector increasingly refers to God, magic themes, fortune telling, popular beliefs, religious faith, mysticism, and the supernatural. In “Meu Natal” (Dec. 21, 1968, 233-34), she describes a magical or mystical event that spared her prayer book after the night fire accident that consumed her bedroom: “houve o incêndio em meu quarto, incêndio que me atingiu tão gravemente que fiquei alguns dias entre a vida e a morte. Meu quarto foi inteiramente queimado: o estuque das paredes e do teto caiu, os móveis foram reduzidos a pó, e os livros também. Não tente sequer explicar o que aconteceu: tudo se queimou, mas o missal ficou intato, apenas com um leve chamuscado na capa” (234).

**Conclusion: A descoberta do mundo as a Journal of Resurrection**

Existentialism and phenomenology, or any reading of Sartre or Heidegger, would be empty theory had Lispector not borrowed from her own emotions and experiences as a Jewish girl in a Catholic milieu. Feeling Jewish coincided with her sense of rejection and seclusion, of being different, of pronouncing words awkwardly, and of being poor and motherless, in Recife (“Restos do Carnaval,” 16 March, 1968, 105-08). “Banhos de mar” (January 25, 1969, 249) illustrates one of the few moments of relaxation, in contrast with “O passeio em família,” which is written from an external point of view, as a subjective short story, but in the third person, and hints at the family’s struggle with poverty (April 24, 1971, 533).

Lispector’s increasing sense of abandonment and frustration led her to a condition of true melancholia, and craving for God became more and more
constant and an ultimate goal for her. Her epiphanic discourse mingles mystical and existential insights and borders on mysticism. She counterbalances her sorrow with the sense of “Hased,” and the hope for illuminated happiness. She mentions the word *alegre* 171 times in her chronicles, and she constantly urges people to be happy. Joy is mentioned in the Bible more than 3,000 times, and it is also a Hasidic perception of the omnipresence of the Divine. To be joyful or blissful often reads like a kind of mantra, as in “Ele seria alegre” (Dec. 21, 1968, 233). At the same time, this text exemplifies her peculiar way of treating religion in an existential perspective, as a desacralized human affair: “Cristo seria alegre se não precisasse mostrar ao mundo a dor do mundo: como homem era um ser perfeito e por isso teria alegrias perfeitas” (233). So often does she encourage people to be happy and blissful that this feeling seems a displacement from her own unhappiness, as in “A cozinha feliz” (March 4, 1972, 643-44). Her letters from Europe often urge her older sister Elisa to be happy and jolly: “Minha irmã querida, minha Leinha, fique alegre, seja feliz!!!” (Rome, May 1, 1945, *Minhas queridas*, 21).

Lispector is neither happy nor funny in her chronicles. She seldom laughs—she is not comical, like Chekhov, although she is not deprived of a fine sense of humor. Nevertheless, she differs from the *carioca* spirit of the male chronicle writers of her time, or from the Modernist “poema piada,” as in Oswald de Andrade. An exception is her chronicle published on All Fool’s Day (April 1) of 1972, “Minha próxima e excitante viagem pelo mundo” (645-47, 645). Based on her actual travels in the past, she describes her fantastic plans to travel so precisely that she fools the reader almost up to the last line.

Another rare example of a funny literary chronicle, “Por causa de um bule de bico rachado” (Dec. 29, 1973, 765-67), narrates a long series of horrible personal incidents that an Englishman suffers after he has a prosaic discussion at breakfast with his wife about the cracked spout of a teapot. He flees home and joins the Foreign Legion for five years, sending no further news until a letter arrives stating that he is at great risk of death. So, his wife works extremely hard to save money to go find him to rescue him. The ending is left in suspense, adding to the absurd alacrity of this “chronicle.”

“Amor, quati, cão, feminino e masculino” (Oct. 9, 1971, 598) is written in a witty tone from the viewpoint of this rodent, the coati, and illustrates Lispector’s identification with animals. She depicts the sense of humiliation and
awkwardness this wild animal feels by being paraded on a leash in the streets of Copacabana, as a pet. It makes one doubt Hélène Cixous’s statement that women cannot laugh. This is no longer true.22

Some of these newspaper chronicles, written in the first person, reveal the psychological sorrows and the physical sufferings that Lispector went through during the six years she signed them, from 1967 to 1973, and extend back into her childhood. Like Franz Kafka, she was able to transform her loneliness, melancholy, and unhappiness into a social act. She helped many young women to become feminists. Her writings helped her contemporary women writers to affirm themselves on the same level as male authors (Lobo, “Clarice Lispector”). She wrote for her readers, but she also talked directly with God. She stressed the importance of being conscious and master of one’s life.

Lispector’s chronicles in A descoberta do mundo may be read as a literary journal that aims at gaining insight into women’s conceptions of “self” and discovering the meaning of life. Marcel Proust’s Remembrance of Things Past also resembles a journal that focuses on the author’s life, nevertheless it does not emerge from the turmoil of social life, nor immerges in his inner self. While Proust is involved with this internal monologue, Lispector delves deeper into the imaginary and the sacred by means of stream of consciousness. Whereas Proust is realistic in his description of actions, scenes, characters and fashions, to draw a historical picture of his time, Lispector is mystical and abstract in what she sees. In order to achieve her mission as a writer, Lispector increasingly plunges into isolation to live like a Hasid. Only through suffering she seems to have found her own style and salvation.

Being so experimental in language and theme, Lispector is often compared to João Guimarães Rosa. While he used Taoism as his philosophical frame, she dug into existentialism, explored anti-metaphysics, and re-read religion to compose her original mystical texts. She employs a peculiar epiphany that derives from mystical and religious revelation, but which is also closely linked to everyday occurrences, where the divine makes frequent appearances.

22 “Para acabar de fundir a cuca” (August 12, 1972, 670) is a funny listing of folk beliefs that can be really amusing. However, in “Chacrinha??” (October 7, 1967, 31), she criticizes this TV showman, who was often compared to a clown, stating that he deludes and exploits the audience by making fun of people who are in need of money. It looks as if she lacks sense of humor. “A bela e a fera ou a ferida grande demais” (1977) illustrates her constant worry and sadness.
Her chronicles were often read as self-help texts, which became quite popular at the end of the millennium. However, they do not convey a ready-made message, neither do they aim only at selling or preaching; they are genuinely derived from her inner self. In line with an international trend of women’s literature that began to emerge in the 1970s, Lispector was the first woman chronicler and fiction writer in Brazil to understand that women should write about their own world, their home, their worries, their self and their family, not to merely imitate male perceptions of the world.

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Existentialism (/ˌɛɡzɪˈstɛnʃəlɪzəm/ or /ˌɛksəˈstɛnʃəˌlɪzəm/) is a form of philosophical inquiry that explores the problem of human existence and centers on the lived experience of the thinking, feeling, acting individual.[3][4] In the view of the existentialist, the individual's starting point has been called "the existential angst," a sense of dread, disorientation, confusion, or anxiety in the face of an apparently meaningless or absurd world.[5] Existentialist thinkers frequently explore issues related to the meaning, purpose, and value of human existence.[6]

Existentialism is associated with several 19th- and 20th-century European philosophers who shared an emphasis on the human subject, despite profound doctrinal differences.[7][4][8] Many existentialists regarded traditional systematic or academic philosophies, in style and content, as too abstract and remote from concrete human experience.[9][10] A primary virtue in existentialist thought is authenticity.[11] Søren Kierkegaard is generally considered to have been the first existentialist philosopher.[7][12][13] He proposed that each individual—not society or religion—is solely responsible for giving meaning to life and living it passionately and sincerely, or "authentically".[14][15]

Furthermore, existentialism has influenced many disciplines outside of philosophy, including theology, drama, art, literature, and psychology.[16]
The term existentialism (French: L’existentialisme) was coined by the French Catholic philosopher Gabriel Marcel in the mid-1940s.\(^{[17]}\)\(^{[18]}\)\(^{[19]}\) When Marcel first applied the term to Jean-Paul Sartre, at a colloquium in 1945, Sartre rejected it.\(^{[20]}\) Sartre subsequently changed his mind and, on October 29, 1945, publicly adopted the existentialist label in a lecture to the Club Maintenant in Paris, published as *L’existentialisme est un humanisme* (Existentialism is a Humanism), a short book that helped popularize existentialist thought.\(^{[21]}\) Marcel later came to reject the label himself in favour of Neo-Socratic, in honor of Kierkegaard's essay "On The Concept of Irony".

Some scholars argue that the term should be used only to refer to the cultural movement in Europe in the 1940s and 1950s associated with the works of the philosophers Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Albert Camus.\(^{[7]}\) Others extend the term to Kierkegaard, and yet others extend it as far back as Socrates.\(^{[22]}\) However, it is often identified with the philosophical views of Sartre.\(^{[7]}\)

### Definitional issues and background

The labels existentialism and existentialist are often seen as historical conveniences in as much as they were first applied to many philosophers long after they had died. While existentialism is generally considered to have originated with Kierkegaard, the first prominent existentialist philosopher to adopt the term as a self-description was Sartre. Sartre posits the idea that "what all existentialists have in common is the fundamental doctrine that existence precedes essence," as the philosopher Frederick Copleston explains.\(^{[23]}\) According to philosopher Steven Crowell, defining existentialism has been relatively difficult, and he argues that it is better understood as a general approach used to reject certain systematic philosophies rather than as a systematic philosophy itself.\(^{[7]}\) In a lecture delivered in 1945, Sartre described existentialism as "the attempt to draw all
Although many outside Scandinavia consider the term existentialism to have originated from Kierkegaard, it is more likely that Kierkegaard adopted this term (or at least the term "existential" as a description of his philosophy) from the Norwegian poet and literary critic Johan Sebastian Cammermeyer Welhaven.[26] This assertion comes from two sources. The Norwegian philosopher Erik Lundestad refers to the Danish philosopher Fredrik Christian Sibbern. Sibbern is supposed to have had two conversations in 1841, the first with Welhaven and the second with Kierkegaard. It is in the first conversation that it is believed that Welhaven came up with "a word that he said covered a certain thinking, which had a close and positive attitude to life, a relationship he described as existential".[27] This was then brought to Kierkegaard by Sibbern.

The second claim comes from the Norwegian historian Rune Slagstad, who claims to prove that Kierkegaard himself said the term "existential" was borrowed from the poet. He strongly believes that it was Kierkegaard himself who said that "Hegelians do not study philosophy "existentially;" to use a phrase by Welhaven from one time when I spoke with him about philosophy."[28]

**Concepts**

**Existence precedes essence**

Sartre argued that a central proposition of existentialism is that *existence precedes essence*, which means that individuals shape themselves by existing and cannot be perceived through preconceived and a-priori categories, an "essence". The actual life of the individuals is what constitutes what could be called their "true essence" instead of an arbitrarily attributed essence others use to define them. Human beings, through their own consciousness, create their own values and determine a meaning to their life.[29] This view is in contradiction to Aristotle and Aquinas who taught that essence precedes individual existence. Although it was Sartre who explicitly coined the phrase, similar notions can be found in the thought of existentialist philosophers such as Heidegger, and Kierkegaard:

> The subjective thinker's *form*, the form of his communication, is his *style*. His form must be just as manifold as are the opposites that he holds together. The systematic *eins, zwei, drei* is an abstract form that also must inevitably run into trouble whenever it is to be applied to the concrete. To the same degree as the subjective thinker is concrete, to that same degree his form must also be concretely dialectical. But just as he himself is not a poet, not an ethicist, not a dialectician, so also his form is none of these directly. His form must first and last be related to existence, and in this regard he must have at his disposal the poetic, the ethical, the dialectical, the religious. Subordinate character, setting, etc., which belong to the well-balanced character of the esthetic production, are in themselves breadth; the subjective thinker has only one setting—existence—and has nothing to do with localities and such things. The setting is not the fairyland of the imagination, where poetry produces consummation, nor is the setting laid in England, and historical accuracy is not a concern. The setting is inwardness in existing as a human being; the concretion is the relation of the existence-categories to one another. Historical accuracy and historical actuality are breadth. Søren Kierkegaard (Concluding Postscript, Hong pp. 357–358)

Some interpret the imperative to define oneself as meaning that anyone can wish to be anything. However, an existentialist philosopher would say such a wish constitutes an inauthentic existence – what Sartre would call "bad faith". Instead, the phrase should be taken to say that people are defined only insofar as they act and that
they are responsible for their actions. Someone who acts cruelly towards other people is, by that act, defined as a cruel person. Such persons are themselves responsible for their new identity (cruel persons). This is opposed to their genes, or human nature, bearing the blame.

As Sartre said in his lecture *Existentialism is a Humanism*: "man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world—and defines himself afterwards". The more positive, therapeutic aspect of this is also implied: a person can choose to act in a different way, and to be a good person instead of a cruel person.\(^\text{30}\)

Jonathan Webber interprets Sartre's usage of the term *essence* not in a modal fashion, i.e. as necessary features, but in a teleological fashion: "an essence is the relational property of having a set of parts ordered in such a way as to collectively perform some activity".\(^\text{31}\)\(^\text{37}\) For example, it belongs to the essence of a house to keep the bad weather out, which is why it has walls and a roof. Humans are different from houses because unlike houses - they don't have an inbuilt purpose: they are free to *choose* their own purpose and thereby shape their essence; thus, their *existence precedes their essence*.\(^\text{31}\)\(^\text{1–4}\)

Sartre is committed to a radical conception of freedom: nothing fixes our purpose but we ourselves, our projects have no weight or inertia except for our endorsement of them.\(^\text{32}\)\(^\text{33}\) Simone de Beauvoir, on the other hand, holds that there are various factors, grouped together under the term *sedimentation*, that offer resistance to attempts to change our direction in life. Sedimentations are themselves products of past choices and can be changed by choosing differently in the present, but such changes happen slowly. They are a force of inertia that shapes the agent's evaluative outlook on the world until the transition is complete.\(^\text{31}\)\(^\text{5,9,66}\)

Sartre's definition of existentialism was based on Heidegger's magnum opus *Being and Time* (1927). In the correspondence with Jean Beaufret later published as the *Letter on Humanism*, Heidegger implied that Sartre misunderstood him for his own purposes of subjectivism, and that he did not mean that actions take precedence over being so long as those actions were not reflected upon.\(^\text{34}\) Heidegger commented that "the reversal of a metaphysical statement remains a metaphysical statement", meaning that he thought Sartre had simply switched the roles traditionally attributed to essence and existence without interrogating these concepts and their history.\(^\text{35}\)

**The absurd**

The notion of the absurd contains the idea that there is no meaning in the world beyond what meaning we give it. This meaninglessness also encompasses the amorality or "unfairness" of the world. This can be highlighted in the way it opposes the traditional Abrahamic religious perspective, which establishes that life's purpose is the fulfillment of God's commandments.\(^\text{36}\) This is what gives meaning to people's lives. To live the life of the absurd means rejecting a life that finds or pursues specific meaning for man's existence since there is nothing to be discovered. According to Albert Camus, the world or the human being is not in itself absurd. The concept only emerges through the juxtaposition of the two; life becomes absurd due to the incompatibility between human beings and the world they inhabit.\(^\text{36}\) This view constitutes one of the two interpretations of the absurd in existentialist literature. The second view, first elaborated by Søren Kierkegaard, holds that absurdity is limited to actions and choices of human beings. These are considered absurd since they issue from human freedom, undermining their foundation outside of themselves.\(^\text{37}\)
The absurd contrasts with the claim that "bad things don't happen to good people"; to the world, metaphorically speaking, there is no such thing as a good person or a bad person; what happens happens, and it may just as well happen to a "good" person as to a "bad" person. Because of the world's absurdity, anything can happen to anyone at any time and a tragic event could plummet someone into direct confrontation with the absurd. The notion of the absurd has been prominent in literature throughout history. Many of the literary works of Kierkegaard, Samuel Beckett, Franz Kafka, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Eugène Ionesco, Miguel de Unamuno, Luigi Pirandello, Sartre, Joseph Heller, and Camus contain descriptions of people who encounter the absurdity of the world.

It is because of the devastating awareness of meaninglessness that Camus claimed in *The Myth of Sisyphus* that "there is only one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide". Although "prescriptions" against the possible deleterious consequences of these kinds of encounters vary, from Kierkegaard's religious "stage" to Camus' insistence on persevering in spite of absurdity, the concern with helping people avoid living their lives in ways that put them in the perpetual danger of having everything meaningful break down is common to most existentialist philosophers. The possibility of having everything meaningful break down poses a threat of quietism, which is inherently against the existentialist philosophy. It has been said that the possibility of suicide makes all humans existentialists. The ultimate hero of absurdism lives without meaning and faces suicide without succumbing to it.

**Facticity**

Facticity is defined by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* (1943) as the *in-itself*, which delineates for humans the modalities of being and not being. This can be more easily understood when considering facticity in relation to the temporal dimension of our past: one's past is what one is, in that it co-constitutes oneself. However, to say that one is only one's past would ignore a significant part of reality (the present and the future), while saying that one's past is only what one was, would entirely detach it from oneself now. A denial of one's concrete past constitutes an inauthentic lifestyle, and also applies to other kinds of facticity (having a human body—e.g., one that does not allow a person to run faster than the speed of sound—identity, values, etc.).

Facticity is a limitation and a condition of freedom. It is a limitation in that a large part of one's facticity consists of things one did not choose (birthplace, etc.), but a condition of freedom in the sense that one's values most likely depend on it. However, even though one's facticity is "set in stone" (as being past, for instance), it cannot determine a person: the value ascribed to one's facticity is still ascribed to it freely by that person. As an example, consider two men, one of whom has no memory of his past and the other who remembers everything. Both have committed many crimes, but the first man, remembering nothing, leads a rather normal life while the second man, feeling trapped by his own past, continues a life of crime, blaming his own past for "trapping" him in this life. There is nothing essential about his committing crimes, but he ascribes this meaning to his past.

However, to disregard one's facticity during the continual process of self-making, projecting oneself into the future, would be to put oneself in denial of oneself and would be inauthentic. The origin of one's projection must still be one's facticity, though in the mode of not being (essentially). An example of one focusing solely on possible projects without reflecting on one's current facticity would be someone who continually thinks about future possibilities related to being rich (e.g. a better car, bigger house, better quality of life, etc.) without acknowledging the facticity of not currently having the financial means to do so. In this example, considering both facticity and transcendence, an authentic mode of being would be considering future projects that might improve one's current finances (e.g. putting in extra hours, or investing savings) in order to arrive at a *future-facticity* of a modest pay rise, further leading to purchase of an affordable car.

Another aspect of facticity is that it entails angst. Freedom "produces" angst when limited by facticity and the lack of the possibility of having facticity to "step in" and take responsibility for something one has done also produces angst.
Another aspect of existential freedom is that one can change one's values. One is responsible for one's values, regardless of society's values. The focus on freedom in existentialism is related to the limits of responsibility one bears, as a result of one's freedom. The relationship between freedom and responsibility is one of interdependency and a clarification of freedom also clarifies that for which one is responsible. [46][47]

Authenticity

Many noted existentialists consider the theme of authentic existence important. Authenticity involves the idea that one has to "create oneself" and live in accordance with this self. For an authentic existence, one should act as oneself, not as "one's acts" or as "one's genes" or any other essence requires. The authentic act is one in accordance with one's freedom. A component of freedom is facticity, but not to the degree that this facticity determines one's transcendent choices (one could then blame one's background for making the choice one made [chosen project, from one's transcendence]). Facticity, in relation to authenticity, involves acting on one's actual values when making a choice (instead of, like Kierkegaard's Aesthete, "choosing" randomly), so that one takes responsibility for the act instead of choosing either-or without allowing the options to have different values. [48]

In contrast, the inauthentic is the denial to live in accordance with one's freedom. This can take many forms, from pretending choices are meaningless or random, convincing oneself that some form of determinism is true, or "mimicry" where one acts as "one should".

How one "should" act is often determined by an image one has, of how one in such a role (bank manager, lion tamer, prostitute, etc) acts. In Being and Nothingness, Sartre uses the example of a waiter in "bad faith". He merely takes part in the "act" of being a typical waiter, albeit very convincingly. [49] This image usually corresponds to a social norm, but this does not mean that all acting in accordance with social norms is inauthentic. The main point is the attitude one takes to one's own freedom and responsibility and the extent to which one acts in accordance with this freedom.

The Other and the Look

The Other (written with a capital "O") is a concept more properly belonging to phenomenology and its account of intersubjectivity. However, it has seen widespread use in existentialist writings, and the conclusions drawn differ slightly from the phenomenological accounts. The Other is the experience of another free subject who inhabits the same world as a person does. In its most basic form, it is this experience of the Other that constitutes intersubjectivity and objectivity. To clarify, when one experiences someone else, and this Other person experiences the world (the same world that a person experiences)—only from "over there"—the world is constituted as objective in that it is something that is "there" as identical for both of the subjects; a person experiences the other person as experiencing the same things. This experience of the Other's look is what is termed the Look (sometimes the Gaze). [50]

While this experience, in its basic phenomenological sense, constitutes the world as objective and oneself as objectively existing subjectivity (one experiences oneself as seen in the Other's Look in precisely the same way that one experiences the Other as seen by him, as subjectivity), in existentialism, it also acts as a kind of limitation of freedom. This is because the Look tends to objectify what it sees. When one experiences oneself in the Look, one does not experience oneself as nothing (no thing), but as something. In Sartre's example of a man peeping at someone through a keyhole, the man is entirely caught up in the situation he is in. He is in a pre-reflexive state where his entire consciousness is directed at what goes on in the room. Suddenly, he hears a creaking floorboard behind him and he becomes aware of himself as seen by the Other. He is then filled with shame for he perceives himself as he would perceive someone else doing what he was doing - as a Peeping Tom. For Sartre, this phenomenological experience of shame establishes proof for the existence of other minds.
and defeats the problem of solipsism. For the conscious state of shame to be experienced, one has to become aware of oneself as an object of another look, proving a priori, that other minds exist. The Look is then co-constitutive of one's facticity.

Another characteristic feature of the Look is that no Other really needs to have been there: It is possible that the creaking floorboard was simply the movement of an old house; the Look is not some kind of mystical telepathic experience of the actual way the Other sees one (there may have been someone there, but he could have not noticed that person). It is only one's perception of the way another might perceive him.

**Angst and dread**

"Existential angst", sometimes called existential dread, anxiety, or anguish, is a term common to many existentialist thinkers. It is generally held to be a negative feeling arising from the experience of human freedom and responsibility. The archetypal example is the experience one has when standing on a cliff where one not only fears falling off it, but also dreads the possibility of throwing oneself off. In this experience that "nothing is holding me back", one senses the lack of anything that predetermines one to either throw oneself off or to stand still, and one experiences one's own freedom.

It can also be seen in relation to the previous point how angst is before nothing, and this is what sets it apart from fear that has an object. While one can take measures to remove an object of fear, for angst no such "constructive" measures are possible. The use of the word "nothing" in this context relates to the inherent insecurity about the consequences of one's actions and to the fact that, in experiencing freedom as angst, one also realizes that one is fully responsible for these consequences. There is nothing in people (genetically, for instance) that acts in their stead—that they can blame if something goes wrong. Therefore, not every choice is perceived as having dreadful possible consequences (and, it can be claimed, human lives would be unbearable if every choice facilitated dread). However, this does not change the fact that freedom remains a condition of every action.

**Despair**

Despair is generally defined as a loss of hope. In existentialism, it is more specifically a loss of hope in reaction to a breakdown in one or more of the defining qualities of one's self or identity. If a person is invested in being a particular thing, such as a bus driver or an upstanding citizen, and then finds their being-thing compromised, they would normally be found in a state of despair—a hopeless state. For example, a singer who loses the ability to sing may despair if they have nothing else to fall back on—nothing to rely on for their identity. They find themselves unable to be what defined their being.

What sets the existentialist notion of despair apart from the conventional definition is that existentialist despair is a state one is in even when they are not overtly in despair. So long as a person's identity depends on qualities that can crumble, they are in perpetual despair—and as there is, in Sartrean terms, no human essence found in conventional reality on which to constitute the individual's sense of identity, despair is a universal human condition. As Kierkegaard defines it in *Either/Or*: "Let each one learn what he can; both of us can learn that a person's unhappiness never lies in his lack of control over external conditions, since this would only make him completely unhappy." In *Works of Love*, he says:

> When the God-forsaken worldliness of earthly life shuts itself in complacency, the confined air develops poison, the moment gets stuck and stands still, the prospect is lost, a need is felt for a refreshing, enlivening breeze to cleanse the air and dispel the poisonous vapors lest we suffocate in worldliness. ... Lovingly to hope all things is the opposite of despairingly to hope nothing at all. Love hopes all things—yet is never put to shame. To relate oneself expectantly to the possibility

Angst and dread

Despair
of the good is to hope. To relate oneself expectantly to the possibility of evil is to fear. By the decision to choose hope one decides infinitely more than it seems, because it is an eternal decision. [pages 246–250]

Opposition to positivism and rationalism

Existentialists oppose defining human beings as primarily rational, and, therefore, oppose positivism and rationalism. Existentialism asserts that people make decisions based on subjective meaning rather than pure rationality. The rejection of reason as the source of meaning is a common theme of existentialist thought, as is the focus on the anxiety and dread that we feel in the face of our own radical freedom and our awareness of death. Kierkegaard advocated rationality as a means to interact with the objective world (e.g., in the natural sciences), but when it comes to existential problems, reason is insufficient: "Human reason has boundaries".⁵⁴

Like Kierkegaard, Sartre saw problems with rationality, calling it a form of "bad faith", an attempt by the self to impose structure on a world of phenomena—"the Other"—that is fundamentally irrational and random. According to Sartre, rationality and other forms of bad faith hinder people from finding meaning in freedom. To try to suppress feelings of anxiety and dread, people confine themselves within everyday experience, Sartre asserts, thereby relinquishing their freedom and acquiescing to being possessed in one form or another by "the Look" of "the Other" (i.e., possessed by another person—or at least one's idea of that other person).⁵⁵

Religion

An existentialist reading of the Bible would demand that the reader recognize that they are an existing subject studying the words more as a recollection of events. This is in contrast to looking at a collection of "truths" that are outside and unrelated to the reader, but may develop a sense of reality/God. Such a reader is not obligated to follow the commandments as if an external agent is forcing these commandments upon them, but as though they are inside them and guiding them from inside. This is the task Kierkegaard takes up when he asks: "Who has the more difficult task: the teacher who lectures on earnest things a meteor's distance from everyday life—or the learner who should put it to use?"⁵⁶

Confusion with nihilism

Although nihilism and existentialism are distinct philosophies, they are often confused with one another as both are rooted in the human experience of anguish and confusion stemming from the apparent meaninglessness of a world in which humans are compelled to find or create meaning.⁵⁷ A primary cause of confusion is that Friedrich Nietzsche was an important philosopher in both fields. Existentialist philosophers often stress the importance of Angst as signifying the absolute lack of any objective ground for action, a move that is often reduced to moral or existential nihilism. A pervasive theme in existentialist philosophy, however, is to persist through encounters with the absurd, as seen in Camus' The Myth of Sisyphus ("One must imagine Sisyphus happy")⁵⁸ and it is only very rarely that existentialist philosophers dismiss morality or one's self-created meaning: Kierkegaard regained a sort of morality in the religious (although he wouldn't agree that it was ethical; the religious suspends the ethical), and Sartre's final words in Being and Nothingness are: "All these questions, which refer us to a pure and not an accessory (or impure) reflection, can find their reply only on the ethical plane. We shall devote to them a future work."⁵⁹

History
Kierkegaard and Nietzsche were two of the first philosophers considered fundamental to the existentialist movement, though neither used the term "existentialism" and it is unclear whether they would have supported the existentialism of the 20th century. They focused on subjective human experience rather than the objective truths of mathematics and science, which they believed were too detached or observational to truly get at the human experience. Like Pascal, they were interested in people's quiet struggle with the apparent meaninglessness of life and the use of diversion to escape from boredom. Unlike Pascal, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche also considered the role of making free choices, particularly regarding fundamental values and beliefs, and how such choices change the nature and identity of the chooser. Kierkegaard's knight of faith and Nietzsche's Übermensch are representative of people who exhibit Freedom, in that they define the nature of their own existence. Nietzsche's idealized individual invents his own values and creates the very terms they excel under. By contrast, Kierkegaard, opposed to the level of abstraction in Hegel, and not nearly as hostile (actually welcoming) to Christianity as Nietzsche, argues through a pseudonym that the objective certainty of religious truths (specifically Christian) is not only impossible, but even founded on logical paradoxes. Yet he continues to imply that a leap of faith is a possible means for an individual to reach a higher stage of existence that transcends and contains both an aesthetic and ethical value of life. Kierkegaard and Nietzsche were also precursors to other intellectual movements, including postmodernism, and various strands of psychotherapy. However, Kierkegaard believed that individuals should live in accordance with their thinking.

Dostoevsky

The first important literary author also important to existentialism was the Russian, Dostoevsky. Dostoevsky's Notes from Underground portrays a man unable to fit into society and unhappy with the identities he creates for himself. Sartre, in his book on existentialism Existentialism is a Humanism, quoted Dostoyevsky's The Brothers Karamazov as an example of existential crisis. Other Dostoyevsky novels covered issues raised in existentialist philosophy while presenting story lines divergent from secular existentialism: for example, in Crime and Punishment, the protagonist Raskolnikov experiences an existential crisis and then moves toward a Christian Orthodox worldview similar to that advocated by Dostoyevsky himself.

Early 20th century

In the first decades of the 20th century, a number of philosophers and writers explored existentialist ideas. The Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo, in his 1913 book The Tragic Sense of Life in Men and Nations, emphasized the life of "flesh and bone" as opposed to that of abstract rationalism. Unamuno rejected systematic philosophy in favor of the individual's quest for faith. He retained a sense of the tragic, even absurd nature of the quest, symbolized by his enduring interest in the eponymous character from the Miguel de Cervantes novel Don Quixote. A novelist, poet and dramatist as well as philosophy professor at the University of Salamanca, Unamuno wrote a short story about a priest's crisis of faith, Saint Manuel the Good, Martyr, which has been collected in anthologies of existentialist fiction. Another Spanish thinker, Ortega y Gasset, writing in 1914, held that human existence must always be defined as the individual person combined with the concrete circumstances of his life: "Yo soy yo y mi circunstancia" ("I am myself and my circumstances"). Sartre likewise believed that human existence is not an abstract matter, but is always situated ("en situation").

Although Martin Buber wrote his major philosophical works in German, and studied and taught at the Universities of Berlin and Frankfurt, he stands apart from the mainstream of German philosophy. Born into a Jewish family in Vienna in 1878, he was also a scholar of Jewish culture and involved at various times in
Zionism and Hasidism. In 1938, he moved permanently to Jerusalem. His best-known philosophical work was the short book *I and Thou*, published in 1922.\[62\] For Buber, the fundamental fact of human existence, too readily overlooked by scientific rationalism and abstract philosophical thought, is "man with man", a dialogue that takes place in the so-called "sphere of between" ("das Zwischenmenschliche").\[63\]

Two Ukrainian born thinkers, Lev Shestov and Nikolai Berdyaev, became well known as existentialist thinkers during their post-Revolutionary exiles in Paris. Shestov, born into a Ukrainian-Jewish family in Kiev, had launched an attack on rationalism and systematization in philosophy as early as 1905 in his book of aphorisms *All Things Are Possible*.

Berdyaev, also from Kiev but with a background in the Eastern Orthodox Church, drew a radical distinction between the world of spirit and the everyday world of objects. Human freedom, for Berdyaev, is rooted in the realm of spirit, a realm independent of scientific notions of causation. To the extent the individual human being lives in the objective world, he is estranged from authentic spiritual freedom. "Man" is not to be interpreted naturalistically, but as a being created in God's image, an originator of free, creative acts.\[64\] He published a major work on these themes, *The Destiny of Man*, in 1931.

Marcel, long before coining the term "existentialism", introduced important existentialist themes to a French audience in his early essay "Existence and Objectivity" (1925) and in his *Metaphysical Journal* (1927).\[65\] A dramatist as well as a philosopher, Marcel found his philosophical starting point in a condition of metaphysical alienation: the human individual searching for harmony in a transient life. Harmony, for Marcel, was to be sought through "secondary reflection", a "dialogical" rather than "dialectical" approach to the world, characterized by "wonder and astonishment" and open to the "presence" of other people and of God rather than merely to "information" about them. For Marcel, such presence implied more than simply being there (as one thing might be in the presence of another thing); it connoted "extravagant" availability, and the willingness to put oneself at the disposal of the other.\[66\]

Marcel contrasted *secondary reflection* with abstract, scientific-technical *primary reflection*, which he associated with the activity of the abstract Cartesian ego. For Marcel, philosophy was a concrete activity undertaken by a sensing, feeling human being incarnate—embodied—in a concrete world.\[65\][\[67\] Although Sartre adopted the term "existentialism" for his own philosophy in the 1940s, Marcel's thought has been described as "almost diametrically opposed" to that of Sartre.\[65\] Unlike Sartre, Marcel was a Christian, and became a Catholic convert in 1929.

In Germany, the psychologist and philosopher Karl Jaspers—who later described existentialism as a "phantom" created by the public\[68\]—called his own thought, heavily influenced by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, *Existenzphilosophie*. For Jaspers, "Existenz-philosophy is the way of thought by means of which man seeks to become himself...This way of thought does not cognize objects, but elucidates and makes actual the being of the thinker".\[69\]

Jaspers, a professor at the University of Heidelberg, was acquainted with Heidegger, who held a professorship at Marburg before acceding to Husserl's chair at Freiburg in 1928. They held many philosophical discussions, but later became estranged over Heidegger's support of National Socialism (Nazism). They shared an admiration for Kierkegaard,\[70\] and in the 1930s, Heidegger lectured extensively on Nietzsche. Nevertheless, the extent to which Heidegger should be considered an existentialist is debatable. In *Being and Time* he presented a method of rooting philosophical explanations in human existence (*Dasein*) to be analysed in terms of existential categories (*existentiale*); and this has led many commentators to treat him as an important figure in the existentialist movement.

**After the Second World War**
Following the Second World War, existentialism became a well-known and significant philosophical and cultural movement, mainly through the public prominence of two French writers, Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, who wrote best-selling novels, plays and widely read journalism as well as theoretical texts. These years also saw the growing reputation of Being and Time outside Germany.

Sartre dealt with existentialist themes in his 1938 novel Nausea and the short stories in his 1939 collection The Wall, and had published his treatise on existentialism, Being and Nothingness, in 1943, but it was in the two years following the liberation of Paris from the German occupying forces that he and his close associates—Camus, Simone de Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and others—became internationally famous as the leading figures of a movement known as existentialism. In a very short period of time, Camus and Sartre in particular became the leading public intellectuals of post-war France, achieving by the end of 1945 "a fame that reached across all audiences." Camus was an editor of the most popular leftist (former French Resistance) newspaper Combat; Sartre launched his journal of leftist thought, Les Temps Modernes, and two weeks later gave the widely reported lecture on existentialism and secular humanism to a packed meeting of the Club Maintenant. Beauvoir wrote that "not a week passed without the newspapers discussing us"; existentialism became "the first media craze of the postwar era."

By the end of 1947, Camus' earlier fiction and plays had been reprinted, his new play Caligula had been performed and his novel The Plague published; the first two novels of Sartre's The Roads to Freedom trilogy had appeared, as had Beauvoir's novel The Blood of Others. Works by Camus and Sartre were already appearing in foreign editions. The Paris-based existentialists had become famous.

Sartre had traveled to Germany in 1930 to study the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, and he included critical comments on their work in his major treatise Being and Nothingness. Heidegger's thought had also become known in French philosophical circles through its use by Alexandre Kojève in explicating Hegel in a series of lectures given in Paris in the 1930s. The lectures were highly influential; members of the audience included not only Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, but Raymond Queneau, Georges Bataille, Louis Althusser, André Breton, and Jacques Lacan. A selection from Being and Time was published in French in 1938, and his essays began to appear in French philosophy journals.

Heidegger read Sartre's work and was initially impressed, commenting: "Here for the first time I encountered an independent thinker who, from the foundations up, has experienced the area out of which I think. Your work shows such an immediate comprehension of my philosophy as I have never before encountered." Later, however, in response to a question posed by his French follower Jean Beaufret, Heidegger distanced himself from Sartre's position and existentialism in general in his Letter on Humanism. Heidegger's reputation continued to grow in France during the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1960s, Sartre attempted to reconcile existentialism and Marxism in his work Critique of Dialectical Reason. A major theme throughout his writings was freedom and responsibility.

Camus was a friend of Sartre, until their falling-out, and wrote several works with existential themes including The Rebel, Summer in Algiers, The Myth of Sisyphus, and The Stranger, the latter being "considered—to what would have been Camus's irritation—the exemplary existentialist novel." Camus, like many others, rejected the
existentialist label, and considered his works concerned with facing the absurd. In the titular book, Camus uses the analogy of the Greek myth of Sisyphus to demonstrate the futility of existence. In the myth, Sisyphus is condemned for eternity to roll a rock up a hill, but when he reaches the summit, the rock will roll to the bottom again. Camus believes that this existence is pointless but that Sisyphus ultimately finds meaning and purpose in his task, simply by continually applying himself to it. The first half of the book contains an extended rebuttal of what Camus took to be existentialist philosophy in the works of Kierkegaard, Shestov, Heidegger, and Jaspers.

Simone de Beauvoir, an important existentialist who spent much of her life as Sartre's partner, wrote about feminist and existentialist ethics in her works, including *The Second Sex* and *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. Although often overlooked due to her relationship with Sartre,[83] de Beauvoir integrated existentialism with other forms of thinking such as feminism, unheard of at the time, resulting in alienation from fellow writers such as Camus.[61]

Paul Tillich, an important existentialist theologian following Kierkegaard and Karl Barth, applied existentialist concepts to Christian theology, and helped introduce existential theology to the general public. His seminal work *The Courage to Be* follows Kierkegaard's analysis of anxiety and life's absurdity, but puts forward the thesis that modern humans must, via God, achieve selfhood in spite of life's absurdity. Rudolf Bultmann used Kierkegaard's and Heidegger's philosophy of existence to demythologize Christianity by interpreting Christian mythical concepts into existentialist concepts.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, an existential phenomenologist, was for a time a companion of Sartre. Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) was recognized as a major statement of French existentialism.[84] It has been said that Merleau-Ponty's work *Humanism and Terror* greatly influenced Sartre. However, in later years they were to disagree irreparably, dividing many existentialists such as de Beauvoir,[61] who sided with Sartre.

Colin Wilson, an English writer, published his study *The Outsider* in 1956, initially to critical acclaim. In this book and others (e.g. *Introduction to the New Existentialism*), he attempted to reinvigorate what he perceived as a pessimistic philosophy and bring it to a wider audience. He was not, however, academically trained, and his work was attacked by professional philosophers for lack of rigor and critical standards.[85]

**Influence outside philosophy**

**Art**

Stanley Kubrick's 1957 anti-war film *Paths of Glory* "illuminates, and even illuminates...existentialism" by examining the "necessary absurdity of the human condition" and the "horror of war".[86] The film tells the story of a fictional World War I French army regiment ordered to attack an impregnable German stronghold; when the attack fails, three soldiers are chosen at random, court-martialed by a "kangaroo court", and executed by firing squad. The film examines existentialist ethics, such as the issue of whether objectivity is possible and the "problem of authenticity".[86] Orson Welles's 1962 film *The Trial*, based upon Franz Kafka's book of the same name (Der Process), is characteristic of both existentialist and absurdist themes in its depiction of a man (Joseph K.) arrested for a crime for which the charges are neither revealed to him nor to the reader.
Neon Genesis Evangelion is a Japanese science fiction animation series created by the anime studio Gainax and was both directed and written by Hideaki Anno. Existential themes of individuality, consciousness, freedom, choice, and responsibility are heavily relied upon throughout the entire series, particularly through the philosophies of Jean-Paul Sartre and Søren Kierkegaard. Episode 16's title, "The Sickness Unto Death, And..." (死に至る病、そして, Shi ni itaru yamai, soshite) is a reference to Kierkegaard's book, The Sickness Unto Death.

Some contemporary films dealing with existentialist issues include Melancholia, Fight Club, I Heart Huckabees, Waking Life, The Matrix, Ordinary People, and Life in a Day. Likewise, films throughout the 20th century such as The Seventh Seal, Ikiru, Taxi Driver, the Toy Story films, The Great Silence, Ghost in the Shell, Harold and Maude, High Noon, Easy Rider, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, A Clockwork Orange, Groundhog Day, Apocalypse Now, Badlands, and Blade Runner also have existentialist qualities.

Notable directors known for their existentialist films include Ingmar Bergman, François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Michelangelo Antonioni, Akira Kurosawa, Terrence Malick, Stanley Kubrick, Andrei Tarkovsky, Hideaki Anno, Wes Anderson, Gaspar Noé, Woody Allen, and Christopher Nolan. Charlie Kaufman's Synecdoche, New York focuses on the protagonist's desire to find existential meaning. Similarly, in Kurosawa's Red Beard, the protagonist's experiences as an intern in a rural health clinic in Japan lead him to an existential crisis whereby he questions his reason for being. This, in turn, leads him to a better understanding of humanity. The French film, Mood Indigo (directed by Michel Gondry) embraced various elements of existentialism. The film The Shawshank Redemption, released in 1994, depicts life in a prison in Maine, United States to explore several existentialist concepts.

Literature

 Existential perspectives are also found in modern literature to varying degrees, especially since the 1920s. Louis-Ferdinand Céline's Journey to the End of the Night (Voyage au bout de la nuit, 1932) celebrated by both Sartre and Beauvoir, contained many of the themes that would be found in later existential literature, and is in some ways, the proto-existential novel. Jean-Paul Sartre's 1938 novel Nausea was "steeped in Existential ideas", and is considered an accessible way of grasping his philosophical stance. Between 1900 and 1960, other authors such as Albert Camus, Franz Kafka, Rainer Maria Rilke, T. S. Eliot, Hermann Hesse, Luigi Pirandello, Ralph Ellison, and Jack Kerouac, composed literature or poetry that contained, to varying degrees, elements of existential or proto-existential thought. The philosophy's influence even reached pulp literature shortly after the turn of the 20th century, as seen in the existential disparity witnessed in Man's lack of control of his fate in the works of H. P. Lovecraft. Since the late 1960s, a great deal of cultural activity in literature contains postmodernist as well as existential elements. Books such as Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? (1968) (now republished as Blade Runner) by Philip K. Dick, Slaughterhouse-Five by Kurt Vonnegut and Fight Club by Chuck Palahniuk all distort the line between reality and appearance while simultaneously espousing existential themes. Books such as William Barton's When We Were Real and Dark Sky Legion tell stories about characters who experience existential crises and how they resolve those crises.

Theatre
Sartre wrote *No Exit* in 1944, an existentialist play originally published in French as *Huis Clos* (meaning *In Camera* or "behind closed doors"), which is the source of the popular quote, "Hell is other people." (In French, "L'enfer, c'est les autres"). The play begins with a Valet leading a man into a room that the audience soon realizes is in hell. Eventually he is joined by two women. After their entry, the Valet leaves and the door is shut and locked. All three expect to be tortured, but no torturer arrives. Instead, they realize they are there to torture each other, which they do effectively by probing each other's sins, desires, and unpleasant memories.

Existentialist themes are displayed in the Theatre of the Absurd, notably in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, in which two men divert themselves while they wait expectantly for someone (or something) named Godot who never arrives. They claim Godot is an acquaintance, but in fact, hardly know him, admitting they would not recognize him if they saw him. Samuel Beckett, once asked who or what Godot is, replied, "If I knew, I would have said so in the play." To occupy themselves, the men eat, sleep, talk, argue, sing, play games, exercise, swap hats, and contemplate suicide—anything "to hold the terrible silence at bay".

The play "exploits several archetypal forms and situations, all of which lend themselves to both comedy and pathos."[103] The play also illustrates an attitude toward human experience on earth: the poignancy, oppression, camaraderie, hope, corruption, and bewilderment of human experience that can be reconciled only in the mind and art of the absurdist. The play examines questions such as death, the meaning of human existence and the place of God in human existence.

Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead* is an absurdist tragicomedy first staged at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 1966.[104] The play expands upon the exploits of two minor characters from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Comparisons have also been drawn to Samuel Beckett's *Waiting For Godot*, for the presence of two central characters who appear almost as two halves of a single character. Many plot features are similar as well: the characters pass time by playing Questions, impersonating other characters, and interrupting each other or remaining silent for long periods of time. The two characters are portrayed as two clowns or fools in a world beyond their understanding. They stumble through philosophical arguments while not realizing the implications, and muse on the irrationality and randomness of the world.

Jean Anouilh's *Antigone* also presents arguments founded on existentialist ideas.[105] It is a tragedy inspired by Greek mythology and the play of the same name (*Antigone*, by Sophocles) from the 5th century BC. In English, it is often distinguished from its antecedent by being pronounced in its original French form, approximately "Ante-GÓN." The play was first performed in Paris on 6 February 1944, during the Nazi occupation of France. Produced under Nazi censorship, the play is purposefully ambiguous with regards to the rejection of authority (represented by Antigone) and the acceptance of it (represented by Creon). The parallels to the French Resistance and the Nazi occupation have been drawn. Antigone rejects life as desperately meaningless but without affirmatively choosing a noble death. The crux of the play is the lengthy dialogue concerning the nature of power, fate, and choice, during which Antigone says that she is, "... disgusted with [the]...promise of a humdrum happiness." She states that she would rather die than live a mediocre existence.

Critic Martin Esslin in his book *Theatre of the Absurd* pointed out how many contemporary playwrights such as Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco, Jean Genet, and Arthur Adamov wove into their plays the existentialist belief that we are absurd beings loose in a universe empty of real meaning. Esslin noted that many of these playwrights demonstrated the philosophy better than did the plays by Sartre and Camus. Though most of such playwrights, subsequently labeled "Absurdist" (based on Esslin’s book), denied affiliations with existentialism and were often staunchly anti-philosophical (for example Ionesco often claimed he identified more with 'Pataphysics or with Surrealism than with existentialism), the playwrights are often linked to existentialism based on Esslin's observation.[106]

**Psychoanalysis and psychotherapy**
A major offshoot of existentialism as a philosophy is existentialist psychology and psychoanalysis, which first crystallized in the work of Otto Rank, Freud's closest associate for 20 years. Without awareness of the writings of Rank, Ludwig Binswanger was influenced by Freud, Edmund Husserl, Heidegger, and Sartre. A later figure was Viktor Frankl, who briefly met Freud as a young man. His logotherapy can be regarded as a form of existentialist therapy. The existentialists would also influence social psychology, antipositivist micro-sociology, symbolic interactionism, and post-structuralism, with the work of thinkers such as Georg Simmel and Michel Foucault. Foucault was a great reader of Kierkegaard even though he almost never refers this author, who nonetheless had for him an importance as secret as it was decisive.

An early contributor to existentialist psychology in the United States was Rollo May, who was strongly influenced by Kierkegaard and Otto Rank. One of the most prolific writers on techniques and theory of existentialist psychology in the USA is Irvin D. Yalom. Yalom states that

\[\text{Aside from their reaction against Freud's mechanistic, deterministic model of the mind and their assumption of a phenomenological approach in therapy, the existentialist analysts have little in common and have never been regarded as a cohesive ideological school. These thinkers—who include Ludwig Binswanger, Medard Boss, Eugène Minkowski, V. E. Gebsattel, Roland Kuhn, G. Caruso, F. T. Buytendijk, G. Bally and Victor Frankl—were almost entirely unknown to the American psychotherapeutic community until Rollo May's highly influential 1958 book } \text{Existence} \text{—and especially his introductory essay—introduced their work into this country.} \]

A more recent contributor to the development of a European version of existentialist psychotherapy is the British-based Emmy van Deurzen.

Anxiety's importance in existentialism makes it a popular topic in psychotherapy. Therapists often offer existentialist philosophy as an explanation for anxiety. The assertion is that anxiety is manifested of an individual's complete freedom to decide, and complete responsibility for the outcome of such decisions. Psychotherapists using an existentialist approach believe that a patient can harness his anxiety and use it constructively. Instead of suppressing anxiety, patients are advised to use it as grounds for change. By embracing anxiety as inevitable, a person can use it to achieve his full potential in life. Humanistic psychology also had major impetus from existentialist psychology and shares many of the fundamental tenets. Terror management theory, based on the writings of Ernest Becker and Otto Rank, is a developing area of study within the academic study of psychology. It looks at what researchers claim are implicit emotional reactions of people confronted with the knowledge that they will eventually die.

Also, Gerd B. Achenbach has refreshed the Socratic tradition with his own blend of philosophical counseling. So did Michel Weber with his Chromatiques Center in Belgium.

**Criticisms**

**General criticisms**

Walter Kaufmann criticized 'the profoundly unsound methods and the dangerous contempt for reason that have been so prominent in existentialism.' Logical positivist philosophers, such as Rudolf Carnap and A. J. Ayer, assert that existentialists are often confused about the verb "to be" in their analyses of "being". Specifically, they argue that the verb "is" is transitive and pre-fixed to a predicate (e.g., an apple *is red*) (without a predicate, the word "is" is meaningless), and that existentialists frequently misuse the term in this manner. Wilson has stated in his book *The Angry Years* that existentialism has created many of its own difficulties: "we can see how this question of freedom of the will has been vitiated by post-romantic
philosophy, with its inbuilt tendency to laziness and boredom, we can also see how it came about that existentialism found itself in a hole of its own digging, and how the philosophical developments since then have amounted to walking in circles round that hole”.[113]

**Sartre's philosophy**

Many critics argue Sartre's philosophy is contradictory. Specifically, they argue that Sartre makes metaphysical arguments despite his claiming that his philosophical views ignore metaphysics. Herbert Marcuse criticized *Being and Nothingness* for projecting anxiety and meaninglessness onto the nature of existence itself: "Insofar as Existentialism is a philosophical doctrine, it remains an idealistic doctrine: it hypostatizes specific historical conditions of human existence into ontological and metaphysical characteristics. Existentialism thus becomes part of the very ideology which it attacks, and its radicalism is illusory".[114]

In *Letter on Humanism*, Heidegger criticized Sartre's existentialism:

Existentialism says existence precedes essence. In this statement he is taking *existentia* and *essentia* according to their metaphysical meaning, which, from Plato's time on, has said that *essentia* precedes *existentia*. Sartre reverses this statement. But the reversal of a metaphysical statement remains a metaphysical statement. With it, he stays with metaphysics, in oblivion of the truth of Being.[115]

### See also

- Abandonment (existentialism)
- Disenchantment
- Existential phenomenology
- Existential risk
- Existential therapy
- Existentiell
- List of existentialists
- Meaning (existential)
- Meaning-making
- Nihilism
- Self
- Self-reflection

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53. Either/Or Part II p. 188 Hong

54. Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers Vol 5, p. 5


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78. Entry on Kojève in Martin Cohen (editor), *The Essentials of Philosophy and Ethics* (Hodder Arnold, 2006, p. 158)
91. For an examination of the existentialist elements within the film, see *Philosophy Now*, issue 102, accessible here [http://philosophynow.org/issues/102/The_Shawshank_Redemption], accessed 3 June 2014.
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External links

- Existentialism (https://curlie.org/Society/Philosophy/Continental_Philosophy/Existentialism/) at Curlie
Existentialism (https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00547h8) on In Our Time at the BBC
Friesian interpretation of Existentialism (http://www.friesian.com/existent.htm)
"Existentialism is a Humanism", a lecture given by Jean-Paul Sartre (https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/sartre/works/exist/sartre.htm)
The Existential Primer (http://www.tameri.com/csw/exist/)
Buddhists, Existentialists and Situationists: Waking up in Waking Life (http://publish.uwo.ca/~dmann/waking_essay.htm)
What Is an Existential Threat? (http://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2016/02/10/what_is_a_n_existential_threat_109009.html) A threat to existence (see Global catastrophic risk) or to a particular state or group.

Journals and articles

- Existential Analysis (http://www.existentialanalysis.co.uk) published by The Society for Existential Analysis

Jean-Paul Sartre (born 21 June 1905 – 15 April 1980) was a French philosopher, playwright, novelist, screenwriter, political activist, biographer, and literary critic. He was one of the key figures in the philosophy of existentialism and phenomenology, and one of the leading figures in 20th-century French philosophy and Marxism. His work has also influenced sociology, critical theory, post-colonial theory, and literary studies, and continues to influence these disciplines.

Sartre was also noted for his open relationship with prominent feminist and fellow existentialist philosopher and writer Simone de Beauvoir. Together, Sartre and de Beauvoir challenged the cultural and social assumptions and expectations of their upbringings, which they considered bourgeois, in both lifestyles and thought. The conflict between oppressive, spiritually destructive conformity (mauvaise foi, literally, 'bad faith') and an "authentic" way of "being" became the dominant theme of Sartre's early work, a theme embodied in his principal philosophical work Being and Nothingness (L'Être et le Néant, 1943).[8] Sartre's introduction to his philosophy is his work Existentialism Is a Humanism (L'existentialisme est un humanisme, 1946), originally presented as a lecture.

He was awarded the 1964 Nobel Prize in Literature despite attempting to refuse it, saying that he always declined official honors and that "a writer should not allow himself to be turned into an institution."[9]
Biography

Early life

Jean-Paul Sartre was born on 21 June 1905 in Paris as the only child of Jean-Baptiste Sartre, an officer of the French Navy, and Anne-Marie (Schweitzer).[10] His mother was of Alsatian origin and the first cousin of Nobel Prize laureate Albert Schweitzer, whose father Louis Théophile was the younger brother of Anne-Marie's father.[11] When Sartre was two years old, his father died of an illness, which he most likely contracted in Indochina. Anne-Marie moved back to her parents' house in Meudon, where she raised Sartre with help from her father Charles Schweitzer, a teacher of German who taught Sartre mathematics and introduced him to classical literature at a very early age.[12] When he was twelve, Sartre's mother remarried, and the family moved to La Rochelle, where he was frequently bullied, in part due to the wandering of his blind right eye (sensory exotropia).[13]

As a teenager in the 1920s, Sartre became attracted to philosophy upon reading Henri Bergson's essay *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*. He attended the Cours Hattemer, a private school in Paris.[15] He studied and earned certificates in psychology, history of philosophy, logic, general philosophy, ethics and sociology, and physics, as well as his diplôme d'études supérieures (roughly equivalent to an MA thesis) in Paris at the École Normale Supérieure, an institution of higher education that was the alma mater for several prominent French thinkers and intellectuals.[16] (His 1928 M.A. thesis under the title "L’Image dans la vie psychologique: rôle et nature" ["Image in Psychological Life: Role and Nature"] was supervised by Henri Delacroix.)[16] It was at ENS that Sartre began his lifelong, sometimes fractious, friendship with Raymond Aron.[17] Perhaps the most decisive influence on Sartre's philosophical development was his weekly attendance at Alexandre Kojève's seminars, which continued for a number of years.[18]

From his first years in the École Normale, Sartre was one of its fiercest pranksters.[19][20] In 1927, his antimilitarist satirical cartoon in the revue of the school, coauthored with Georges Canguilhem, particularly upset the director Gustave Lanson.[21] In the same year, with his comrades Nizan, Larroutis, Baillou and Herland,[22] he organized a media prank following Charles Lindbergh's successful New York City–Paris flight; Sartre & Co. called newspapers and informed them that Lindbergh was going to be awarded an honorary École degree. Many newspapers, including *Le Petit Parisien*, announced the event on 25 May. Thousands, including journalists and curious spectators, showed up, unaware that what they were witnessing...
was a stunt involving a Lindbergh look-alike. The public's resultant outcry forced Lanson to resign.

In 1929 at the École Normale, he met Simone de Beauvoir, who studied at the Sorbonne and later went on to become a noted philosopher, writer, and feminist. The two became inseparable and lifelong companions, initiating a romantic relationship though they were not monogamous. The first time Sartre took the agrégation, he failed. He took it a second time and virtually tied for first place with Beauvoir, although Sartre was eventually awarded first place, with Beauvoir second.

From 1931 until 1945, Sartre taught at various lycées of Le Havre (at the Lycée de Le Havre, the present-day Lycée François-Ier (Le Havre), 1931–1936), Laon (at the Lycée de Laon, 1936–37), and, finally, Paris (at the Lycée Pasteur, 1937–1939, and at the Lycée Condorcet, 1941–1944; see below).

In 1932, Sartre read Voyage au bout de la nuit by Louis-Ferdinand Céline, a book that had a remarkable influence on him.

In 1933–34, he succeeded Raymond Aron at the Institut français d’Allemagne in Berlin where he studied Edmund Husserl's phenomenological philosophy. Aron had already advised him in 1930 to read Emmanuel Levinas's Théorie de l'intuition dans la phénoménologie de Husserl (The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology).

The neo-Hegelian revival led by Alexandre Kojève and Jean Hyppolite in the 1930s inspired a whole generation of French thinkers, including Sartre, to discover Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit.

**World War II**

In 1939 Sartre was drafted into the French army, where he served as a meteorologist. He was captured by German troops in 1940 in Padoux and he spent nine months as a prisoner of war—in Nancy and finally in Stalag XII-D, Trier, where he wrote his first theatrical piece, Barionà, fils du tonnerre, a drama concerning Christmas. It was during this period of confinement that Sartre read Martin Heidegger's Sein und Zeit, later to become a major influence on his own essay on phenomenological ontology. Because of poor health (he claimed that his poor eyesight and exotropia affected his balance) Sartre was released in April 1941. According to other sources, he escaped after a medical visit to the ophthalmologist. Given civilian status, he recovered his teaching position at Lycée Pasteur near Paris and settled at the Hotel Mistral. In October 1941 he was given a position, previously held by a Jewish teacher who had been forbidden to teach by Vichy law, at Lycée Condorcet in Paris.

After coming back to Paris in May 1941, he participated in the founding of the underground group Socialisme et Liberté ("Socialism and Liberty") with other writers Simone de Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean-Toussaint Desanti, Dominique Desanti, Jean Kanapa, and École Normale students. In spring of 1941, Sartre suggested with "cheerful ferocity" at a meeting that the Socialisme et Liberté assassinate prominent war collaborators like Marcel Déat, but de Beauvoir noted his idea was rejected as "none of us felt qualified to make bombs or hurl grenades". The British historian Ian Ousby observed that the French always had far more hatred for collaborators than they did for the Germans, noting it was French people like Déat that Sartre wanted to assassinate rather than the military governor of France, General Otto von Stülpnagel, and the popular slogan always was "Death to Laval!" rather than "Death to Hitler!" In August Sartre and de Beauvoir went to the French Riviera seeking the support of André Gide and André Malraux. However, both
Sartre and Malraux were undecided, and this may have been the cause of Sartre's disappointment and discouragement. *Socialisme et liberté* soon dissolved and Sartre decided to write instead of being involved in active resistance. He then wrote *Being and Nothingness*, *The Flies*, and *No Exit*, none of which were censored by the Germans, and also contributed to both legal and illegal literary magazines.

In his essay "Paris under the Occupation", Sartre wrote that the "correct" behaviour of the Germans had entrapped too many Parisians into complicity with the occupation, accepting what was unnatural as natural:

> The Germans did not stride, revolver in hand, through the streets. They did not force civilians to make way for them on the pavement. They would offer seats to old ladies on the Metro. They showed great fondness for children and would pat them on the cheek. They had been told to behave correctly and being well-disciplined, they tried shyly and conscientiously to do so. Some of them even displayed a naive kindness which could find no practical expression.\(^{[40]}\)

Sartre noted when Wehrmacht soldiers asked Parisians politely in their German-accented French for directions, people usually felt embarrassed and ashamed as they tried their best to help out the Wehrmacht which led Sartre to remark "We could not be natural".\(^{[41]}\) French was a language widely taught in German schools and most Germans could speak at least some French. Sartre himself always found it difficult when a Wehrmacht soldier asked him for directions, usually saying he did not know where it was that the soldier wanted to go, but still felt uncomfortable as the very act of speaking to the Wehrmacht meant he had been complicit in the Occupation.\(^{[42]}\) Ousby wrote: "But, in however humble a fashion, everyone still had to decide how they were going to cope with life in a fragmenting society ... So Sartre's worries ... about how to react when a German soldier stopped him in the street and asked politely for directions were not as fussily inconsequential as they might sound at first. They were emblematic of how the dilemmas of the Occupation presented themselves in daily life".\(^{[42]}\) Sartre wrote the very "correctness" of the Germans caused moral corruption in many people who used the "correct" behavior of the Germans as an excuse for passivity, and the very act of simply trying to live one's day-to-day existence without challenging the occupation aided the "New Order in Europe", which depended upon the passivity of ordinary people to accomplish its goals.\(^{[40]}\)

Throughout the occupation, it was German policy to plunder France, and food shortages were always a major problem as the majority of food from the French countryside went to Germany.\(^{[43]}\) Sartre wrote about the "languid existence" of the Parisians as people waited obsessively for the one weekly arrival of trucks bringing food from the countryside that the Germans allowed, writing: "Paris would grow peaked and yawn with hunger under the empty sky. Cut off from the rest of the world, fed only through the pity or some ulterior motive, the town led a purely abstract and symbolic life".\(^{[43]}\) Sartre himself lived on a diet of rabbits sent to him by a friend of de Beauvoir living in Anjou.\(^{[44]}\) The rabbits were usually in an advanced state of decay full of maggots, and despite being hungry, Sartre once threw out one rabbit as uneatable, saying it had more maggots in it than meat.\(^{[44]}\) Sartre also remarked that conversations at the Café de Flore between intellectuals had changed, as the fear that one of them might be a mouche (informer) or a writer of the corbeau (anonymous denunciatory letters) meant that no one really said what they meant anymore, imposing self-censorship.\(^{[45]}\) Sartre and his friends at the Café de Flore had reasons for their fear; by September 1940, the *Abwehr* alone had already recruited 32,000 French people to work as mouches while by 1942 the Paris *Kommandantur* was receiving an average of 1,500 letters/per day sent by the *corbeaux*.\(^{[46]}\)
Sartre wrote under the occupation Paris had become a "sham", resembling the empty wine bottles displayed in shop windows as all of the wine had been exported to Germany, looking like the old Paris, but hollowed out, as what had made Paris special was gone.\[47] Paris had almost no cars on the streets during the occupation as the oil went to Germany while the Germans imposed a nightly curfew, which led Sartre to remark that Paris "was peopled by the absent".\[48] Sartre also noted that people began to disappear under the occupation, writing:

One day you might phone a friend and the phone would ring for a long time in an empty flat. You would go round and ring the doorbell, but no-one would answer it. If the concierge forced the door, you would find two chairs standing close together in the hall with the fag-ends of German cigarettes on the floor between their legs. If the wife or mother of the man who had vanished had been present at his arrest, she would tell you that he had been taken away by very polite Germans, like those who asked the way in the street. And when she went to ask what had happened to them at the offices in the Avenue Foch or the Rue des Saussaies she would be politely received and sent away with comforting words" [No. 11 Rue des Saussaies was the headquarters of the Gestapo in Paris].\[49]

Sartre wrote the feldgrau ("field grey") uniforms of the Wehrmacht and the green uniforms of the Order Police which had seemed so alien in 1940 had become accepted, as people were numbed into accepting what Sartre called "a pale, dull green, unobtrusive strain, which the eye almost expected to find among the dark clothes of the civilians".\[50] Under the occupation, the French often called the Germans les autres ("the others"), which inspired Sartre's aphorism in his play Huis clos ("No Exit") of "l'enfer, c'est les Autres" ("Hell is other people").\[51] Sartre intended the line "l'enfer, c'est les Autres" at least in part to be a dig at the German occupiers.\[51]

Sartre was a very active contributor to Combat, a newspaper created during the clandestine period by Albert Camus, a philosopher and author who held similar beliefs. Sartre and de Beauvoir remained friends with Camus until 1951, with the publication of Camus's The Rebel. Sartre wrote extensively post-war about neglected minority groups, namely French Jews and black people. In 1946, he published Anti-Semite and Jew, after having published the first part of the essay, "Portrait de l’antisémite," the year before in Les Temps modernes, No. 3. In the essay, in the course of explaining the etiology of "hate," he attacks antisemitism in France\[52] during a time when the Jews who came back from concentration camps were quickly abandoned.\[53] In 1947, Sartre published several articles concerning the condition of African Americans in the United States—specifically the racism and discrimination against them in the country—in his second Situations collection. Then, in 1948, for the introduction of Léopold Sédar Senghor's l’Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache (Anthology of New Negro and Malagasy Poetry), he wrote “Black Orpheus” (re-published in Situations III), a critique of colonialism and racism in light of the philosophy Sartre developed in Being and Nothingness. Later, while Sartre was labeled by some authors as a resistant, the French philosopher and resistant Vladimir Jankelevitch criticized Sartre's lack of political commitment during the German occupation, and interpreted his further struggles for liberty as an attempt to redeem himself. According to Camus, Sartre was a writer who resisted; not a resister who wrote.

In 1945, after the war ended, Sartre moved to an apartment on the rue Bonaparte, where he was to produce most of his subsequent work and where he lived until 1962. It was from there that he helped establish a quarterly literary and political review, Les Temps modernes (Modern Times), in part to popularize his thought.\[54] He ceased teaching and devoted his time to writing and political activism. He would draw on his war experiences for his great trilogy of novels, Les Chemins de la Liberté (The Roads to Freedom) (1945–1949).

Cold War politics and anticolonialism
The first period of Sartre's career, defined in large part by *Being and Nothingness* (1943), gave way to a second period—when the world was perceived as split into communist and capitalist blocs—of highly publicized political involvement. Sartre tended to glorify the Resistance after the war as the uncompromising expression of morality in action, and recalled that the *résistants* were a "band of brothers" who had enjoyed "real freedom" in a way that did not exist before nor after the war. Sartre was "merciless" in attacking anyone who had collaborated or remained passive during the German occupation; for instance, criticizing Camus for signing an appeal to spare the collaborationist writer Robert Brasillach from being executed. His 1948 play *Les mains sales* (Dirty Hands) in particular explored the problem of being a politically "engaged" intellectual. He embraced Marxism but did not join the Communist Party. For a time in the late 1940s, Sartre described French nationalism as "provincial" and in a 1949 essay called for a "United States of Europe". In an essay published in the June 1949 edition of the journal *Politique étrangère*, Sartre wrote:

If we want French civilization to survive, it must be fitted into the framework of a great European civilization. Why? I have said that civilization is the reflection on a shared situation. In Italy, in France, in Benelux, in Sweden, in Norway, in Germany, in Greece, in Austria, everywhere we find the same problems and the same dangers ... But this cultural polity has prospects only as elements of a policy which defends Europe's cultural autonomy vis-à-vis America and the Soviet Union, but also its political and economic autonomy, with the aim of making Europe a single force between the blocs, not a third bloc, but an autonomous force which will refuse to allow itself to be torn into shreds between American optimism and Russian scientificism.

About the Korean War, Sartre wrote: "I have no doubt that the South Korean feudalists and the American imperialists have promoted this war. But I do not doubt either that it was begun by the North Koreans". In July 1950, Sartre wrote in *Les Temps Modernes* about his and de Beauvoir's attitude to the Soviet Union:

As we were neither members of the [Communist] party nor its avowed sympathizers, it was not our duty to write about Soviet labor camps; we were free to remain aloof from the quarrel over the nature of this system, provided that no events of sociological significance had occurred.

Sartre held that the Soviet Union was a "revolutionary" state working for the betterment of humanity and could be criticized only for failing to live up to its own ideals, but that critics had to take in mind that the Soviet state needed to defend itself against a hostile world; by contrast Sartre held that the failures of "bourgeois" states were due to their innate shortcomings. The Swiss journalist François Bondy wrote that, based on a reading of Sartre's numerous essays, speeches and interviews "a simple basic pattern never fails to emerge: social change must be comprehensive and revolutionary" and the parties that promote the revolutionary charges "may be criticized, but only by those who completely identify themselves with its purpose, its struggle and its road to power", deeming Sartre's position to be "existentialist".

Sartre believed at this time in the moral superiority of the Eastern Bloc in spite of its human rights violations, arguing that this belief was necessary "to keep hope alive" and opposed any criticism of Soviet Union to the extent that Maurice Merleau-Ponty called him an "ultra-Bolshevik". Sartre's expression "workers of Billancourt must not be deprived of their hopes" (Fr. "il ne faut pas désespérer Billancourt"), became a catchphrase meaning communist activists should not tell the whole truth to the workers in order to avoid decline in their revolutionary enthusiasm.
In 1954, just after Stalin’s death, Sartre visited the Soviet Union, which he stated he found a “complete freedom of criticism” while condemning the United States for sinking into “prefascism”. Sartre wrote about those Soviet writers expelled from the Soviet Writers' Union “still had the opportunity of rehabilitating themselves by writing better books”. Sartre’s comments on Hungarian revolution of 1956 are quite representative to his frequently contradictory and changing views. On one hand, Sartre saw in Hungary a true reunification between intellectuals and workers only to criticize it for “losing socialist base”. He condemned the Soviet invasion of Hungary in November 1956.

In 1964 Sartre attacked Khrushchev’s "Secret Speech" which condemned the Stalinist repressions and purges. Sartre argued that "the masses were not ready to receive the truth".

In 1973 he argued that "revolutionary authority always needs to get rid of some people that threaten it, and their death is the only way". A number of people, starting from Frank Gibney in 1961, classified Sartre as a "useful idiot" due to his uncritical position.

Sartre came to admire the Polish leader Władysław Gomułka, a man who favored a "Polish road to socialism" and wanted more independence for Poland, but was loyal to the Soviet Union because of the Oder-Neisse line issue. Sartre’s newspaper Les Temps Modernes devoted a number of special issues in 1957 and 1958 to Poland under Gomułka, praising him for his reforms. Bondy wrote of the notable contradiction between Sarte’s "ultra Bolshevism" as he expressed admiration for the Chinese leader Mao Zedong as the man who led the oppressed masses of the Third World into revolution while also praising more moderate Communist leaders like Gomułka.

As an anti-colonialist, Sartre took a prominent role in the struggle against French rule in Algeria, and the use of torture and concentration camps by the French in Algeria. He became an eminent supporter of the FLN in the Algerian War and was one of the signatories of the Manifeste des 121. Consequently, Sartre became a domestic target of the paramilitary Organisation armée secrète (OAS), escaping two bomb attacks in the early '60s. He later argued in 1959 that each French person was responsible for the collective crimes during the Algerian War of Independence. (He had an Algerian mistress, Arlette Elkaïm, who became his adopted daughter in 1965.) He opposed U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War and, along with Bertrand Russell and others, organized a tribunal intended to expose U.S. war crimes, which became known as the Russell Tribunal in 1967.

His work after Stalin’s death, the Critique de la raison dialectique (Critique of Dialectical Reason), appeared in 1960 (a second volume appearing posthumously). In the Critique Sartre set out to give Marxism a more vigorous intellectual defense than it had received until then; he ended by concluding that Marx’s notion of "class" as an objective entity was fallacious. Sartre’s emphasis on the humanist values in the early works of Marx led to a dispute with a leading leftist intellectual in France in the 1960s, Louis Althusser, who claimed that the ideas of the young Marx were decisively superseded by the "scientific" system of the later Marx. In the late 1950s, Sartre began to argue that the European working classes were too apolitical to carry out the revolution predicated by Marx, and influenced by Frantz Fanon stated to argue it was the impoverished masses of the Third World, the "real damned of the earth", who would carry out the revolution. A major theme of Sarte’s political essays in the 1960s was of his disgust with the "Americanization" of the French working class who would much rather watch American TV shows dubbed into French than agitate for a revolution.
Sartre went to Cuba in the 1960s to meet Fidel Castro and spoke with Ernesto "Che" Guevara. After Guevara's death, Sartre would declare him to be "not only an intellectual but also the most complete human being of our age"[76] and the "era's most perfect man",[77] Sartre would also compliment Guevara by professing that "he lived his words, spoke his own actions and his story and the story of the world ran parallel".[78] However he stood against the persecution of gays by Castro's government, which he compared to Nazi persecution of the Jews, and said: "In Cuba there are no Jews, but there are homosexuals". [79]

During a collective hunger strike in 1974, Sartre visited Red Army Faction member Andreas Baader in Stammheim Prison and criticized the harsh conditions of imprisonment.[80]

Towards the end of his life, Sartre began to describe himself as a "special kind" of anarchist.[81]

### Late life and death

In 1964 Sartre renounced literature in a witty and sardonic account of the first ten years of his life, *Les Mots* (*The Words*). The book is an ironic counterblast to Marcel Proust, whose reputation had unexpectedly eclipsed that of André Gide (who had provided the model of *littérature engagée* for Sartre's generation). Literature, Sartre concluded, functioned ultimately as a bourgeois substitute for real commitment in the world. In October 1964, Sartre was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature but he declined it. He was the first Nobel laureate to voluntarily decline the prize,[82] and remains one of only two laureates to do so.[83] According to Lars Gyllensten, in the book *Minnen, bara minnen* ("Memories, Only Memories") published in 2000, Sartre himself or someone close to him got in touch with the Swedish Academy in 1975 with a request for the prize money, but was refused.[84] In 1945, he had refused the *Légion d'honneur*.[85] The Nobel prize was announced on 22 October 1964; on 14 October, Sartre had written a letter to the Nobel Institute, asking to be removed from the list of nominees, and warning that he would not accept the prize if awarded, but the letter went unread;[86] on 23 October, *Le Figaro* published a statement by Sartre explaining his refusal. He said he did not wish to be "transformed" by such an award, and did not want to take sides in an East vs. West cultural struggle by accepting an award from a prominent Western cultural institution.[86] Nevertheless, he was that year's prizewinner.[87] After being awarded the prize he tried to escape the media by hiding in the house of Simone's sister Hélène de Beauvoir in Goxwiller, Alsace.

Though his name was then a household word (as was "existentialism" during the tumultuous 1960s), Sartre remained a simple man with few possessions, actively committed to causes until the end of his life, such as the May 1968 strikes in Paris during the summer of 1968 during which he was arrested for civil disobedience. President Charles de Gaulle intervened and pardoned him, commenting that "you don’t arrest Voltaire".[88]

In 1975, when asked how he would like to be remembered, Sartre replied:

> I would like [people] to remember *Nausea*, [my plays] *No Exit* and *The Devil and the Good Lord*, and then my two philosophical works, more particularly the second one, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. Then my essay on...
Sartre’s physical condition deteriorated, partially because of the merciless pace of work (and the use of amphetamine) he put himself through during the writing of the Critique and a massive analytical biography of Gustave Flaubert (The Family Idiot), both of which remained unfinished. He suffered from hypertension and became almost completely blind in 1973. Sartre was a notorious chain smoker, which could also have contributed to the deterioration of his health.

Sartre died on 15 April 1980 in Paris from edema of the lung. He had not wanted to be buried at Père-Lachaise Cemetery between his mother and stepfather, so it was arranged that he be buried at Montparnasse Cemetery. At his funeral on Saturday, 19 April, 50,000 Parisians descended onto boulevard du Montparnasse to accompany Sartre’s cortège. The funeral started at “the hospital at 2:00 p.m., then filed through the fourteenth arrondissement, past all Sartre’s haunts, and entered the cemetery through the gate on the Boulevard Edgar Quinet”. Sartre was initially buried in a temporary grave to the left of the cemetery gate. Four days later the body was disinterred for cremation at Père-Lachaise Cemetery, and his ashes were reburied at the permanent site in Montparnasse Cemetery, to the right of the cemetery gate.

Thought

Sartre’s primary idea is that people, as humans, are “condemned to be free”. This may seem paradoxical because condemnation is normally an external judgment which constitutes the conclusion of a judgment. Here, it is not the human who has chosen to be like this. There is a contingency of human existence. It is a condemnation of their being. Their being is not determined, so it is up to everyone to create their own existence, for which they are then responsible. They cannot not be free, there is a form of necessity for freedom, which can never be given up. This theory relies upon his position that there is no creator, and is illustrated using the example of the paper cutter. Sartre says that if one considered a paper cutter, one would assume that the creator would have had a plan for it: an essence. Sartre said that human beings have no essence before their existence because there is no Creator. Thus: "existence precedes essence". This forms the basis for his assertion that because one cannot explain one’s own actions and behavior by referring to any specific human nature, they are necessarily fully responsible for those actions. "We are left alone, without excuse." "We can act without being determined by our past which is always separated from us." Sartre maintained that the concepts of authenticity and individuality have to be earned but not learned. We need to experience “death consciousness” so as to wake up ourselves as to what is really important; the authentic in our lives which is life experience, not knowledge. Death draws the final point when we as
beings cease to live for ourselves and permanently become objects that exist only for the outside world.[101] In this way death emphasizes the burden of our free, individual existence. "We can oppose authenticity to an inauthentic way of being. Authenticity consists in experiencing the indeterminate character of existence in anguish. It is also to know how to face it by giving meaning to our actions and by recognizing ourselves as the author of this meaning. On the other hand, an inauthentic way of being consists in running away, in lying to oneself in order to escape this anguish and the responsibility for one's own existence."[102]

As a junior lecturer at the Lycée du Havre in 1938, Sartre wrote the novel La Nausée (Nausea), which serves in some ways as a manifesto of existentialism and remains one of his most famous books. Taking a page from the German phenomenological movement, he believed that our ideas are the product of experiences of real-life situations, and that novels and plays can well describe such fundamental experiences, having equal value to discursive essays for the elaboration of philosophical theories such as existentialism. With such purpose, this novel concerns a dejected researcher (Roquentin) in a town similar to Le Havre who becomes starkly conscious of the fact that inanimate objects and situations remain absolutely indifferent to his existence. As such, they show themselves to be resistant to whatever significance human consciousness might perceive in them.

He also took inspiration from phenomenologist epistemology, explained by Franz Adler in this way: "Man chooses and makes himself by acting. Any action implies the judgment that he is right under the circumstances not only for the actor, but also for everybody else in similar circumstances."[103]

This indifference of "things in themselves" (closely linked with the later notion of "being-in-itself" in his Being and Nothingness) has the effect of highlighting all the more the freedom Roquentin has to perceive and act in the world; everywhere he looks, he finds situations imbued with meanings which bear the stamp of his existence. Hence the "nausea" referred to in the title of the book; all that he encounters in his everyday life is suffused with a pervasive, even horrible, taste—specifically, his freedom. The book takes the term from Friedrich Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra, where it is used in the context of the often nauseating quality of existence. No matter how much Roquentin longs for something else or something different, he cannot get away from this harrowing evidence of his engagement with the world.

The novel also acts as a terrifying realization of some of Immanuel Kant's fundamental ideas about freedom; Sartre uses the idea of the autonomy of the will (that morality is derived from our ability to choose in reality; the ability to choose being derived from human freedom; embodied in the famous saying "Condemned to be free") as a way to show the world's indifference to the individual. The freedom that Kant exposed is here a strong burden, for the freedom to act towards objects is ultimately useless, and the practical application of Kant's ideas proves to be bitterly rejected.

Also important is Sartre's analysis of psychological concepts, including his suggestion that consciousness exists as something other than itself, and that the conscious awareness of things is not limited to their knowledge: for Sartre intentionality applies to the emotions as well as to cognitions, to desires as well as to perceptions.[104] "When an external object is perceived, consciousness is also conscious of itself, even if consciousness is not its own object: it is a non-positional consciousness of itself."[105]

**Career as public intellectual**

While the broad focus of Sartre's life revolved around the notion of human freedom, he began a sustained intellectual participation in more public matters towards the end of the Second World War, around 1944–1945.[106] Before World War II, he was content with the role of an apolitical liberal intellectual: "Now teaching at a lycée in Laon ... Sartre made his headquarters the Dome café at the crossing of Montparnasse and Raspail boulevards. He attended plays, read novels, and dined [with] women. He wrote. And he was published."[107] Sartre and his lifelong companion, de Beauvoir, existed, in her words, where "the world about us was a mere backdrop against which our private lives were played out"[108]
Sartre portrayed his own pre-war situation in the character Mathieu, chief protagonist in *The Age of Reason*, which was completed during Sartre's first year as a soldier in the Second World War. By forging Mathieu as an absolute rationalist, analyzing every situation, and functioning entirely on reason, he removed any strands of authentic content from his character and as a result, Mathieu could "recognize no allegiance except to [him]self", though he realized that without "responsibility for my own existence, it would seem utterly absurd to go on existing". Mathieu's commitment was only to himself, never to the outside world. Mathieu was restrained from action each time because he had no reasons for acting. Sartre then, for these reasons, was not compelled to participate in the Spanish Civil War, and it took the invasion of his own country to motivate him into action and to provide a crystallization of these ideas. It was the war that gave him a purpose beyond himself, and the atrocities of the war can be seen as the turning point in his public stance.

The war opened Sartre's eyes to a political reality he had not yet understood until forced into continual engagement with it: "the world itself destroyed Sartre's illusions about isolated self-determining individuals and made clear his own personal stake in the events of the time." Returning to Paris in 1941 he formed the "Socialisme et Liberté" resistance group. In 1943, after the group disbanded, Sartre joined a writers' Resistance group, in which he remained an active participant until the end of the war. He continued to write ferociously, and it was due to this "crucial experience of war and captivity that Sartre began to try to build up a positive moral system and to express it through literature".  

The symbolic initiation of this new phase in Sartre's work is packaged in the introduction he wrote for a new journal, *Les Temps modernes*, in October 1945. Here he aligned the journal, and thus himself, with the Left and called for writers to express their political commitment. Yet, this alignment was indefinite, directed more to the concept of the Left than a specific party of the Left.

Sartre's philosophy lent itself to his being a public intellectual. He envisaged culture as a very fluid concept; neither pre-determined, nor definitely finished; instead, in true existential fashion, "culture was always conceived as a process of continual invention and re-invention." This marks Sartre, the intellectual, as a pragmatist, willing to move and shift stance along with events. He did not dogmatically follow a cause other than the belief in human freedom, preferring to retain a pacifist's objectivity. It is this overarching theme of freedom that means his work "subverts the bases for distinctions among the disciplines". Therefore, he was able to hold knowledge across a vast array of subjects: "the international world order, the political and economic organisation of contemporary society, especially France, the institutional and legal frameworks that regulate the lives of ordinary citizens, the educational system, the media networks that control and disseminate information. Sartre systematically refused to keep quiet about what he saw as inequalities and injustices in the world."  

Sartre always sympathized with the Left, and supported the French Communist Party (PCF) until the 1956 Soviet invasion of Hungary. Following the Liberation the PCF were infuriated by Sartre's philosophy, which appeared to lure young French men and women away from the ideology of communism and into Sartre's own existentialism. From 1956 onwards Sartre rejected the claims of the PCF to represent the French working classes, objecting to its "authoritarian tendencies". In the late 1960s Sartre supported the Maoists, a movement that rejected the authority of established communist parties. However, despite aligning with the Maoists, Sartre said after the May events: "If one rereads all my books, one will realize that I have not changed profoundly, and that I have always remained an anarchist." He would later explicitly allow himself to be called an anarchist.
In the aftermath of a war that had for the first time properly engaged Sartre in political matters, he set forth a body of work which "reflected on virtually every important theme of his early thought and began to explore alternative solutions to the problems posed there".[121] The greatest difficulties that he and all public intellectuals of the time faced were the increasing technological aspects of the world that were outdating the printed word as a form of expression. In Sartre's opinion, the "traditional bourgeois literary forms remain innately superior", but there is "a recognition that the new technological 'mass media' forms must be embraced" if Sartre's ethical and political goals as an authentic, committed intellectual are to be achieved: the demystification of bourgeois political practices and the raising of the consciousness, both political and cultural, of the working class.[122]

The struggle for Sartre was against the monopolising moguls who were beginning to take over the media and destroy the role of the intellectual. His attempts to reach a public were mediated by these powers, and it was often these powers he had to campaign against. He was skilled enough, however, to circumvent some of these issues by his interactive approach to the various forms of media, advertising his radio interviews in a newspaper column for example, and vice versa.[123]

Sartre's role as a public intellectual occasionally put him in physical danger, such as in June 1961, when a plastic bomb exploded in the entrance of his apartment building. His public support of Algerian self-determination at the time had led Sartre to become a target of the campaign of terror that mounted as the colonists' position deteriorated. A similar occurrence took place the next year and he had begun to receive threatening letters from Oran, Algeria.[124]

**Literature**

Sartre wrote successfully in a number of literary modes and made major contributions to literary criticism and literary biography. His plays are richly symbolic and serve as a means of conveying his philosophy. The best-known, *Huis-clos* (*No Exit*), contains the famous line "L'enfer, c'est les autres", usually translated as "Hell is other people."[125] Aside from the impact of *Nausea*, Sartre's major work of fiction was *The Roads to Freedom* trilogy which charts the progression of how World War II affected Sartre's ideas. In this way, *Roads to Freedom* presents a less theoretical and more practical approach to existentialism.

John Huston got Sartre to script his film *Freud: The Secret Passion*.[126] However it was too long and Sartre withdrew his name from the film's credits.[127] Nevertheless, many key elements from Sartre's script survive in the finished film.[128]

Despite their similarities as polemists, novelists, adapters, and playwrights, Sartre's literary work has been counterposed, often pejoratively, to that of Camus in the popular imagination. In 1948 the Roman Catholic Church placed Sartre's oeuvre on the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* (List of Prohibited Books).

**Criticism**

Some philosophers argue that Sartre's thought is contradictory. Specifically, they believe that Sartre makes metaphysical arguments despite his claim that his philosophical views ignore metaphysics. Herbert Marcuse criticized *Being and Nothingness* for projecting anxiety and meaninglessness onto the nature of existence itself: "Insofar as Existentialism is a philosophical doctrine, it remains an idealistic doctrine: it hypostatizes specific historical conditions of human existence into ontological and metaphysical characteristics. Existentialism thus becomes part of the very ideology which it attacks, and its radicalism is illusory."[129] In *Letter on Humanism*, Heidegger criticized Sartre's existentialism:
Existentialism says existence precedes essence. In this statement he is taking existentia and essentia according to their metaphysical meaning, which, from Plato's time on, has said that essentia precedes existentia. Sartre reverses this statement. But the reversal of a metaphysical statement remains a metaphysical statement. With it, he stays with metaphysics, in oblivion of the truth of Being.[130]

The philosophers Richard Wollheim and Thomas Baldwin have argued that Sartre's attempt to show that Sigmund Freud's theory of the unconscious is mistaken was based on a misinterpretation of Freud.[131][132] Richard Webster considers Sartre one of many modern thinkers who have reconstructed Christian orthodoxies in secular form.[133]

Brian C. Anderson denounced Sartre as an apologist for tyranny and terror and a supporter of Stalinism, Maoism, and Castro's rule over Cuba.[134] The historian Paul Johnson asserted that Sartre's ideas had inspired the Khmer Rouge leadership: "The events in Cambodia in the 1970s, in which between one-fifth and one-third of the nation was starved to death or murdered, were entirely the work of a group of intellectuals, who were for the most part pupils and admirers of Jean-Paul Sartre – 'Sartre's Children' as I call them..."[135] Sartre's philosophy, and his actions in the world, were opposed by a group of French literati dubbed the Hussards.

Sartre, who stated in his preface to Frantz Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth that, "To shoot down a European is to kill two birds with one stone, to destroy an oppressor and the man he oppresses at the same time: there remains a dead man and a free man", has been criticized by Anderson and Michael Walzer for supporting the killing of European civilians by the FLN during the Algerian War. Walzer suggests that Sartre, a European, was a hypocrite for not volunteering to be killed.[134][136]

The critic, poet, essayist and philosopher Clive James excoriated Sartre in his book of mini biographies Cultural Amnesia (2007). James attacks Sartre's philosophy as being "all a pose".[137]

### Works

#### Plays, screenplays, novels, and short stories
- *Nausea / La nausée* (1938)
- *The Wall / Le mur* (1939)
- *Bariona / Bariona, ou le fils du tonnerre* (1940)
- *The Flies / Le mur* (1943)
- *No Exit / Huis clos* (1944)
- *Typhus*, wr. '44, pub. '07; adapted as *The Proud and the Beautiful*
- *The Age of Reason / L'âge de raison* (1945)
- *The Reprieve / Le sursis* (1945)
- *The Respectful Prostitute / La putain respectueuse* (1946)

#### Philosophic essays
- *The Transcendence of the Ego / La transcendance de l'égo* (1936)
- *Imagination: A Psychological Critique / L'imagination* (1936)
- *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions / Esquisse d'une théorie des émotions* (1939)
- *The Imaginary / L'imaginaire* (1940)
- *Being and Nothingness / L'être et le néant* (1943)
- *Existentialism Is a Humanism / L'existentialisme est un humanisme* (1946)
- *Existentialism and Human Emotions / Existentialisme et émotions humaines* (1957)

#### Critical essays
- *Anti-Semite and Jew / Réflexions sur la question juive* (wr. 1944, pub. 1946)
- *Baudelaire* (1946)
- *Situations I: Literary Critiques / Critiques littéraires* (1947)[138]
- *Situations II: What Is Literature? / Qu'est-ce que la littérature ?* (1947)
- "Black Orpheus" / "Orphée noir" (1948)
- *Situations III* (1949)
- *Saint Genet, Actor and Martyr / S.G., comédien et martyr* (1952)[139]
- *The Henri Martin Affair / L'affaire Henri Martin* (1953)
- The Victors (Men Without Shadows) / Morts sans sépulture (1946)
- The Chips Are Down / Les jeux sont faits (screenplay, dir. Jean Delannoy; 1947)
- In the Mesh / L’engrenage (1948)
- Dirty Hands / Les mains sales (1948)
- Troubled Sleep (London ed. (Hamilton) has title: Iron in the soul) / La mort dans l’âme (1949)
- Intimacy (1949)
- The Devil and the Good Lord / Le diable et le bon dieu (1951)
- Kean (1953)
- Nekrassov (1955)
- The Crucible (screenplay, 1957; dir. Raymond Rouleau)
- The Condemned of Altona / Les séquestrés d’Altona (1959)
- Hurricane over Cuba / written and printed in 1961 in Brazil, along with Rubem Braga and Fernando Sabino (1961)
- The Trojan Women / Les Troyennes (1965)
- The Freud Scenario / Le scénario Freud (1984)
- Search for a Method / Question de méthode (1957)
- Critique of Dialectical Reason / Critique de la raison dialectique (1960, 1985)
- Notebooks for an Ethics / Cahiers pour une morale (1983)
- Situations IV: Portraits (1964)
- Situations V: Colonialism and Neocolonialism (1964)
- Situations VII: Problems of Marxism, Part 2 (1967)
- The Family Idiot / L’idiot de la famille (1971–72)
- Situations VIII: Autour de 1968 (1972)
- Situations IX: Mélanges (1972)
- Situations X: Life/Situations: Essays Written and Spoken / Politique et Autobiographie (1976)

Autobiographical
- Sartre By Himself / Sartre par lui-même (1959)
- The Words / Les Mots (1964)[139]
- Witness to My Life & Quiet Moments in a War / Lettres au Castor et à quelques autres (1983)
- War Diaries: Notebooks from a Phony War / Les carnets de la drole de guerre (1984)
See also

- Sartre's Roads to Freedom Trilogy
- Situation (Sartre)
- Place Jean-Paul-Sartre-et-Simone-de-Beauvoir

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1. At the time, the ENS was part of the University of Paris according to the decree of 10 November 1903.
5. Ian H. Birchall, Sartre against Stalinism, Berghahn Books, 2004, p. 176: "Sartre praised highly [Lefebvre's] work on sociological methodology, saying of it: 'It remains regrettable that Lefebvre has not found imitators among other Marxist intellectuals'."
17. Memoirs: fifty years of political reflection, By Raymond Aron (1990)
20. Cohen-Solal 1987, pp. 61–62 “During his first years at the Ecole, Sartre was the fearsome instigator of all the revues, all the jokes, all the scandals.”
40. Ousby 2000, p. 54.
42. Ousby 2000, p. 151.
43. Ousby 2000, p. 70.
44. Ousby 2000, p. 127.
46. Ousby 2000, p. 146.


58. Bondy 1967, p. 34.


60. Bondy 1967, p. 28: "To keep hope alive one must, in spite of all mistakes, horrors, and crimes, recognize the obvious superiority of the socialist camp."

61. Bondy 1967, p. 38: "In Stalin's day this seemed a private refinement and what was of particular importance then was Sartre's strong resistance to any form of opposition to the communist bloc."

62. Bondy, p. 33


64. Bondy 1967, p. 28.


66. Bondy, 1967, p. 37: "In 1956 Sartre saw in Hungary the kind of revolution of which he had dreamed: a contact between intellectual circles and broadly based mass movements, an activism shared by intellectuals and workers, revolution as an explosion of spontaneity. Reading Sartre's reply to Camus after fourteen years, we are struck by the mixture of dishonesty and bubbling verve with which Sartre indulges in misquotation in order to ridicule his opponents with the quick wit of the experience playwright."


68. https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/sartre-renounces-communists

69. Sartre, Jean-Paul (19 November 1964). "Nouvel Observateur". "La faute la plus énorme a probablement été le rapport de Khrouchtchev, car la dénonciation publique et solennelle, l'exposition détaillée de tous les crimes d'un personnage sacré qui a représenté si longtemps le régime est une folie quand une telle franchise n'est pas rendue possible par une élévation préalable et considérable du niveau de vie de la population... Le résultat a été de découvrir la vérité à des masses qui n'étaient pas prêtes à la recevoir."


97. Existentialism and Humanism, p.29
00. Sartre (1943) Being and Nothingness, p. 246
06. Baert 2015.
08. de Beauvoir 1958: 339
09. Sartre 1942: 13
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**Further reading**


**External links**

- Jean-Paul Sartre (https://curlie.org/Society/Philosophy/Philosophers/S/Sartre%2C_Jean-Paul/) at Curlie
- Jean-Paul Sartre (https://www.nobelprize.org/laureate/637) on Nobelprize.org

**By Sartre**

- Works by or about Jean-Paul Sartre (https://archive.org/search.php?query=%28%28subject%3A%22Sartre%2C%20Jean-Paul%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Jean-Paul%20Sartre%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Jean-Paul%20Sartre%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Sartre%2C%20Jean-Paul%22%20OR%20title%3A%22Jean-Paul%20Sartre%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Sartre%2C%20Jean-Paul%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Jean-Paul%20Sartre%22%20OR%20description%3A%22%20description%3A%22%29) at Internet Archive
- Works by Jean-Paul Sartre (https://openlibrary.org/authors/OL117592A) at Open Library
- George H. Bauer Jean Paul Sartre Manuscript Collection. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

**On Sartre**
Groupe d’études sartriennes (http://www.ges-sartre.fr/), Paris
"Jean Paul Sartre: Existentialism" (http://www.iep.utm.edu/s/sartre-ex.htm), Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy
"Sartre’s Political Philosophy" (http://www.iep.utm.edu/s/sartre-p.htm), Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy
"Jean-Paul Sartre" (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/sartre/)—Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy
Reclaiming Sartre (http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/isj102/pitt.htm) A review of Ian Birchall, Sartre Against Stalinism
Biography and quotes of Sartre (http://atheisme.free.fr/Biographies/Sartre_e.htm)
"Sartre" (http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/inourtime/inourtime_20041007.shtml)—In Our Time on Radio 4 (RealAudio)
Buddhists, Existentialists and Situationists: Waking up in Waking Life (http://publish.uwo.ca/~dmann/waking_essay.htm)
Newspaper clippings about Jean-Paul Sartre (http://purl.org/pressemappe20/folder/pe/015376) in the 20th Century Press Archives of the ZBW
