

THE RELATION BETWEEN CONSCIOUSNESS AND EGO: THE
QUESTION OF ETHICS IN SARTRE'S EARLY PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

THE RELATION BETWEEN CONCIIOUSNESS AND THE EGO: THE QUESTION OF ETHICS IN SARTRE'S EARLY PHILOSOPHY

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This investigation tries to disclose the meaning of the self and the question of ethics in Sartre's early philosophy through the relation between consciousness and the ego. For the sake of this aim, this investigation is divided into three argumentative parts. The first part tries to reveal the relation of consciousness and the ego through the question of what it means to be self in Sartre's philosophy. Sarte conceptualizes consciousness as a non-substantial absolute, spontaneous, autonomous and nihilating power and reveals ego as a free, creative and original product of consciousness. On this ground, Sartre's identifies consciousness with freedom and nothingness which points out human beings' free self-determination. Therefore, the first result of the investigation is that we, as conscious being, create who we are freely. However, this free self-determination leads us to discuss the question of ethics, since there seems to be no ground for ethical action. That is also one of the reasons why Sartre is labeled as ethical subjectivist or nihilist. As a result, the second part discusses the possibility of ethics in general, of ethical action in particular in Sartre's early philosophy. The final part focuses on the existentialist ethics in which freedom and responsibility are the basis of all morality. The existentialist ethics opens us a way to reconsider ethics, and presents freedom as an

ultimate value in which we seek freedom for its own sake and promote freedom of others.

Keywords: Consciousness, Ego, Freedom, Nothingness, Existentialist Ethics

ÖZ

BİLİNÇ VE KENDİLİK İLİŞKİSİ: ERKEN DÖNEM SARTRE FELSEFESİNDE ETİK SORUSU

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Bu araştırma bilinç ve ego kavramlarının ilişkisi üzerinden Sartre'ın erken dönem felsefesinde etik sorusunu sormaktadır. Bu amaç dahilinde araştırma üç bölüme ayrılmıştır. İlk bölüm, bilinç ve ego ilişkisini incelemektedir. Bu ilişki içersinden bilinç tözsel olmayan, kendiliğinden ve özerk bir mutlak, aynı zamanda bir hiçleyici güç olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Ego ise bu bilincin özgür, yaratıcı ve orijinal bir ürünü olmaktadır. Bu zeminde, Sartre bilinci hiçlik ve özgürlükle özdeşleştirmekte ve bu özdeşim özgür öz-belirlenimimize işaret etmektedir. Dolayısıyla, araştırmanın ilk kısmı kim olduğumuz sorusuna özgür öz-belirlenim üzerinden cevap vermektedir. Bu sonuç, Sartre felsefesinde etiğin olanağının sorgulanmasına sebep olmaktadır, çünkü Sartre etik eylem ya da etik için hiçbir zemin verememekte gibi görünmektedir. Bu zemin eksikliği, Sartre'ın ahlaki görecelilik ya da nihilizmle suçlanmasının sebeplerinden bir tanesidir. Sonuç olarak, ikinci kısım Sartre felsefesinde genel olarak etiğin, özel olarak da etik edimin olanağını tartışmaktadır. Son kısım ise Sartre'ın özgürlüğü ve sorumluluğu temel aldığı varoluşçu etiğine odaklanmaktadır. Varoluşçu etik bize etiği yeniden düşünmemiz dair bir yol açmakta ve özgürlüğü en temel değer olarak sunmaktadır.

Varoluşçu etik özgürlüğü özgürlük amacıyla istemekte ve ötekinin özgürlüğünü desteklemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bilinç, Ego, Özgürlük, Hiçlik, Varoluşçu Etik

To *My Grandparents*; Mustafa and Ayten Önerürk

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>INT</i>	Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology
<i>TE</i>	The Transcendence of the Ego: An Existentialist Theory of Consciousness
<i>BN</i>	Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology
<i>N</i>	Nausea
<i>EH</i>	Existentialism is a Humanism

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In all our inquiries, no matter whether it is scientific or philosophical, there seems to be an implicit understanding of who we are, a pre-comprehension of ourselves prior to an understanding of the issue at hand. Suppose that we find the truth; we have already related it to ourselves by grasping ourselves in our commitment to it. Or, let us suppose that we are convinced that there is no such thing called as truth, do we not further think about what it means to our lives even if it is only a fiction or just a matter of faith? Therefore, we can claim that who we are is always an issue for us. The basic issue with regards to ourselves could be put forward as the question of freedom. In the history of philosophy, Sartre was one of the significant philosophers, who took this question as the center of his investigations.

For Sartre, the theme of freedom is so pivotal that he characterized our being as “condemned to be free”¹. Sartre refers our consciousness of freedom as “vertigo of possibility” which reveals itself through “anguish”; yet he maintains that the ego is a mask which hides the spontaneity of our consciousness from ourselves.² What is the relation between consciousness and ego that both reveals and conceals our freedom? Why our freedom creates anguish rather than relief? I believe committing ourselves to these questions would change our basic orientation to ourselves, to others and to the world we live in, and the shift would be from a cognitive interest to an existential concern.

¹Jean Paul, Sartre. *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, Trans. By Hazel E. Barnes, New York: Washington Square Press, 1993, p.186.

²Jean Paul, Sartre. *The Transcendence of the Ego: A sketch for Phenomenological Description*, Trans. Brown, Andrew. London: Routledge, 2004, pp. 47-48.

In this investigation, we shall try to disclose this existential orientation first by investigating the way in which Sartre describes the notions of consciousness, ego, and the relation between them within his early philosophy³ with the motivation of responding the issue of freedom. We will try to inquire how Sartre raises the issue of freedom through the exposition of the relation between consciousness and the ego. The result of this exposition will be the identification of freedom with our being. Putting it differently, the exposition of the relation between consciousness and ego will point out our free self-determination.

We will try to reveal that our “self” is a creative and original production of our consciousness. Therefore, we can argue that “who we are” is like a product of art. Unlike the work of art, our selves are always in a process of continuous creation. In other words, we are creating who we are as if a product of art whose creator is continuously making it until his/her death. In Sartre’s philosophy, we can consider ourselves as the authors of our lives while our self will be our work. Similar to the author who will probably try to constitute his/her work with an ideal editing, we will try to shape ourselves in an ideal form. Like the author, who asks the question that “what should be the ideal shape of his/her book?” or “how he/she will write his/her book better?”, we will ask ourselves “who we should be?” or “how can we determine ourselves in a better manner?”. Thus, the question of “who we are” will turn into the question of “who we should be?” Furthermore, since our selves are our own creation, we should take the responsibility of ourselves. Since the words “should” and “responsibility” bring ethics to the scene, our investigation of the self will turn into a question of ethics.

At first sight, it seems not possible to derive any “should” in the context of Sartre’s philosophy of freedom, since it is up to us to determine ourselves as a choice. Yet, we will argue that such an attitude will be a jump to the conclusion. Therefore, we will claim that there is a need for interpreting Sartre’s concept of freedom and its relation to ethics in a deeper fashion. With such a motivation, we

³ Sartre’s early philosophy is characterized by his works between 1930-1950.

will try to reveal that Sartre offers us an existentialist ethics which is based on freedom and responsibility. In the light of these, in our investigation we will try to reveal the exposition of the relation between consciousness and the ego through which the question of ethics will be raised.

Sartre is a philosopher, novelist, dramatist, a political activist, a journalist with 28 books; we are not counting his interviews and articles at all. Furthermore, he has 6 posthumous publications.⁴ As a result, we will limit ourselves to his early works which are characterized by his writings between 1930 and 1950 in our investigation. Therefore, we will try to explain our question mainly with reference to the following works of Sartre: *Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology*,⁵ *The Transcendence of the Ego: An Existentialist Theory of Consciousness*,⁶ *Nausea*,⁷ *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* and *Existentialism is a Humanism*.⁸ The reason behind the selection of these works consists in their being basic works which reveal the way in which Sartre progresses from phenomenology to phenomenological ontology and from there to existentialism. Therefore, we assume that these works will not only reveal how his phenomenology evolves to existentialism, but also will shed light on the fact that Sartre provides an ethic depending on freedom from the very beginning of his philosophy.

In this regard, in the following chapter, we will briefly refer to the meaning of phenomenology, since Sartre introduces his *Intentionality*, *The Transcendence of*

⁴ Although it is possible to include Sartre's posthumous work *Notebooks for an Ethics* in this inquiry, the reason why we shall not is not only because we will limit ourselves to Sartre's early philosophy, but also because we can find our answers in the selected works.

⁵ Sartre, Jean Paul. *Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl Phenomenology*". Trans. Joseph P. Fell, *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 1970, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 4-5.

⁶ Sartre, Jean Paul. *The Transcendence of the Ego: An Existentialist Theory of Consciousness*, Trans. Andrew, Brown. London: Routledge, 2004.

⁷ Sartre Jean Paul. *Nausea*. Trans. Llyold Alexander, Newyork: New Directions Publishing, 2007.

⁸Sartre, Jean Paul. *Being and Nothingness: A Phenemenological Essay on Ontology*. Trans. By Hazel E. Barnes, New York: Washington Square Press, 1993.

the Ego and Being and Nothingness as phenomenological inquiries. During our clarifications, we will not specifically focus on phenomenologists (i.e. we will not consider Heidegger and Merleau Ponty), yet we will refer to the basic concepts of phenomenology like intentionality, natural attitude and *epoche*, and how Sartre applies these concepts to his philosophy. In order to have a deeper understanding of what phenomenology is and what Sartre understands from phenomenology, we will analyze Sartre's essay on "*Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology*".⁹ One of the reasons is that it is his first attempt to write an "original philosophy". Although Sartre waited five years to publish it, he wrote this book in 1934, when he for the first time excitedly encountered with phenomenology.¹⁰ Furthermore, as the title indicates, this essay is one of the major and the best examples of Sartre's understanding and application of Husserlian phenomenology. Moreover, this work gives and shows us important clues about his later works especially for *The Transcendence of the Ego* and *Being and Nothingness*. In this essay, we will find first an answer for Sartre's views on idealism and realism, second, his introduction of consciousness as emptiness and nothingness, and finally the self among many others which will be the starting point of *The Transcendence of the Ego* in which Sartre's affiliation to Husserl's philosophy becomes a critical one.

In the second chapter of this thesis, we shall first consider *The Transcendence of the Ego*, written in 1938, not only for its significance to reveal the transition from phenomenology to existentialism, but also for its very detailed examination of the relation between consciousness and the ego. To illuminate this relation, Sartre rejects Husserl's concept of transcendental ego and the concept of unconscious provided by the psychologists. Yet, this point would not be the main concern of our investigation. Here it is important to note that throughout our investigation, we shall only refer to philosophers and psychologists as the way

⁹Jean Paul Sartre, *Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl Phenomenology*. Trans. Fell, Joseph P.. *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 1970, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 4-5.

¹⁰ Robert Bernasconi, *How to read Sartre*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2007, p. 16.

Sartre conveyed their ideas without going into the details of their philosophies, or without discussing whether Sartre's criticism is fair or not. Therefore, our specific focus in *The Transcendence of the Ego* will be the reasons why Sartre rejected transcendental ego, and through this rejection how he introduced the ego as an object *of* and *for* consciousness. Sartre's differentiation of "pre-reflective and reflective consciousness" together with "the positional and non-positional awareness" will be one of the main concerns of this chapter.

As we shall examine, Sartre will identify consciousness with intentionality and describe it as a non-substantial absolute without any content and spontaneity. The ego as an object *of* and *for* consciousness is the product or constitution of a consciousness, and due to this fact our ego becomes a matter of *free* self-determination. Furthermore, the ego in the context of *The Transcendence of the Ego* serves as a mask to hide the reality that, we are *free* to determine ourselves due to the spontaneity of our consciousness. The ego tries to hide this reality, since it cannot bear the responsibility that it brings. As we shall further discuss, through his illumination of the relation between the ego and the consciousness, in *The Transcendence of the Ego*, Sartre will provide a ground for the themes in *Being and Nothingness* like anguish and bad faith. While Sartre refers anguish as consciousness of freedom, he points out to bad faith without naming it. As a result, the exposition of the relation between consciousness and the ego will lead us further to investigate not only the relation itself, but also the implications of this relation.

In chapter 3, we will examine Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* which is published in 1943 and considered generally as the masterpiece of Sartre. He presents his inquiry as an essay on phenomenological ontology, so we will start with the brief sketch of both the book itself. In this way we will question the meaning of Sartre's phenomenological ontology, which is vital for our purposes not only because it indicates the reasons why Sartre's phenomenology switches

into a phenomenological ontology, but also because it elucidates the meaning of what it means to be a self.

In his phenomenological ontology, Sartre describes two modes of being; namely being-in-itself and being-for-itself. In a broad sense, the difference between being-in-itself and being-for-itself can be thought as follows: while being-in-itself is self-identical, being-for-itself is identified with its lack of self-identity. In a more concrete fashion, we can say that Sartre describes for-itself as a synthesis of facticity, which refers to human beings' unchangeable features like age, sex, nationality etc., and transcendence which refers to being consciousness.

After explicating the immediate contact with being through some of the passages in Sartre's novel *Nausea* written in 1938, with which we will explicate the meaning of being and contingency of existence, we will try to elucidate Sartre's identification of consciousness with nothingness and freedom. Furthermore, we will try to make clear the different senses in which Sartre uses the following concepts like consciousness, nothingness, freedom, and for-itself as far as possible. As we shall see, the question of non-being will lead us to clarify Sartre's identification of consciousness with nothingness and freedom. As we will indicate, Sartre identifies consciousness with nothingness, since consciousness is *nothing* other than its nihilating activities. On the same ground, he identifies consciousness with freedom, since our freedom is *nothing* other than consciousness' ability to transcend, interpret, go beyond or question what is given. As a result, we will see that in *Being and Nothingness* Sartre offers us a description of a human reality which is "condemned to be free".

Nevertheless, as we shall also see, Sartre points to the implications of such an absolute freedom which brings an absolute responsibility with itself. This absolute freedom and responsibility provoke anguish in human beings; therefore they also form attitudes of bad faith in order to escape this elemental anguish. Bad faith basically means for-itself's self-deception in which he/she denies either his facticity

or transcendence. In other words, bad faith takes place, when we reject our own reality which is being a synthesis of subjectivity and objectivity.

Investigation of bad faith will lead us to another theme, that is, our relation with the other, since our self-deception occurs in the context of our relation with the other. This means that although bad faith is a form of self-deception, we deceive ourselves in the face of the other. As we will clarify, Sartre gives an account of my relation with the other as essentially shaped by conflict due to its being a threat to my freedom. Since the other is a subject who is capable of objectifying me, he/she becomes a treat to my freedom. In a world, where the essential relation of human beings is grounded on conflict, an inter-subjective world becomes a fiction.

For Sartre, another and an ultimate project of bad faith is desire to be God. Desire to be God mainly refers to for-itself's futile striving to be being-in-and-for-itself which basically means human beings desire to have the self-identity of the in-itself, while at the same time keeping their consciousness. This desire is not only contradictory, but also impossible to achieve. Since all human beings are ontologically striving for this aim, all our actions are doomed to failure. At the end of the third chapter then, our investigation on the relation between consciousness and the ego will seem to disclose our existence as a useless passion to be God. All actions are equal and doomed to failure due to our futile desire to be God.

As a result of this, at the beginning of the fourth chapter, we will ask Sartre the following question: "on what grounds can Sartre differentiate actions from each other in general and actions from ethical ones in particular?" This is to ask, since all our actions are free whether Sartre's philosophy is capable of giving a criteria for making a distinction between killing and helping the other. Furthermore, we will ask him: "if all our actions are doomed to failure, then is there anything worthy in our actions?" Likewise we will ask him if the other is a threat to my freedom, "why we should care for the other?" The underlying question can be formulated as follows: "what can Sartre offer us in the area of ethics?" In order to provide a

response to these questions, we will consider the possibility of re-interpreting *Being and Nothingness* in general, his concept of bad faith, the other and desire to be God in particular.

As our re-examination will disclose, due to its being an ontological inquiry, *Being and Nothingness* is not providing us an ethical theory. In addition to the remarks that Sartre points out in *The Transcendence of the Ego*, our re-consideration will be grounded upon Sartre's footnotes and some concluding paragraphs, with which we will argue that the ontology Sartre provides in *Being and Nothingness* is the ontology which describes a human reality living in bad faith. One of our basic arguments, therefore, will be founded on interpreting *Being and Nothingness* as describing a human reality identified with bad faith. Depending on the same references, we will claim that Sartre opens us a door for an ethics that is founded on freedom. On the same ground, we will argue that it is possible to choose freedom instead of desire to be. Such a choice, however, necessitates a differentiation between "pure reflection" and "impure reflection" and between "pre-reflective and reflective values". By explicating these differences, we will claim that in the context of *The Transcendence of the Ego* and *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre discloses the ways to choose "freedom" instead of "desire to be". However, since *Being and Nothingness* is a description of bad faith, this choice necessitates a conversion to authenticity for Sartre. This is why he excluded authenticity and authentic relations from *Being and Nothingness* which can find their places only in an ethical investigation. In the light of these, Sartre delays ethics to a promised ethic book which he never wrote.

As a result, after pointing out choosing freedom instead of desire to be God in the context of *The Transcendence of the Ego* and *Being and Nothingness*, which will give a ground to us to discuss the concepts of authenticity and authentic relations, we will refer *Existentialism is a Humanism* which is a lecture given to public in 1946 and the only work of Sartre's inquiry on ethics published in his life time. Unlike *Being and Nothingness*, in which Sartre's attitude to ethics is indirect

and abstract one, in *Existentialism is a Humanism* Sartre offers us an ethics depending on freedom.

To elucidate our point, we will refer the ways that Sartre is labeled as an ethical subjectivist or nihilist. We will try to challenge this reading by investigating the way in which Sartre presents freedom as an ultimate value. To do this, we will refer to his concepts of human condition, responsibility and the invention of choice. Above all, we will assert that Sartre's existentialist ethics can illuminate a need for a re-construction in ethics. The existentialist ethic will reveal the insufficiency of ethical and religious theories to guide our actions. More precisely, it will show us the impossibility of an absolute morality, in which actions are guided by *a priori* rules. However, such an idea will have dangerous implications in the area of ethics, since it can be regarded as subjectivism and nihilism in the area of ethics. Yet, we will argue that Sartre is trying to reveal the fact that the impossibility of an absolute morality will be the ground of morality itself. That is to say, rather than suggesting subjectivism or nihilism in the area of ethical action, Sartre is offering us an ethics which is grounded on freedom.

Given this, we will try to further explain Sartre's argument to choose freedom as an ultimate value which basically argues that it is not "rationally consistent" for human reality not to choose freedom as an ultimate value on which all values are grounded. In other words, Sartre claims that it is not rationally consistent to give a value something without giving a value on which it depends. As a result, Sartre argues that an existentialist ethics that he provides will freedom for its own sake and promote the freedom of others. In addition to the problem of validity of the rational consistency argument, we will ask Sartre if we are condemned to be free and absolutely responsible, then how it is possible for us to promote the freedom of others (since they are already free) and how it is possible for us to be irresponsible. To elucidate this point, we will make a difference between ontological and practical freedom. While the ontological freedom refers to the freedom identified with consciousness and nothingness, practical freedom is the

freedom to access the basic needs. We will argue that although we cannot promote the ontological freedom of the other, we can promote the practical freedom of the other. Similarly, we will claim that every attempt which constraints the freedom of others can be considered as wrong, and every attempt to promote practical freedom is right. Therefore, freedom will be a ground for us for differentiating actions in an ethical sense.

A discussion of conclusion deriving from our investigation will be the final chapter of our investigation. In this chapter, we will summarize our points, confess our shortcomings and point out the way how this investigation can be carried for a future work. In short, this investigation will be an attempt to provide an answer to the question of ethical action through the exposition of the relation between consciousness and the ego.

CHAPTER 2

THE EGO AS A PRODUCT OF CONSCIOUSNESS

2.1. Phenomenology

“There is no such a thing as the one phenomenology”¹¹

As Heidegger already pointed out, definition of phenomenology is a controversial issue. We can consider phenomenology as “a philosophical movement in the history of philosophy”, “a disciplinary field in philosophy”¹², “an agreed method”, “one set of philosophical thesis about consciousness, knowledge and the world” or “ a way of doing philosophy”¹³. Husserl, founder of phenomenology, defines it in his lectures as “a science, a complex of scientific disciplines; but it also designates at the same time and above all a method and attitude of thought: the specifically *philosophical attitude of thought*, the specifically *philosophical method*.”¹⁴ When we analyze the philosophies of phenomenologist like Husserl, Heidegger and Sartre, we can see that their interest, their attitudes towards central phenomenological issues and their understandings of

¹¹ Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Translation, Introduction and Lexicon by Albert Hofstadter, Revised Edition, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982, p. 328

¹² “Phenomenology”, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/>

¹³ Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, Newyork: Routledge, 2009, p.3

¹⁴ Edmund Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, Translation and Introduction by Lee Hardy, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999, p. 19.

phenomenological method are too different from each other.¹⁵In line with this, we can identify phenomenology with all of the concepts mentioned above without reducing it to any of them. First and foremost we should always keep in mind that “phenomenology is a practice rather than a system”.¹⁶

The controversy about the definition of phenomenology is not a central concern of our investigation. Rather, we want briefly to focus on the basic concepts of phenomenology which have an impact on Sartre’s philosophy. In line with this, in this chapter we want to explain briefly the meaning of phenomenology and the phenomenological concepts like natural attitude and phenomenological *époché*, and then analyze Sartre’s discussion of idealism and realism and the principle of intentionality by referring to his article on “*Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl Phenomenology*”.¹⁷

As many interpreters preferred,¹⁸ Sartre’s first encounter with phenomenology, told by Simone de Beauvoir is a convenient starting point to understand the meaning of phenomenology.

Raymond Aron was spending a year at French Institute in Berlin and studying Husserl simultaneously with preparing a historical thesis. When he came to Paris he spoke of Husserl to Sartre. We spent an evening together at the Bec de Gaz in the Rue Montparnasse. We ordered the specialty of the house, apricot cocktails; Aron said, pointing to his glass: ‘You see, my dear fellow, if you are a phenomenologist, you can talk about this cocktail and make philosophy out of it!’ Sartre turned pale with emotion at this. Here as just the thing he had been longing to

¹⁵D. Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, p. 3.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷Jean Paul Sartre, *Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl Phenomenology*. Trans. by Joseph P. Fell, *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 1970, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 4-5. Hereafter this work will be cited in the main body of the text with abbreviation *INT*.

¹⁸ For some of them, see: Michael Hammond, Jane Howarth and Russell Keat, *Understanding Phenomenology*, Oxford, Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991, p. David Detmer, *Sartre Explained: From Bad Faith to Authenticity*, Chicago: Open Court, 2008, p. 16. Katherine J. Morris, *On Sartre*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2008, p.5.

achieve for years- to describe objects as he saw and touched them, and extract philosophy from the process.

Sartre told the same story:

The messenger from heaven, for me, was Raymond Aron. Upon his return from Berlin, he spoke to me in a bar about the phenomenologists. ‘Those hearty individuals,’ he concluded smiling, ‘find a way of philosophizing about everything.’[...] I was over-joyed: nothing seemed more important to me than raising streetlights to the dignity of a philosophical objects...A year later I was reading in Husserl in Berlin. Everything had changed for all time.¹⁹

As it is quoted, phenomenology is about describing the objects as they are experienced. The word phenomenology refers to “logos of phenomena” meaning that “the truth or rationale of immediate experience”.²⁰In other words, it is the study of the phenomena which means “object as they appear to consciousness” or “objects as it is experienced.”²¹

Here, there are two things that we should focus on. The first is the emphasis on description. Phenomenology is not about explaining or theorizing anything, it is about describing experience as it is lived and objects as they appear to us. For phenomenologist we are living in the world, before theoretically explaining or systematizing it. Thus, in contrast to the traditional philosophy, there is a primacy of the lived experience over knowledge or of practice over theory in phenomenology. Therefore, rather than conceptualizing, phenomenology tries to take us back to our life and our lived experience; so phenomenologists try to describe our experience, world and our relation to it.

¹⁹ Edited by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, *Phenomenology World-Wide: Foundations -- Expanding Dynamisms -- Life Engagements- A Guide for Research and Study*, Yvanka B. Raynova “Jean Paul Sartre: A Profound Revision of Husserlian Phenomenology”, p.324.

²⁰ Jean Paul Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego: An Existentialist Theory of Consciousness*. Here after *TE*. Sarah Richmond, “Introduction”, p. 12.

²¹ Edited by Robert C. Solomon, *Existentialism and Phenomenology*, R.C. Solomon, “General Introduction: What is Phenomenology?”, Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1972, p. 13.

Second clue that we get from the quotation is the emphasis on describing the objects as they appear to us. Here we should be careful about the meaning of phenomena and appearance. Generally speaking, in traditional philosophy these words refer to the dichotomy of appearance and reality, like the distinction between phenomena and noumena in Kant's philosophy.²² In other words, the distinction between appearance and reality indicates a difference between what is real beyond or behind appearances. Absolutely different from this, phenomenologists use the word 'appearance', as the way one experience the object.²³ As we will clarify throughout our investigation, for phenomenologist there is no distinction between appearance and reality or between things as they appear to us or things in themselves. Similarly, although their success is controversial, phenomenologists try to dissolve all dualisms like mind and body or subject and object throughout the development of phenomenology. Consequently, phenomenology aims to describe object as they appear to consciousness which for phenomenologists imply that there is no distinction between the object in itself and the object that appears to consciousness.

The phrase "describing the phenomena as they appear to us" shows us another aspect of phenomenology. For there to be any appearance or experience, there should be an experiencing subject more precisely a consciousness to which it appears. Therefore, objects of phenomenological inquiry are not only phenomena, but also the conscious beings and the acts of consciousness like thinking, doubting, perceiving etc. One of the major aims of phenomenology is to describe the conscious activities through and by which objects are appearing and revealing to us.²⁴

²² Whether this distinction refers to epistemology or ontology is beyond the scope of my investigation. Here it is used as an ontological distinction.

²³ M. Hammond, J. Howarth and R. Keat, *Understanding Phenomenology*, p.2.

²⁴ D. Detmer, *Sartre Explained: From Bad Faith to Authenticity*, p.18.

Phenomenologists' interest in subject and conscious activities or their interest in objects and the world is not a current new for philosophy. What is novel and can be considered as one of the major radical shifts in philosophy is their approach to these relations. As we mentioned above, they try to rescue philosophy from all dualisms between subject and object or appearance and reality. Similarly, while turning back to lived experiences, they try to destroy the understanding related to subjectivity of inner world and objectivity of outer world which shows itself best in Descartes' mind and body dualism.²⁵ In other words, conscious activities like loving or hating someone are not activities regarded as a subjective reaction of an agent, but they are objective as the things in the world. Therefore, description of these activities is a central task for phenomenologists.

2.1.1. Natural Attitude and Phenomenological *Époché*

In order to clarify what it means to describe the acts and objects of consciousness and how to do it, Husserl introduces his notions of natural attitude and phenomenological *époché* or phenomenological reduction. He defines natural attitude with all of our beliefs including scientific and philosophical ones or all of our beliefs belonging to everyday life which are covering up our experiences and are full of assumptions, presuppositions, biases and prejudices. Not questioning and having no doubts about our beliefs are major indicators of natural attitude. Being as such, they are preventing us to describe objects as they appear to us or experience as it is lived.

To do it, Husserl introduces a 'presuppositionless' inquiry as one of the fundamental principles of phenomenology. For Husserl, only as such phenomenology can be a science which would be the foundation of all other

²⁵ M. Hammond, J. Howarth and R. Keat, *Understanding Phenomenology*, p. 2

sciences.²⁶ Since such a science should be constructed upon a priori principles, it cannot start with any given theory of philosophy or science.²⁷ In order to purify our descriptions from their covering ups and to reach a point where there is no presupposition, a phenomenologist should carry on a phenomenological reduction, i.e., a term used by him synonymously with bracketing and suspension.²⁸ This suspension is similar to Descartes' methodological doubt in which all beliefs, including existence of himself, are questioned. The difference between Descartes' doubt and Husserl's phenomenological *époché* can be explained as following; while exercising *époché*, we do not negate or doubt our unquestioned existential beliefs, rather we suspend them.²⁹ Phenomenological reduction or phenomenological *époché* is a procedure in which one suspends brackets or parenthesize existence of the external world and reaches to a realm of certainty which is sought by all philosophers.³⁰ Phenomenological reduction can be exemplified with a court in which members of juries should suspend all his/her judgments, bias and inferences about the case and focus exclusively on evidences.³¹ Similarly, a phenomenologist should suspend, bracket or parenthesize all of his/her beliefs including existential, philosophical, cultural, political and scientific ones and starts philosophy from a presuppositionless point. When a phenomenologist reaches this point, he/she will reach to his/her proper domain of inquiry "the domain of pure consciousness". In this domain, we leave behind our

²⁶ Edited by Robert C. Solomon, *Existentialism and Phenomenology*. R.C. Solomon, "General Introduction: What is Phenomenology?", p. 9

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Their specific differences are beyond the scope of this investigation.

²⁹ Jean Paul Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego: A sketch for phenomenological description*. Translated by Andrew Brown. London: Routledge, 2004, Sarah Richmond, "Introduction", p. xi.

³⁰ Robert Bernasconi, *How to read Sartre*, Newyork: W. W. Norton and Company, 2007, p. 20.

³¹ D. Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, p 11.

unquestioned existential beliefs and it is possible to describe phenomena as it appears or to “back to the things themselves” in Husserl words.³²

In order to have a deeper understanding of what phenomenology is and what Sartre understands from phenomenology, we want to analyze Sartre’s article on “*Intentionality: The Fundamental Idea of Husserl’s Phenomenology*”.³³

2.1.2. *Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl Phenomenology*

As we stated in the first chapter, it is possible to read this short essay *Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl Phenomenology* as an outline of his later works. Although they are not fully developed, Sartre’s later views on consciousness, self and the world are grounded in this essay. In this essay, Sartre mainly criticizes the epistemology of his time and through his criticisms, he practices his phenomenology. Therefore, we want to emphasize the debate between realism and idealism followed by the problem of correspondence and Sartre’s solution to it with the principle of intentionality and descriptions of consciousness. As we noticed earlier, an epistemological discussion of Husserl’s philosophy is not one of the central themes of our investigation. Therefore, we will neither focus on the interpretations of idealism and realism debate, nor on the particular details of Husserl’s philosophy. As a result, we will try to clarify the essay with the motivation of understanding Sartre, his view on Husserl’s principle of intentionality and most importantly his understanding of consciousness and the self.

³² Jean Paul Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego: A sketch for phenomenological description*. Translated by Andrew Brown. London: Routledge, 2004, Sarah Richmond, “Introduction”, p. xi.

³³ Jean Paul Sartre, *Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl Phenomenology*. Translated falan yok bul. Hereafter this work will be cited with abbreviation *INT*.

2.1.3. Illusion of Idealism and Realism and The Problem of Correspondence

For phenomenologist, our beliefs and systems even philosophical ones conceal our experience and prevent us to describe objects as they appear to us. For Sartre, idealism and realism debate is one of the philosophical debates that occupied philosophy for hundreds of years and prevents us to realize the aims of phenomenology. Therefore, rescuing philosophy from this debate can be one of the ways for turning to our concrete experiences as it is lived.³⁴ This can be the reason why Sartre starts the text by attacking realists and idealists. In the context of the text it is possible to read the realism and idealism debate as turning around the question that asks whether the world is ontologically dependent on consciousness or not. While for realism the world is independent from our consciousness of it, for idealist it is the other way around.³⁵ Although for both Sartre and realists the world is independent from our consciousness of it, Sartre argues that realism and idealism have a common point regarding to knowing the world through ideas.³⁶ In other words, whether the world is dependent on consciousness or not, all we can know is our ideas or our contents of consciousness about the world. Sartre uses the words digestion, assimilation, taking in to explain what idealist and realist understand from knowledge:³⁷

“He devoured her with his eyes.” This expression and many other signs point to the illusion common to both realism and idealism: to know is to eat. After a hundred years of academicism, French philosophy remains at that point.[...] [W]e have all believed that

³⁴ R. Bernasconi, *How to read Sartre*, p. 16

³⁵ Sorin Baiasu, *Kant and Sartre: Re-discovering Critical Ethics*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, p. 46

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ M. Hammond, J. Howarth and R. Keat, *Understanding Phenomenology*, p. 98.

the spidery mind trapped things in its web, covered them with a white spit and slowly swallowed them, reducing them to its own substance. What is a table, a rock, a house? Answer: a certain assemblage of “contents of consciousness,” a class of such contents. Oh digestive philosophy![...] Nutrition, assimilation! Assimilation, Lalande said, of things to ideas, of ideas by ideas, of minds by minds.³⁸

Sartre refers to the problem of correspondence by using the words assimilation, digestion and nutrition. This problem basically means that since all we can know is our ideas of the world or our contents of consciousness, we can never be sure about whether our ideas or contents correspond to the world as it is.³⁹ As a result, for Sartre, idealists’ and realists’ understanding of knowledge are composed of reducing or assimilating the world into ideas, like a spider eating its pray, without being sure whether they know it as it is or not.

For Sartre, one of the great achievements of Husserl is to rescue objects from their assimilations by mind or consciousness. As he states:

Against the digestive philosophy of empirico-criticism, of neo-Kantianism, against all “psychologism,” Husserl persistently affirmed that one cannot dissolve things in consciousness. Consciousness and the world are given at one stroke: essentially external to consciousness, the world is nevertheless essentially relative to consciousness. Husserl sees consciousness as an irreducible fact that no physical image can account for.⁴⁰

In order to understand how Husserl rescues the objects and turns back to things themselves, one should understand Husserl’s principle of intentionality and Sartre’s application of these principles to his philosophy. In other words, in order to clarify Sartre’s solution to “the illusion of idealism and realism”⁴¹ and what Sartre

³⁸INT, 1.

³⁹ This problem shares the same ground with appearance reality distinction explained in the section of Phenomenology.

⁴⁰INT, 1.

⁴¹INT, 1.

is appreciating in Husserl's philosophy, one should understand the meaning of intentionality.

2.1.4. Intentionality and Nothingness of Consciousness as a Solution

From a phenomenological point of view, all acts of consciousness display an intentional structure. The principle of intentionality means that consciousness is always directed to some objects other than itself, and it is the consciousness of them. The principle of intentionality indicates that there is something either an image or a material object and consciousness intends to this object.⁴² Thus, the intentional objects can be characterized by what we see, think, image, perceive in our everyday life.⁴³ So considered, in the context of intentionality there should be a consciousness and an object which consciousness is conscious of. As Sartre says, "this necessity for consciousness to exist as consciousness of something other than itself is what Husserl calls 'intentionality'".⁴⁴

By giving objects a status of independency, Sartre tries to show us the fact that objects cannot be reduced to the states of consciousness. Although consciousness can grasp objects as they appear to it, this does not mean that they are equal to conscious states. In other words, the objects of consciousness are neither mental representations nor mental activities; on the contrary they are *transcendent* to the consciousness which intends them. Therefore, what we are intending is neither images nor representations of the objects, but the objects as they appear to us.

On this ground, it is possible to argue that principle of intentionality gives Sartre the opportunity of arguing the existence of a world outside of

⁴²Gregory McCulloch, *Using Sartre: An Analytical Introduction to Early Sartrean Themes*, London: Routledge, 1994, p.5.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴*INT*, 2.

consciousness.⁴⁵ Putting differently, what it means to be a consciousness is always referring to consciousness directing or intending something other than itself, which refers at the same time the *transcendence* of the object. As Sartre says:

Husserl has restored things to their horror and charm. [...] Being dreadful is a property of this Japanese mask [...] and not sum of our subjective reactions to a piece of sculptured wood. [...] [I]f we love a woman, it is because she is lovable.⁴⁶

Although Husserl's principle of intentionality is a necessary step to solve the problem of correspondence, it is not sufficient to dissolve it. It is a necessary step because once the relation between consciousness and the world is putted in the form of "being consciousness of an object other than itself", it is no more possible to say that the being of objects are reduced to ideas. In other words, the object is always different and other than consciousness, and therefore *transcendent* to the consciousness intending it.⁴⁷ As Sartre says "[...] the tree escapes me and repulses me, and I can no more lose myself in the tree than it can dissolve itself in me. I am beyond it; it is beyond me".⁴⁸ Then he asks "Do you recognize [...] this in your own circumstances? You certainly knew that this tree is not you, that you could not make it enter your dark stomach".⁴⁹

However, this does not necessarily mean that my consciousness of the tree is the tree as it is. Putting differently, the principle of intentionality is not sufficient to solve the problem of correspondence because it is still possible to ask whether my consciousness of an object and the object itself corresponds to each other. As it is quoted above, for Sartre "Husserl is not a realist" and "the world is essentially relative to consciousness".⁵⁰ In order to understand how Sartre's solution to the

⁴⁵G. Linsenbard, *Starting with Sartre*, New York: Continuum, 2010, p.44.

⁴⁶*INT*, 2, 3.

⁴⁷ Sartre will refer to this idea as an ontological proof to being, in *Being and Nothingness*.

⁴⁸*INT*, 2.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

problem of correspondence, we should further explicate what Sartre means by consciousness. One of the definitions that Sartre gives for consciousness:

Except perhaps the quick, obscure image of a burst. To know is to “burst toward”, to tear oneself out of the moist gastric intimacy, veering out there beyond oneself, out there near the tree and yet beyond it. [...] All at once consciousness is purified, it is clear as a strong wind. There is nothing in it but a movement of fleeing itself, a sliding beyond itself. [...] [C]onsciousness has no “inside”. Precisely this being-beyond-itself, this absolute flight, this refusal to be a substance is what makes it to be consciousness.⁵¹

From the quotation we can derive two significant definitions of consciousness which are going to be clear in *The Transcendence of the Ego and Being and Nothingness*. First, by defining consciousness as “an absolute flight” or “a strong wind”, Sartre refers to intentionality. What it means to be a consciousness is always referring to a consciousness directing or intending something other than itself, like “a connected series of bursts that tear us out of ourselves, that do not even allow to an “ourselves” the leisure of composing ourselves behind them [...]”⁵²This leads us to our second point. Like a movement, a wind or a burst has no content or inside, consciousness has “no inside”. As Sartre had already defined in *Intentionality* and will clarify in *The Transcendence of the Ego and Being and Nothingness*, *consciousness* is not a substance carrying qualities with it, but it is nothingness. What he means by this is that there are no ideas, perceptions, images or representations in consciousness. For Sartre, mind is not a container that holds the perceptions, ideas or impressions.⁵³ To clarify the point, we can think consciousness like a mirror. If a mirror can bear all of the objects that it reflects, then it is almost impossible to differentiate what is inside and outside of the mirror.⁵⁴ Similarly, if consciousness bears all the objects which it intends, then it is

⁵¹ Ibid..

⁵² *INT*, 2.

⁵³ Richard Kamber, *On Sartre*, Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth, 2000, p.48.

⁵⁴ Neil Levy, *Sartre*, Oxford: Oxford, 2002, p. 6.

not possible to differentiate consciousness from its objects which are external to it.⁵⁵ Therefore, Sartre claims “consciousness is devoid of any content”.⁵⁶

To summarize, the problem of correspondence is nothing but to problematize how the objects that are intended are corresponding to the objects as they are. For an idealist and a realist, our relation to the world is always constructed with our ideas of it. As a result, we can never be sure that our ideas of the world correspond to the objects as they really are. From an epistemological perspective, we can say that if we define our consciousness as something carrying ideas, representations and contents in it like a substance carrying its qualities, then it will be almost impossible to solve the problem of correspondence. It looks impossible, because if we define consciousness as a substance carrying representations, then our relation with the world will always be mediated through our ideas or representations of it. This leads us to skepticism about our knowledge of the world, because we can never be sure about whether we can know the world as it is. However, if we define consciousness as nothingness, then the problem will be dissolved. Since our consciousness is not a container but nothingness we have immediate and direct awareness of the independently existing world.⁵⁷ As a result, once the relation between our consciousness and the world becomes direct, rather than mediated with ideas, the problem of correspondence will not occur. As Sartre says:

No more is necessary to dispose of the effeminate philosophy of immanence, where everything happens by compromise, by protoplasmic transformations, by a tepid cellular chemistry. The philosophy of transcendence thrown us on to the highway, in the midst of dangers, under a dazzling light.⁵⁸

2.1.5. Sartre’s Path to Phenomenological Existentialism

Sartre criticizes theory of knowledge of his time, but he at the same time adds:

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Mark Tanzer, *On Existentialism*, Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth, 2008, p.41.

⁵⁷ G. Linsenbard, *Starting with Sartre*, pp.45-46.

⁵⁸ *INT*, 2.

[...] [F]or Husserl and the phenomenologists our consciousness of things is by no means limited to our knowledge of them. Knowledge, or pure “representation,” is only one of the possible forms of my consciousness “of” this tree; I can also love it, fear it, hate it [...] Our own being, says Heidegger, is being-in-the-world. One must understand this “being in” as movement. To be is to fly out into the world, to spring from the nothingness of the world and of consciousness in order suddenly to burst out as consciousness-in-the-world.⁵⁹

This is one of places in the text where we can find Sartre’s effort to replace our epistemological concerns with a phenomenological and an existential one. Sartre tries to take us back to our concrete experiences by questioning how human beings relate to the world, rather than questioning how the ideas correspond to the world.⁶⁰ Consciousness is a “movement” to objects in the world and is consciousness “of” them.⁶¹ Yet, here this “of” does not anymore refers to assimilation or representation of an object, but it refers to the relationality. To exemplify, the color of the sky or the feelings towards the beloved is one of the instances of my relation to the world or my experience of the world.⁶² Likewise, cognizing the world is one of the possible forms of experiencing the world among many others including our loving or hating it. What Sartre emphasizes is that we have a relation with the world including moral and aesthetic ones with which we are not only experiencing the world and ourselves, but also the world and objects in it are revealing themselves to us.⁶³ Furthermore, in this relation Sartre gives priority neither to the world nor to consciousness, but emphasizes a mutual dependence and relation.⁶⁴ For Sartre “Consciousness and the world are given at one stroke”.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ R. Bernasconi, *How to Read Sartre*, p.19.

⁶¹ S. Baiasu, *Kant and Sartre: Re-discovering Critical Ethics*, p. 46.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ S. Baiasu, *Kant and Sartre: Re-discovering Critical Ethics*, pp. 46-7.

⁶⁵ *INT*, 1.

Under the light of these Sartre can say:

We are delivered from Proust. We are likewise delivered from the “internal life”: in vain would we seek the caresses and fondlings of our intimate selves, like Amiel, or like a child who kisses his own shoulder -- for everything is finally outside: everything, even ourselves. Outside, in the world, among others. It is not in some hiding-place that we will discover ourselves; it is on the road, in the town, in the midst of the crowd, a thing among things, a human among humans.⁶⁶

Due to intentional structure of consciousness, it is not possible for consciousness to know itself independently from its relation to the objects and the world.⁶⁷ This is because consciousness is always consciousness of something other than itself. So considered, if consciousness is consciousness of the self or the ego, then the self or the ego becomes objects for consciousness. On this ground, Sartre can claim that there is no inner self that we can discover through introspection. As the quotation indicates, consciousness is a movement to its objects which are transcendent to it, therefore everything is “outside in the world” including ourselves. As a result, he is able to say that rather than searching ourselves in “some hiding place”, we will discover ourselves in the world and among human beings.

In this essay, Sartre mainly focuses on what it means to be a consciousness, *transcendence* of the objects and the relation of consciousness and the world. Furthermore, he introduces his idea of the self as “outside among others” at the end of the essay. We can say that this idea of the self and of the consciousness are not only the whole foundation of Sartre’s phenomenological ontology and existentialism, it is also the ground which makes our being “condemned to be free”. As we will see in *The Transcendence of the Ego*, Sartre will explore this idea by making the self or the ego an object *of* and *for* consciousness which will lead us to Sartre’s philosophy of freedom. In order to see the conclusions deriving from this

⁶⁶INT, 5.

⁶⁷R. Bernasconi, *How to Read Sartre*, p.25.

idea, which lead us to discuss ethical action in Sartre's early philosophy, now we should investigate *The Transcendence of the Ego*.

2.2. *The Transcendence of the Ego*

In *The Transcendence of the Ego*, Sartre mainly criticizes the conception of the ego we find both in the Cartesian, Kantian and Husserlian philosophies and in the mainstream psychological theories. Similar to *Intentionality* essay, in this book Sartre practices his phenomenology and he introduces his idea of self and consciousness that arises from the above mentioned criticisms. The main focus of this chapter, we will be the way in which Sartre rejected transcendental ego and unconsciousness, and by means of this rejection how he introduced the ego as an object *of* and *for* consciousness. Consequently, although we will refer to these criticisms, our fundamental aim is to exhibit Sartre's idea of consciousness and self.

2.2.1. Sartre's Conception of Consciousness and The Problem of Self Consciousness

In *The Transcendence of the Ego*⁶⁸, Sartre defines phenomenology as a "scientific, and not a Critical, study of consciousness".⁶⁹ He agrees with Husserl in the sense that it is science *of fact*. Therefore, Sartre claims that the problems of phenomenology are problems *of fact* and the questions it asks are existential questions.⁷⁰ The problem that he deals within *The Transcendence of the Ego* is to

⁶⁸ Jean Paul Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego: An Existential Theory of Consciousness*. Translated by Forrest Williams and Robert Kirkpatrick. Newyork: Noonday Press, 1957. Hereafter this work will be cited with the abbreviation *TE*.

⁶⁹*TE*, 35.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*.

exhibit that: “the Ego is neither formally nor materially in consciousness: it is outside, *in the world*; it is a being in the world, like the Ego of another”.⁷¹ In order to understand this, we need to explicate further what Sartre means by consciousness.

As we noticed, Sartre defines consciousness with intentionality which basically means that consciousness is always consciousness *of* something other than itself and it is at the same time conscious *of* itself. As he says: “By intentionality it transcends itself. It unifies itself by escaping from itself”.⁷² So considered, we can say that all particular consciousness assumes self-consciousness. According to Sartre, this is the idea which leads philosophers like Kant and Husserl to develop the notion of transcendental ego. They assume that there must be a transcendental self which underlies all our intentional acts. As Sartre explains, the need for assuming the transcendental ego or self is to give a unity and individuality to consciousness. In order to link the particular perceptions, thoughts, feelings etc. to a center (unity of my conscious acts) and to say that they are mine (individuality) rather than someone else’s both Kant and Husserl assume the transcendental ego.⁷³ Thus, they assume an “I” which is behind my conscious states.

Sartre does not directly argue against Kantian concept of transcendental ego, he rather directs his critique to Husserl’s transcendental ego. The reason why is while Kant sets transcendental ego as “a condition of possibility”, Husserl affirms it as an existent or as an “apprehension of fact”.⁷⁴ For Sartre, to say that “it must be possible for the ‘I think’ can accompany all our representations” is not equal to say that it actually accompanies them.⁷⁵ While the former refers a *de jure* judgment, the

⁷¹TE,31.

⁷²TE, 38.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴TE, 43.

⁷⁵TE, 31.

latter is a *de facto* judgment. He criticizes Husserl for not bracketing the transcendental ego itself and asks whether it is necessary to assume such an ego in order to explain the structure of consciousness.⁷⁶ As a result, in *The Transcendence of the Ego* by analyzing the structure of consciousness and ego, Sartre aims to show there is no such an ego and in fact there is no need for it. As he emphasizes:

the phenomenological conception of consciousness renders the unifying and the individualizing role of the I completely useless. It is, on the contrary, consciousness that renders the unity and personality of my I possible. The transcendental I thus has no *raison d'être*.⁷⁷

As the quotation indicates although Sartre does not deny that there must be a unity of my conscious acts, he does not consider this unity either as a transcendental condition or as an existing center. In other words, the claim that there is no “I” which inhabits my conscious states does not mean that there is no unity of my consciousness. There is a unity of my consciousness as the consciousness of an object and itself. As Sartre claims that “The type of existence that consciousness has is that it is consciousness of itself. And it becomes consciousness of itself *insofar as it is consciousness of a transcendent object*”.⁷⁸ It has its own unity because for Sartre consciousness is pure, absolute, impersonal spontaneity which cannot be limited by something other than itself.⁷⁹ By putting a transcendental I into this unity would be rather to render consciousness divided, and this will amount to posit a consciousness which is differentiated from itself.⁸⁰ As Sartre says: “Transcendental I is the death of consciousness”.⁸¹ The reason is that if we accept the existence of the transcendental ego, we assume that there is an ego inhabiting my consciousness which controls and directs my actions.

⁷⁶TE, 36.

⁷⁷TE, 40.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

Such an assumption divides the absoluteness of the consciousness given that it separates consciousness into parts. As Sartre says:

The Transcendental Field, purified of all egological structure, recovers its former limpidity. In one sense, it is a *nothing*, since all physical, psycho-physical, and psychical objects, all truths, and all values are outside it, since the me has, for its part, ceased to be part of it. But this nothing is *everything* because it is *consciousness of* all these objects. There is no longer an ‘inner life’ in the sense in which Brunshvicg opposes ‘inner life’ and ‘spiritual life, since there is no longer anything that can be described as an *object* and which can at the same time belong to the intimacy of consciousness. Doubts, remorse, the so-called ‘crises of consciousness’ etc., in short all the material of people’s diaries become mere *representations*.⁸²

As the quotation indicates, neither mental images nor a transcendental ego can inhabit in consciousness, because consciousness is always empty or without any material or mental content. Furthermore, ego is an object *for* consciousness and as an object it always carries *opaqueness* within itself, and putting an object in consciousness brings the opaqueness into this pure, absolute, spontaneous unity. As Sartre explains:

Thus, if one introduces this opacity into consciousness, one thereby destroys the fruitful definition cited earlier. One congeals consciousness, one darkens it. Consciousness is than no longer a spontaneity; it bears within itself the germ of opaqueness.⁸³

Consequently, for Sartre consciousness is a “non-substantial absolute” for which “to be and to appear is one and the same”.⁸⁴ Here, we can question individualization of this consciousness. Sartre answers this question by likening consciousness to Spinoza’s substance which is limited only by itself.⁸⁵ He says that like Spinoza’s substance “consciousness constitutes a synthetic and individual

⁸²TE, 93.

⁸³TE, 41, 42.

⁸⁴TE,42.

⁸⁵TE,39.

totality entirely isolated from other totalities of the same type”.⁸⁶ In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre will clarify this issue by introducing his idea of time and fundamental project. Within the perspective of *The Transcendence of the Ego*, we can say that this non-substantial absolute individualizes itself through the constitution of ego. In order to understand this constitution and individualization, we should understand Sartre’s notions of pre-reflective and reflective consciousness.

2.2.2. The Relation between the Ego and Consciousness with respect to Pre-reflective and Reflective Consciousness

Descartes gets rid of his existential nausea when he found the formulation of “I think therefore I am”. As most of us can affirm, our individual existence may be the only thing that we can be sure about. Sartre does not directly reject this claim. The problem for him is the “I” that is conceptualized behind our experiences or thinking. In other words, he is criticizing the “I” which is named as thinking substance by Descartes and transcendental ego by Kant and Husserl. Sartre gets rid of his problem with Descartes, Husserl and Kant by introducing the distinction between pre-reflective and reflective consciousness. Corresponding to one of the major aims of the book, with this distinction Sartre is trying to show us the fact that there is no reason for assuming a transcendental ego. Furthermore, Sartre will illuminate us about the ways in which the ego is constructed through the reflective acts of consciousness by differentiating pre-reflection and reflection. Finally, this distinction is one of the major grounds on which Sartre’s theory of freedom will be founded. We will focus on the last point at the end of the chapter.

According to Sartre, in the pre-reflective or unreflective mode, consciousness does not focus on itself and does not take itself as an object. In this mode of

⁸⁶ Ibid.

consciousness, which he also calls as “first order consciousness” there is nothetic action which posits the “I” as existing.⁸⁷ Therefore, here, the knowledge of consciousness is in an “absolute inwardness”.⁸⁸ To exemplify, when I mow my lawn, my intentional objects are the lawn, the lawn mower, the branches to be moved etc.⁸⁹ Thus, my attention is focused on these objects, but not on myself. However, when my attention shifts to myself and I make my acts as my intentional objects, at this point the I or me appears in the reflective mode. For example, when I say: “I have been out here mowing the lawn for more than a hour; maybe I should take a break”, at this point my consciousness focus on myself, so it makes itself an object.⁹⁰ As a result, Sartre can say the “I” is not there in pre-reflective mode and it cannot be caught as a subject in experience even in the reflective mode. In other words, when I say that I am hungry, the “I” which says it already become an object for my reflecting consciousness.⁹¹ For Sartre, that is why consciousness that “says ‘I Think’ is precisely not the consciousness that thinks”.⁹²

However, this uncatchable being of the I would not result with infinite regress, since the pre-reflective consciousness does not need the reflective consciousness for being conscious of itself.⁹³ The pre-reflective mode is prior to reflection, since it is not possible to have a reflective mode of consciousness without the objectification of the pre-reflective mode. Therefore, Sartre emphasizes although it is the reflective mode in which the “I” comes into the scene, it is the pre-reflective mode from which it is derived.⁹⁴ Here, it is important to note that although Sartre clarifies these levels as if they are happening one after another, they

⁸⁷TE, 41.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹D. Detmer. *Sartre Explained: From Bad Faith to Authenticity*, p. 19.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹²TE, 45.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

are “contemporaneous moments of consciousness”.⁹⁵ As a result, Sartre claims that “the I is not discovered in reflection, but rather it is constituted in reflective acts of consciousness.”⁹⁶ As he indicates:

the complex structure of consciousness is as follows: there is an unreflected act of reflection, without an I, which is directed on a reflected consciousness. The latter becomes the object of the reflecting consciousness without ceasing to affirm its own object (a chair, a mathematical truth, etc.). At the same time, a new object appears which is the occasion for an affirmation by reflective consciousness, and which is consequently not on the same level as the unreflected consciousness (because the latter consciousness is an absolute which has no need of reflective consciousness in order to exist), nor on the same level as the object of the reflected consciousness (chair, etc.). This transcendent object of the reflective act is the I.⁹⁷

Explaining how “the I” is constituted in the reflective acts of consciousness gives Sartre the means for giving an account of why philosophers choose “the I” as a starting point and why they are mistaken. They start with “the I” because whenever I remember or think about any of my pre-reflective acts, there occurs an “I”. In Sartre’s words: “there is not one of my consciousness that I do not apprehend as provided with an I”.⁹⁸ It is not only the starting point of Descartes, but also “*factual* guarantee of the Kantian claim *concerning validity*”.⁹⁹ Husserl takes it as an absolute fact, since he conceptualizes it as a unity in which reflected consciousness and reflecting consciousness are in an indissoluble unity.¹⁰⁰ Yet, as we see the reflecting consciousness needs the pre-reflecting consciousness to be there and when pre-reflective consciousness becomes reflected consciousness, the

⁹⁵ Christina Daigle, *Jean Paul Sartre*, London: Routledge, 2009, p.22.

⁹⁶ D. Detmer, *Sartre Explained: From Bad Faith to Authenticity*, p. 21.

⁹⁷ *TE*, 53.

⁹⁸ *TE*, 44.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

reflecting consciousness takes the reflected consciousness as its object. Therefore, they cannot come into a unity.¹⁰¹

Although his argument seems acceptable, Sartre should give an account of our awareness of ourselves when we are absorbed in the pre-reflective mode of consciousness.¹⁰² For example, when I am counting, I do not focus on myself but I am absorbed in the numbers. However, when someone comes into the room and asks me what I am doing, I can immediately say that I am counting. If there is no “I” standing behind my conscious acts and if there is no “I” in the pre-reflective mode, then Sartre should answer that how it is possible for me to say that I am counting.¹⁰³

Sartre’s answer to this question is his differentiation of positional and non-positional awareness. When our pre-reflective consciousness is aware of itself, this awareness is non-positional. However, when the pre-reflective consciousness is aware of the reflected consciousness, it becomes positional consciousness.¹⁰⁴ Sartre exemplifies this by saying that while he was reading a book, there is the positional consciousness of the events and heroes in the book. At this moment it is them which constitute his consciousness. Thus, there is no I inhabiting in this consciousness, but there is a non-positional awareness of himself. In other words, while he is positionally aware of the book, he is non-positionally aware of himself.¹⁰⁵ Thus, Sartre claims that all our positional awareness is accompanied by a non-positional awareness.¹⁰⁶ As a result, Sartre can explain how I can immediately say that I am counting while I am absorbed in numbers, because while

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² D. Detmer, *Sartre Explained: From Bad Faith to Authenticity*, p. 22

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ *TE*, 45.

¹⁰⁵ *TE*, 46, 47.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

I am focusing on numbers positionally and not focusing on myself, I am non-positionally aware of myself.¹⁰⁷ As he says:

When I run after a tram, when I look at the time, when I become absorbed in the contemplation of a portrait, there is no I. There is consciousness of *tram-needing-to-be-caught*, etc., and a non-positional consciousness of consciousness. In fact, I am then plunged into the world of objects, it is they which constitute the unity of my consciousness, it is they which present themselves with values, attractive and repulsive qualities-, but *me*, I have disappeared, I have annihilated myself. There is no place for *me* at this level, and this is not a matter of chance, due to a momentary lapse of attention, but happens because of the very structure of consciousness.¹⁰⁸

As the quotation points out there is no I in the pre-reflective mode. It is the objects which form our consciousness, but it is always possible to say that I am the subject who is doing the activity due to non-positional awareness of the pre-reflective mode. Both pre-reflective and reflective consciousnesses demonstrate a dual structure.¹⁰⁹ They are non-positionally aware of themselves and positionally aware of the object. At this stage, it is important to note that the difference between positional and non-positional acts of consciousness is not about “a belief in the existence of the object”, it rather refers consciousness’ capacity to “objectify or not to objectify”.¹¹⁰

Now, we are in a position to answer the question that we raised at the beginning of the section: how the absolute consciousness individualizes itself. This non-substantial absolute individualizes itself through the objects and reflective acts of consciousness. As we mentioned before, for Sartre the unity and individuality of consciousness is possible as far as it is consciousness of an object and itself. On this ground, we can say that ego is an object of consciousness and constructed

¹⁰⁷TE, 23.

¹⁰⁸TE, 49.

¹⁰⁹Phyllis Sutton Morris, “Sartre on Transcendence of the Ego”, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (Dec., 1985), pp. 179-198.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

through the reflective acts of consciousness. Therefore, we can state that through the objects in the world that includes not only material objects, but also ourselves and others, consciousness individualizes itself. In other words, consciousness individualizes itself through the constitution of the “I”. The “I” for Sartre: “[i]s an *existent*. It has a concrete type of existence, undoubtedly different from the existence of mathematical truths, of meanings, or of spatio-temporal beings, but no less real. The “I” gives itself as transcendent”.¹¹¹ As a result, Sartre claims that like the table which is not in consciousness, the ego is in the world and in the space. Myself is in the world like the selves of the others.

Here, we can question what it is like to experience ourselves as an object *of* and *for* our consciousness. Providing an answer to this question would lead us not only to Sartre’s theory of freedom, but also to a more concrete explanation of the individualization of the absolute consciousness. Consequently, in the next section we will explicate how the self is constructed in the reflective acts of consciousness rather than discovered in it.

2.2.3. Individualization of the Consciousness: Ego as States, Actions and Qualities

In *The Transcendence of the Ego* Sartre explains the constitution of the ego as the unity of state, actions and qualities. When the ego is the unity of states and qualities he calls it as *me*, and when the ego is the ideal unity of actions he calls it as *the I*.¹¹² Sartre refers the ego as “human being who each of us is”.¹¹³ When Sartre uses the word “I” it is “human being qua thinker”, “me is the name of human being

¹¹¹ *TE*, 53.

¹¹² *TE*, 21.

¹¹³ Stephen Priest, *The Subject in Question: Sartre’s Critique of Husserl in The Transcendence of the Ego*, London: Routledge, 2000, p. 100.

qua agent”.¹¹⁴ As we know, our being qua thinker and qua agent cannot be distinctly separable from each other and that is why Sartre says: “the distinction that one makes between the two aspects of the one and the same reality seems to us simply functional, not to say grammatical.”¹¹⁵

Accordingly, the “I” and me is differentiated according to their functions and they are the two faces of the Ego.¹¹⁶ As we said before, the ego is constituted in reflection. Thus, Sartre articulates that “the state appears to reflective consciousness”.¹¹⁷ He exemplifies this by giving the example of his hatred of Peter as a state- transcendent object- which can be grasped in reflection.¹¹⁸ While my immediate reaction of attraction to someone is a consciousness, the unity of this consciousness and the earlier ones which is made in reflection is a state.¹¹⁹ Following this, Sartre argues that hatred is not a *form of consciousness*, but it is a state.¹²⁰ Sartre argues that many thinkers assume that as far as I feel that I hate Peter, I cannot be in doubt about my feelings. However, for Sartre, reflection has limits of validity and limits in fact”¹²¹ and such an “affirmation infinitely exceeds the power of reflection”.¹²² While I feel angry or revulsion at this moment, these are not equal to the experience of the hatred. Although hatred is constituted by the reflective consciousness through the consciousness of revulsion, angry, disgust etc., it is not any of them and not sum of them.¹²³ As Sartre indicates “It is certain that Peter is repugnant to me. But it is and always will remain doubtful that I hate

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ *TE*, 60.

¹¹⁷ *TE*, 61.

¹¹⁸ *TE*, 63.

¹¹⁹ Jean Paul, Sartre. *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*. Hazel E. Barnes, “Translator’s Introduction”, p.xii.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ *TE*, 61, 62.

¹²² *TE*, 64.

¹²³ *TE*, 63.

him”.¹²⁴ Therefore, Sartre argues that the certainty of reflection should be limited by the instantaneous moment of consciousness.

For Sartre, states as transcendent objects have the same ‘dubitability’ status with any transcendent object of consciousness.¹²⁵ The ideality and ‘dubitability’ of the objects comes from the fact that consciousness reveals the objects only from one profile or one project (an *Abschattung*).¹²⁶ As we know from our experiences, when we perceive an object we perceive it from one side. Suppose that you see a house, you see it from one perspective. You cannot see both the front and the back of the house at the same time. Likewise, although consciousness can intend the object with infinite intentions, it cannot do this in one act of consciousness. As result, the unity of an object of consciousness, no matter it is an object in the world or it is me, would always be an ideal unity of the infinite perspectives.¹²⁷ Accordingly, a state is as real as an object in the world and shares the same ‘dubitability’ with it.¹²⁸

Like the state which is not a *form of consciousness*, actions should be differentiated from conscious acts. Sartre states that not only the actions like driving a car, writing can be regarded as transcendences; the actions like doubting, reasoning, thinking must also belong there.¹²⁹ He argues that since the former actions belong to world of things there is no difficulty of conceiving why they are transcendences.¹³⁰ In order to explain the latter he claims that when I see an object in a half-light, the spontaneous doubt that fills me is a consciousness. Yet, the

¹²⁴TE, 64.

¹²⁵TE, 63.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸TE, 64.

¹²⁹TE, 68,69.

¹³⁰TE, 69.

methodological doubt of Descartes who takes itself as an object is an action, since it is an object of reflection.¹³¹

Given the ego as a transcendent unity of states and actions, Sartre introduces qualities as an intermediary between them. He says that when we experience hatred, love or anger to different people and in different times we unify them in a psychological disposition.¹³² We say that “I am very spiteful, I am ill-tempered”.¹³³ For Sartre, such a disposition is a transcendent object *for* consciousness. Furthermore, as the words like capacity or inclination indicates, qualities are potentialities and their actualizations are either states or actions.¹³⁴ For example, when I say that I feel hatred to Peter, this is an actualization of the quality hatred and when I love Peter it is the actualization of quality of love. Yet, qualities as potentialities do not mean that they are only possibilities. They are real and they exist but their mode of existence is being as a potential, like the talents which exist but remains as a potential as far as it is not actualized.¹³⁵ As a result, ego is the transcendent object which is constituted by the synthesizing activity of consciousness. By synthesizing different states, actions and qualities an ego is developed. The objects of the ego are transcendent to it, yet ego by being the synthesis of them is also transcendent to all of its objects. As Sartre claims:

The ego is nothing outside of the concrete totality of states and actions that it supports. Undoubtedly, it is transcendent to all the states which it unifies, but not as an abstract X whose mission is merely to unify: rather it is the infinite totality of states and actions which is never reducible to *an* action or to *a* state.¹³⁶

For clarifying the relationship between consciousness, the ego and the constitutive items of the ego, Sartre uses two analogies. Firstly, he makes an

¹³¹Ibid.

¹³²TE, 70.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴TE 27, 28.

¹³⁵TE, 71.

¹³⁶TE, 74.

analogy to express the relationship between the constitutive items of the ego and the ego. A melody is composed of notes and it is not something independent from them. Moreover, a melody is not something that directs the notes or gives identity to the individual notes. On the contrary, melody is a produced unity after the notes are synthesized in a proper way. Therefore, it is not something that is prior to the notes which form it. Like the melody which is ‘a synthetic totality of the notes’, the ego is synthetic totality of the states and actions. Rather than directing them, it is produced after the conscious acts takes place. Thus, although my ego is the infinite synthesis of states and actions, it is transcendent to them therefore cannot be reduced to one of them. Therefore, the ego does not function as a holder and controller of the states and actions, but an infinite synthesis which is transcendent to what it unifies.¹³⁷ Another analogy that Sartre uses to explain consciousness and ego is the world and objects.¹³⁸ Like the world which is seen as a background of the things, the ego is the background of the psychical objects. Yet, unlike the world which rarely appears as a surrounding of the things, the ego is always on the horizon of the states.¹³⁹ What is world for unreflective consciousness is the ego for reflective consciousness.¹⁴⁰ While pre-reflective consciousness intends to objects and unifies them into a world, reflective consciousness directs itself to action, state and qualities and unifies them into an ego.¹⁴¹ As a result, while the ego is transcendent to its object, it is an object for consciousness and constituted by the activity of consciousness. Here, Sartre warns us about differentiating unity of consciousness with the unity of the ego. Although both of them are a unity while the first one does not need anything in order for its unification, the unity of the ego needs consciousness in order to be unified. Remember that ego is constituted

¹³⁷ D. Detmer, *Sartre Explained: From Bad Faith to Authenticity*, p.25.

¹³⁸ *TE*, 75.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ S. Priest, *The Subject in Question: Sartre's critique of Husserl in The Transcendence of the Ego*, p. 100.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

through the acts of consciousness. Above all, while consciousness is a pure spontaneity, ego is an object for it.

Ego, as a synthesis of actions, states and qualities explicate how the absolute, pure, spontaneous consciousness becomes individualized in a more concrete fashion. The individualization of each consciousness is related with their intentions, therefore with their ego. Since each consciousness takes different states as its objects, acts differently and have different qualities their constitution of the ego cannot be the same. Unlike the consciousness, the ego has its content which is formed by the acts of consciousness. By acting, human beings begin to develop an ego and gain a life history.¹⁴²In reflection, we objectify many of our non-positional awareness of ourselves and syntheses of these objectifications give rise to the construction of the ego.¹⁴³ Since we do not and cannot objectify all our non-positional awarenesses, we do it selectively.¹⁴⁴ Therefore, by selectively objectifying our past and present acts and by synthesizing them with our planned acts, we are constructing an ideal ego or self in reflection.¹⁴⁵ Since we cannot have the same past, present and future acts, all of us develop different egos.¹⁴⁶

Now we are in a point in which our ego is in the world with other selves. At this point, our ego is an object disclosed by infinite intentions. Here, we can ask whether it is possible to know ourselves or our self-knowledge will stay in an ideal point. Furthermore, we can ask the nature of the relation between ourselves and others in the world. For answering these questions, we should further investigate the relation between consciousness and ego which will lead us Sartre's theory of freedom.

¹⁴² M. Tanzer, *On Existentialism*, p. 45.

¹⁴³ D. Detmer, *Sartre Explained: From Bad Faith to Authenticity*, p. 23.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

2.2.4. The Broken Intimacy of Consciousness and the Ego: Self Knowledge and Others

Sartre states that ego is “an irrational synthesis of interiority and transcendence”.¹⁴⁷ As stated, ego is transcendent to its constitutive items as being the synthesis of them, and as being an object *for* consciousness it is transcendent to consciousness. However, Sartre says that ego is “more internal to consciousness than its states”.¹⁴⁸ Yet, this interiority does not occur in *contemplation*; on the contrary it is a *lived* inwardness.¹⁴⁹ This means that although in the reflected consciousness we have inwardness of ourselves, when this inwardness comes into reflection it becomes an object and loses its inward character. In order to clarify this, Sartre introduces a double structure to inwardness namely *intimacy* and *indistinctness*.¹⁵⁰ The relation between consciousness and ego is an intimate relation and the ego is seen as if it is *a part of consciousness*.¹⁵¹ Yet it cannot be a part of it, because ego is an object *of* and *for* consciousness. Ego as an object *of* and *for* consciousness carries the opaqueness, and this creates the indistinctness or “*lack of distinctness*”.¹⁵² This means that although the ego is intimate to consciousness, it does not have any determination (indistinctness) and when it becomes determined in the reflective consciousness it loses this intimacy.¹⁵³ Therefore, whenever the ego becomes an object, it becomes an ideal and cannot be known totally. We cannot use the advantage of the inwardness, since as an object it becomes “*the non-intimate transcendence*”.¹⁵⁴ Although it is the most intimate

¹⁴⁷TE, 83.

¹⁴⁸TE, 36.

¹⁴⁹TE, 84.

¹⁵⁰TE, 85.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³TE, 86.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

thing, when this intimacy comes into the scene, it becomes an externality which can only be grasped by experience or in reflection.

Sartre exemplifies this difficulty by saying that I cannot know whether I am a hard worker or an idler.¹⁵⁵ The answer can be known only by looking or observing my actions. In order to get an objective answer I should either get a distance from myself or look at the answer like someone who answers the question or asks another people about their opinion. In either case, I cannot use my intimacy in order to know myself.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, Sartre states “‘really to ‘know oneself’ is inevitably to take toward oneself the point of view of others, that is to say, a point of view which is necessarily false”.¹⁵⁷ Here Sartre refers to the role of others in our self-knowledge which he will clarify in detail in *Being and Nothingness*. Sartre argues that others are functioning as a mirror for our self- knowledge. Therefore, they are not only objectifying us, but also reflecting ourselves to us. Encountering with the other reflects us the fact that we are both a consciousness which is a non-substantial absolute and an ego which is an object in the world. As Sartre says “[w]e are surrounded by [s]pontaneity of consciousness, yet continue to be objects in the world. This is why man is always sorcerer for man [...] and [w]e are sorcerers for ourselves each time we view our *me*”.¹⁵⁸ Given this we can say that the intimate relationship between consciousness and ego not only misleads us to think that ego is a part of consciousness, but also misleads us about our self-knowledge. Thus, Sartre concludes “[t]he *me* as such remains unknown to us”.¹⁵⁹

As Sartre introduced in *Intentionality*, by making the ego an object *for* consciousness, he can overcome the difference between objectivity of the world and the subjectivity of ‘the psychical states’.¹⁶⁰ Sartre clarifies this difference by

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ *TE*, 87.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ *TE*, 82.

¹⁵⁹ *TE*, 86.

¹⁶⁰ *TE*, 94.

saying that while two people can talk about the one and the same chair; they cannot talk about their psychical states. The reason is that when the objects in the world are objective and accessible to everyone, the psychical states only belongs to person's inner life. Thus, while the psychical states are only accessible to person who owns them, they are not accessible to another person. However, since my state is an object both for me and for another person, we could talk about one and the same state. ¹⁶¹As Sartre clarifies:

Phenomenological understanding has come to teach us that *states* are objects, that an emotion as such (a love or hatred) is a transcendent object and cannot shrink into the interior unity of a 'consciousness.' Consequently, if Peter and Paul are both speaking about Peter's love, for example, it is no longer true that the one is speaking blindly and by analogy of that which the apprehends is full. ¹⁶²

Consequently, for Sartre the ego of me is equally intuitive to another person yet while I have a clearer grasp of it, another ego has a less clear grasp of it. ¹⁶³ As Sartre states " [m]y [i]s *no more certain for consciousness than the I of the other men*. It is only more intimate". ¹⁶⁴ However, this intuition should not be confused with consciousness of the other people. While another person can intuit my ego, neither of us is capable of intuiting each other's consciousness. ¹⁶⁵As Sartre says: "[t]here is no longer anything impenetrable about 'Peter', unless it is his very consciousness [...]" which is "[r]adically impenetrable". ¹⁶⁶ At this point, Sartre tries to show the reader the spontaneity of consciousness which is one of the most significant issues that Sartre pursues from *The Transcendence of the Ego to Being and Nothingness*.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² *TE*, 95.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ *TE*, 104.

¹⁶⁵ *TE*, 95.

¹⁶⁶ *TE*, 96.

2.2.5. The Spontaneity of Consciousness: Freedom and Anguish

[T]ranscendental consciousness is an impersonal spontaneity. It determines its existence at each instant, without our being able to conceive of anything *before* it. Thus each instant of our consciousness life reveals to us a creation from *ex nihilo*.¹⁶⁷

By the spontaneity of consciousness, what Sartre means is that the source of consciousness is itself, therefore it needs nothing in order to exist. As we said before, consciousness is an absolute, impersonal and spontaneous unity which cannot be determined by something other than itself. As the quotation indicates, it is an impersonal spontaneity and determination of it comes from itself, from *ex nihilo*, that is, there is no reason for its existence or the only reason for its existence is itself. For Sartre, this spontaneity and the creation of itself from *ex nihilo* results in anguish. The reason is that when we are aware of this spontaneity, each of us sees the fact that we are not responsible from this creation and beyond this we cannot control this spontaneity. Even *the will*, which we see as a controlling power of our actions, cannot control this spontaneity, since it is also an object “*constituted for and by this spontaneity*”.¹⁶⁸ For Sartre, this is the reason why we cannot sleep when we want to sleep or continuously think about something while we do not want to think about it.¹⁶⁹ This spontaneity is both the source of the anguish and the freedom. We are confronted with anguish since we grasp this absolute spontaneity which we are not responsible from the existence of it and we do not have any control on it. Furthermore, it is this spontaneity which not only makes possible the freedom of ourselves, but also condemns us to be free. Therefore, anguish appears as a reflective consciousness of freedom.

¹⁶⁷TE, 99.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

Sartre exemplifies the experience of anguish by a young bride who lives vertigo of possibility when her husband left her alone.¹⁷⁰ She is free for behaving like a prostitute and nothing can prevent her for doing this. She feels anguish because of the possibilities that come into the scene. As Sartre says: “she is monstrously free” and this is why she fills with anguish.¹⁷¹ Putting it differently, the possibility of the actions that she can do provokes anguish in her, because nothing can prevent her to do or not to do them. As a result, our consciousness of our freedom which is grasped as possibilities creates anguish in us.

Anguish is one of the experiences that show us the relation between our consciousness, ego and freedom. Thus freedom, as the spontaneity of consciousness, reveals itself in the form anguish. Yet, when consciousness realizes this spontaneity, it cannot escape the fear of itself and this can be the source of the some types of psychologic disorders.¹⁷² Anguish leads us to some psychological disorders because we cannot deal with the fact that we are authors of our own lives. Our consciousness of our freedom in the mode of anguish reveals us the fact that I make the person who I am, it is not the ego that makes me. In other words, we are escaping from the fact that ego is a constitution of my consciousness, not the owner of it.¹⁷³ Therefore, it is always possible for us to act differently, since we do not have a fixed ego which controls our actions.

However, we can claim that most of us do not experience ourselves and our life in anguish. This is to say generally we are living in the natural attitude as if we have stable egos. The attitude that tries to hide spontaneity of consciousness from itself will be named as the attitude of bad faith in *Being and Nothingness*. In *The Transcendence of the Ego*, Sartre is describing this attitude by likening of ego to a mask.

¹⁷⁰ *TE*, 100.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ D. Detmer, *Sartre Explained: From Bad Faith to Authenticity*, p. 28.

2.2.6. Ego as a Mask: Bad Faith

By rejecting transcendental ego, Sartre rejects formal presence of the I “at the heart of the *Erlebnisse*”.¹⁷⁴ On the same ground, Sartre rejects “material presence of me” existence of which is claimed to be in all our conscious activities by the mainstream of psychological theories. Similar to Husserl, who makes transcendental ego unifying center of consciousness, psychologists raised the theory of self-love for explaining unity of consciousness.¹⁷⁵ Sartre describes it as follows:

the love of self—and consequently the *me*—lies concealed within all emotions in a thousand different forms. In a very general way, the *me*, as a function of this love that it bears for itself, would desire *for itself* all the objects it desires. The essential structure of each of my acts would be a *reference to myself*. The “return to me” would be constitutive of all consciousnesses.¹⁷⁶

As it is quoted, for self-love theorists when we desire something, we desire it not because of it is desirable, but because of we desire ourselves. In other words, whatever we desire is for satisfying a need in us. Sartre exemplifies this issue with Pierre who needs help. For self-love theorists, we are going to Pierre’s assistance, because Pierre’s suffering creates an unpleasant state in us. In other words, although we think that we help Pierre for ending his suffering, actually we help him to end the unpleasant state that it creates in us.¹⁷⁷ Therefore, for self-love moralists “[i]t is the desire which is given as an end, and the desired object is the means”.¹⁷⁸ According to Sartre, self-love moralists misread the issue because they are not only

¹⁷⁴TE, 31.

¹⁷⁵TE, 54.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ TE,56.

¹⁷⁸ TE,55.

confusing pre-reflective and reflective levels of consciousness, but also the desire and the objects of desire.¹⁷⁹ He articulates his point as follows:

I pity Peter, and I go to his assistance. For my consciousness only one thing exists at that moment: Peter-having-to-be-helped. This quality of "having-to-be-helped" lies in Peter, It acts on me like a force. Aristotle said it: the desirable is that which moves the desiring. At this level, the desire is given to consciousness as centrifugal (it transcends itself; it is thetic consciousness of "having-to-be" and non-thetic consciousness of itself) and as impersonal (there is no *me*: I am in the presence of Peter's suffering just as I am in the presence of the color of this inkstand[...].¹⁸⁰

As it is quoted, for Sartre we are going to help Peter, not because of some unconscious drives that push us, but because of the positional consciousness of "Peter-having-to-be-helped" and unpositional awareness of this consciousness. His need for help is a quality that belongs to Peter, not to our consciousness. This is why Sartre says that psychologists are confusing the desire and objects of it. Helping Peter is an act of consciousness and "Peter-having-to-be-helped" is an object of it. Psychologist, for Sartre, is not taking "[f]irst moment of desire [a] complete and autonomous moment".¹⁸¹ This is also why they are confusing pre-reflective structure of consciousness with the reflective ones. For Sartre, it is only possible in reflection that I can say that since I pity Peter, I will help him. However, at the first moment of desire or consciousness, there is no pity, there is no I, but consciousness of Peter's need for help which is non-positionally aware of itself. Therefore, Sartre says, "In the case of reflection, and only in that case affectivity is posited for itself as desire, fear etc. Only in the case of reflection can I think 'I hate Peter', 'I pity Paul' etc." ¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ *TE*, 56.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² *TE*, 58.

Confusing the pre-reflective level of consciousness with the reflective ones leads us to conceptualize ego as a part of consciousness. Encountering with the fact that our consciousness is our freedom, so our ego is not a part of our consciousness, reveals anguish. However, in general we do not live our lives in anguish. For Sartre we take attitude of bad faith in order to escape the anguish that our freedom brings us. On this ground, Sartre argues that the function of the ego can be not only theoretical in the sense that philosophers assume the transcendental I for giving unity and identity to consciousness, but the function of the ego can be practical as well in the sense that it can be a mask whose essential function is to hide spontaneity of consciousness from itself.¹⁸³ Defining the ego as a mask will be called by Sartre as bad faith in *Being and Nothingness*. As he introduces it:

Everything happens, therefore, as if consciousness constituted the ego as a false representation of itself, as if consciousness hypnotized itself before this ego which it has constituted, absorbing itself in the ego as if to make the ego its guardian and its law.¹⁸⁴

Therefore, we are deceiving ourselves as if there is an ego in us which leads us to act in a determinate way, so we are living in self-deception. Similarly, we behave as if we have some unchangeable selves. Therefore, when we encounter with some situations, we are hiding in that self and say that “I could not do otherwise”. However, as Sartre exemplifies, we can at the same time say “: ‘I, I could do that’- ‘I, I could hate my father’”.¹⁸⁵ Possibility of forming such sentences does not due to the existence of an ego in us. On the contrary, this possibility lies on the ground of our freedom or spontaneous and absolute consciousness. This is to say whether we can refer impossibility or possibility of doing otherwise; it is because of our freedom which is not limited something other than itself.

Consequently, although we used to think our ego as something stable, Sartre shows that this ego is determined and re-determined by our consciousness in each conscious act. In other words, we are always *free* to determine our *ego* through our

¹⁸³TE, 100.

¹⁸⁴TE, 101.

¹⁸⁵TE,80.

consciousness meaning that we cannot escape from the fact that we are free to determine ourselves either this or that way. In sum, for Sartre we are the author of our lives and nothing other than consciousness can determine us.¹⁸⁶

In *The Transcendence of the Ego*, Sartre grounds his concept of consciousness and ego. It is in *Being and Nothingness* where these concepts are more elaborated and the relation between consciousness, nothingness and freedom is formed. Furthermore, in *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre's phenomenology will turn into a phenomenological ontology which we will examine in the next chapter.

¹⁸⁶Here, we should note that although our consciousness is free, this freedom does not mean doing anything we want. In *Being and Nothingness*, we will see that it is limited with our facticity and situations.

CHAPTER 3

IDENTIFICATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS WITH NOTHINGNESS AND FREEDOM

2.1. Phenomenological Ontology

As the subtitle of the work *Being and Nothingness* “*A phenomenological essay on ontology*” indicates, the main purpose of Sartre is to introduce a phenomenological ontology. Therefore, in order to have a better understanding of the book and the conceptions in it, we should explicate the meaning of phenomenological ontology.

Ontology is defined as the “study of beings or their beings”.¹⁸⁷ It seeks “ultimate constituents of reality”.¹⁸⁸ Hence, it is an investigation of different kinds of beings and their structures.¹⁸⁹ Putting it differently, ontology seeks to describe “fundamental categories of being and their interrelations”.¹⁹⁰ As the title indicates, for Sartre, reality is formed by two irreducible components, namely “Being” and “Nothingness”.¹⁹¹ Although it is possible to read *Being and Nothingness* as a dualistic ontology, we should be careful about the fact that Sartre does not present his ontology as such. A dualistic ontology would explain the reality with two independent elements such as the Cartesian duality of mind and body. However, for Sartre, as far as there are two independent substances, their

¹⁸⁷ See “Ontology”. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

¹⁸⁸ N. Levy, *Sartre*, p. 3.

¹⁸⁹ G. Linsenbard, *Starting with Sartre*, p.28.

¹⁹⁰ D. Detmer, *Sartre Explained: From Bad Faith to Authenticity*, p. 63.

¹⁹¹ N. Levy, *Sartre*, p. 3.

relation will always be a problem.¹⁹² As he says: “It is not profitable first to separate the two terms of a relation in order to try to join them altogether later. The relation is a synthesis”.¹⁹³ Therefore, we should understand being and nothingness as two interrelated terms. Additionally, we can state that this is one of the reasons why Sartre uses concepts of being-in-itself and being-for-itself, instead of mind and matter or man and things which imply dualisms and hierarchies throughout the history of philosophy.¹⁹⁴ In short, being and nothingness describe two modes of being. Thus, rather than “different realms of being”, Sartre would say ‘there are different ways for being to be’.¹⁹⁵

From a general point of view, we can say that while being refers to the being of whatever is, nothingness refers to consciousness. Sartre defines and specifies these concepts by naming them as “being-in-itself” and “being-for-itself”. While being-in-itself refers to the being of whatever is, so being of the world, of the objects in it etc., being-for-itself refers to consciousness, human being and human reality. Although it is controversial, Sartre uses the terms ‘world’, ‘being-in-itself’ and ‘being’ interchangeably. Similarly, he refers consciousness, nothingness, being-for-itself and human being synonymously.¹⁹⁶ In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre investigates a mode of being namely “for itself” as one of the constituents of the reality, its modes of existence and its relation to the other modes of beings.¹⁹⁷ Briefly, Sartre claims that there are two modes of Being, which can be revealed through a phenomenological ontology.

Here, we can examine why Sartre takes a phenomenological approach to the questions of ontology which will also elucidate the meaning of phenomenological

¹⁹² Joseph S. Catalano, *A Commentary on Jean-Paul Sartre's Being and Nothingness*, Chicago: Mid-way Reprint, 1985, p.22.

¹⁹³ *BN*, 3.

¹⁹⁴ Catalano, *A Commentary on Jean-Paul Sartre's Being and Nothingness*, pp.45-6.

¹⁹⁵ C. Daigle, *Jean Paul Sartre*, p.32.

¹⁹⁶ We will look at their specific differences in following pages of the chapter.

¹⁹⁷ G. Linsenbard, *Starting with Sartre*, p.34.

ontology. Phenomenology is the descriptive study of phenomena, that is, it tries to describe objects as they appear to consciousness and their experience as it is lived. Furthermore, it also tries to explicate the activities of consciousness through which these objects appear. Consequently, what is given to consciousness forms the study area of phenomenology. This is one of the reasons why Sartre presents his work as phenomenological ontology. He investigates being through what is given to consciousness. However, this does not mean that phenomenological ontology will be idealism. In *Intentionality* and *The Transcendence of the Ego*, Sartre believed that the transcendence of the objects and intentionality of consciousness is sufficient to reveal that there is a world independent from consciousness' perception of it.¹⁹⁸ In addition to this, he adds in *Being and Nothingness*, since we have an immediate access to being, through nausea or boredom, the question, whether the objects as they appear to us and the objects themselves are one and the same or not, will not take place. Therefore, difference between consciousness of the objects and objects themselves will be saved. In other words, they would not be reduced to each other. As a result, one of the aspects of phenomenological ontology is describing being through consciousness which has immediate access to it.

When a phenomenologist, if you prefer Sartre, talks about "being" he does not refer to entities or substances, but he refers the way, mode, or manner of the existence of beings.¹⁹⁹ Similarly, when Sartre examines consciousness, he does not question what kind of an entity or substance that consciousness is.²⁰⁰ Rather, he investigates the mode or the way of existence of consciousness. In other words, Sartre as a phenomenologist, tries to describe the different modes of existence that a conscious (being-for-itself) or an unconscious being (being-for-itself) could have. To exemplify, the questions like what it is like to experience oneself as a conscious

¹⁹⁸ Sartre considers idealism as a philosophy in which objects of the world are reduced to contents of consciousness. For a detailed discussion please see Chapter 2.

¹⁹⁹ D. Detmer, *Sartre Explained: From Bad Faith to Authenticity*, p. 64.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

being or what it is like to experience yourself as a being in the world are questions of Sartre's phenomenological ontology.

On the same ground, *Being and Nothingness* as a phenomenological inquiry involves both description of "the central structures of lived experience" and disclosing "the meaning of human existence as lived experience"²⁰¹. The phenomenological ontology finds its meaning by understanding *Being and Nothingness* as a study which aims to indicate the fundamental relations between being-in-itself and being-for-itself through which the meaning of experiencing of ourselves in the world is disclosed²⁰². Anguish, despair and joy are some of the "existential emotions" that belong to our experience of ourselves in the world. Furthermore, these emotions point out our difference from the objects in the sense that while we are conscious or experiencing beings, the objects have none of them.²⁰³ Similarly, these emotions open up ontological structures of what it means to be a conscious being.

Therefore, we can read Sartre's phenomenological ontology as having dual structures. First, he describes human experiences and second, he expresses the conditions under which "human experience [i]s possible".²⁰⁴ On the same ground, through the examination of human conduct, Sartre will examine the being of human beings. For instance, "what [i]s the being of man who has the possibility of denying himself?" or "what must man be in his being in order that through him nothingness may come to being?"²⁰⁵ are the questions of Sartre's phenomenological ontology. Consequently, *Being and Nothingness* is a phenomenological ontology which tries to give an ontological description of consciousness and its relation to the world.

²⁰¹G. Linsenbard, *Starting with Sartre*, p. 34.

²⁰²Ibid., p. 35.

²⁰³Ibid.

²⁰⁴Ibid.

²⁰⁵*BN*, 24.

In order to explicate the meaning of phenomenological ontology in detail, we will first try to analyze Part One, 'Introduction' of the *Being and Nothingness*. As many commentators warn us, it is one of the most difficult parts of the book. The difficulty is not only due to Sartre's language use, but also Sartre's introduction of almost the whole conceptions in the book without going into details. However, we think that this part is useful not only to elucidate the meaning of phenomenological ontology, but also to understand general structure of *Being and Nothingness*. Therefore, in the followings part of the chapter we will first focus on Sartre's understanding of appearance, consciousness, being and their relations. We will focus on *being* specifically, because Sartre generally repeats his claim about consciousness which he introduced in *The Transcendence of the Ego* and *Intentionality* in 'Introduction'. Second, we will refer consciousness as nothingness and freedom which result as anguish. Third, we will investigate bad faith, the other and project to be God which will lead us to discuss ethics in Sartre's philosophy.

3.1.1. Appearance, Essence and Being and Their Relation to Consciousness

MODERN thought has realized considerable progress by reducing the existent to the series of appearances which manifest it. Its aim was to overcome a certain number of dualisms which have embarrassed philosophy and to replace them by the monism of the phenomenon. Has the attempt been successful?²⁰⁶

Sartre claims that the dualisms of interior and exterior, being and appearance, potency and act, and appearance and essence can no longer find a place in philosophy. In order to understand such a big claim, we should understand what Sartre means by appearance, essence, being and their interrelations. First of all, we should keep in mind that when Sartre talks about phenomenon he does not refer to

²⁰⁶BN, xIv.

Kantian distinction of phenomenon and noumenon. Sartre rejects this distinction and argues that phenomenon does not refer to the appearance of something behind or beyond experience which cannot be experienced. In Sartre's words "the appearance refers to the total series of appearances and not to a hidden reality which would drain to itself all the being of the existent".²⁰⁷ Therefore, he argues that rather than hiding being, appearances disclose it.²⁰⁸ He differentiates himself from the tradition:

Force, for example, is not a metaphysical conatus of an unknown kind which hides behind its effects (accelerations, deviations, etc.); it is the totality of these effects. Similarly an electric current does not have a secret reverse side; it is nothing but the totality of the physical-chemical actions which manifest it (electrolysis, the incandescence of a carbon filament, the displacement of the needle of a galvanometer, etc.).²⁰⁹

As stated, Sartre claims that appearances refer to each other and the total series of appearances reveal being in each and every time of appearing. An object is the series of its appearances or manifestations.²¹⁰ Yet, there is nothing behind the appearances, which hides their actual nature²¹¹. An appearance is a manifestation of an existence whose existence is not reducible to its manifestations, but it is an infinite and connected series of its manifestations. As Sartre exemplifies, electric current is the total manifestation of its physical and chemical effects, yet it cannot be reduced to one of these effects.²¹² In other words, for him, although deviation is one of the appearances of electric current, it is not enough to explain what an electric current is. This is so, because it is *for* consciousness, *for whom* these effects occur and it is consciousness which intends them as objects. Since consciousness

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ As we discussed in the first chapter, phenomena or appearance is conceptualized in some part of the philosophy as something deceptive or as something that hides being. Sartre here refers to the revealing feature of the appearances.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

can intend an object with infinite intentions, one manifestation can never explain, but merely disclose it.²¹³

Sartre is also aware of the fact that we do not perceive the appearances in arbitrary ways. Although each of us has different experiences of the object, we still have commonly held view on objects. In other words, in our 'normal' world of experience, we do not experience difficulties on naming or conceptualizing the objects. For instance, while we perceive a table in different times and from different perspectives, we are still able to say that it is a table. This is one of the reasons why Sartre claims that there is objectivity in the world and objects in it. One part of the objectivity of the objects comes from the *essence* of the object meaning that there is something in Sartre's words a 'law' or 'principle' as what makes a thing or an object that specific thing or object.²¹⁴ This law or principle is what Sartre calls *essence*. The law or the *essence* itself is also an appearance which regulates the total series of appearances and is the synthesis of them.²¹⁵ As Sartre puts it: "[e]ssence, as the principles of series, is definitely only the concatenation of appearances; that is, itself an appearance".²¹⁶

However, the essence or feature of the appearing as revealing being is not sufficient by itself to explain either the objectivity of the world or the very nature of appearance. As we examined in the previous chapter, object is a *transcendent unity* whose existence does not depend on consciousness. However, in order for us to say that it is an object, it somehow must depend on consciousness. Objects are *transcendent* to the consciousness which unifies itself and the object by transcending itself. Similarly, in order there to be an appearance, it necessitates a consciousness to which it appears. Therefore, appearances become relative to the

²¹³BN, pp. xIv, xIvi.

²¹⁴ As we referred in the second chapter, for Sartre objects are transcendent to the consciousness that intends to it. Meaning that being of the objects cannot be reduced to the conscious states. For instance, the existence of an apple is not the perception of it.

²¹⁵BN, xIvi

²¹⁶ Ibid.

consciousness. This relativity of the object is the aspect that shows us what makes the infinity of appearances possible. As Sartre explained in *The Transcendence of the Ego* and *Intentionality*, consciousness can intend an object from one side or profile (an *Abschattung*) in one act of consciousness. As a result, objects would always be an ideal unity of infinite perspectives.²¹⁷ In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre repeats his claim by noticing that objects are both transcendent and relative to the consciousness which intends them. Therefore, while Sartre agrees with Husserl who claims that phenomenon is relative to consciousness, he disagrees with Kant who claims that phenomenon is relative both to the consciousness and the thing in itself.²¹⁸ To exemplify, for Sartre redness is both a quality of an apple-red and relative to consciousness which perceives it.²¹⁹

Consequently, we are at a point which claims both independency and relativity of the object.²²⁰ The objects are independent because 'the series of its appearance' depends on a principle, or if you prefer an *essence*, which does not depend on consciousness.²²¹ Yet, in order there to be an object, series of appearances or actual and possible number of appearances, there should be a consciousness which unifies them by transcending itself.

As a result, Sartre argues that we are confronting with a new dualism:

If the phenomenon is to reveal itself as transcendent, it is necessary that the subject himself transcend the appearance toward the total series of which it is a member.[B]ut if the transcendence of the object is based on the necessity of causing the appearance to be always transcended, the result is that on principle an object posits the series of its appearances as infinite. Thus the appearance, which is finite, indicates itself in its finitude, but at the same time in order to be grasped as an appearance-of-that-which-appears, it requires that it be surpassed toward infinity. This new opposition, the "finite and the infinite," or

²¹⁷ For a detailed discussion, see: Chapter 2..

²¹⁸ *BN*, xIvi.

²¹⁹ Joseph S. Catalano, *A Commentary on Jean-Paul Sartre's Being and Nothingness*, p.22.

²²⁰ We should remember that Sartre gives no priority either the consciousness or the objects. Objects and consciousness can only be what they are in relation to each other. The aim here is to show Sartre's way of argumentation.

²²¹ *BN*, xIvii.

better, "the in-finite in the finite," replaces the dualism of being and appearance.²²²

Sartre exemplifies his new duality with the genius of Proust whose genius is not exhaustible and cannot be reduced to his works. The genius of him and inexhaustibility of his work comes from "the infinity of possible points of view which one can take on".²²³ Briefly, Sartre forms his argument on three points. First, there are individual appearances whose appearance does not depend on consciousness. Second, in order there to be a particular appearance, there should be series of appearances. Series of appearances cannot be given in a particular appearance but necessitate and therefore are formed by consciousness. As a result, the very nature of object and consciousness drag us to a new duality namely "the in-finite in the finite" which means 'the finitude of single appearance and the infinity of possible appearances within the same series.'²²⁴ Consequently, even if we accept that Sartre solved all this dualism by melting them into a new one, we can still ask the being of the appearance as Sartre did.

3.1.2. Transphenomenality of Being and Consciousness: The Phenomenon of Being and the Being of the Phenomenon

In the second part of the Introduction, Sartre claims that appearance has its own being.²²⁵ This means that if something appears, it should "be". So the being of this appearance is our question. Sartre asks this question by differentiating the being of the phenomenon from the phenomenon of being: "is the phenomenon of being [i]dential with the being of phenomena? In other words, is the being which discloses itself to me, which appears to me, of the same nature as the being of

²²²BN, xIvii, xIviii.

²²³BN, xIvii.

²²⁴ Jacques Salvan, *To be and Not To Be: The Analysis of Jean Paul's Sartre's Ontology*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press: 1962, p.2.

²²⁵BN, xIviii.

existents which appear to me?”²²⁶Sartre’s question is whether we can reduce the being of the phenomenon to the phenomenon of being.

Here, we again encounter with some difficulties in Sartre’s use of language, especially with the word “being”. Being of phenomenon here refers to the being of existents which is “exactly its appearing”.²²⁷For Sartre, phenomena or appearance “designates itself as an organized totality of qualities,not its being”.²²⁸The qualities, actual and possible appearances of an object, form the essence or the meaning of an object,but not the being of it. For instance,the quality of an apple, (i.e. redness) is not the being of the apple.If the quality of the object is equal to its being, then we should interrogate the being of the quality of redness which will end up with an infinite regress. Similarly, being cannot be reduced either to the meanings or to the predicates. If this were the case, thenit would always be possible to ask the being of the predicate that is attached to it. Although Sartre admits that it is always possible to ask what the being of the object, i.e. being of the chair is²²⁹, he argues that it is not possible to do this questioning “without passing to the idea being in general and forgetting the table”²³⁰. Therefore, in this questioning “Being appears to me, not the being of the chair.”²³¹The being Sartre mentions is the phenomenon of being which he calls later as being-in-itself. For him, being (the phenomenon of being) cannot be reduced to the appearances (the being of the phenomenon). If this were the case, then this is, for Sartre, “to clothe the old ‘to be is to be perceived’ of Berkeley”.²³²

For Sartre, being is the foundation of both phenomenon and the being of phenomenon. As he describes:“The existent is a phenomenon.[B]eing is simply the condition of all revelation. It is being-for-revealing [a]nd not revealed

²²⁶Ibid.

²²⁷BN, xIvi.

²²⁸BN, xIix.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ J. Salvan, *To be and Not To Be: The Analysis of Jean Paul’s Sartre’s Ontology*, p.3.

²³¹Ibid.

²³²BN,,I .

being”.²³³ Being as a foundation or condition of appearances is what Sartre called transphenomenality of being. The irreducible aspect of being to its appearances and its status as a condition of any appearance is what makes being transphenomenal. As he describes:

It is (phenomenon of being) is an appeal to being; it requires as phenomenon, a foundation which is transphenomenal. The phenomenon of being requires the transphenomenality of being. That does not mean that being is found hidden *behind* phenomena (we have seen that the phenomenon cannot hide being), nor that the phenomenon is an appearance which refers to a distinct being (the phenomenon exists only qua appearance; that is, it indicates itself on the foundation of being).²³⁴

Similar to the being of objects, which cannot be reduced to the states of consciousness, Sartre argues that consciousness reveals a transphenomenal structure.²³⁵ Sartre has already introduced consciousness as a spontaneous, self-aware, translucent, contentless, autonomous and non-substantial absolute in *Transcendence of the Ego* and *Intentionality*. It is an absolute, because of two reasons. First, although its existence is a contingency, it does not depend on something to exist. Second, there is no difference between its being and appearing. Non-substantiality of it stems from the fact that it is not a substance carrying qualities. Thus, it has no content and is translucent. It is autonomous, due to its being as self-determined, and spontaneous due to its being as pure activity.²³⁶ Sartre repeats his claims about his descriptions of consciousness in *Introduction* and adds that consciousness as a non-substantial absolute has a transphenomenal structure. By the transphenomenality of consciousness, Sartre means that consciousness should be more than “a mere phenomenon” which depends for its

²³³BN, xlix.

²³⁴BN, I.

²³⁵Note that both being of the object and consciousness are “two regions” of one and the same being for Sartre.

²³⁶For a detailed discussion, please see: Chapter 2.

existence on something other than itself.²³⁷ However, this does not mean that consciousness can exist independently from its object. Sartre always keeps his argument about intentionality which is *consciousness is always consciousness of itself and something other than itself*. Like the transphenomenality of being, transphenomenality of consciousness points that consciousness can be reduced neither to its states nor to its objects.

As a result, Sartre claims that both phenomenon and consciousness, which are in fact refer to the two modes of being, reveal a transphenomenal structure. According to Sartre, the irreducibility of the being of objects and consciousness to each other, which implies the principle of intentionality and transphenomenality, is an *ontological proof* for transphenomenality of being.²³⁸ While the last part of the formula of intentionality (*something other than itself*) leads us to the transphenomenality of being of the objects, consciousness as a non-substantial absolute directs us to transphenomenality of consciousness. Therefore, both of these show us the transphenomenality of being, in which consciousness and objects of consciousness are two regions of it. Sartre's phenomenological approach is an attempt to investigate the question of being and relation of regions of it. As he puts:

What is the ultimate meaning of these two types of being? For what reasons do they both belong to being in general? What is the meaning of that being which includes within itself these two radically separated regions of being? If idealism and realism both fail to explain the relations which *in fact* unite these regions which in theory are without communication, what other solution can we find for this problem? And how can the being of the phenomenon be transphenomenal? It is to attempt to reply to these questions that I have written the present work.²³⁹

²³⁷ D. Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, p. 105.

²³⁸ *BN*, IX-IXii.

²³⁹ *BN*, IXvii.

3.1.3. Being: The Experience of Roquentin

To explicate further Sartre's question of Being, which will also clarify being of the appearance and consciousness, Sartre's novel *Nausea*, which is written at the same time as *Transcendence of the Ego* but published after 4 years, seems to be a good starting point. *Nausea* can be read as an adventure of Antoine Roquentin who tries to find a justification for his existence.²⁴⁰ Through Roquentin's adventure Sartre poses the question: "what if a human being could see the world as it really is, i.e. as it is before consciousness intends it?"²⁴¹ Roquentin describes his encounter with pure and brute existence:

If anyone had asked me what existence was, I would have answered, in good faith, that it was nothing, simply an empty form which was added to external things without changing anything in their nature. And then, all of a sudden, [there it was clear of a day: existence had suddenly unveiled itself. It had lost the harmless look of an abstract category: it was the very paste of things, this root was kneaded into existence. Or rather the root, the park gates, the bench, the sparse grass, all that had vanished: the diversity of things, their individuality, were only an appearance, a veneer. This veneer had melted, leaving soft, monstrous masses, all in disorder—naked, in a frightful, obscene nakedness.²⁴²

Encounter with the existence creates nausea in Roquentin. The following passage reveals Roquentin's attempt to overcome this nausea:

I lean my hand on the seat but pull it back hurriedly: it exists. This thing I'm sitting on, leaning my hand on, is called a seat. They made it purposely for people to sit on, they took leather, springs and cloth, they went to work with the idea of making a seat and when they finished, that was what they had made. They carried it here. [I] murmur: "It's a seat," a little like an exorcism. But the word stays on my lips: it refuses to go and put itself on the thing. It stays what it is, with its red plush,

²⁴⁰ Jean Paul Sartre, *Nausea*. Translated by Llyold Alexander. New York: New Directions Publishing, 2007. Hereafter this work will be cited as *N*.

²⁴¹ C. Daigle, *Jean Paul Sartre*, p.22.

²⁴² *N*, 127.

thousands of little red paws in the air, all still, little dead paws. [T]hings are divorced from their names. They are there, grotesque, headstrong, gigantic and it seems ridiculous to call them seats or say anything at all about them: I am in the midst of things, nameless things. Alone, without words, defenseless, they surround me, are beneath me, behind me, above me. They demand nothing, they don't impose themselves: they are there.²⁴³

In this quotation, Sartre tries to describe an experience of being in which there is not a positional consciousness giving meaning to it. It is pure existence, not a meaningful world. Once Roquentin detached from his meaningful world and encountered with being, the world and objects lose their meanings. This is why he tries to hold on the seat or to convince himself that it is a seat, and why he experiences nausea. What remain after such a loss are the meaningless and nameless mass which is hard to put into words.

This shows us three important aspects of Sartre's understanding of the world, consciousness and being. First, there is 'no world' before consciousness intends it.²⁴⁴ A world is structured by a consciousness with its selected goals, projects and desires.²⁴⁵ Roquentin is a person who temporarily does not have these projects which make him possible to structure the world.²⁴⁶ As a result, we can say that Roquentin can experience or encounter the brute existence which is a rare phenomenon, and this inevitably brings forth nausea. Second, For Sartre such an experience is possible only with the non-positional pre-reflective consciousness in which there is no *I*, but pre-reflective awareness of consciousness and its objects: "I was the root of the chestnut tree. Or rather I was entirely conscious of its existence. Still detached from it—since I was conscious of it—yet lost in it, nothing but it".²⁴⁷ As a result, Sartre again shows us the reality of pre-reflective experience, and the ego as

²⁴³ *N*, 125.

²⁴⁴ This argument was clarified in the second chapter and will be pointed again at the end of the third chapter.

²⁴⁵ D, Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, p. 111.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid*.

²⁴⁷ Cited by C. Daigle, *Jean Paul Sartre*, p. 29. *N*, p.131

a construction of consciousness: “Now, when I say ‘I’, it seems hollow to me. I can’t manage to feel myself very well, I am so forgotten. The only real thing left in me is existence which feels it exists.”²⁴⁸ Furthermore, it is possible, for Sartre, to have an immediate contact with being through some emotions such as nausea or boredom.²⁴⁹ Therefore, Sartre argues that all our investigations to being should be non-conceptual.²⁵⁰ In other words, although it is possible to have knowledge of the being, the being of this knowledge will always remain as a question. Besides, since we have an immediate access to being, knowledge of it is just a one mode of speaking about it. As he describes in *Nausea*: “Existence is not something which lets itself be thought of from a distance: it must invade you suddenly, master you, weigh heavily on your heart like a great motionless beast or else there is nothing more at all”.²⁵¹ Finally, Sartre’s description of being or Roquentin’s encounter with it differentiates Sartre’s phenomenological ontology from realism in general and from the idealisms of Berkeley, Husserl and Kant. He is not an idealist like Berkeley and Husserl due to the transphenomenal structure of being. As we stated, for Sartre being is neither its appearances as Berkeley claimed nor sum of its actual and possible appearances as Husserl argued. Finally, he is different from Kant in the sense that while the Kantian notion of noumena is the condition of all appearance (but cannot be experienced), for Sartre we have an immediate access to being.

In “Introduction”, Sartre gives preliminary descriptions of being. While explicating these descriptions; it can be useful to keep in mind the descriptions of being that Roquentin made. We may need these descriptions, because rather than brute existence, Sartre’s examples in *Being and Nothingness* include objects which we already have relations and find meaningful.²⁵² As Sartre

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ *BN*, xlviii.

²⁵⁰ J. S. Catalano, *A Commentary on Jean-Paul Sartre’s Being and Nothingness*, p.29.

²⁵¹ *N*, p.122

²⁵² J. S. Catalano, *A Commentary on Jean-Paul Sartre’s Being and Nothingness*, Chicago: Mid-way Reprint, 1985, p.46.

says: “The difficulty with trying to make this clear is that technically a “thing” such as a “tree,” already presupposes a relation of the in-itself to consciousness.”²⁵³ Therefore, in his definitions we should rather think pure existence, which is hard to put into words.

At the end of the “Introduction”, Sartre gives three descriptions of being : “Being is in itself. Being is what it is and being is.” These terms are related to each other, so generally it is not possible to differentiate them from each other. Therefore, our strategy is providing some ground for their differences and then opening up them altogether. When he refers to being as in *itself*, he refers to the absolute unity that being has.²⁵⁴ For instance, a tree is a tree, has its absolute unity, so an oak becomes a tree only *for* a consciousness. Developmental stages of tree are absolutely one with itself and manifest the continuity of its development, in other words, its becoming as a tree necessitates unification of consciousness.²⁵⁵ As a result, potency, actuality or relation cannot be applied to being-in-itself. When he refers being as *what it is*, he refers to the absolute self-identity that being-in-itself has. Furthermore, he tries to differentiate being-in-itself from being- for- itself which is “what it is not and is not what it is”²⁵⁶.²⁵⁷ Finally, when he refers being-in-itself as which *is*, he refers *contingency* of the existence.²⁵⁸ This means that existence has no reason, is uncreated and it is “superfluous (*de trop*) for eternity”.²⁵⁹ As he describes in *Nausea*:

The essential thing is contingency. I mean that one cannot define existence as necessity. To exist is simply *to be there*; those who exist let themselves be encountered, but you can never deduce anything from them. I believe there are people who have understood this. Only they

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ J. S. Catalano, *A Commentary on Jean-Paul Sartre's Being and Nothingness*, p. 45.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., pp.45-6.

²⁵⁶ *BN*, 119.

²⁵⁷ This point will be clarified in the next chapter.

²⁵⁸ J. S. Catalano, *A Commentary on Jean-Paul Sartre's Being and Nothingness*, p. 47.

²⁵⁹ *BN*, 29.

tried to overcome this contingency by inventing a necessary, causal being. But no necessary being can explain existence: contingency is not a delusion, a probability which can be dissipated; it is the absolute, consequently, the perfect free gift.²⁶⁰

Consequently, the being-in-itself is independent from the conscious being who intends it and it is simply what it is.²⁶¹ It is massive and full of positivity without carrying any negation.²⁶² Furthermore, becoming, transition or change is not applicable to it, it does not connect to any otherness and it is independent from temporality.²⁶³ Of course, Sartre is aware of the fact that entities in the material universe are subject to change or destruction.²⁶⁴ However, what Sartre says is that this change is a change for the observer (being-for-itself), not a change for being-in-itself. Sartre accepts that if we drop a glass, then it will shatter. Yet, Sartre says that in order there to be a change or destruction there must be a witness or observer who sees it.²⁶⁵ However, this does not mean that the perception of change of a thing creates the thing. This would be a contradiction, since he defines being-in-itself as independent from for-itself. What he emphasizes is the fact that change is a concept for being-for-itself, what we call as change is a change for us, but a modification of the “distribution of masses of beings” for the in-itself.²⁶⁶ Therefore, even the natural phenomenon like earthquakes or storms are destructions or changes for the being-for-itself.²⁶⁷ The being-in-itself is and it is still what it is before and after a storm or an earthquake occurs. This is not only because being-in-itself is not subject to temporality, but also because being-in-itself is full of positivity which cannot have any lack in any time.²⁶⁸ Furthermore, since being-in-itself is simply what it is, all

²⁶⁰N,131.

²⁶¹BN, 28.

²⁶²BN, pp.28-9.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ N. Levy, *Sartre*, p. 29.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶BN, 39.

²⁶⁷BN, pp.39-40.

²⁶⁸BN,39.

the modifications and differentiations in them come from being-for-itself. Therefore, it is for itself who sees cities as destructible by an earthquake. Here, he does not mean that being-for-itself creates the earthquakes, but rather he means that an earthquake and the destruction it causes finds its meaning in being-for-itself.²⁶⁹ Moreover, the spatial temporal relations of objects are also for being-for-itself. Putting differently, distances and nearness have a sense only in their relation to consciousness. A thing can be seen as near or far, as far as it is related with a consciousness. While Eiffel Tower is near to me in Paris; it is far if I am in Rome.²⁷⁰ Or, in the times when there is no plane, the distance between Australia and Great Britain is eight months, and today it is less than twenty four hours.²⁷¹ Yet, there is no quantitative change neither in Australia nor in Great Britain, they are still what they are. The change of distance is a change for us. Similarly, an object is an object for us in relation with our expectations, purposes and intentions.²⁷² While a glass of beer can be an alcohol for a drinker, it can be an object with a price for a producer or another intend for a waiter. Yet, from the perspective of in itself, it has no relation with the expectations or intentions of human beings. Briefly, being *is*, *being is in itself* and it is simply *what it is*.

3.2. Being- For- Itself and Its Relation to Consciousness

As we indicated at the beginning of this chapter, *Being and Nothingness* as a phenomenological ontology describes the relation between being-in-itself which refers to being explained above and being-for-itself which refers to nothingness. We also mentioned that Sartre can use the words consciousness, for-itself and nothingness synonymously. However, this does not mean that they are always

²⁶⁹ BN,40.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 21.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² R. Kamber, *On Sartre*, p. 45.

identical to each other. Therefore, we want first to clarify the meanings and differences between them in relation to consciousness without going into details.

In *The Transcendence of the Ego and Intentionality*, Sartre introduces ego as an object *of* and *for* consciousness and a self among many others in the world. This ego or self is being-for-itself, the human individual, in *Being and Nothingness*. Thus, Sartre uses the word being-for-itself with reference to “man” who each of us is. When he refers a human being confronting the world or has an awareness of it, Sartre does not differentiate consciousness and for-itself.²⁷³ Consequently, Sartre uses the words for itself, man and human reality interchangeably. However, when he refers the relation between consciousness and ego, or consciousness and body, he does not use the word for-itself.²⁷⁴ The reason behind this is specifying consciousness with intentionality; power of nihilating, negating, reflecting and self-detachment.²⁷⁵ Therefore, consciousness is equal or identical with its activities. However, this does not mean that consciousness and for-itself are two different entities.²⁷⁶ The relation between consciousness and for-itself is not identical but similar with the eye and seeing. It is possible to describe phenomenologically the act of seeing without introducing eye as an actor which realizes the act.²⁷⁷ Yet, this does not mean that it is possible for us to see without an eye. Similarly, we can describe consciousness without introducing for-itself with keeping in mind that when there is consciousness, there is for-itself and vice versa.

A being without consciousness cannot be *for-itself*, but it will be an *in-itself*. As a result, consciousness is not a sheer power without a body or ego. If this were the case, then it is not possible for a consciousness to act in a world. Besides, it is not possible for a consciousness to have a world without a body or ego. What we

²⁷³Edited by Christina Howells, *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre*, Hazel E. Barnes, “Sartre’s Ontology: The Revealing and Making of Being”, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 15.

²⁷⁴ Ibid, p.16

²⁷⁵ Ibid, p.18.

²⁷⁶ Consciousness is not an entity at all.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

try to emphasize is the difference between consciousness and ego, while the former constitutes the latter, the latter is an object *of* and *for* it. In other words, by differentiating the consciousness from being-for-itself in their relation to body and ego, we are trying to escape from being mistaken about the nature of the ego and consciousness. As a result, in this text we will use the word consciousness if it specifically refers to nihilating activities of consciousness and otherwise, we will use consciousness and for-itself synonymously.

In *Intentionality and Transcendence of the Ego*, Sartre introduces consciousness as a movement towards objects, a nothingness or emptiness without carrying anything in it. In the context of these works, nothingness of consciousness includes no-thingness or emptiness, and intentional character of consciousness. It is in *Being and Nothingness* where Sartre explicitly states that consciousness is nothingness. Explicating consciousness as nothingness will lead us to understand why consciousness, nothingness and freedom are one and the same.

Initially, consciousness is nothingness because it is *nothing* but an activity of nihilating. Through consciousness' nihilating activities consciousness becomes aware of itself and its objects. Moreover, when Sartre states that consciousness is nothingness, he refers its mode of existence. This is to say, Sartre does not claim that consciousness is a sheer nothingness. In other words, he does not argue that consciousness does not exist.²⁷⁸ Obviously consciousness does exist, but its way or mode of existence is nothingness. To articulate the point, we can consider nothingness in contrast to being-in-itself. Being-in-itself is self-identical, full of positivity, dense, massive etc. While being *is*, nothingness *is not*. If both of them were an *is* or self-identical without carrying any relation to itself or other, it would not be possible for us even to talk about them. Although both being-in-itself and being-for-itself are modes of one and the same being, the mode of Nothingness is a lack of being. It lacks the self-identity that being-in-itself has, therefore it is a

²⁷⁸ Alvin Palantinga, "An Existentialist's Ethics", *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 12, No.2, (Dec., 1958), pp. 235-256

movement, projection or an attempt to *be*. Its being is a borrowed one and will never be one with itself. In order to *be*, consciousness both nihilates itself and the world which is *nothing* but the intentional structure of it. Nothingness, in this sense, is identical with both consciousness and freedom. Since consciousness is nothingness, it is *free* to nihilate, transcend, take a distance or question what is given. For this reason consciousness due to its being as nothingness is freedom.²⁷⁹

3.2.1. Consciousness as Nothingness: Nihilation, Negation and Negativities

The phenomenological ontology of Sartre is about the relation between being-in-itself and being-for-itself. This relation is a ‘synthetic’ one for Sartre and the terms of the relation can be differentiated from each other only by means of abstraction.²⁸⁰ Rather than separating the regions of being and taking them independently, Sartre examines and describes the terms of this synthetic totality in relation to each other. He expresses this synthetic totality or relation between two regions of being as “man-in-the-world”.²⁸¹ And then he asks: what is the synthetic relation of world which we call being-in-the-world? and “what must man and the world be in order for a relation between them to be possible?”.²⁸² Sartre argues that these questions are interdependent and interrelated to each other, but it is possible to answer them both by means of analyzing human conduct. He chooses human conduct as a starting point, because they take place in the world, so they can reveal both the world and the human being, therefore their relationship.²⁸³ Although Sartre will use a lot of examples of human conduct throughout *Being and Nothingness*, he chooses questioning or interrogation as a starting point. The reason for his choice is

²⁷⁹ We will turn back to this point in the following parts of the chapter.

²⁸⁰ *BN*, 4.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

²⁸² *Ibid.*

²⁸³ *Ibid.*

that we are in the area of interrogation even at the moment when we ask “‘is there any conduct which can reveal to me the relation of man and world’?”.²⁸⁴ As we shall see, Sartre’s choice of questioning is not an arbitrary one. His interrogation will show us the revelation of non-being or nothingness, the relation between the world and consciousness, human being as a being which poses question and finally the meaning of freedom. We will investigate them one by one.

Sartre argues that posing a question reveals non-being in two ways. First, asking a question supposes a being who questions and a being which is questioned.²⁸⁵ Furthermore, we pose questions ‘about’ something. To exemplify, we question ourselves about some issue, situation etc. We can also question someone or something. However, in both cases, questioning involves an encounter with being and therefore disclosing it. Sartre exemplifies this by a broken watch.²⁸⁶ When my watch is broken, I will question the watchmaker for the reason why and watchmaker will question the watch and mechanisms of it.²⁸⁷ Both I and watchmaker wait for an answer from being in different ways. Therefore, asking a question presupposes an expectation for an answer.²⁸⁸ Furthermore, it seems to be an absurd attitude to ask a question, if the answer is already known. Therefore, questioning involves a lack of knowledge or ignorance of the questioner.²⁸⁹ Since being refers to identity and fullness, lack belongs to non-being. Second, it is always possible to give a negative answer such as no or none to the questions. As we know from our experiences, “no body, no one, nothing, never” etc. are one of the most general answers to our questions. In the case of our questioning to the broken watch, it is always possible for the watch to have ‘nothing’.²⁹⁰ Therefore, Sartre

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ *BN*, 7.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ *BN*, 5.

²⁸⁹ Alvin Palantinga, *An Existentialist’s Ethics*, p. 236.

²⁹⁰ *BN*, 7.

argues that every question presupposes a negative answer in it.²⁹¹ Since being is full of positivity, negativity again leads us to the non-being.

Sartre warns us to take non-being as a conceptual or judgmental issue. From different numbers of negative judgments like ‘Pierre is not here’, ‘unicorns do not exist’, we can form reflectively ‘the concept of non-being as the class possessing all of these “non-existents”’.²⁹² Although negation is included in these judgments, negation is not just the quality of these judgments.²⁹³ In order to form a negative judgment, we first need negation for Sartre. For instance, in order to judge that x is distinct and different from y, or in other words x is not same with the y, we should introduce limits in being, and introducing limitation necessitates negation.²⁹⁴ Even to judge that there is an x, we need first to negate all other things that are not x. In other words, all differentiation necessitates negation. Therefore, Sartre claims that negation is a transcendental condition of cognition.²⁹⁵ As he says: “What is present to me is what is not me, and this “non-being” is implied *a priori* in every theory of knowledge.”²⁹⁶

As a result Sartre asks: “[i]s negation as the structure of judicative proposition at the origin of nothingness? Or on the contrary is nothingness as the structure of the real, the origin and foundation of nothingness?”.²⁹⁷ Rather than a quality of judgment, nothingness for Sartre is a pre-judgmental issue and is the condition of judgment. For him, nothingness is constitutive of both our cognition and experience. To support his claim, Sartre describes concrete nothings that we encounter in experience. These experiences are absence, regret, destruction, distance etc. Analyzing these experiences will show us the reality of nothingness.

²⁹¹ BN,5.

²⁹² J. S. Catalano, *A Commentary on Jean-Paul Sartre's Being and Nothingness*, p. 55

²⁹³ BN,7.

²⁹⁴ S. Gardner, *Sartre's Being and Nothingness': A Reader's Guide*, p. 62.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ BN,7.

We will specifically focus on 'absence' since absence is described by Sartre in detail. Sartre describes the absence of Pierre as follows:

I have an appointment with Pierre at four o'clock. I arrive at the cafe a quarter of an hour late. Pierre is always punctual. Will he have waited for me? I look at the room, the patrons, and I say, "He is not here."²⁹⁸

All of the experience described above, finds its meaning and is constituted by the absence of Pierre. Consciousness and its objects are formed by the absence of Pierre at this moment. Here rather than being a judgmental issue, Pierre's absence is a lived experience and an experience which is formed by the absence of Pierre. It becomes a judgment only after this experience is lived. Besides, even to judge 'absence' of somebody or something, necessitates two nihilating acts of consciousness. We should note that these are spontaneous moments of consciousness therefore they should not be thought temporally but logically. The first act of nihilation is nihilating of the background in order to form the ground that Pierre should appear. In other words, in order there to be an appearance of a cafe the other things should be nihilated. Second, there should be a nihilation of objects in the café, such as objects or the other people, for the absence of Peter can appear:

It is certain that the cafe by itself with its patrons, its tables, its booths, its mirrors, its light, its smoky atmosphere, and the sounds of voices, rattling saucers, and footsteps which fill it-the cafe is a fullness of being. [B]ut we must observe that in perception there is always the construction of a figure on a ground. No one object no group of objects is especially designed to be organized as specifically either ground or figure; all depend the direction of my attention. When I enter this cafe to search for Pierre, there is formed a synthetic organization of all the objects in the cafe, on the ground of which Pierre is given as about to appear. This organization of the cafe as the ground is an original nihilation.²⁹⁹

These nihilating acts of consciousness can be applied in each and every experience. In order to have any experience at all, we should nihilate both the

²⁹⁸BN,9.

²⁹⁹Ibid.

background and objects in it. Furthermore, we should nihilate ourselves in order to differentiate the objects from ourselves, but we will come to this point later. Therefore, Sartre claims that in absence we have an immediate and pre-reflective awareness of somebody not there.³⁰⁰ As he says: "Do we not say, for example, "I suddenly saw that he was not there"“. ³⁰¹The experience of regret will take us to the same point. At the very moment of regret, we have pre-reflective and immediate awareness of 'I could have done otherwise.'³⁰² As a result, rather than being only a form of judgment, nothingness is concretized in the world.

It seems that nothingness both belongs to consciousness and the world. In other words, there is nothingness within man and in the world. Similar to the objects in the world, experience of absence is also a *transcendent* object *for* consciousness. In other words, absence of Pierre is the object of my pre-reflective consciousness, and belongs to the reality of the world. We can understand the relation between nothingness and negativities with affiliating them to ego and consciousness. While the ego is constituted by consciousness, it becomes a transcendent object *for* and *of* it. The ego is in the world among many others. Likewise, although absence, regret, destruction or distance is *for* and *of* consciousness, they become transcendent objects for it and participate in the objects in the world after they are formed. As a result, nothingness reveals itself at least in two places. First, nothingness is consciousness as an emptiness, a nihilating power and a constitutive rule for experience. Second, nothingness as negativities or concrete nothings are encountered in the world through which they become objects of experience due to the nothingness of consciousness.

Here we can question the foundation of nothingness, that is, if there is nothingness in the world, it should have some kind of originator. We stated that being-in-itself is a mode of being which is described as *is*, *in-itself* and is *what it is*. Therefore, we can plausibly affirm that nothingness cannot come from it, since it is

³⁰⁰ J. S. Catalano, *A Commentary on Jean-Paul Sartre's Being and Nothingness*, p.52

³⁰¹ *BN*, 9.

³⁰² *Ibid.*

full of positivity without carrying any lack or negation. Nothingness, on the other hand, is not and is lack of being. Although its being is only a borrowed one, it is still a region of being. As Sartre states:

[i]f nothingness can be given, it is neither before nor after being, nor in a general way outside of being. Nothingness lies coiled in the heart of being-like a worm. [N]othingness cannot be produced by Being-in-itself; the notion of Being as full positivity does not contain Nothingness as one of its structures. We cannot even say that Being excludes it. Being lacks all relation with it. Hence the question which is put to us now with a particular urgency: if Nothingness can be conceived neither outside of Being, nor in terms of Being, and if on the other hand, since it is non-being, it cannot derive from itself the necessary force to "nihilate itself," where does Nothingness come from?"³⁰³

At this point, it can be useful to recall that Sartre does not refer to nothingness as a sheer one. If this were the case, then it would not be possible for nothingness to nihilate itself.³⁰⁴ A sheer nothingness cannot nihilate anything, "because nothing is not".³⁰⁵ Thus, in order for something to nihilate another, it should *be*.³⁰⁶ For Sartre, we can talk about nothingness, because "it possesses an appearance of being, a borrowed being".³⁰⁷ Therefore, Sartre claims:

There must exist a Being (this cannot be the In-itself) of which the property is to nihilate Nothingness, to support it in its being, to sustain it perpetually in its very existence, a being by which nothingness comes to things.³⁰⁸

This being for Sartre:

[T]he Being by which Nothingness arrives in the world is a being such that in its Being Nothingness of its Being is in question. *The being by which Nothingness comes to the world must be its own Nothingness.*³⁰⁹

³⁰³BN, 21-2.

³⁰⁴BN, 22.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹BN, 23

In order to understand the reason why this being must be its own nothingness and to describe what the mode of existence of this being is, Sartre again turns back to the nature of question. As stated, question presupposes two kinds of being, being of a questioner and being of the thing that is questioned. Here, intentionality principle again plays an important role. For a consciousness to become aware of an object, it should first nihilate the background in order to have a ground in which the object appear. Then, it should nihilate the ground itself in which the object appear. Finally, it should nihilate itself to put the object, ground and background to put the object as other than itself. In other words, for a consciousness, to raise a question necessitates a consciousness which must be something other than the question (so can differentiate the question from itself). Yet it should be at the same time self-consciousness, since all consciousness assumes self-consciousness and consciousness cannot be reduced to its object. On this ground, Sartre claims that in order to ask a question, questioner cannot have the same being with the question. To put it in another way, the questioner should be independent from the causal chain of the questions, if it is able to withdraw himself/herself to ask a question. If the questioner belongs to the universal determinism, then it is not possible even to ask a question. Therefore, the questioner should be able to detach, withdraw, and fall back from the chain of questions. We can consider it in similarity to the relation between foundation of things and things that are founded. If the foundation has the same type of being which it founds, it will belong to the class of founded. Briefly, Sartre claims that it is possible to ask a question as far as the subject and object of the question can be differentiated from each other. As he notices:

[T]he questioner have the permanent possibility of dissociating himself from the causal series which constitutes being and which can produce only being. If we admitted that the question is determined in the questioner by universal determinism, the question would thereby become unintelligible and even inconceivable. [b]y a double movement

of nihilation, he nihilates the thing questioned in relation to himself by placing it in a neutral state, between being and nonbeing-and that he, nihilates himself in relation to the thing questioned by wrenching himself from being in order to be able to bring out of himself the possibility of a non-being. [A]t the same time the question emanates from a questioner who in order to motivate himself in his being as one who questions, disengages himself from being. This disengagement is then by definition a human process. Man presents himself at least in this instance as a being who causes Nothingness to arise in the world, inasmuch as he himself is affected with non-being to this end.³¹⁰

Since objects are incapable of self-detachment, movement, differentiation or nihilation, it is man who poses the question. This capability of taking a distance to itself, or the intentional structure of consciousness, is what Sartre means by the phrases like “nothingness nihilates itself” or “*The being by which Nothingness comes to the world must be its own Nothingness.*” If nothingness arrives to the world by means of human being, then Sartre asks “what must man be in his being in order that through him nothingness may come to being?”³¹¹

The being of man occurs as freedom. To explicate further the reason why, it seems plausible to give a brief description of our point. Sartre claims that the relation between in-itself and for-itself can be described through human conduct, for instance the way we raise questions. An investigation to the nature of the question leads us to non-being in the world and human beings. Nothingness or non-being appeared as a constitutive part of our experience and as a result of this constitution, they become the objects of experience. When he further investigates the condition of possibility to ask a question, he finds that to pose a question necessitates a detachment from the world and consciousness. To put it differently, consciousness should take a distance from itself and from the causal chain of the objects to ask a question. This ability to take a distance from itself is one of the aspects that make consciousness, nothingness and freedom identical. However, it is vital to note that freedom is not a property of consciousness, they are indistinguishable.

³¹⁰BN, 23-24.

³¹¹BN, 24.

3.2.2. Consciousness as Freedom: Anguish and Bad Faith

Let us go back and consider “the absence of Pierre” again. Obviously, there are infinitely many things that are not present in that café at that moment. Nevertheless, what Sartre perceives is the absence of Pierre. For Sartre, this is one of the signs that disclose the freedom of consciousness. What is given in the world cannot determine my perception.³¹² In other words, it is my intentional acts, my directedness to the world that decide what I will see in the café, not the object themselves.³¹³ Furthermore, the world and objects in it appear to me as absent, distant and deconstructed again depending on my expectations. For instance, neither Peter nor Marilyn Monroe is in that café, but I do not perceive them as absent. Therefore, what I will see, think, perceive, imagine, look etc. is always depending on my intention, and hence on my expectation. As a result, consciousness is *free* to go beyond what is given in the experience.³¹⁴ However, Sartre does not claim that we are free to live in an imaginary world.³¹⁵ There are objective facts in the world. As we know from experiences, the world is resisting to us, we cannot make whatever we want with the world. Non-being appears in the world, not as a subjective reaction of an agent, but as a constitutive part of our experience which results as objective nothings in the world.

What makes us free is that we are always free to change the relation between us and the world through our intentions. More importantly, this relationship itself is constituted through our intentions. Being-in-itself is only what it is and prior to nothingness. Yet, consciousness through its nihilating acts is *free* to go beyond, and transcend what is given to it. As Sartre emphasizes:

³¹² D. Detmer, *Sartre Explained*, p.68.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Ibid. p.69

³¹⁵ We should always keep in mind that Sartre always thinks that he is “protecting” the reality and the transcendence of the world with the principle of intentionality.

Yet it is not given to "human reality" to annihilate *even* provisionally the mass of being which it posits before itself. Man's *relation* with being is that he can modify it. For man to put a particular existent out of circuit is to put himself out of circuit in relation to that existent. In this case he is not subject to it; he is out of reach; it cannot act on him, for he has retired *beyond a nothingness*. Descartes following the Stoics has given a name to this possibility which human reality has to secrete a nothingness which isolates it-it is *freedom*.³¹⁶

The nothingness of consciousness reveals us the fact that our existence is an issue for us. We are capable of examining ourselves, our lives and the world because, unlike the objects, we are capable of disassociating ourselves from what we are exposed to and take our exposition as an issue for us. The nothingness of consciousness, that is, its being "nothing" could be understood as the reason why our freedom is inevitable and absolute. Since consciousness is nothing and it is a nihilating power, it must make "what it is" from nothing. This means that although our past actions take the form of being-in-itself (it cannot change, it is simply what it is), they cannot be effective in our present and future actions. Therefore, in all our actions and decisions we must make ourselves again and again which makes our freedom unavoidable. As a result, while causal determinations apply to the things in the world, for-itself as far as it does not objectify itself is not subject to the causality. More accurately, although human beings explain their actions with causal determinations, their past cannot determine their future because they are separated with nothingness.

What Sartre tries to show us is the fact that *nothing* can be effective in our decisions and in our lives. Therefore, neither the past nor the present situations can determine what we are. Although we find us inevitably in a situation, we are also inevitably free to make ourselves in each time we are confronted with situations. Therefore, for Sartre, what I will be depends on me, since I am separated from my past with nothingness. However, being inevitably free to make what myself is does not mean I am free to do anything I want. Sartre is aware of the fact that there are at least some unchangeable factors in my existence. Sartre named these factors as

³¹⁶BN,24

“facticity”. Facticity can be exemplified by my age, sex, date and place of birth, nationality etc. For him, although we cannot change it, I can change or take a different attitude to the meanings that I give to it. Therefore, by freedom, Sartre does not mean that I can change my environmental, biological or social conditions. Although I can leave my present environment, I must live in a different environment. Therefore, although there are some factors in my life that I cannot change, I can change the meaning that I give to them.

However, here it is significant to mention that Sartre does not argue that my facticity or my past does not play any important role in my life at all. For him, “[t]he past can “be reborn” to haunt us”³¹⁷. As we can know from our experiences, it is always possible for any past action to shape our lives. However, what Sartre argues is that our past actions can change or shape our lives as far as we let them to do so. More importantly, our facticity is one of the features that make us who we are. As Sartre exemplifies, my past is what makes me a sailor rather than a diplomat or professor. My past becomes my facticity, it is fixed like a substance, but it is always possible for me to change and to choose anew meaning that I give to it. Transcending, negating, re-interpreting my facticity is always possible, because our past and future are separated with nothingness which is our freedom.

One’s facticity reaches the status of being-in-itself with the death of consciousness. This is to say when someone dies, its past cannot be changed, since it becomes “what it is”. As Sartre quotes: “[A]mong man that one cannot pass a judgment on the life of mortals and say if it has been happy or unhappy, until their death. [T]he terrible thing about Death is that it transforms life into Destiny”.³¹⁸ Therefore, once for-itself dies, its past becomes being-in-itself. However, past after death can only be a past for a consciousness that is alive. In other words, after our death we cannot have a past, and our past becomes a past for someone or for a present consciousness. Here, it is better to stress that for Sartre “death” is not

³¹⁷BN, 109.

³¹⁸BN, 115.

necessary, in order for my past to become being-in-itself. This is to say, once my present becomes my past, it already reaches the status of being-in-itself. What makes death special is that with death of consciousness, my possibility to reinterpret the meaning that I give to my past is destroyed. Therefore, although what I lived becomes being-in-itself due to its fixity, as far as I am alive I can change the meaning that I give to it.

By disclosing freedom, consciousness and nothingness as identical, Sartre claims that “existence precedes essence”³¹⁹ or, as he expresses in *The Transcendence of the Ego*, the ego is constructed by means of consciousness. Since we are always free to choose our actions and to make what we are, there is no fixed or determined essence in our existence. This means that we are making or constructing our essence through our actions, therefore there is no such essence which determines us in a particular way. As we stated, essence for objects in the world is the law of the series of appearances. Sartre’s understanding of essence can be understood with primary and secondary qualities.³²⁰ While the primary qualities give the conceptual identity of the thing, secondary qualities are relative and depend on the perceiver. Therefore, the essence of the thing is its primary qualities. Since consciousness is empty and nothingness, it cannot have any quality or property. Yet, he says that since existence precedes essence, there should be an essence in human beings although it cannot be a fixed one.³²¹ As we said before, consciousness is prior to ego and constructs the ego through its acts. Furthermore, while consciousness is an ontological structure of for-itself, ego is what gives the human beings their particularity. In other words, it is the ego which makes a person this specific person. Likewise the essence of things which makes an object as this object, the essence of human beings is their ego.³²²

³¹⁹BN, 725.

³²⁰ M. Tanzer, *On Existentialism*, p. 43.

³²¹Ibid., p. 45.

³²²Ibid., p. 47.

By acting consciously I begin to develop an ego or essence. Nonetheless, although an object's essence is determinable in its usage, this is not the case for human beings. If all the essential properties that make a table were taken away from a table, then it would not be a table anymore. It would lose its tablehood and simply be. However, if I negate all my acts that construct my ego or essence, it is possible for me to reconstruct an ego. It is possible because as we said our past and future are separated with nothingness. But still, it is worth remembering that if all the qualities, states and actions are taken away from the ego, then there is no such thing called as ego. It is because ego is not something inhabiting in my consciousness, but it is an object *for* consciousness.

The emphasis here is my possibility of negating my past and my ego, and this is possible because of the fact that my consciousness which is prior to my ego has an unrestricted power of negating. As a result, while Sartre does not attribute any determined essences to human beings, he does not deny that they have essences. In other words, although we have no fixed essence, we are always in the process of making our essences or what we are, therefore our ego. In human beings existence precedes essence, while existence refers to consciousness and essence refers to the ego that which consciousness constructs.³²³ Putting differently, consciousness (existence) as being the source of the ego (essence) is both ontologically and temporally prior to the ego.³²⁴ Since the existence of the ego depends on the consciousness, it is ontologically posterior to it. It is also temporally posterior to it, because human beings first exist as conscious beings, and then begins to develop an ego.³²⁵

As a final point, Sartre warns us to think that we do not exist for being free. On the contrary, our existence is our freedom. As he says: "Man does not exist first in order to be free subsequently; there is no difference between the being of man

³²³ Ibid, pp. 47-48.

³²⁴ Ibid., p. 48

³²⁵ Ibid.

and his being free”.³²⁶The reason why can be explained again by the relation between consciousness and ego. We are always *free* to determine our *ego* through our *consciousness* meaning that we cannot escape from the fact that we are free to determine ourselves either this or that way. In other words, we are always free to make who we are because our consciousness is nothingness.

3.2.2.1. Anguish

Sartre states that “if freedom is the being of consciousness, consciousness ought to exist as consciousness of freedom.”³²⁷ This means that if our being is freedom, then there should be a consciousness of our being. As we discussed in the previous chapter, reflective consciousness of freedom is the experience of anguish in Sartre’s philosophy. He exemplifies anguish in *The Transcendence of the Ego* by a young bride who lives vertigo of possibility when her husband left her alone. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre explicates anguish in a more detailed fashion and specifies two kinds of anguish namely; anguish in the face of past and future. Sartre warns us against identifying the concept of freedom with the concept of anguish. First, freedom is the condition of the appearance of anguish, therefore cannot be equal to it. Second, freedom shows itself to us in anguish does not mean that freedom is anguish.³²⁸

Sartre explicates the meaning of anguish by differentiating it from fear. For Sartre, while the source of fear is the objects in the world, “anguish is anguish before myself”.³²⁹ In other words, in fear, we fear from something or someone. However, anguish refers to our capability to do something or to do otherwise.

³²⁶BN 60.

³²⁷BN, 53.

³²⁸BN, 70, 71.

³²⁹BN, 29

Putting it differently, anguish is the experience of knowing that the source of our actions is not determined by anything like the objects in the world, but only by ourselves. Sartre explains anguish in the face of the future and its difference from fear through the experience of the vertigo. While walking in a precipice, I fear to fall down. I fear it, since I feel that I am an object in the world and subject to causal order of the world or universal determinism.³³⁰ In other words, if a stone will slip, then like an object I will fall down too. At this moment, I have nothing to do, I am a just an object in the world. Therefore, fear is the pre-reflective apprehension of being a transcendent object in the world.³³¹ Anguish occurs when I ask myself “what I am going to do?”³³² It occurs at that moment when I encounter the fact that I am the only decision maker. What I will do is not determined by anything, I am the only one who should decide my future actions. For instance, it is possible for me to take some precautions for not falling down or I can change my attention to escape from the fear.³³³ However, it is also possible for me to do otherwise. Thus, I can jump at the precipice or I do not take any measure to not falling down.³³⁴ Both of these actions are possible, therefore Sartre claims that the existence of my all future actions is in the mode of being possible. Their existence depends on me, in other words, they will come to the existence if I choose to bring them into existence. As a result, all of my future actions are my possibilities and they will exist as far as I take them as my possibilities.³³⁵ Another example that Sartre uses to explain anguish in the face of the future is the anguish of the soldier. A soldier can fear from the bombs or to be killed. Yet, to kill someone or the results of the war provokes anguish in him. He experiences anguish since he reflectively knows that it is also possible not to kill anyone or not to be involved in any war. As a

³³⁰*BN*, 30.

³³¹ *Ibid.*

³³²*BN*, 29-30.

³³³*BN*,30.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

result, the reflective consciousness that knows it is the only source of action provokes anguish in for-itself.

Sartre exemplifies anguish in the face of the past by a gambler who regrets of being a player and forswears playing again. However, when he comes near to gaming table, his resolution dissolves. He is free either to play or not play, so he must make a new or original decision. When he comes in front of the gambling table, the experiences that he lived yesterday become a “memory of an idea” or “a memory of feeling”.³³⁶ While he is deciding to play or not to play, he must re-experience the fear of losing all money or disappointing of his family.³³⁷ Therefore, although it seems so, the early decision of him is not effective in his new decision. This is why he must re-experience them. Although the gambler decides not to play after his re-experiencing, this does not mean that his past decision determines his present decision. He will decide as such, because of his new experience. The gambler lives anguish because of the fact that *nothing* prevents him in his past to play again. Either his decision of not playing or the possibility of losing all money can be a determinative factor for his action. He must re-make his decision and re-experience the fear of losing all money. As Sartre says: “The not gambling is only one of my possibilities, as the fact of gambling is another of them, neither more nor less”.³³⁸ Therefore, Sartre says, his consciousness of freedom shows itself in the form of the consciousness of anguish. The possibility of playing again and anguish followed by this possibility is the consciousness of freedom.³³⁹

By the experience of the anguish, Sartre reveals us further the relation between consciousness and the ego. Since our self-determination depends only in us, we experience anguish. In other words, all values, actions, projects, aims etc. find their source in us. Therefore, finding no one to blame or finding no one to justify our

³³⁶BN,70.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Ibid., pp.70-71

actions except ourselves is both our freedom and the reason of our anguish. Yet, we do not live our life normally like this. Putting it differently, we explain our actions as if they are formed by external causes or we have stable egos. Encountering with the fact that we are the author of our lives brings responsibility with it. In other words, since we are the creators of our actions and our world, we are responsible from what we create. Since we cannot deal with the excessive responsibility that our freedom brings to us, we escape anguish with the project of bad faith.

3.2.2.2.Bad Faith

As stated, through being its own nothingness, consciousness introduces negations into the world which results as negativities. Similarly consciousness is also capable of negating itself and through this negation some attitudes of self-negation come to the world. When consciousness' negation turns to itself rather than to the world, attitudes of self-negation come to the scene. As he reveals negativities through absence and distance, Sartre will clarify consciousness' internal negation through bad faith.³⁴⁰

The internal self-negation or the negative attitude that for-itself takes to itself is self-deception. Therefore, Sartre describes the project of bad faith with self-deception. He differentiates lie from bad faith. Normally, lying includes first two subjects interacted to each other while the former knows the truth, the latter does not. The former subject should know the truth to lie. In other words, in order to lie, we should know the reality, but act or speak otherwise. Yet, as we know from experiences lying to ourselves is also possible. Smoking is a very explicit example of our self-deception. While we know the harm of smoking, we smoke as if it is harmless.³⁴¹ In other words, we behave as if it will be not us who will be in the danger of being cancer while smoking. While we are pre-reflectively aware of the

³⁴⁰BN, 47-48.

³⁴¹ D. Detmer, *Sartre Explained*, p.82

risks of being a smoker, we reflectively behave as if we do not.³⁴² Therefore, in self-deception, we both know the truth and lie to ourselves. We can ask that how this is possible as Sartre did.

According to Sartre, self-deception or self-lying is explained by psychologist especially by Freud by means of the existence of unconsciousness. For Sartre the existence of unconsciousness as the explanation of self-deception or self-lying cannot be accepted. Since consciousness is empty and translucency, Sartre denies existence of anything including unconsciousness in consciousness.³⁴³ Therefore he asks: “what [i]s the being of man who has the possibility of denying himself?”³⁴⁴

For Sartre being of man is being of a synthesis of transcendence and facticity. While transcendence refers to consciousness’ capacity of going beyond itself, of dissociating from itself, nihilating powers or intentionality, in short to freedom, facticity refers to its unchangeable features. As we discussed, the past actions, the body, biological and social conditions of for-itself takes the form of being-in-itself. Therefore, being of a man for Sartre is synthesis of two. As Sartre describes:

The basic concept which is thus engendered, utilizes the double property of the human being, who is at once a facticity and a transcendence, These two aspects of human reality are and ought to be capable of a valid coordination. But bad faith does not wish either to coordinate them or to surmount them in a synthesis. Bad faith seeks to affirm their identity while preserving their differences.³⁴⁵

For-itself in order to hide this reality from itself lives in bad faith. This means that for-itself is focusing on one part of the synthesis, it treats itself either as being transcendent or facticity. Sartre exemplifies for-itself’s identification of itself with its transcendence by a women who goes for a date with a man. Sartre assumes that here the man has some sexual aims in his mind and the woman knows this fact. However, the woman wants to ignore these aims and demands an intellectual

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ For a detailed discussion, please see chapter 1.

³⁴⁴ *BN*, 104.

³⁴⁵ *BN*,56.

adoration from the man. In other words, the woman wants the man to admire her intellectual capacities. Although it is possible for the women to share the aims of the man at the following stages of the relationship, she does not want to decide it yet. However, when the man suddenly takes the hand of the woman, she should decide what she is going to do. At the moment of hand taking, it is no more possible for the women to behave as if they are merely in an intellectual talking. As Sartre describes:

But then suppose he takes her hand. This act of her companion risks changing the situation by calling for an immediate decision. To leave the hand there is to consent in herself to flirt, to engage herself. To withdraw it is to break the troubled and unstable harmony which gives the hour its charm. The aim is to postpone the moment of decision as long as possible. We know what happens next; the young woman leaves her hand, but she does not notice because it happens by chance that she is at this moment all intellect. She draws her companion up to the, most lofty regions of sentimental speculation; she speaks of Life, of her life, she shows herself in her essential aspect-a personality, a consciousness. And during this time the divorce of the body from the soul is accomplished; the" hand rests inert between the warm hands of her companion-neither consenting nor resisting-a thing.³⁴⁶

As we see, the woman's treatment of herself as if she is a disembodied mind means that she denies her facticity.³⁴⁷ She would not be in bad faith, if she was aware of the fact that she is a synthesis of consciousness and body. Bad faith is there because while she pre-reflectively knows that she is a synthesis of her mind and body, she behaves as if her body is not a part of her. Contrary to the woman who identifies herself with her consciousness, Sartre gives an example of a waiter who identifies himself with its facticity. He describes the waiter:

His movement is quick and forward, a little too precise, a little too rapid. He comes toward the patrons with a step a little too quick. He bends forward a little too eagerly; his voice, his eyes express an interest a little too solicitous for the order of the customer. Finally there he returns, trying to imitate in his walk the inflexible stiffness of some kind of automaton while carrying his tray with the recklessness of a

³⁴⁶BN, 56-7

³⁴⁷ C. Daigle, *Jean Paul Sartre*, p. 63.

tight-rope-walker by putting it in a perpetually unstable, perpetually broken equilibrium which he perpetually reestablishes by a light movement of the arm and hand. All his behavior seems to us a game.³⁴⁸

Although being a waiter can be a part of one's facticity, it is not possible for a conscious being to be reduced to a specific role. In other words, his being cannot be reduced to its role. Yet, the waiter, while playing its role tries to be a waiter like "this inkwell is an inkwell".³⁴⁹ In other words, the waiter denies its transcendence and tries to stay in the mode of being-in-itself which is impossible.

Through the examples of bad faith Sartre opens up the ontological structure of human reality. He describes the for itself as: "human reality as a being which is what it is not and is not what it is".³⁵⁰ This paradoxical and puzzled description is again leading us to the relation of consciousness and ego. Furthermore, it reveals their relation to time which is another ontological structure of human reality. Since human reality is freedom (consciousness) it is always possible to transcend its facticity (ego and past). Therefore, for itself is not "what it is", like "this inkwell is an inkwell". Although its facticity takes the form of in-itself, its capability of nihilating it makes possible to not be reduced to its facticity. On the same ground, for itself is "what it is not", since for itself is always projecting itself to a future which is undetermined. In other words, since the ego or the facticity of for-itself cannot determine the future actions of it, for-itself is always projecting itself to "what it is not". This again brings us to our freedom: "I am infinity of possibilities"³⁵¹ and "the future is what I have to be in so far as I cannot be it".³⁵² We have a future, because we are beings whose being is a lack. As we said, although for-itself has a relation to itself and in-itself by means of being its own nothingness, it can never "be" until his/her death. In other words, self-identity is

³⁴⁸BN,59

³⁴⁹BN,66.

³⁵⁰BN,58.

³⁵¹BN,129.

³⁵²BN, 125.

not possible for the for-itself. This is the reason why for-itself is a flight to a future to reach what it lacks. However, it is not possible for-itself to reach completely what it lacks, since “to be” is possible for for-itself only in death which turns for-itself into a being-in-itself.

Bad faith, is not only shape our self-relation, but also our relation with others. Putting differently, human beings, in order to escape from their freedom, form another projects of bad faith. Our relation with the other and the projects of desire to be necessary which we will investigate in the following sections are the other forms of bad faith.

3.2.3. Being-for-Others

Being-for-others is another mode of being-for-itself. Till here, we explicate being-for-itself as something related with other things. In other words, we try to illuminate consciousness in relation with the world and ego. Throughout in our investigation we referred to “the other” in *The Transcendence of the Ego* as someone who mirrors us in our self-knowledge. As stated, we can learn whether we are a lazy person or not with a distance from ourselves where we look ourselves as if someone is looking to us. In discussing concrete nothingness, we revealed absence of Pierre as both constitutive of our experience and objects in the world. In bad faith, we again discussed “the other” in affirmation or in rejection of our facticity or transcendence. Consequently, in our investigation the role of the other stayed in the status of an object of consciousness. In this section, we will try to concentrate on the role of the other as a subject in our inquiry. In explicating the third region of being, being-for-others, Sartre gives us a wide description of being-for-others in which our being “as seen by the other” is revealed. “The look” and the feeling of “the shame” are the experiences in which we encounter with the other as either subject or object.

Sartre describes encountering with the other as an object by an example of a park where someone is walking. Till you become aware of the subject, the

organization of the park is depending on your intentional activities. Even the distances are determined according to your attention. For instance, the bank is near to the street, but away from the grass depending on what you focus on. Your experience of the park is pre-reflective and objects of the park are objects of your consciousness. However, when you see someone in the park, she/he is both an object and subject for your consciousness. As Sartre describes:

THIS woman whom I see coming toward me, this man who is passing by in the street, this beggar whom I hear calling before my window, all are for me *objects-of* that there is no doubt.³⁵³ [I] am in a public park. Not far away there is a lawn and along the edge of that lawn there are benches. A man passes by those benches. I see this man; I apprehend him as an object and at the same time as a man.³⁵⁴

Although it is possible to perceive him/her as an object among many others, this object is a special one. First of all, this object opens up the fact that it is capable of objectification. In other words, while the objects in the park; the banks or the grass, are neither capable of making anything object for themselves nor being aware of any being. The other, on the other hand, is a subject in the park who is a consciousness and makes objects in the park objects for himself/herself. Therefore, while the organization of the park depends on my focus of attention, with the appearance of the other I become aware of the fact that someone other than me is capable of organizing the park for himself. As Sartre states:

[S]uddenly an object has appeared which has stolen the world from me. Everything is in place; everything still exists for *me*; but everything is traversed by an invisible flight and fixed in the direction of a new object. The appearance of the Other in the world corresponds therefore to a fixed sliding of the whole universe, to a decentralization of the world which undermines the centralization which I am simultaneously effecting.³⁵⁵

³⁵³BN, 252.

³⁵⁴BN, 254.

³⁵⁵BN,255.

More importantly, due to its being a consciousness this special object can see me as I see him/her or he/she is capable of making me an object as I have already made him/her. In other words, my seeing of the other implies that the other can see me in return. As Sartre describes:

In a word, my apprehension of the Other in the world as probably being a man refers to my permanent possibility of *being-seen-by-him*; that is, to the permanent possibility that a subject who sees me may be substituted for the object seen by me. "Being-seen-by-the-Other" is the truth of "seeing-the-Other. [I]f the Other is on principle the one who *looks* at me, then we must be able to explain the meaning of the Other's look.³⁵⁶

Sartre gives a very familiar example of shame in order to explicate "the meaning of the Other's look."³⁵⁷ Suppose that you are spying on a room through a keyhole due to your envy or curiosity.³⁵⁸ In these activities, the consciousness is pre-reflective and non-positional in which there is no I inhabiting there. This is to say that the consciousness at that moment is just the content of the talking or actions of the people in the room. I am as a consciousness is there to justify my actions.³⁵⁹ The actions are to be there revealed for my seeing and the keyhole serve as an instrument for my perception. It is my decision either to stay or leave there.³⁶⁰ Yet suppose that:

[a]ll of a sudden I hear footsteps in the hall. Someone 'is looking at me! What does this mean? It means that I am suddenly affected in my being and that essential modifications appear in my structure-modifications which I can apprehend and fix conceptually by means of the *reflective cogito*.³⁶¹

³⁵⁶BN,257.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸BN, 259.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹BN,260.

With the possibility of appearance of someone, my pre-reflective consciousness which is formed by my envy turns into a reflective consciousness of the shame. Shame occurs because of the appearance of the other, I am encountered with the risk of losing of my freedom. In other words, while it is always possible for me as a consciousness to transcend my situation during and after spying, with the appearance of the other this possibility turns this fact into impossibility. For instance, I can take an attitude of bad faith and convince myself that I am not a spy, but a curious person. Or I can again convince myself that it is the actions of the other person which lead me to spy the room. However, the look of the other labels me as a spy. I cannot change his/ her judgment on me and more importantly his/her judgment does not depend on me. The appearance of the other ends up with the objectification of my consciousness. His/her look will make me a jealous or curious person. The look gives me a stable ego whose existence does not depend on me. "Shame is [t]he shame of the self"³⁶², not of the consciousness. I am ashamed of being a spy in front of the other's look. With the gaze of the other: "[I], who in so far as I am my possibles, am what I am not and am not what I am-behold now I am somebody!"³⁶³ With the look of the other, I become aware of the fact that there is something as a part of my existence that I have no control over it.³⁶⁴ "My being for-others is strictly determined by others"³⁶⁵ Therefore, the look of the other due to its objectification of my freedom is a threat to my freedom.

The threat of the other to my freedom is not restricted to the presence of the other. Suppose again it is a false alarm meaning that there is no one in the corridor.³⁶⁶ Although I experience a relief, the possibility of the appearance of the other determines my future action. I either choose to continue to spy at the cost of being a spy or leave there. Yet, probably I will choose to leave. As Sartre describes:

³⁶²BN, 261.

³⁶³BN, 265.

³⁶⁴ C. Diagle, *Jean Paul Sartre*, p. 75.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶BN,277.

Let us look more carefully. Is it actually my being-as-object for the Other which has been revealed as an error? By no means. The Other's existence is so far from being placed in doubt that this false alarm can very well result in making me give up my enterprise. If, on the other hand, I persevere in it, I shall feel my heart beat fast, and I shall detect the slightest noise, the slightest creaking of the stairs. Far from disappearing with my first alarm, the Other is present everywhere, below me, above me, in the neighboring rooms, and I continue to feel profoundly my being-for-others. [I]f I tremble at the slightest noise, if each creak announces to me a look, this is because I am already in the state of being-looked-at.³⁶⁷

The look of others is a threat to my freedom since it determines my possibilities by objectifying my freedom. Before becoming aware of the footsteps, I have infinity of possibilities. I am the only one who decides what to do. I can stay or leave there. It is even possible for me to interrupt the conversations on the room. However, the footsteps determine my possibilities since all of my possible actions are determined as an answer to the existence of the other. In other words, even if I choose to stay there it is an answer to the other which claims that there is nothing in my actions to be ashamed of. Yet before the appearance of the other, there is no need for an answer. There is only pre-reflective consciousness and objects of it. Similarly, my relation with objects in the world is different from with being-for-others in the sense that while I have a control over the former, I do not have over the later. When I broke a vase, it is due to my lack of attention. I can foresee what can I do for not to brake the vase. Therefore, I have a control over objects in the world, but not over the other.³⁶⁸ As Sartre exemplifies:

To remain at home because it is raining and to remain at home because one has been forbidden to go out are by no means the same thing. In the first case I myself determine to stay inside in consideration of the consequences of my acts; I surpass the obstacle "rain" toward myself and I make an instrument of it. In the second case it is my very

³⁶⁷BN,277.

³⁶⁸BN, 268.

possibilities of going out of or staying inside which are presented to me as surpassed and fixed and which a freedom simultaneously foresees and prevents.³⁶⁹

My being-for-others is revealed as a threat to my freedom. It is possible for me to turn my look into the other in order to escape its objectification of me. Therefore, it is me now who threatens the freedom of the other. In either case, we are trying to make the other an object in order to keep our status of the subject. In other words, we are trying to assimilate the freedom of the other.³⁷⁰ Therefore Sartre claims that “conflict is the original meaning of the being-for-others”.³⁷¹ Sartre expresses the same thing in his play, *No Exit*, as “Hell is the other people.”

In this structure, Sartre claims that all concrete relations (love, hate, sadism etc.) of being-for-others are structured by this conflict and it is not possible to have a final inter-subjective recognition. Although we have some experience of “we”, the essential relation with the other will stay as being in conflict. Yet, as we stated, this attitude towards the other is another form of bad faith.³⁷² Furthermore, as we shall see in the next section, this attitude is shaped by a deeper project of for-itself, namely as Desire to be God.

3.2.4. Desire to be God

“Each desire-the desire of eating or of sleeping as well as the desire of creating a work of art expresses all human reality.”³⁷³

³⁶⁹BN, 271.

³⁷⁰BN, 364.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² We will discuss this point in the next chapter.

³⁷³BN, ,575.

According to Sartre, desire is the evidence that for-itself is a lack.³⁷⁴ In order to desire something, it is necessary to not possess it. It seems that it is not possible to consider a desire of something that we already have. As Sartre claims: “Desire is a lack of being. As such it is directly supported by the being of which it is a lack”.³⁷⁵ Sartre adds ‘by which lack appears in the world must be itself a lack’.³⁷⁶ Therefore, for-itself is a lack of being. Due to being its own nothingness, for-itself is continuously a striving, an urge to “be”. As stated, for-itself continuously tries to make itself out of nothing. In contrast to being-in-itself, for-itself can never be what it is, on the contrary it is “what it is not and not be what it is”.³⁷⁷

The desire which expresses itself in each and every desire is desire to be necessary or desire to be God. For Sartre, human beings are striving for being God or being-in-itself-for-itself. This is to say although being-for-itself is in the search of to “be”, it is at the same time desire to stay in the status of consciousness. In other words, human beings are striving to stay as what they are and as consciousness. However, we should not confuse it with Sartre’s description of for-itself as a synthesis of facticity and transcendence. The project to be necessary is about for-itself’s desire to be a being which is consciousness and its own foundation at the same time. As Sartre says:

It is as consciousness that it wishes to have the impermeability and infinite density of the in-itself. It is as the nihilation of the in-itself and a perpetual evasion of contingency and of facticity that it wishes to be its own foundation. This is why the possible is projected in general as what the for-itself lacks in order to become in-itself-for-itself. The fundamental value which presides over this project is exactly the in-itself-for-itself; that is, the ideal of a consciousness which would be the foundation of its own being-in-itself by the pure consciousness which it would have of itself. It is this ideal which can be called God.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁴ N. Levy, *Sartre*, p. 93.

³⁷⁵ *BN*, 575

³⁷⁶ *BN*, 87.

³⁷⁷ *BN*, 67.

³⁷⁸ *BN*, 566.

Actually, the project to be God shed light on human reality which continuously seeks a justification for its existence which cannot be found. In this project, for itself tries to escape contingency of his/her existence and to make his/her existence necessary which is impossible. Therefore, for Sartre human reality is a contradiction and a “useless passion” which strives for an aim that is impossible to achieve. As he states:

all men are condemned to be despair; for all human activities are equivalent and all in principle doomed to failure. Thus, it amounts to same thing whether one gets drunk alone or is a leader of nations. If one of these activities takes precedence over the other, this will not be because of its real goal but because of the degree of consciousness which it possesses of *its* ideal goal; and in this case it will be the quietism of the solitary drunkard which will take precedence over the vain agitation of the leader of nations.³⁷⁹

Consequently, for itself's lack of self-identity seems to make all human actions equal worth. All of us are searching for coinciding with ourselves which is impossible to achieve and all of our actions are expressions of this impossible aim.

In conclusion, in *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre describes human reality through the relation between being-in-itself and being-for-itself. Furthermore, he discloses unavoidable character of our free self-determination throughout the relation between consciousness and ego. Furthermore, he refers our consciousness of freedom as an experience of “anguish” and introduces bad faith as an escape from our freedom. We are experiencing anguish and bad faith; because we cannot bear the responsibility that our freedom entails. This is to say whatever can be considered as belonging to human life such as our values and actions finds their source in human condition, more precisely in consciousness. Since for-itself is a decision maker while being a contingent one, the original project of for-itself appears as a desire to be necessary being or a desire to be in-itself-for-itself. Similarly, my relation with others is a matter of conflict since the other is always a threat to my original project.

³⁷⁹BN,627.

Now we are in a position to ask the possibility of an ethical action in the context of Sartre's early philosophy on the basis of *Intentionality*, *The Transcendence of the Ego*, *Being and Nothingness* and *Existentialism is a Humanism*, which is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

FREEDOM AS A GROUND

4.1. The Question of Ethics

Our investigation leads us to a point in which we make explicit the relation between ego and consciousness. Now, we can ask the meaning of this relation for ethical action. Thus, we can question to where Sartre places ethics in his philosophy of freedom. Putting it differently, we can examine whether it is possible to act ethically in Sartre's philosophy. This is to ask whether Sartre's conception of freedom can provide us any ethical criteria to choose an action instead of another. Therefore, we can ask that on what grounds our actions can be regarded as valuable, right or wrong in an ethical sense. We will ask this question because if only our actions constitute who we are, and if our consciousness is an absolute spontaneity, how it is possible to differentiate an arbitrary action from an ethical one. Similarly, we suppose that there should be a difference being in this or that person. In other words, there should be a difference between killing and helping or between determining myself as a killer or as a hero. In the context of *Being and Nothingness*, we can say that being a killer or a hero equally refers to the same freedom. This is to say both can be freely chosen. If the only difference lies in their choices or in their degree of consciousness, in this context there will be no difference between acting and not acting except that both choices belong to us. As Sartre says "not to choose is, in fact, to choose not to choose"³⁸⁰. On the same ground, if all actions are doomed to failure due to our inescapable project to be necessary, then a person who tries to be good, or another one who chooses to be inactive, and an alcoholic will be one and the same. Finally, his account of other as initiating conflictual relationship does not give us a reason to act ethically. Putting

³⁸⁰BN, 481.

it differently, ethic is about the relation between people. There is no reason for a person to talk about an ethical action in an island.³⁸¹ Therefore, ethical action seems to be impossible in a world where inter-subjectivity is not possible. As a result, we can ask Sartre the following questions: What is the difference between acting and not acting except the degree of consciousness? Why we should care about the world and the others? Is there anything that has an intrinsic worth to choose? Is there any reason to change the world? We can enhance such questions but briefly in this chapter we will investigate whether Sartre can provide any ground for differentiating actions in an ethical sense.

Therefore, we can search for an answer to the question that asks whether Sartre rejects ethical action at all or whether he introduces an ethical understanding from the perspective of his phenomenological ontology and existentialism. In general, Sartre scholars claim that since there is no universal value or a priori ethical rules in Sartre's philosophy, he cannot give a ground for right or wrong action.³⁸² Furthermore, they say that even if it is possible to infer an ethic from Sartre's phenomenology, ontology or existentialism, it will be either a nihilistic or a relativistic one. Their critical point is as follows; since human beings are the only source of every value, and since each of us determine what is valuable in our life, then values will become relative to our ideas. Furthermore, they criticize Sartre as offering a philosophy of inaction, since all our actions will be doomed to failure. As a result, Sartre is either accused of a nihilist or a subjectivist about ethical actions.

However, we argue that Sartre's references to ethics at least make it possible to defend the idea that he is not rejecting ethical action. Therefore, we will claim that he is not a nihilist in the area of ethical action. It is true that he cannot suggest us an absolute morality, in which actions are guided by universal principles which

³⁸¹ Simon Glendinning, *In the Name of Phenomenology*, New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 106.

³⁸² For some of them see Alvin Plantinga, "An Existentialist's Ethics", *Review of Metaphysics* 12, No. 2, 1958, pp.235-56, James Collins, *The Existentialists*, Chicago: Gateway, 1968, Richard Bernstein, *Praxis and Action*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971.

are valid for each and every situation. Actually, we will claim that rather than suggesting an absolute morality, he is showing us of its impossibility. However, this does not mean that Sartre cannot offer us a ground for right or wrong action. We will argue that this ground for an ethic will be freedom. On this ground, we will claim that the only a priori or objective value for Sartre's ethics is freedom. As a result, we will argue that ever since his early philosophy, Sartre is offering us an ethics depending on freedom. Actions can be regarded as valuable, right or wrong depending on human beings' choice of freedom instead of desire to be God. Depending on this claim, we will argue that in *Being and Nothingness* Sartre describes a human reality identified with bad faith.

Consequently, in order to discuss the question of ethics in Sartre's early philosophy in a more comprehensive fashion, we should further explicate the meaning of bad faith, human relationships and the desire to be God. However, in contrast to the mainstream interpretations of *Being and Nothingness*, by following some of the Sartre's scholars, we will argue that *Being and Nothingness* provides an ontological ground for an existential ethics. This alternative reading will have three interdependent claims. First, if we interpret Sartre's conceptions of "desire to be" and "being-for-others" as forms of bad faith, then it is possible for us to open a way for ethics. This is to say, if the desire to be God makes all of our actions as doomed to failure; this can be valid as far as we are in bad faith. Therefore, an escape from bad faith makes it possible to differentiate actions from each other and for that reason an ethical action from an arbitrary one. Such an escape necessitates a radical conversion and Sartre's concept of authenticity. As a result we will claim that bad faith can be read in contrast to authenticity. Therefore, we will read bad faith as a negative determination of authenticity. On this ground, we will argue that Sartre's ideas about human relationships are misread; therefore both authenticity and authentic relations are possible. Although the basic relation between people is grounded on conflict and given this mutual recognition is not possible, this is so in so far as they are in bad faith. Finally, if we consider Sartre's distinction between pre-reflective and reflective values, then we see that the project to be God is a pre-

reflective value and it is possible to choose freedom reflectively as an ultimate value instead of “desire to be God”. Finally, the possibility of all of these lies in pure reflection in which people become aware of the fact that they are synthesis of subjectivity and objectivity. Therefore, we will claim that the arguments of the opponents of a Sartrean ethics are valid in so far as human beings are living in bad faith.

As we shall see, in *Being and Nothingness* Sartre has many references and signs that point out *Being and Nothingness* as an ontology of human reality who is both condemned to be free and bad faith. Actually, because of this reason, the ethic it offers is an abstract one. For instance, although he points out authenticity and authentic relationships, which will lead for itself to a self-recovery and conversion to authenticity, he does not give us any content regarding these relations. Likewise, *Being and Nothingness* by itself is not sufficient to reveal why we choose freedom instead of desire to be. More importantly, it does not make explicit what would happen if we take freedom as an ultimate value. Therefore, to explicate how Sartre’s idea on ethics is concretized, we will examine *Existentialism is a Humanism*. As a result, in the first section of this chapter³⁸³, we will try to investigate that way in which *Being and Nothingness* mainly displays an ontology of bad faith in order to consider the implications of such ontology for ethics. In the second section of this chapter,³⁸⁴ we will try to illuminate the kind of ethics after the conversion by depending on Sartre’s claims on *Existentialism is a Humanism*.

4.1. 1.Re-interpretation of *Being and Nothingness*

In the *Intentionality*, by separating the ego from consciousness, and by making consciousness as an absolute spontaneity and nothingness, Sartre thinks he

³⁸³ 4.1.1 and so on.

³⁸⁴ 4.2.1 and so on.

solves the problem of correspondence in philosophy³⁸⁵. The solution Sartre gives in *The Transcendence of the Ego* is the same. In his solution, there is no priority either in the side of the object or the subject. As he declares:

In fact, it is not necessary that the object precede the subject for spiritual pseudo-values to vanish and for ethics to find its bases in reality. It is enough that the *me* be contemporaneous with the World, and that the subject-object duality, which is purely logical, definitively disappear from philosophical preoccupations. The World has not created the *me*: the *me* has not created the World. These are two objects for absolute, impersonal consciousness, and it is by virtue of this consciousness that they are connected. [N]o more is needed in the way of a philosophical foundation for an ethics and a politics which are absolutely positive.³⁸⁶

Sartre thinks that saving consciousness from the ego, or saving philosophy from the subject-object dualism, is enough to prepare a ground for ethics, and therefore for the question regarding the ethical worth of our actions. *Similarly, he concludes Being and Nothingness as follows: [A]ll these questions, which refer us to a pure and not an accessory reflection, can find their reply only on the ethical plane. We shall devote to them a future work*".³⁸⁷ Therefore, while in *The Transcendence of the Ego* he argues that there is no need for additional ideas for an ethics, in *Being and Nothingness* he becomes aware of a need for ethical questions. Although he never wrote a book about ethics which is promised at the end of *Being and Nothingness*, we will find an answer to our ethical questions in *The Transcendence of the Ego*, *Being and Nothingness* and *Existentialism is a Humanism*.

In this section, we will try to answer the opponents of a Sartrean ethics who claim that Sartre offers us either as ethical relativism or nihilism. We suppose that the underlying reason for this claim is that they ignore the fact that *Being and Nothingness* is a phenomenological ontology. Following Hume, we can say that it

³⁸⁵ For a detailed discussion please see sections 2.1.4 and 2.1.5.

³⁸⁶ *TE*, 106.

³⁸⁷ *BN*, 628

is not possible to derive “ought” from “is”. Yet, we can also claim that ‘what is’ can show us a way to discuss what ought to be. Although the task of *Being and Nothingness* is to describe human reality rather than to produce ethical norms or principles, this does not necessarily mean that ethical action is impossible. As Sartre says:

ONTOLOGY itself cannot formulate ethical precepts. It is concerned solely with what is, and we cannot possibly derive imperatives from ontology's indicatives. It does, however, allow us to catch a glimpse of what sort of ethics will assume its responsibilities when confronted with a human reality in situation.³⁸⁸

This glimpse can be caught with Sartre’s distinction between awareness of pure pre-reflective and reflective values.³⁸⁹ Before, explicating them, we should highlight two points. First, Sartre labeled as moral relativist or nihilist since he claims all actions are doomed to failure due to for-itself’s project to be God. However, it is possible to read the project to be God as another form of bad faith. It is a form of bad faith, since in this project human beings are trying to escape from the burden of being contingent.³⁹⁰ This is to say, for-itself’s existence is neither justified nor unjustified by itself. Thus, the justification of its existence depends on human beings’ self-determination which both reveals freedom and leads them to anguish. Putting it differently, the project to be God refers to another way of escaping from the freedom and the responsibility that freedom brings with itself.³⁹¹ Therefore, we claim that *Being and Nothingness* is an ontology which describes human beings who are living in bad faith, rather than realizing their freedom. As Sartre states:

[W]e are already on the moral plane but concurrently on that of bad faith, for it is an ethics which is ashamed of itself and does not dare speak its name. It has obscured all its goals in order to free itself from

³⁸⁸BN, 626.

³⁸⁹ G, Linsenbard. *Starting with Sartre*, p. 71 .

³⁹⁰Ibid. p.70.

³⁹¹ For a detailed discussion please see Chapter 3, Section 3.1.9

anguish. Man pursues being blindly by hiding from himself the free project which is this pursuit. He makes himself such that he is *waited* for by all the tasks placed along his way.³⁹²

4.1.2. The Pure and the Impure Reflection: Reflective and Pre-Reflective Values:

Consequently, Sartre claims that for-itself who are living in bad faith must seek the ultimate value of being God, yet, he also states that this value is generally lived pre-reflectively.³⁹³ Value of being God, for him, as lived pre-reflectively means that it is not questioned or examined but initialized as given like other values³⁹⁴. It is possible to consider reflective values like the natural attitude. In the natural attitude, we do not discuss, examine or question the values that are imposed on us by our culture, society or even by philosophy.³⁹⁵ We accept them as if they are parts and parcel of normal situation of human life. Yet, due to our being as nothingness, we are capable of self-distancing or questioning the values that are imposed on us. Therefore, although desire to be is an ontological structure of for-itself, we can say that it is possible for for-itself to take a distance, turn back, question, examine the value of being God. Questioning the pre-reflective value of being God necessitates a pure reflection for Sartre.

To explicate this point, we should differentiate pure reflection from the impure one. One aspect of the difference comes from the differentiation of ego and consciousness. The reflection that considers the “I” as the source of action is impure reflection. In other words, the reflection that considers the ego as something stable or self-determined is the impure reflection. It is the

³⁹² BN, 626.

³⁹³ G, Linsenbard. *Starting with Sartre*, pp.69-70.

³⁹⁴ Ibid. ,p. 71 .

³⁹⁵ For a detailed discussion please see: chapter 2.

pure reflection in which we realize that ego is a construction of our consciousness with which we determine ourselves in each and every conscious act. Therefore, while we conceptualize our ego as self-permanent and necessary in impure reflection, it is in pure reflection that we become aware of the fact that our ego is something freely created.³⁹⁶ Sartre describes pure reflection in *The Transcendence of the Ego* as following:

But it can happen that consciousness suddenly produces itself on the pure reflective level. Perhaps not without the ego, yet as escaping from the ego on all sides, as dominating the ego and maintaining the ego outside the consciousness by a continued creation.³⁹⁷ [T]he level of pure reflection, in which the ego undoubtedly appears, but appears *on the horizon* of a spontaneity.³⁹⁸ A reflective apprehension of spontaneous consciousness as non-personal spontaneity would have to be accomplished *without any antecedent motivation*. This is always possible in principle, but remains very improbable or, at least, extremely rare in our human condition. At any rate, as we have said above, the / which appears on the horizon of the *I think is* not given as the producer of conscious spontaneity. Consciousness produces itself facing the *I* and goes toward it, goes to rejoin it. That is all one can say.³⁹⁹

In *Being and Nothingness* he refers pure reflection:

Pure reflection, the simple presence of the reflective for-itself to the for-itself reflected-on, is at once the original form of reflection and its ideal form; it is that on whose foundation impure reflection appears, it is that also which is never first given; and it is that which must be won by a sort of *katharsis*. Impure or accessory reflection, of which we will speak later, includes pure reflection but surpasses it and makes further claims.⁴⁰⁰

The reference to *katharsis*, which we read as purification, gives us a clue about why Sartre refers purifying reflection as rare and almost

³⁹⁶ G, Linsenbard. *Starting with Sartre*, p. 75.

³⁹⁷ *TE*, 101.

³⁹⁸ *TE*, 97.

³⁹⁹ *TE*, 92.

⁴⁰⁰ *BN*, 155.

improbable. Like anguish which is the consciousness of freedom, purifying reflection is a rare situation. This is to say, we are occupied with objects and other selves in the world and generally with an “I” in impure reflection. However, pure reflection is “a consciousness performing a pure reflective act which delivers consciousness to itself as a non-personal spontaneity.”⁴⁰¹ Therefore, we can define pure reflection with the awareness of spontaneous consciousness.

As we discussed throughout our investigation, generally and most of all our lives, we are in impure reflection which shows itself in the form of bad faith. In *The Transcendence of the Ego*, bad faith reveals itself with the ego which masks the spontaneity of consciousness from itself. In *Being and Nothingness*, bad faith reveals itself in the forms of denying either our facticity or transcendence which result with conflictual human relationships and the desire to be God. While impure reflection is maintenance of the bad faith, pure reflection is a rupture in this project.⁴⁰² Putting it differently, while impure reflection refers to natural attitude, purifying reflection is the *epoche* with which we question the impure reflection itself.⁴⁰³ Likewise, we can understand the difference between pure and impure reflection; while the former questions the pre-reflective values, the latter accepts and lives them as given.

At this point, it is vital to remember that Sartre presents desire to be necessary both as an ontological structure of for-itself and an ultimate value of it. What pure reflection makes possible is to reject this value. In other words, although it is not possible for us to eliminate the ontological structure of for-itself, it is possible to abandon this value.⁴⁰⁴ Therefore, we can argue

⁴⁰¹ *TE*, 91.

⁴⁰² Edited by Charles Guignon, *Critical Essays on Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Sartre*, Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2004, Thomas C. Anderson, “Sartre’s Early Ethics and Ontology of Being and Nothingness”, p.138.

⁴⁰³ G. Linsenbard, *Starting with Sartre*, p. 71.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 140.

that although being God is an ontological value for each of us, values are values for us in so far as we take them as ours⁴⁰⁵.

4.1.3. Choice of Freedom instead of Desire to Be God

As a result, if we consider Sartre's distinction between pure and impure reflection and pre-reflective and reflective values, then we see that the project to be God is a pre-reflective value which can be rejected. In this rejection, it is possible to choose freedom reflectively as an ultimate value instead of desire to be God. As Sartre states:

This particular type of project, which has freedom for its foundation and its goal, deserves a special study. It is radically different from all others in that it aims at a radically different type of being. It would be necessary to explain in full detail its relations with the project of being God, which has appeared to us as the deep-seated structure of human reality. But such a study can not be made here; it belongs rather to an *Ethics* and it supposes that there has been a preliminary definition of nature and the role of purifying reflection (our descriptions have hitherto aimed only at accessory reflection); it supposes in addition taking a position which can be moral only in the face of values which haunt the for-itself.

Therefore, although Sartre does not explicate the ethics that he will suggest, he opens us a door for an ethics which is based on freedom. As he notices:

[A]lthough possibles could be chosen and rejected *ad libitum*, the theme which made the unity of all choices of possibles was the value or the ideal presence of the *enscausasui*. What will become of freedom if it turns its back upon this value? Will freedom carry this value along with it whatever it does and even in its very turning back upon the in-itself-for-itself? Will freedom be re-apprehended from behind by the value which it wishes to contemplate? Or will freedom by the very fact that it

⁴⁰⁵Ibid., p. 34 .

apprehends itself as a freedom in relation to itself, be able to put an end to the reign of this value?⁴⁰⁶

Sartre concludes his book without answering the questions that he proposed at the end of *Being and Nothingness*: “all these questions, [c]an find their reply only on the ethical plane. We shall devote to them a future work.”⁴⁰⁷ As a result, although we cannot explicate what kind of an ethic would take place after taking freedom as a foundation of all values, in the context of *Intentionality*, *The Transcendence of the Ego* and *Being and Nothingness*, we can briefly argue that the descriptions in these works are descriptions of human reality which is identified with bad faith. This human reality which inescapably realizes his/her freedom which lead them to anguish, produces projects of bad faith including desire to be God. However, this project can be rejected by another project namely as authenticity.

4.1.4. Authenticity and Authentic Relations

We can define authenticity in Sartre’s philosophy as the awareness of the meaning of human reality which is the synthesis of subjectivity and objectivity. In this awareness, for-itself realizes the fact that she/he is both an object and a subject in the world among many others. Therefore, the for-itself who takes an attitude of authenticity becomes aware that neither his/her facticity nor his/her transcendence can define him/her. Yet, he/she realizes that the human reality, which she/he belongs, is the synthesis of facticity and transcendence. As we can see, such an attitude is radically different from bad faith; so taking an authentic attitude necessarily needs a radical conversion and self-recovery of the for-itself.

In this section, we will first argue that in *Being and Nothingness* Sartre’s references to authenticity provides us another clue that Sartre is describing a human reality before conversion. Second, depending on the first claim we will argue that

⁴⁰⁶BN,627-8.

⁴⁰⁷BN,628

both authenticity and authentic relations are possible in Sartre's early philosophy. As a result, we will try to provide an answer to the opponents of Sartre's ethics who claim that inter-subjective recognition is impossible in Sartre's philosophy.

Initially, it is important to note that similar to his ideas of ethics, Sartre's approach to authenticity is indirect. This is to say, rather than describing authenticity, he shows us the consequences of taking the project of bad faith. Therefore, as we stated, bad faith, in Sartre's early philosophy, is the negative determination of authenticity. Furthermore, we argue that in *Being and Nothingness* and in *The Transcendence of the Ego*, rather than describing an authentic individual, he gives us conditions of authenticity. The underlying reason, for us, is that it is not possible in Sartre's philosophy to be something and stay in this status till death. Putting it differently, it is not possible for the for-itself to be authentic, as "an inkwell is an inkwell". Rather than being authentic, authenticity is a project of human beings or an ideal to be achieved.⁴⁰⁸ Of course, it is possible for human beings to take authentic attitudes towards themselves and others. What we try to emphasize is that it is both possible an authentic individual to take an attitude of bad faith and vice versa. It is for this reason we consider authenticity as an attitude and project.

We claim by following some of Sartre's scholars⁴⁰⁹ that Sartre refers authenticity in *The Transcendence of the Ego*, without naming it. In the context of *The Transcendence of the Ego*, "authenticity is essentially related to an awareness and acknowledgment of the spontaneous upsurge of the unreflective consciousness."⁴¹⁰ Therefore, one aspect of authenticity is realizing absoluteness and spontaneity of consciousness. Such awareness includes the priority of pre-reflective consciousness to the reflective one, and to consider ego as an object *of* and *for* consciousness. Moreover, since Sartre defines consciousness with

⁴⁰⁸ Edited by Jonathan Webber, *Reading Sartre: On Phenomenology and Existentialism*, New York: Routledge, 2010, Christine Daigle, "The Ethics of Authenticity", p.8

⁴⁰⁹ For some of them see: Jacob Golomb, *In Search of Authenticity: From Kierkegaard to Camus*, London: Routledge, 1995. William G. Smith, "Authenticity in Sartre's Early Work", *South West Philosophical Studies*, Spring 1989, Vol. 11, p.65-72

⁴¹⁰ William G. Smith, "Authenticity in Sartre's Early Work", *South West Philosophical Studies*, Spring 1989, Vol. 11, p.67.

intentionality and since “every intentional act is self-orienting, self-determining and absolutely free”⁴¹¹, authenticity becomes the outcome of intentional acts.⁴¹² Thus, authenticity is related with spontaneity and absoluteness of consciousness which creatively determines its objects. Furthermore, authenticity is not only these creative products, but also the creative process itself.⁴¹³ Defining authenticity as such makes every act of consciousness as authentic. As Golomb says:

[I]f consciousness is *necessarily* spontaneous and absolute, one is either fully responsible for one’s authenticity or not responsible at all. If my phenomenological make-up is such that I am not responsible for this self-generating self, how can I become a free and authentic being? If reverse is true, I seemed to be authentic in the same way as ‘I’ am condemned to be free.⁴¹⁴

Therefore, spontaneity of consciousness alone is not sufficient to take an attitude of authenticity. To do this requires an awareness of our reality as a synthesis of subject and object. As Sartre says:

[I]t can happen that consciousness suddenly produces itself on the pure reflective level. Perhaps not without the ego, yet as escaping from the ego on all sides, as dominating the ego and maintaining the ego outside the consciousness by a continued creation [...]. [A] level at which man considers himself as at once both subject and object.⁴¹⁵

Human beings are in bad faith or in an inauthentic state as far as they are carrying impure reflection. Yet, authenticity is possible with pure reflection. Pure reflection includes a self-detachment from our natural attitude in which we conceptualize our ego as something stable. It is in pure reflection that we become aware of the fact that our reality is such that our ego is a product of our consciousness and we are a synthesis of subjectivity and objectivity. In addition to

⁴¹¹Ibid.

⁴¹²Jacob Golomb, *In Search of Authenticity*, p.94.

⁴¹³Ibid., p. 93.

⁴¹⁴Ibid., p. 96.

⁴¹⁵*TE*, 101.

spontaneity, non-substantial absoluteness, creativity of consciousness with the awareness of the human reality constitutes the conditions of authenticity.

Human beings, in the ontology of *Being and Nothingness*, are living in bad faith. Therefore, in order to for those to take an authentic attitude, a self-recovery is needed which would lead them to a radical conversion. This is why Sartre announces a possibility of escaping the project of bad faith with a footnote: “this self -recovery which we shall call authenticity, the description of it would no place here”.⁴¹⁶ The description of authenticity is excluded from *Being and Nothingness*, since it is ontology before conversion. In the context of *Being and Nothingness*, we can define authenticity as an attitude in which human beings will accept the fact that they are synthesis of transcendence and facticity rather than a useless striving foran unachievable goal of being God. Furthermore, a human being, who takes an authentic attitude, both considers his/her existence as unjustifiable and contingent yet realizes the fact that he/she is the source of all meanings and justifications.⁴¹⁷ Therefore, an authentic person knows that desire to be necessary is an ontological fact about him/her, yet not an ultimate value.⁴¹⁸ A person who takes an authentic attitude will take freedom as an ultimate value instead of desire to be. Since the authentic person knows that he/she is “what it is not and is not what it is”, she/he knows his/her own reality. As a result, an authentic person realizes that she/he is responsible from his/her self and for this reason does not search for a ground to justify his/her existence. By accepting the contingency of existence, an authentic person does not seek desire to be an ultimate value, yet search freedom instead.

Taking freedom as an ultimate value converses my relation with others which is essentially shaped by conflict. Sartre, in the discussion of my being-for-others, with a footnote indicates that “these considerations do not exclude possibility of an

⁴¹⁶BN, 412.

⁴¹⁷ Thomas C. Anderson, *Sartre's 2 Ethics: From Authenticity to Integral Humanity*, Lawrence: The Regent Press of Kansas, 1993, p. 52.

⁴¹⁸ Edited by Christina Daigle, *Existentialist Thinkers and Ethics*, Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006. Christina Daigle, “Introduction: The Problem of Ethics in Existentialism”, p.6.

ethics of deliverance and salvation. But this can be achieved only after a radical conversion which we cannot discuss here”.⁴¹⁹ Therefore, we argue that conflict is the essential meaning of human relations as far as they carry the project to be God. In this regard, we can claim that with the project of authenticity Sartre opens us a possibility of authentic relations. For the project to be God, the other is a threat to my freedom due to its objectification of me. In other words, as far as I am not realizing the fact that I am a synthesis of objectivity and transcendence, the other is a threat to my freedom. Yet, an authentic person considers the other even in his/her objectifications as someone who opens a reality of him/her. Putting it differently, the other plays a role as a mirror. It is through the other I become aware of myself as an object, therefore it is through the other I become aware of myself as a synthesis of objectivity and subjectivity.

However, it can be an exaggeration to claim further content of authentic relationships depending on a footnote.⁴²⁰ Furthermore, it is still not clear that on what grounds Sartre can suggest us to take an authentic attitude. This is to ask, what is “bad” about bad faith? What makes the difference between an authentic person and the inauthentic one except his/her degree of consciousness? Putting it differently, while authentic person knows the fact that he/she is a synthesis, the other one is wander between the two poles of synthesis. Although an authentic person leaves the project of desire to be, accept the impossibility of his/her self-identity or self- coincide, it is still possible to examine the meaning of this attitude to his/her life. Does it give him/her a motivation to change the world? Is there any reason to fight against the system or poverty?⁴²¹ Is it able to provide us a reason for not oppressing the other? We are not alone in asking these questions. Sartre is asked to provide a ground to differentiate the “Authentic Torturer” who

⁴¹⁹ *BN*, 412.

⁴²⁰ Thomas C. Anderson, *Sartre's 2 Ethics: From Authenticity to Integral Humanity*, Lawrence: The Regent Press of Kansas, 1993.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, .p.26.

responsibly, freely and consciously choose to rape and kill the other from the “Authentic Anti- Torturer”.⁴²²

Sartre scholars become aware of this difficulty and add another condition to authenticity. In addition to the conditions, described above, as an awareness of spontaneity of consciousness and being of human reality as the synthesis of facticity and transcendence, they add that an authentic person should promote the freedom of others.⁴²³⁴²⁴ Therefore, we are again encountering the question why we should take freedom as a foundation of all values and more importantly why we should care the freedom of others. The reason why we cannot find an answer to these questions in the context of *Being and Nothingness* is again because it is a phenomenological ontology. The description of bad faith is a description of ontological structures of the for-itself. Therefore, bad faith is the self-relation of for-itself with its structures.⁴²⁵ It is related neither to culture nor sociopolitical structures.⁴²⁶ Similarly, authenticity as an escape from bad faith, is accepting the ontological structures of one’s being and living accordingly.⁴²⁷ Yet the phrase “living accordingly” should be concretized in human situations. In his descriptions, Sartre does not focus on the relation between concrete human beings, but instead the relation between consciousnesses.⁴²⁸ Therefore, both descriptions of bad faith and references to authenticity are about the relation between self and

⁴²² David Detmer, *Freedom as a Value: a Critique of the Ethical Theory of Jean-Paul Sartre*, Open court: Chicago, 1988, p. 165.

⁴²³ In *Anti Semite and Jew*, Sartre gives two conditions of authenticity as follows: “ having a true and lucid consciousness of the situation, in assuming the responsibilities and risks which it involves”⁴²³. Although Heter adds the third condition in the context of *Anti Semite and Jew*, we think that this condition is also needed when we reflect on the concept of authenticity in *The Transcendence of the Ego* and *Being and Nothingness*.

⁴²⁴ Heter T. Storm, “Authenticity and Others: Sartre's Ethics of Recognition”, *Sartre Studies International* , Vol. 12, No. 2, 2006, pp. 16-43, p.22.

⁴²⁵ Thomas C. Anderson, *Sartre’s 2 Ethics*, pp. 16-7.

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

⁴²⁸ Ibid, p.55.

consciousness, but not an account of political and historical human beings.⁴²⁹ As a result, in order to give an account of freedom as an ultimate value and the ethics derived from this freedom, we need a concretization. In order to satisfy this need, we should examine *Existentialism is a Humanism*. Yet, before explicating it, it can be useful to give a brief description of our argument.

We argue that rather than suggesting a moral relativism or nihilism, in *Being and Nothingness* Sartre offers us an ontology which provides a ground for an existentialist ethics. Such an ethics would place freedom at the core of each value so that actions can be counted as good or wrong on the basis of this value. In other words, if freedom becomes an ultimate value, then other values can be counted as good and bad in an ethical sense with regard to freedom. Possibility of this is stated by Sartre with his distinctions of pure and impure reflection and pre-reflective and reflective values. Conflictual human relationships and desire to be God are pre-reflective projects of bad faith and can be left behind by a project of authenticity in which human beings realize their freedom and can choose freedom instead of being God.⁴³⁰ It is important to note that such an ethic will be an abstract and indirect one. Therefore, we can argue that Sartre's approach to ethics in *Being and Nothingness* is indirect, and rather than writing an ethic founded on freedom, Sartre chooses to show us the consequences of doing otherwise⁴³¹.

Being and Nothingness as a phenomenological ontology tries to explicate human reality descriptively, but ethics can be realized in the realm of action. In order to see how this ethics will be concretized, we should look at *Existentialism is a Humanism*.

⁴²⁹ Ibid., p. 17.

⁴³⁰ Thomas C. Anderson, *Sartre's Two Ethics*, p.40.

⁴³¹ David Detmer, *Sartre Explained*; p. 137

4.2. *Existentialism is a Humanism*

*Existentialism is a Humanism*⁴³² is a public lecture given by Sartre in 1946. In this lecture, he tries to give a response to the people, who criticize him in general, and Marxists and Christians in particular. Therefore, the structure of this lecture is mainly designed for responding to the critiques. However, while Sartre provides answers to the critiques, he introduces his existentialist ethics, which will be the main focus of this section. Anguish, despair, abandonment, responsibility and choice are both the main concepts of his ethics and the reason for critiques. All of these concepts and critiques depend on Sartre's identification of human beings with freedom. Moreover, Sartre chooses the idea of non-existence of God and the consequences deriving from this idea to introduce his existentialistic ethics. Yet, as we shall examine, Sartre will not lead us to ethical nihilism which basically rejects the existence of values. Sartre's attempt is rather to show that there are no transcendent or independent values. Thus, he claims that human beings are the source of every value. As a result, we will claim that Sartre will offer us a new understanding of ethics without endorsing absolute morality.

In order to explicate Sartre's existentialist ethics, we will first explicate what Sartre means by "existence precedes essence" and implications of this idea. Then, we will try to make explicit why we should take freedom as a foundation of all values. As a result, to the opponents of Sartrean ethics, who claim that what Sartre can offer us is either a moral relativism or a moral nihilism, we will argue that by making freedom as a foundation of all values, Sartre offers us an ethic founded on freedom. If freedom is an ultimate value for us, then other values can be counted as good and bad with regards to this end. Furthermore, freedom as a foundation will

⁴³² Jean Paul Sartre , *Existentialism is a Humanism*. Trans. by Carol Macomber, New Haven&London: Yale University Press, 2007 . Hereafter this work will be cited with abbreviation *EH*.

give us a reason for caring the other. Finally, we will claim that it is our freedom which makes moral action possible.

4.2.1. The Priority of Existence over Essence

According to Sartre, there are two kinds of existentialism. While the first one is Christian Existentialists; Karl Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel, the second one is Atheistic Existentialists; French Existentialists⁴³³, Heidegger and Sartre himself.⁴³⁴ In *Existentialism is a Humanism*, Sartre does not explain what kind of existentialism that Christian Existentialists provide us. Rather, he will explicate his atheistic position. Initially, it is important to mention that his investigation is not an attempt to prove that God does not exist. Rather he describes us a human reality in which there is no governing rules or principles that God or any transcendent being gives us. As he says:

[I]t is not that we believe that God exists, but we think that the real problem is not one of his existence; what man needs is to rediscover himself and to comprehend that nothing can save him from himself, not even valid proof of the existence of God. [E]xistentialism affirms that even if God were to exist, it would make no difference - that is our point of view.⁴³⁵

Sartre describes existentialism as “a doctrine that makes human life possible and also affirms that every truth and every action imply an environment and a human subjectivity.”⁴³⁶ Therefore, in order to understand the meaning of existentialism we should explicate the meaning of subjectivity. By human subjectivity, Sartre in a broad sense refers to his famous phrase “existence precedes

⁴³³ Sartre does not state who consists the French Existentialist in the text. As the translator states in *EH*, p. 101, Heidegger does not consider himself as an existentialist.

⁴³⁴ *EH*, 20.

⁴³⁵ *EH*,. 53.

⁴³⁶ *EH*, 18.

essence”. To explicate his phrase, Sartre contrasts the human existence with the existence of the objects. In *Being and Nothingness*, he explicates the essence of the objects as a law governing the appearances.⁴³⁷ In *Existentialism is a Humanism*, he describes the essence of an object with the concept of the object, production techniques and its purpose.⁴³⁸ He exemplifies the essence of an object with a paper knife. The production of a paper knife immediately assumes a craftsman or a producer who knows the concept of paper knife. In other words, the producer of the paper knife should know “what a paper knife is”.⁴³⁹ To produce a paper knife, he/she should also know how to produce a paper knife which refers to the production techniques. Finally he/she should produce it with a definitive purpose. Although it is theoretically possible to produce something not for the purpose of using it, the production of something implies that it would be used for a purpose. Consequently, Sartre defines an essence of an object “[t]he sum of properties that enable it to be produced and defined”.⁴⁴⁰ Since the craftsman knows these properties before creating the object, Sartre claims that for the objects “essence” or “production precedes existence”.⁴⁴¹

For Sartre, “we”⁴⁴² conceptualize God like a craftsman who produces the paper knife.⁴⁴³ Like the craftsman, God knows the concept of human being, the production techniques and the purpose of it. Therefore, he creates human beings with a definitive purpose and a definitive nature. It follows then, the meaning or essence of being human is defined by God and each and every human being is “a

⁴³⁷ For a detailed discussion, please see: Chapter 3, Section 3.12.

⁴³⁸ *EH*, 21.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid*.

⁴⁴⁰ *EH*, 21.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid*.

⁴⁴² Although he does not clearly state to whom he is referring as “we” he explicitly uses the names of Descartes, Kant, Voltaire, Diderot and Leibniz. *EH*, pp. 21-2.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid*, 22.

particular example of a universal concept of man”.⁴⁴⁴ With such a conception “we” believe that like the objects, our essence precedes our existence since our essence is determined in the mind of God before he creates us. We can say that a paper knife has a definitive function; therefore its existence is justified. Therefore, if our essence precedes our existence, then our existence like the paper knife, will be justified by the existence of God. Yet, if God does not exist, then there is “at least one being in whom existence precedes essence. That being is man, or, as Heidegger put it, human reality”.⁴⁴⁵

For Sartre, the preceding of existence to essence is a distinctive feature of human beings. Unlike the objects in the world, human beings exist first and then form their essence. Like we explicate in *The Transcendence of the Ego and Being and Nothingness*, there is nothing which determines human beings except their facticities.⁴⁴⁶ As we stated, by acting in the world among others we are forming a self. The essence, in *Existentialism is a Humanism*, refers to the ego which is the object *of* and *for* a consciousness. On this ground, Sartre explicates the same thing by “existence precedes essence”. As he states: “Man first exists: he materializes in the world, encounters himself, and only afterwards defines himself”.⁴⁴⁷ It is one of the aims of *Existentialism is a Humanism* to illuminate the consequences of such a human reality for an ethics.

⁴⁴⁴Ibid. p.23.

⁴⁴⁵Ibid, p.22.

⁴⁴⁶ As we stated in the previous chapter, even facticity is not a limit to our freedom, because we can interpret it.

⁴⁴⁷*EH*, 22.

4.2.2. Universal Human Condition and Absolute Responsibility

Although there is no human nature determined by God or any transcendent being, it does not mean for Sartre that human beings have nothing in common. Sartre claims that there is a “universal human condition”. He describes the condition as following:

To all limitations that a priori define man’s fundamental situation in the universe. Historical situations vary: a man may be born a slave in a pagan society or a feudal lord or a member of the proletariat. What never varies is the necessity for him to be in the world, to work in it, to live out his life in it among others, and, eventually, to die in it. These limitations are neither subjective nor objective; rather they have an objective as well as a subjective dimension: objective, because they affect everyone and are evident everywhere; subjective because they are *experienced* and meaningless if man does not experience them.⁴⁴⁸

Consequently, Sartre argues that although there is no human nature, there is a universal human condition which is determined by human beings themselves. The elements of objectivity of human condition come basically with the facticity which refers human beings’ unchangeable features. Each human being should born, live, die in somewhere with some biological features. Furthermore, since there is no God, human beings should live their lives in an “abandoned” world with other human beings. Similarly, all human beings find themselves in a situation in which they have to choose and be responsible from their choices. The elements of subjectivity of human condition come from the fact that this condition is not determined by God, it is actively formed by human beings. Each and every human being plays a role in this constitution by acting in the world among others. Putting it differently, human beings constitute and re-constitute “what it means to be a human” or “universal human condition” with their actions, choices, projects. This condition is determined and re-determined in every act of human beings. As a

⁴⁴⁸EH, 42.

result, although there is no determined human nature, there is a shared human reality or human condition formed and determined by human beings themselves. As Sartre states: “human universality exists, but it is not a given; it is in perpetual construction. In choosing myself; I construct universality”.⁴⁴⁹

For Sartre, we live in a human reality, in which there is no God for justifying our existence and our actions. This results with our abandonment in the world. Since our existence precedes our essence, we should make who we are through our actions. Therefore, we are only responsible for our actions, therefore for our self-determination. Yet, our responsibility is not limited with our self-determination, but it extends to all humanity. We are responsible from all human kind, since in each and every action we constitute what it means to be human. In order to understand this responsibility and “what it means to be” from the perspective of an existentialist ethics, we should further explicate the meaning of responsibility.

If [e]xistence truly does precede essence, man is responsible for what he is. Thus, the first effect of existentialism is to make every man conscious of what he is, and to make him solely responsible for his own existence. And when we say that man is responsible for himself, we do not mean that he is responsible only for his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men.⁴⁵⁰

According to Sartre, when we are in a situation in which we should decide, we choose what we consider to be true. For Sartre, it is not possible for us to do something without thinking that it is the right thing to do. On the same ground, Sartre argues that our choices reveal values. In other words, if I choose to do something, I believe that this something is both right and valuable. He exemplifies this with the choice of marriage.⁴⁵¹ When I choose to marry, I suggest “monogamy” to the rest of the world.⁴⁵² I affirm that marriage is a true and valuable thing.⁴⁵³ Therefore, Sartre argues that our actions point out an image of

⁴⁴⁹EH, 43.

⁴⁵⁰EH, 23.

⁴⁵¹Ibid., 24.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

⁴⁵³Ibid, 23.

man “as we think he ought to be”⁴⁵⁴. Creation of the image of man results with an absolute responsibility. We are absolutely responsible because while we are choosing, we choose as if the whole humanity ought to act accordingly. In other words, our choice both binds ourselves and the rest of the world. This binding brings absolute responsibility, since all of our actions take place “as if the entire human race were staring at him and measuring itself by what he does”.⁴⁵⁵

The awareness of absolute responsibility is not a daily experience. Moreover, it is not an easy task to accept. Thus, we behave as if our actions are binding only us. The awareness of absolute responsibility, however, brings nausea and anxiety with itself. As Sartre says:

[A] man who commits himself, and who realizes that he is not only the individual that he chooses to be, but also a legislator choosing at the same time what humanity as a whole should be, cannot help but be aware of his own full and profound responsibility.

Yet, it is possible for us to take an attitude of bad faith, in order to escape from anguish. As Sartre describes:

Certainly, many believe that their actions involve no one but themselves, and were we to ask them, "But what if everyone acted that way?" they would shrug their shoulders and reply, "But everyone does not act that way." In truth, however, one should always ask oneself, "What would happen if everyone did what I am doing?" "The only way to evade that disturbing thought is through some kind of bad faith."⁴⁵⁶

This absolute responsibility is a heavy burden to carry on and it makes our ethical decisions vital more than ever. The decisions are hard to make and may be impossible now, since we decide for all humanity. The ethical questions that we raised at the beginning of the section like “how we should live?” or “on what grounds our actions are regarded as right or wrong?” gain a further significance, since our ground will be a ground for all humanity. Neither ethical theories nor

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid,24.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid,26.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid, 25.

God is there to decide for ourselves. Sartre uses moral dilemmas to illuminate his point in a more clear fashion.

4.2.3. Moral Dilemmas and the Leap of Choice

Sartre gives an example of a moral dilemma in order to show that not only religion but also ethical theories are not sufficient for us to decide what to do in a situation. Sartre tells us a student of his who asks for help from Sartre. He describes the circumstances of his students as follows:

[H]is father had broken off with his mother, and, moreover, was inclined to be a "collaborator." His older brother had been killed in the German offensive of 1940, and this young man, with primitive but noble feelings, wanted to avenge him. His mother, living alone with him and deeply hurt by the partial betrayal of his father and the death of her oldest son, found her only comfort in him. At the time, the young man had the choice of going to England to join the Free French Forces - which would mean abandoning his mother - or remaining by her side to help her go on with her life.⁴⁵⁷

This student can choose either to leave her mother which will lead her into despair or to stay with her mother which will mean escaping the war and leaving the nation alone. While the first option has an immediate consequence such as the happiness of the mother, the result of the second option is not explicit i.e. he can be imprisoned during his road to England. However, while the first option includes a responsibility to one person, the second one is vital for a broader population. Remember that Sartre's student should behave as if all human kind decides according to his decision. Therefore, leaving the army will result as the possibility of an oppression of a whole nation. Sartre states that the student is between two

⁴⁵⁷Ibid, 30.

different kinds of morality: “a morality motivated by sympathy and individual devotion, and another morality with a broader scope, but less likely be fruitful”.⁴⁵⁸

If the student applies to Christian Morality, it will suggest that “be charitable, love our neighbor, sacrifice ourselves for others, choose ‘the narrow way’ etc.” Yet, now the student should decide for whom he should sacrifice himself.⁴⁵⁹ Should he sacrifice himself for his mother or neighbors? If he applies ethical theories such as Kant’s then the suggestion is as follows: “‘never treat another as a means, but always as an end’ ”.⁴⁶⁰ However, if the student wants to follow Kantian ethic, then he should treat either his citizens or his mother as a mean. Therefore, Sartre concludes: “We cannot decide a priori what ought to be done. [R]egardless of whatever ethical system he might attempt to follow, [n]one would offer any guidance.”⁴⁶¹

Here it is important to point out that Sartre is rejecting neither ethical action nor ethical theories. Rather than falsifying the ethical theories of Kant or Christianity, he tries to show us they are not themselves sufficient to guide our actions.⁴⁶² In this regard, what he rejects is an absolute morality which is valid for all people and all situations. Therefore, we argue that Sartre is trying to show that each person and each situation has uniqueness; both ethical and religious principles are too general for guiding specific actions. As we see, although both Kantian and Christian moralities show Sartre’s student a way, it is the student himself who should decide the morality that he will follow. Putting it differently, the student can choose to act according to Kantian or Christian morality, but this necessitates a choice between them. Even if we believe that there are transcendent religious

⁴⁵⁸Ibid, 31.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.,26.

⁴⁶² Edited by Christina Daigle, *Existentialist Thinkers and Ethics*, Canada: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006. Christina Daigle, Gleen Braddock, “Sartre on Atheism, Freedom, Morality in *The Humanism of Existentialism*, pp.7-8.

duties given by God, it is up to us to believe them. In other words, it depends on us to accept or reject the orders that God gives to us. Sartre exemplifies this by the case of Abraham. Abraham believed that God wants him to sacrifice his son. Yet, Sartre states, it is Abraham himself who should decide whether the voice he heard is the voice of God or whether he will follow the voice of God or not.⁴⁶³

On this ground, we can interpret this moral dilemma as revealing the unbridgeable gap between moral principles and our choices.⁴⁶⁴ It is always up to us to accept or reject the principles themselves. Therefore, they cannot by themselves force us to any action.⁴⁶⁵ Filling the gap or not to filling it is always depending on individual choice and individual responsibility.⁴⁶⁶ Thus, we can claim that our ethical decisions necessitate a leap of choice, like Abraham's leap of faith. Therefore, we argue that Sartre's emphasis is on choice; the choice of ourselves in the world among many others. This also applies to our ethical considerations. While a person chooses himself/herself, he/she at the same time choose his/her morality. As Sartre states: "Man makes himself; he does not come into the world fully made, he makes himself by choosing his own morality, and his circumstances are such that he has no option other than to choose a morality."⁴⁶⁷

In the light of these, Sartre's response to his student is as follows: "You are free, so choose; in other words, invent. No general code of ethics can tell what you ought to do; there are no signs in this world."⁴⁶⁸ The word "invention" in addition to Sartre's great emphasis on individual choices is interpreted by the opponents of Sartre's ethic as "a moral *laissez faire*".⁴⁶⁹ In other words, they claim that Sartre cannot differentiate ethical decisions from subjective preferences; therefore they

⁴⁶³EH, 24.

⁴⁶⁴ G. Braddock, "Sartre on Atheism, Freedom, Morality in The Humanism of Existentialism", p.97

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁷EH, 46.

⁴⁶⁸EH,33.

⁴⁶⁹ David E. Cooper, *Existentialism: A Reconstruction*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1999, p. 175

claim that “anything goes” in the realm of ethical action.⁴⁷⁰ Since our being is our freedom and there is no absolute morality or God’s order to follow, they claim that Sartre cannot differentiate subjective preferences and arbitrary actions from ethical ones. The point they miss, however, is that it is one thing to know a priori what has to be done before action, it is another to choose in a situation. What Sartre points out is the fact that even if there are some universal moral principles, it depends on human beings themselves to act according to them. As a result, Sartre claims that we should “invent” our own decision when we confront with ethical situations. He draws a parallel between art and ethical choice to elucidate his point:

[H]as anyone ever told an artist what sort of picture he should paint? It is obvious that there is no predefined picture to be made, and that the artist commits himself in painting his own picture, and that the picture that ought to be painted is precisely the one that he will have painted. [T]here are no aesthetic values *a priori*.⁴⁷¹

Like the artist, the agent in decision invents his decision from nothing. In other words, the decision is like a work of art, so it is original. Similar to the painter, who cannot be blamed for not depending on a priori rules in his painting, the agent in decision cannot be blamed for not depending on a priori rules in ethical actions. Yet, this does not mean that either the ethical decision or the work of art is either unjustified or arbitrary. As Sartre says:

When we discuss one of Picasso's paintings, we never say that it is gratuitous; we know full well that his composition became what it is while he was painting it, and that the body of his work is part and parcel of his life.⁴⁷²

Self-creativity is one of Sartre’s responses to the critiques who criticize Sartre for not differentiating arbitrary decisions and ethical ones since both are depending on the same freedom. Yet, Sartre claims that similar to artist, whose work is not arbitrary, the decision as a creation should not be considered as

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁷¹ *EH*, 45.

⁴⁷² *EH*, 46.

arbitrary. Actually, it is due to freedom, our ethical decisions are creative and inventive.⁴⁷³ Since there is no God or absolute morality, our decision is our creation. As a result, justification of our values cannot come either from God or from absolute morality; they find their source in us. Thus, like the artist, who should take the responsibility of his/her painting, we should take the responsibility of our actions. As Sartre says:

[M]an finds himself in a complex social situation in which he himself is committed, and by his choices commits all mankind, and he cannot avoid choosing. He will choose to abstain from sex, or marry without having children, or marry and have children. Whatever he does, he cannot avoid bearing full responsibility for his situation. He must choose without reference to any pre-established values, but it would be unfair to tax him with capriciousness.⁴⁷⁴

Therefore, the ethical decision for Sartre is about the self-creative subject who takes the responsibility of his/her decision. On this ground, we can argue that the concept of invention does not make Sartre an ethical subjectivist, but gives us a ground for providing an ethics of responsibility. On this ground, we claim that invention which is followed by responsibility is the very possibility of ethics. This is to say, if values are given to us as transcendent, if what should be done is determined by a priori rules, then it is not possible to take responsibility. In other words, in order to be responsible from something, then it should be done by the agent himself/herself. If God decides what we should do, then it would be him to blame. Thus, we can say that it would be the existence of a priori rules or God which would make us de-responsible from our actions.⁴⁷⁵ On this ground, we can claim that the very existence of the meaning of the “sin” reveals our capacity to choose. If our existence would have a ground, then it would “de-responsibilize”

⁴⁷³ G. Linsenbard, *Starting with Sartre*, p. 29.

⁴⁷⁴ *EH*, 45.

⁴⁷⁵ François Raffoul, *The Origins of Responsibility*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010, p.137.

us.⁴⁷⁶ Therefore, our freedom or our being as a contingency is what makes us responsible and provides us the whole “foundation” of ethical action.⁴⁷⁷

In this regard, we can give a final response to the critiques of Sartre’s conception of invention with the unusual nature of moral dilemmas. Ethical questions take place if we do not know the right rule.⁴⁷⁸ Furthermore, it is the nature of moral dilemmas to have at least two right things to do. In the case of Sartre’s student, there are good reasons for the student to choose either his mother or nation.⁴⁷⁹ Yet, the problem in this dilemma is that there are two moralities colliding with each other.⁴⁸⁰ Consider, for instance, “love your mother” and “act so as to maximize the greatest happiness of the greatest number”.⁴⁸¹ Both principles can be regarded as good and as a guide for action.⁴⁸² Therefore, we can argue that moral values are such that rather than directing us a one explicit action, they open us many alternatives.⁴⁸³ As a result of this, the only way for us is to choose between alternatives.⁴⁸⁴ Since there is no absolute morality, we should invent or choose our principles by ourselves.

Under the light of these, we can say that while we determine ourselves, we determine our morality. Since our existence precedes our essence, we contribute to what it means to be a human with our actions. Similarly, we give a creative and inventive contribution to the meaning of good, right, bad etc. with our ethical choices. Since values are not given externally to us, but invented by us, what we consider as worth living and good are creative and free products of human beings.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 136

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 138

⁴⁷⁹ D. E. Cooper, *Existentialism: A Reconstruction*, p. 175.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

⁴⁸² Ibid.

⁴⁸³ Jonathan Crow, “Is an Existentialist Ethics Possible?”, *Philosophy Now*, Issue 103, 2004, p.1

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁵ Although such an idea gives us “pluralism in moral matters”⁴⁸⁶, it does not mean that it is an ethical nihilism. As we discussed, it is one thing to state that there are no transcendent values and another to express human beings are the foundation of all values.⁴⁸⁷ Therefore, we think that rather than suggesting an ethical nihilism, Sartre discloses us a need for an ethical reconstruction.⁴⁸⁸

Yet, these explanations by themselves are still not sufficient for asserting that Sartre is not an ethical subjectivist. In this context, it is even not possible to make moral mistake.⁴⁸⁹ As we point out throughout our investigation, Sartre should give a ground for differentiating actions in an ethical sense. To exemplify, Sartre should give a ground for differentiating an authentic Nazi from the authentic student.⁴⁹⁰ Similarly, he should give a response for instance the reason why I should not oppress the other. Freedom as a ground will give us both the mean for differentiating actions and the reasons for caring the other.

4.2.4. Freedom as a Foundation

Sartre gives an argument of strict consistency for taking freedom as an ultimate value. He states that since freedom is the source of all values, it is rationally not consistent to value something without valuing freedom itself. As he states: “Once a man realizes, in his state of abandonment, that it is he who imposes his values, he can will but one thing: freedom as the foundation of all values.”⁴⁹¹ However, as Sartre adds, it is possible for someone to choose bad faith itself. Sartre’s response is that “there is no reason why you should not be, but I declare

⁴⁸⁵ Simon Glendining, *In the Name of Phenomenology*, p. 108

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁷ C. Daigle, “The Problem of Existentialist Ethics”, p 14.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁹ Gary J. Foulk, “Plantinga’s Criticism of Sartre’s Ethics”, Vol. 82.No. 4, 1972, pp.330-333, p. 332.

⁴⁹⁰ Detmer, *Freedom as a Value*, p. 106.

⁴⁹¹ *EH*, 48

you are, and that a strictly consistent attitude alone demonstrates good faith.”⁴⁹² Here we should focus on two points. First, although Sartre’s argument seems to be persuasive, it is still possible to claim that it is we who value rationality itself. In other words, it will be consistent in the lines of Sartre’s philosophy to choose to value irrationality and inconsistency instead of rationality and consistency.⁴⁹³ We have no counter argument for this thesis. However, we can argue that Sartre as a phenomenologist does not try to prove anything, but tries to describe human reality. Yet, in this case we can ask why he uses the word “rational consistency”.

Given this we want to draw attention to another point; how we “value” or “promote” freedom. In other words, if we are condemned to be free, then we should explicate the meaning of willing our freedom and freedom of others. The same argument can be applied to responsibility. If I am responsible for all of my actions, how can I be irresponsible from them? In order to explicate this we can make a difference between practical and ontological freedom.⁴⁹⁴ Ontological freedom can be understood with Sartre’s identification of consciousness, nothingness and freedom in *Being and Nothingness*. Since our consciousness is nothingness, it is always free to interpret, transcendent, go beyond what is given. In this regard, we can not will the freedom of ours and freedom of others, since all of us is condemned to be free, it is our way of existence. In this sense our freedom is absolute and not limited by anything other than itself. Practical freedom, on the other hand, is about satisfying the basic needs.⁴⁹⁵ Although there is a huge controversy about the meaning of the basic needs, we can in a broad sense define it as an access to material, social and cultural goods.⁴⁹⁶

Taking practical freedom as an ultimate value, gives us the means for differentiating good and wrong actions from each other and the reasons for

⁴⁹² Ibid.

⁴⁹³ Thomas C. Anderson, “Sartre’s Early Ethics”, p. 144.

⁴⁹⁴ T. Storm Heter, *Authenticity and Others: Sartre’s Ethics of Recognition*, p. 24.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid., p.18.

promoting the freedom of others.. Since oppression and killing is against the value of practical freedom, now we can say “it is wrong to kill.” Remember that for Sartre when we choose something for ourselves, we choose it for the humanity. Therefore, if something is a constraint to our practical freedom, then it cannot be good for the other. As a result, we can argue that we should not oppress the other in the name of being not oppressed, because when we oppress the other, we will choose a kind of humanity in which oppression is a good thing to do. Therefore, Sartre argues that freedom of oneself depends on the freedom of others. As he says:

We will freedom for freedom’s sake through our individual circumstances. And in thus willing freedom depends entirely on the freedom of others, and that freedom of others depends on our own. Of course, freedom as the definition of man does not depend on others, but as soon as there is commitment, I am obliged to will the freedom of others at the same time as I will my own. I cannot see my own freedom as a goal without also setting the freedom of others as a goal. ⁴⁹⁷

As a result, Sartre’s account of human world turns into an inter-subjective world, in which values are considered to be good and wrong depending on the ultimate value of freedom. As he declares: “We are thus immediately thrust into a world that we may call “inter-subjectivity”. It is in this world that man decides what he is and others are.”⁴⁹⁸ With his account of freedom as an ultimate value, Sartre’s account of the other in *Being and Nothingness*, which is conceptualized as conflictual, turns into authentic relations in which human beings promote freedom of themselves and others. As Sartre says:

[W]hen, operating on the level of complete authenticity, I have acknowledged that existence precedes essence, and that man is a free being who, under any circumstances, can only ever will his freedom, I have at the same time acknowledged that I must will the freedom of others.⁴⁹⁹

In the light of these, we can argue that scholars who claim that Sartre is an ethical nihilist misinterpret Sartre because he is both able to give a ground for

⁴⁹⁷EH, pp.48-9.

⁴⁹⁸EH, 42.

⁴⁹⁹EH, 49.

differentiating actions from each other and promoting the freedom of others. As a result, Sartre's ontology gives us a ground for his existentialist ethics, which is a product of humanity. Taking freedom as a ground does not lead us to ethical nihilism or subjectivism. Although there are no given values, there are values invented by humanity itself. One can still insist that these values at the end of the day are subjective. Yet, we think that if our being, the world and values have no foundation, there is no reason to blame Sartre. We rather claim that Sartre is trying to confront us with our own reality in which an a priori morality is impossible. This lack of ground and a priori morality, however, thus actually show us the possibility of moral action, since it makes us responsible.⁵⁰⁰ Consequently, it leads us to reconsider the meaning of ethics itself and to rebuild it from the ground.⁵⁰¹ Therefore, Sartre's philosophy takes ethics from heaven and re-situated it in the world among human beings. In other words, ethics is re-situated in existence.

⁵⁰⁰ François Raffoul, *The Origins of Responsibility*, p.137.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

There is a generally accepted metaphor that compares life to a road. To compare life to a road can indeed be fruitful in many ways, but we must consider how life is unlike a road. In a physical sense a road is an external actuality, no matter whether anyone is walking on it or not, no matter how the individual travels on it – the road is the road. But in the spiritual sense, the road comes into existence only when we walk on it. That is, the road *is* how it is walked.⁵⁰²

Our walk, in which Sartre was the guide, started with the question of the self, and directed us to the question of an existentialist ethics. Now, we are on our own way to the end of the road. Here our aim is to tell the story of our journey in general by pointing out in particular the important stations we visited on our way. Since Sartre was both the guide and the partner in our journey, it is possible to read this journey as Sartre's path from phenomenology to existentialism. Although it is up to the reader to choose their own way to read our story, we should say that our road was mainly shaped by the exposition of the relation between consciousness and ego through which the question of ethics is raised.

In the first station of our journey, we searched for the meaning of phenomenology and its central concepts like natural attitude, *epoché* and intentionality. This was an important task for us not only because it gave us an opportunity to gain a general insight about Sartre's philosophy, but also because these concepts became central in our investigation to our question of the self and

⁵⁰²Compiled and Edited by Charles E. Moore, *Provocations: Spiritual Writings of Kierkegaard*, Farmington: The Bruderhod Foundation, 2002, p. 55.

ethics. In order to elaborate Sartre's own understanding of phenomenology, we visited Sartre's essay on *Intentionality* and then *The Transcendence of the Ego*. Our inquiry to *Intentionality* showed us Sartre's affiliation with phenomenology in general and Husserl in particular. Throughout Sartre's criticism of idealism and realism, we witnessed how Sartre characterizes consciousness with movement, emptiness, and nothingness. This is the way in which Sartre found a ground to show how we cannot accommodate the ego within consciousness. Although this essay gave us a clue about the relation between our consciousness and the ego, it was not sufficient for us to have a comprehensive account of the meaning of the self. As a result, we directed our route to *The Transcendence of the Ego* in which the self becomes an object *of* and *for* consciousness.

To elucidate his point, Sartre explained us the reason why he rejected the Husserlian notion of transcendental ego; the existence of which means the death of consciousness for him. Sartre agrees with Husserl in the sense that all conscious acts reveal an intentional structure which basically means that consciousness is always consciousness of something *other* than itself; therefore it is consciousness of itself in so far as it is consciousness of something. Against Husserl, who assumed a factual existence of the transcendental ego in order to give unification to one's conscious acts and to give individuality to one's consciousness, Sartre claims that the principle of intentionality is enough to prepare a ground for the unity of conscious acts and for the individuality of consciousness. As a result, Sartre argued that although consciousness has unity and individuality of its own, neither of them is due to the existence of transcendental ego that is assumed to be seated in consciousness.

In order to make clear Sartre's rejection of the transcendental ego, we gave a specific emphasis on Sartre's conceptions of pre-reflective and reflective consciousness and positional and non-positional awareness. While the pre-reflective consciousness refers to our conscious activities in which there is no I, the reflective consciousness is the consciousness that is reflected on these activities. To exemplify, while the consciousness of the "train to be caught" is the pre-reflective

consciousness; the consciousness of “me catching the train” is the reflective consciousness. Given that these are spontaneous moments of consciousness, Sartre gave us examples showing that “the I” is a product of objectifications of pre-reflective consciousnesses. Therefore, through his examples, we understood that pre-reflective consciousness is both logically and temporally prior to the reflective one. However, we realized that there is a further problem which is the possibility of the unity of the pre-reflective consciousness. Therefore, we asked that how we can pass from the pre-reflective consciousness of “the train to be caught” to the reflective consciousness of “me catching the train”.

To clarify this point, Sartre gave us an example of reading a book. According to him, in reading a book, there is a positional awareness of the characters and situations in the book which is accompanied by a non-positional awareness of ourselves. Similarly, while we are trying to catch a train, our pre-reflective consciousness is both positionally aware of “the train to be caught” and non-positionally aware of itself. That is why for him, we are able to say immediately that “we were trying to catch the train”, if someone asks what we are doing. As a result, Sartre argued that it is possible for us to pass from pre-reflective consciousness to reflective ones, because our pre-reflective consciousness is both positionally aware of the object and non-positionally aware of itself. After illustrating that the conclusions deriving from the idea of a transcendental ego inhabiting in consciousness, Sartre claimed that consciousness is a non-substantial, spontaneous activity which needs *nothing* other than its object to unify itself. As a result, the priority of pre-reflective consciousness to reflective one, and the principle of intentionality were sufficient enough for Sartre to reveal that there is no need to assume a transcendental ego to give unity to one’s conscious acts and individuality of one’s consciousness.

Rather than reflecting on the validity of Sartre’s argument as to whether he is fair to Husserl or not, we choose to direct ourselves the implications of such an argument for our question of the self. Our question, “who we are”, as a result answered by Sartre as an ego which is a product of spontaneous and non-

substantial absolute consciousness. Our question of the self, then, turned into a question of the relation of consciousness and the ego. As we progressed, we reached to the conclusion that the ego is created by the reflective acts of consciousness, rather than discovered in it. This conclusion was important for us, because of two reasons. First, if there is no inner self to be discovered in us, we can reflect on “who we are” from a concrete point of view. Second, we realized that putting the self outside of consciousness will be the very ground of Sartre’s concept of freedom. However we, at the same time, asked how this absolute consciousness individualizes itself, because we believed that “who we are” is more than activities of a spontaneous consciousness.

As we further inquired, we found that the spontaneous consciousness creates the ego as a synthesis of states, actions and qualities. Our ego is like a melody which is synthetically composed of notes which is determined freely by our consciousness. Like a musician, who creates his/her own melody with given notes, yet within the infinity of possible compositions, human beings create themselves with a given life, yet within the infinity of possible lives. Anguish, in the form of vertigo of possibility, and bad faith as a mask of consciousness then appeared on our way, so we turned our route to another station.

In this new station, we found the monumental work of Sartre which is 638 pages with 5 chapters, divided into 45 subtitles, namely *Being and Nothingness*. We read the book with the motivation to find an answer to our question of the relation between consciousness and the ego. Our reading disclosed that Sartre’s phenomenological questions lead him to a phenomenological ontology through which he raised both the question of being and the human reality. Therefore, our journey in this station started with the elucidation of phenomenological ontology, followed by Sartre’s concepts of being, appearance and essence, and Sartre’s differentiation of being-for-itself and being-in-itself. While we were getting in trouble to understand Sartre’s concept of being, one of Sartre’s friend named Roquentin brought some help. He described his nausea which was the result of his

encounter with pure existence, gave us a clearer understanding of Sartre's conception of being.

As we stepped forward in *Being and Nothingness*, we witnessed the relation of being and non-being, and learned that non-being is the condition of our experience of the being. To make himself clear, Sartre gave us many examples of negativities (absence, distance, regret) and these examples provided us a ground to understand how Sartre identifies consciousness, freedom, nothingness and human reality. In fact, we found our answer to our question of the relation between consciousness and the ego at the moment we realized that the identity of consciousness with nothingness and freedom. We saw that for Sartre our consciousness is *nothing* other than being a nihilative activity and due to its being a nihilative power; it can transcend, go beyond or take a distance from what is given. This led us to understand why consciousness is freedom; since consciousness is always *free* to nihilate anything given to it, it is *free* from all determinations.

We arrived to the conclusion that the relation of the consciousness and the ego is such that due to its being nothingness, consciousness is freely producing an ego through which it acts in the world among other people. Furthermore, we recognized that these actions take place within a number of possible choices. In other words, we understood that while we are developing an ego by acting in the world, our actions becomes our choices which determine who we are. As a result, we conclude that "who we are" is what we choose freely. The underlying reason why our investigation was not finished here is the question of ethics; because we first asked Sartre the question that if all of our actions are the result of our free consciousness, on what ground Sartre can differentiate actions from each other which is followed by the question of a ground to differentiate actions in an ethical sense.

In order to find an answer, we further progressed to see that Sartre told us a story similar to *The Transcendence of the Ego* where the investigation is again led to bad faith and anguish. We witnessed that Sartre's explication of anguish as a reflective consciousness of freedom which is concretized by his concepts of

anguish in the face of past and future. While we were following Sartre, bad faith as an escape from anguish comes to the scene. Sartre explained bad faith with human beings' denial of human reality which consists in being a synthesis of facticity and transcendence. As a result, we learned that our freedom is such that it provokes anguish in us and leads us to project attitudes of bad faith to mask it from ourselves.

However, the attitudes of bad faith to escape from the anguish directed us again to despair. We fell into despair, since we learnt that being human means, for Sartre, being a futile desire to be God. He further claimed that all our actions are doomed to failure due to the existence of this ultimate desire. We observed that our relation with the other takes place in this structure and for this reason shaped by conflict. As a result, while we were happy with the idea that our self is a free product of our consciousness which makes us artists without any talent, we fell into despair because it does not matter whether we are artists or killers in a prison. Although Sartre explained that our choice to be an artist or a killer explicates the difference between us, facing with the fact that both determinations will end up with a failure was the reason of our despair. As a result, we desperately asked Sartre and ourselves the following question: whether he can give a ground to differentiate actions in an ethical sense or not. While keeping this question in our mind, we continued our journey.

In our final station, we realized that we are not alone in asking this question. Furthermore, we discovered that there are two groups of scholars, while some of them blame Sartre either for ethical subjectivism or an ethical nihilism, the other ones argue that Sartre at the very beginning of his philosophy gives a ground for an existentialist ethics. The first group, which we named as opponents of Sartre's ethics, build their argument on two inter-related points. First, since for Sartre all values find their justification only in the choices of human beings, he rejects independent values. They further say that even if he does not reject the existence of values, he makes values relative to our choices, and so subjective. Secondly, they criticize him for his elucidation of the relation between human beings as essentially

conflictual. They ask that if inter-subjectivity is not possible, then how we can claim for an ethical account.

During our re-consideration, we remembered that starting with *The Transcendence of the Ego*, Sartre refers to ethics. Although it is still not clear for us why he never wrote a book on ethics that is promised at the end of *Being and Nothingness*, we discovered that there are some paragraphs and footnotes in which Sartre reminds us the fact that *Being and Nothingness* is an ontology, therefore it cannot provide us ethical norms and principles. Depending on the same references, we discovered that freedom can be chosen instead of the desire to be God. Most important of all, we realized that in this work Sartre describes us a human reality which is shaped by bad faith. Although we did know that desire to be God and our relation with the other take place within the project of bad faith, what we missed is that attitudes of bad faith can be abandoned by taking an attitude of authenticity which necessitates a radical conversion and self-recovery of human beings from bad faith to authenticity.

Our inquiry revealed us the fact that Sartre's differentiation of "pure and impure reflection" and "pre-reflective and reflective values" opens us the way to choose freedom instead of the desire to be God. Sartre reminded us his references to pure reflection in *The Transcendence of the Ego*, so we turned back to it and *Being and Nothingness*, in order to clarify the meaning of pure and impure reflection and pre-reflective and reflective values. While the impure reflection and the pre-reflectively chosen values are like the natural attitude in which we do not question our values, the pure reflection and choosing freedom as a reflective value refers to *epoché* with which we question our natural attitude. Therefore, we concluded that although the desire to be god is a pre-reflective value for each of us, it is possible for us to take freedom as an ultimate value by a pure reflective act of consciousness.

Since we discovered that such an attitude is radically different from bad faith, we directed ourselves to the concept of authenticity which is conditioned by the realization of the spontaneity of our consciousness and by our human reality as a

synthesis of facticity and transcendence. Therefore, we concluded that *Being and Nothingness* is an ontology of bad faith, in which authenticity is negatively determined. As a result, although we saw that both authenticity and authentic relations are possible in the context of *Being and Nothingness*, the implications of these relation to ethics is both an indirect and abstract one, therefore needs to be concretized.

Sartre offered us in his lecture on “Existentialism is a Humanism” in which we can find not only his responses to the critiques directed to him, but also presentation of his existentialist ethics that we searched for. Sartre provided his response on the ground of his existentialism with which he described human beings for whom “existence precedes essence”. We did not focus on this point too much; since we had already explicated that our self is our own creation. Yet, the ethical conclusions deriving from this idea was new for us. Therefore, we gave our full attention to understand his ideas of universal human condition, choice, absolute responsibility and their meanings for an existentialist ethics.

In this lecture, Sartre told us that since there is neither God nor absolute morality, human beings should invent their own values. In order to clarify his point, Sartre gave us an example of moral dilemma in which a student of him should choose either his mother or nation. This example was significant for us, because Sartre reveals us first the insufficiency and generality of moralities of philosophy and religion to guide our actions, and second he enlightens us about the nature of our ethical choices which take place with a leap of choice. As a result, we realized that Sartre, by claiming “existence precedes essence”, sheds light on both our condemnation to choose ourselves and our morality. Our investigation taught us, therefore, that each and every action of us is both a contribution to and a revelation of what it means to be human. Our choice of ourselves, thus, constitutes the meaning of being human. On this ground Sartre stated that when we choose ourselves, we choose for humanity. Therefore, we reached to the conclusion that the choice of an action is to ascribe a value to it, and this is how we, each of us, are the source of the constitution of morality. Sartre’s existentialist humanism consists

in this self-creation through which values could first shine forth in our world, and in this way our world turns into a world with a moral significance.

Sartre's final remarks on freedom led us to our way back to home. He first gave us an argument to choose the value of freedom as an ultimate value. He argued that since freedom is the foundation of all values, we should take freedom as an ultimate value. He stated that since all values find their sources in freedom, it is rationally not consistent to value something without valuing the source to which it depends. Although we did not specifically focus on this argument, we stated that it is possible to value "irrationality" in the context of Sartre's philosophy. Our final point, which might direct us to another road if we realized it earlier, was the need to introduce a determination or limitation to his idea of absolute freedom and responsibility. Putting it differently, we stated that Sartre should limit our freedom and responsibility, because without this limitation it is not possible for him to claim either to promote freedom of others or to suggest not oppressing the other. Both of the actions will be impossible because it is not possible either to promote or to oppress a freedom which is absolute. As a result, we referred to a distinction between ontological and practical freedom, while the first one refers to the identification of freedom, consciousness and nothingness, the second one refers to satisfying the basic needs which can be explained by the access to social, material and cultural goods. We finally found our ground for differentiating actions. The ground was the practical freedom. Therefore, we concluded that every attempt to prevent the other's practical freedom therefore is wrong and every attempt to promote the practical freedom of ourselves and the others is good.

Although we considered that such a ground is too general for ethics, we directed ourselves to the existentialist ethics. We formed our response to the critiques on the ground of our human reality which is contingent. We re-asserted the idea that since we have no foundation, we are the foundation of all values. The non-existence of absolute morality, therefore, became the condition of ethics itself. As a result, we explained that the existentialist ethics is a product of humanity which is shaped by every act of human beings. We claimed that since it is the

product of each of us, we should take the responsibility of which we created. As a result, we argued that the core value of this ethics is responsibility and freedom.

Now, we are on our own way back to home which will be the end of our road. It is now time to reflect on how this journey could have been different. We think that raising the question of self was a good decision, since we now feel satisfied with Sartre's account of the self as a free and creative product of consciousness except the fact that his account is not satisfactory enough to give a concrete account of a political, historical and cultural human being situated in the world. Yet, we can suggest Sartre's later work *Critique of Dialectical Reason* for the other travelers who will be interested in this issue. Another possible road could be to turn our route to Sartre's plays and other early works such as *No Exit* and *Theory of Emotions* and their relation to this inquiry. A further possible road could be the consideration of Sartre's philosophy with regard to other philosophers, since he refers, derives ideas, and criticizes many philosophers especially like Descartes, Kant, Husserl and Heidegger. Although we referred Sartre's criticisms of them time to time, we did not discuss whether his criticisms are fair or not. Accepting that this point is one of the shortcomings of our inquiry, we can explain its reason by referring to our priority of explicating Sartre's own ideas rather than the ideas of the other philosophers. Yet, we can say that we left the decision regarding the validity of Sartre's criticisms to the reader. Finally we can assert that there are still many resources, inspirational ideas and difficulties in Sartre's works waiting to be explored by further research.

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TURKISH SUMMARY

EGO VE BİLİNÇ İLİŞKİSİ: ERKEN DÖNEM SARTRE FELSEFESİNDE ETİK SORUSU

“Benlik” ya da “ben kimim?” sorusu bilimsel ya da felsefi tüm arařtırmalarımızın altında yatan temel sorulardan biridir. Kendimize veya dıř dünyaya yönelttiğimiz her bir soru içsel bir şekilde kendimizi anlamaya, kim olduğumuz sorusuna bir cevap bulmaya yöneliktir. Farz edelim ki hakikat diye bir şey var ve biz onu bulduk. Onu hakikat olarak kabul ettiğimiz anda, kendi kabulümüz düzeyinde bile olsa, onunla kendimizi çoktan ilişkilendirmiş olmaz mıyız? Aynı şekilde farz edelim ki hakikat diye bir şeyin var olmadığına ikna olduk. Bu yokluğun, iman ya da kurgu düzeyinde bile olsa, hayatlarımız için ne anlama geldiğini düşünmez miyiz? Bu yüzdendir ki, kim olduğumuz sorusunun bizim için her zaman bir konu ya da cevap aranan bir soru olduğunu söyleyebiliriz. Kendimizle ilgili sorguladığımız en önemli sorulardan biri ise özgürlük sorusu olarak ortaya konabilir. Felsefe tarihi içersinde, Sartre, özgürlük sorusunu arařtırmalarının merkezine koyan en önemli filozoflardan biridir.

Sartre için özgürlük konusu o kadar merkezidir ki varlığımızı “özgürlüğe mahkumluk” olarak betimlemiştir. Özgürlük bilincimizi kendini iç daralmasıyla gösteren bir “olanakların yarattığı baş dönmesi” ve egomuzu; bilincimizin spontanlığını kendinden saklamak adına oluşturduğu bir maske olarak tanımlamıştır. Bilincin kendilikle ya da egoyla olan ilişkisi ne olmalıdır ki bu ilişki özgürlüğümüzü açıklarken saklasın? Tek mahkumiyetimizin özgürlük olduğu bu dünya neden bize rahatlamadan ziyade, iç daralması versin? Kendimizi bu sorulara ve cevaplarına adamanın kendimiz, öteki ve içinde yaşadığımız dünyayla

olan ilişkimizi deęiştirip dönüştüreceğine ve bu dönüşümün epistemolojik bir kaygıdan varoluşsal bir kaygıya evirileceğine inanıyorum.

Bu araştırma, bahsi geçen bu varoluşsal oryantasyonu öncelikle Sartre'in erken dönem felsefesi içinden, bilinç ve ego kavramlarını ve bu kavramlar arasındaki ilişkiyi özgürlük sorusuna bir cevap bulmak motivasyonu ile açıklamaya çalışmaktadır. Başka bir deyişle, Sartre'in ego ve bilinç ilişkisi üzerinden özgürlük meselesini nasıl ortaya koyduğuna dair bir cevap aranmaktadır. Araştırmanın bu bölümünün işaret ettiği en önemli noktalardan biri; Sartre'in varoluşumuzu özgürlüğümüzle özdeşleştirdiğine, aynı şekilde bilinç ve ego ilişkisinin özgür öz-belirlenimimizi açığa çıkarttığıdır.

Bilinç ve ego ilişkisi bize egomuzun bilincin yaratıcı ve orijinal bir ürünü olduğunu göstermektedir. Metaforik olarak, Sartre felsefesinde, kim olduğumuz sorusunun cevabını bir sanat eseri olarak düşünebiliriz. Sanatçının eserini yarattığı gibi, biz de "kim olduğumuzu" ya da benliğimizi eserini ölene kadar tekrar ve tekrar düzenleyen, yenileyen bir sanatçı gibi belirlemekteyiz. Bu zeminde, Sartre felsefesinde "kendilik" sorusunun cevabı, yazarı ve eseri özdeş olan bir sanatçı olarak düşünülebilir. Muhtemelen eserini yaratmak için ölene kadar vakti olan bir sanatçı "eserimi nasıl daha iyi hale getirebilirim?" ya da "bu kitabın ideal kurgusu ne olacaktır?" sorularını kendine yöneltecektir. Bu soruyu soran sanatçı gibi biz de "ideal benliğimiz ne olmalıdır?", "kim olmalıyım?", "kendimi nasıl daha iyi bir şekilde belirleyebilirim?" sorularını kendimize yöneltebiliriz. Dolayısıyla "kim olduğumuz" sorusu "kim olmalıyım?" sorusuna evirilecektir. Aynı zeminde, egomuz kendi yaratımımız olduğundan, yarattığımız eserden de sorumlu olmamız gerekmektedir. "Meli-malı" ekleri, "sorumluluk" ve "gereklilik" kelimeleri etik meseleyi sahneye çağırıldığından, "kim olduğum" sorusuyla başlayan bu araştırma, "kim olmalıyım?" sorusuna yönelen bir etik soru

haline gelmektedir. Özetle bu araştırma, Sartre'ın erken dönem felsefesinde bilinç ve ego ilişkisi üzerinden etik soruyu açığa çıkarmaya çalışmaktadır.

Sartre bir filozof, edebiyatçı, tiyatro yazarı, aktivist ve aynı zamanda gazetecidir. Ölmeden önce yayımlanan 28 eseri ve öldükten sonra basılan 6 kitabı bulunmaktadır. Yayımlanan röportajları ve makaleleri ise bu listeye dâhil değildir. Dolayısıyla, bu araştırma Sartre'ın erken dönem felsefesi olarak adlandırılan 1930 ve 1950 arasındaki dönemde yayımlanmasına izin verdiği eserlerle sınırlandırılmaktadır. Sonuç olarak araştırma sorusu ve cevabı Sartre'ın aşağıda belirlenen eserleri üzerinden verilmektedir: “Yönelimsellik: Husserl Fenomenolojisi Üzerine Temel Bir Düşünce” (1934) , *Ego'nun Aşkınısallığı* (1939), *Bulantı* (1938) *Varlık ve Hiçlik: Fenomenolojik Ontoloji Denemesi* (1943) ve *Varoluşçuluk Bir Hümanizmadır* (1946). Bu eserlerin seçilmesinin arkasında yatan temel sebep ise onların sadece Sartre'ın fenomenolojiden, fenomenolojik ontolojiye ve oradan varoluşçuluğa uzanan yolunu açıklaması değil, aynı zamanda Sartre'ın felsefesinin en başından beri özgürlüğe dayanan bir etik sunuyor olduğunu göstermesidir.

Araştırmanın ikinci bölümü, Sartre'ın ilk felsefi eseri sayılan ve Husserl fenomenolojisine yakınlığını gösteren “Yönelimsellik” makalesinin incelenmesiyle ve temel olarak Husserl'i eleştirdiği “Ego'nun Aşkınısallığı” kitabının incelenmesinden oluşmaktadır. Bu iki eser araştırmamız açısından oldukça önemlidir, çünkü bu eserler Sartre felsefesinin fenomenolojiden varoluşçuluğa geçiş evresini göstermekle beraber, bilinç ve ego ilişkisinin oldukça derin bir analizini içermektedir.

Bu bağlamda, ikinci bölümün ilk kısmı fenomenolojinin anlamını ve fenomenolojinin doğal tutum ve *epoche* gibi temel kavramlarını açıklamaktadır. Sartre “Yönelimsellik” makalesinde okuyucuya idealizm ve realizme dair eleştirilerini sunarken, kendi fenomenolojisini nasıl

uyguladığını da göstermektedir. Bu kritikler üzerinden bilinci bir hareket, boşluk ve hiçlik olarak tanımlamıştır ki bu yolla Sartre egoyu neden bilincin dışında tutulmamız gerektiğini ve egomuzu nasıl özgürce yaratabileceğimizin temelini vermiştir. Ancak, bu temellendirme dört sayfalık bir makale içerisinde eksik kaldığından ve aynı zamanda kim olduğumuz sorusuna yeterli bir cevap veremediğinden, ikinci bölümün ikinci kısmı *Egonun Aşkınılığı* kitabının incelenmesinden oluşmaktadır.

Egonun Aşkınılığı eserinde Sartre'ınamacının Husserl'in aşkınsal ego kavramını reddederek, ego ve bilinç ilişkisini tüm yönleriyle açıklamak ve bilinci her türlü içerikten bağımsız kılmaya çalışmak olduğunu söyleyebiliriz. Ancak bu noktada dikkat edilmesi gereken nokta, bu bölüm ve araştırma boyunca Sartre'ın eleştirilerinin adil ya da doğru olup olmadığının tartışılmadığıdır. Bundan daha ziyade, Sartre'ın diğer filozofları nasıl anladığı ve eleştirdiği açık kılınmaya çalışılmaktadır. Dolayısıyla, bu araştırmanın esas meselesi Sartre'ın diğer filozoflara dair okumalarını anlamak ve Sartre'ın kendi düşünce ve kavramlarını yansıtmaya çalışmaktır. Özetle, bu bölümün ana konusu Sartre'ın aşkınsal bir egonun varlığını “neden” ve “nasıl” reddettiği ve bu reddediş üzerinden egoyu nasıl ve ne şekilde *bilinç için* ve *bilincin* bir objesi kıldığıdır. Bu bağlamda Sartre'ın düşünüm öncesi ve düşünümsel bilinç arasında yaptığı ayırım ve konumsal ve konumsal-olmayan bilinç ayırımları bu bölümün temel odak noktalarıdır.

Bu ayırımlarla beraber, Sartre bilinci yönelimsellikle özdeş kılmış ve onu herhangi bir içeriği olmayan bir spontanlık olarak betimlemiştir. Sartre için bilinç tözsel olmayan bir mutlaktır. *Bilincin* bir objesi olan ve *bilinç için* bir obje olan ego ise bilincin bir ürünüdür. Dolayısıyla, kim olduğumuz ya da egomuz bilinçli varlıklar olarak bizim *özgür* öz-belirlenimize bağlıdır. Tam da bu sebeple, egomuz bu spontanlığı, bu yaratımı kendimizden saklamak adına bir maske olarak karşımıza çıkar.

Kendimizi özgürce belirleyebiliyor olduğumuz gerçeğinden saklanmak için, ya dışarıdan (bir Tanrı ya da toplum tarafından belirlenebilen) ya da içimizde (aşkınsal egonun varlığı gibi) kontrol edemediğimiz bir şekilde bizi belirleyen bir egomuz varmış gibi inanır ya da davranırız. Bu gerçekten saklanmak isteriz, çünkü edimlerimizin ya da kim olduğumuzun sorumluluğunu almaktan, aynı şekilde kendimizden başka hiçbir şeyin bizi belirleyemediği gerçeğinden kaçmak isteriz. Sartre bu kaçışımızın adını *Varlık ve Hiçlik* kitabında kendini aldatma olarak koyacaktır ve *Ego'nun Aşkınılığı* kitabını kendini aldatma davranışına ve bunun yarattığı iç daralması deneyimine bağlayarak bitirmektedir. Dolayısıyla, ego ve bilinç ilişkisi bizi *Varlık ve Hiçliği* inceleme gerekliliğine götürmektedir.

Araştırmanın üçüncü bölümü, Sartre'ın başyapıtı sayılan ve 1943'te yayımlanan *Varlık ve Hiçlik* eserinin incelenmesi ile başlamaktadır. Sartre eserini fenomenolojik ontoloji olarak sunmuştur, dolayısıyla bu bölümün ilk kısmı fenomenolojik ontolojinin anlamı ve bu anlam üzerinden *Varlık ve Hiçlik*' in genel bir özeti ve amacının açıklanmasından oluşmaktadır. Bu bölüm bize Sartre'ın fenomenolojisinin neden bir fenomenolojik ontolojiye dönüştüğünü göstermekle beraber, aynı zamanda ben olmak ne demektir sorusuna da oldukça detaylı bir cevap vermektedir.

Sartre fenomenolojik ontolojisinde *kendi için ve kendinde adını* verdiği iki varlık kipi tanımlamıştır. Çok geniş bir çerçevede kendi-için bilinçli varlığa yani “insana” referans verirken, kendinde varlık dünyaya referans verir. Bu iki varlık kipi arasında ki en temel farklardan biri ise, kendi-için varlık kendiyle özdeşlik ve birlik eksikliğiyken, kendinde varlık tamamen kendiyle özdeş ve birdir. *Varlık ve Hiçlik* bu iki varlık kipi arasındaki münasebeti ve bu münasebetin koşullarını incelemektedir. İnsan gerçekliğinin hiçlik oluşu, bu iki varlığın münasebetini mümkün kılmaktadır. Daha somut bir şekilde ifade etmek gerekirse, insan gerçekliği ya da kendi-için olmak olgusal ve aşkınsallığın bir sentezidir.

Olgusallık kendi-için varlığın değiştiremeyeceği (yaş, cinsiyet, uyruk vs.) gibi özelliklerine referans verirken, aşkınsallık onun bilinçli bir varlık olması anlamına gelmektedir.

Bu bölümün takip eden kısımlarında Sartre'ın *Bulantıromanı*ndan yararlanarak onun varlık nosyonu açıklanmaya çalışılmaktadır. Genelde varoluşun, özelde insan varoluşunun olumsallığı üzerinde odaklanılmaktadır. Bu odak üzerinden daha sonra Sartre'ın bilinci nasıl ve ne şekilde özgürlük ve hiçlikle özdeşleştirdiği ortaya konulmaya çalışılmaktadır. Bu bağlamda Sartre'ın bilinç, kendi-için, özgürlük ve hiçlik kavramlarını hangi zeminlerde ayırt edip etmediği mümkün olduğunca açık kılınmaktadır. Sartre'ın “varlık olmayan” a dair sorgusu bizi bilincin özgürlük ve hiçlikle bir ve aynı olduğunu anlamaya yönlendirir. Bilinç hiçliktir, çünkü bilinç kendini, başkasını ve verili olanı hiçleme aktivesinden başka *hiçbir şey* değildir. Bilinç özgürlüktür, çünkü özgürlüğümüz bilincin kendini, başkasını ve verili olanı aşabilmesi, yorumlayabilmesi, sorgulayabilmesi ve mesafe alabilmesinden başka *hiçbir şey* değildir. Dolayısıyla, hiç oluşumuz ve özgür oluşumuz bir ve aynı şeydir. Sonuç olarak, *Varlık ve Hiçlik*, insan bilinçli bir varlık olduğça, “özgürlüğe mahkum olan” bir insan gerçekliğinin betimlenmesidir.

Sartre'ın “Ego'nun Aşkınsallığı”nda da gösterdiği üzere, mutlak olan bu özgürlük kendisiyle beraber mutlak bir sorumluluk getirir ve bu özgürlüğün ve sorumluluğun bilinci olarak ortaya çıkan iç daralması, insanların ya da bilinçli varlıkların kendini aldatma projeleri yaratmalarına sebep olmaktadır. *Varlık ve Hiçlik* çerçevesinde kendini aldatma olgusallığımızın ya da aşkınsallığımızın bizzat kendimiz tarafından reddedilmesi olarak ortaya çıkar. Başka bir deyişle, kendini aldatma nesnelğin ve öznelğin bir sentezi olan insan gerçekliğinin reddedilmesidir.

Kendini aldatma tavırlarının incelenmesi ise bizi ötekiyle olan ilişkimizin incelenmesine yönlendirir, çünkü kendimizi aldatmamız diğeri ile olan ilişkimiz çerçevesinde şekillenir. Bunun anlamı şudur: kendini aldatma her ne kadar kendinle olan ilişkini içerse de, bu aldatma ötekinin karşısında bir kendini aldatmadır. Sartre'a göre öteki ile olan ilişkilerim özsel olarak çatışma ile şekillenir, çünkü öteki her zaman için özgürlüğüme bir tehdittir. Ötekinin özgürlüğüme tehdit oluşunun sebebi ise, beni nesneleştirme kapasitesine sahip olan bir özne oluşudur. Dolayısıyla, öteki ile olan ilişkimin özsel olarak çatışma olduğu bir dünya da, öznel-arası bir ilişkinin varlığı ancak bir kurgu olabilir.

Sartre için tanrı olma arzusu başka bir kendini aldatma projesidir. Bu arzu insanın kendi-için-kendinde olma arzusudur. Bu arzunun anlamı; insanın bilinçli bir varlık olarak kalırken, aynı zamanda kendinde varlığın birliği ve özdeşliğini istemesidir. Ve tam da bu sebepten dolayı boş, temelsiz, nafil ve çelişkilidir. Dolayısıyla bu arzu elde edilmesi imkânsız bir arzudur. Ancak Sartre felsefesinde insan olmak ya da bilinçli olmak hep bir varlık eksikliği olmak demek olduğu için, ontolojik olarak tüm insanlar bu arzuya ulaşmaya çalışmak yani tam olmak isterler. Ontolojik olarak bu arzunun en temel ve en mutlak arzu olması da, tüm davranış ve belirlenimlerimizi başarısızlığa mahkûm kılar. Sonuç olarak, ego ve bilinç arasında ki ilişki üzerinden yanıt vermeye çalıştığımız benlik sorgusu bize varoluşumuzu yararsız bir tanrı olma tutkusu olarak açılanmaktadır. Tüm edimlerimiz bu tanrı olma çabası üzerinden şekillendiğinden, hepsi eşit ve başarısızlığa mahkûmdur.

Tüm bunların sonucunda dördüncü bölümün başında Sartre'a şu soru sorulmuştur: “ hangi zemin üzerinden genel olarak edimleri ve özel olarak etik edimleri birbirinden ayırabiliriz?” Bu şunu sormaktır; eğer tüm edimlerimiz eşit olarak aynı özgürlüğe referans verecekse, birini öldürmek ve ona yardım etmek arasında bir ayırım var mıdır? Varsa bu ayırımın

zemini nedir? Aynı şekilde, eğer tüm edimlerimiz başarısızlıkla sonuçlanacaksa, edimlerimiz içinde değerli olan ya da bu dünya da yapmaya değer herhangi bir edim var mıdır? sorularını, benzer bir şekilde, eğer öteki ile olan ilişkim çatışmaysa ve öteki özgürlüğüme bir tehditse, hangi sebeple ve hangi zeminde ötekini umursamalı ve değer vermeliyim? sorusu takip etmektedir. Başka bir deyişle, öznel-arası ilişkinin imkânsız olduğu bir dünyada etiğin yeri nerededir? Tüm bu soruları temellendiren soru: “ Sartre bize etik için, etik edim için ne önerebilir?” şeklinde formüleleştirilebilir. Bu sorulara bir cevap verebilmek için araştırmanın dördüncü kısmı genel olarak *Varlık ve Hiçlik* in, özel olarak ise kendini aldatma ve tanrı olma çabası kavramlarının yeniden yorumlanmasının gerekliliği üzerinde durmaktadır.

Bu yeniden yorumlamanın üç temel argümanı vardır. Öncelikle vurgulanan *Varlık ve Hiçlik* eserinin ontolojik bir araştırma olmasıdır ve tam da bu sebeple bize etik bir teori sunamayacağıdır. Sartre’ın *Ego’nun Aşkınılığı* çerçevesinde işaret ettiği etik düşüncelere ek olarak, *Varlık ve Hiçlik*’ de sunduğu dipnotlara ve son bölümdeki bazı paragraflara dayanarak, bu bölümün temel argümanlarından biri, Sartre’ın *Varlık ve Hiçlik*’ de kendini aldatma tavırları içersinde ki bir insan gerçekliğini betimlediğidir. Dolayısıyla, bizim yorumumuz içersinde *Varlık ve Hiçlik*’ de betimlenen insan gerçekliği kendini aldatma projesinde olan insan gerçekliğidir. Aynı referanslardan yola çıkarak bu bölüm, *Varlık ve Hiçlik*’ de Sartre’ın özgürlüğe dayanan bir etiğe kapı açtığını iddia eder. Bu zeminde, insanın en temel değer olarak tanrı olma projesini değil de, özgürlüğü seçebileceğinin olasılığını gösterdiği savını taşır. Ancak bu seçim, saf ve saf olmayan (ikincil) refleksiyon ve aynı şekilde düşünömsel ve düşünüm öncesi değerler arasında bir ayırım yapmayı gerektirir. Bu ayırımların açıklanması *Ego’nun Aşkınısallığı ve Varlık ve Hiçlik*’de Sartre’ın tanrı olma çabası yerine özgürlüğün nasıl seçilebileceğinin yollarını açıkladığını ortaya çıkarmaktadır.

Ancak *Varlık ve Hiçlik* kendini aldatma projesi içerisindeki insanın betimlenmesidir, dolayısıyla özgürlüğü seçiş otantikliğe doğru bir dönüşümü gerektirir, bu yüzden ki Sartre otantiklik kavramını ve otantik ilişkileri *Varlık ve Hiçlik*' den dışlamıştır. Sartre bu kavramların yerlerini ancak bir etik kitabında bulabileceklerini belirtmiş ve söz verdiği etik kitabını hiç yazmamıştır. Bu bağlamda bölümün takip eden kısımlarında *Ego'nun Aşkınlığı* ve *Varlık ve Hiçlik* çerçevesinde, tanrı olma arzusu yerine özgürlüğü seçişimizin temeli üzerinden otantiklik ve otantik ilişkiler tartışılmaktadır.

Sartre felsefesinde otantiklik, kendini aldatma tavrı içinde olan insan gerçekliğinin kendini yeniden keşfetmesini ve bir dönüşüm geçirmesi gerekliliği olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. İnsanın kendini hem nesne hem de özne olarak görmesi ve aynı zaman da özgürlüğü en temel değer olarak görmesi otantikliğin başlıca koşulları olmuştur. Ancak bu tartışmanın somutlaşması ve Sartre'ın etik alanda bize ne sunabileceğini görmek için bu eserler yetersiz kalmaktadır. Aynı şekilde, Sartre'ın hem *Ego'nun Aşkınlığı*'nda hem de *Varlık ve Hiçlik*' de etiğe yaklaşımı soyut ve dolayımıdır.

Dolayısıyla bölümün son kısmında, Sartre'ın 1946'da yayımlanan ve ölmeden önce basılmasına izin verdiği tek etik kitabı olan *Varoluşçuluk Bir Hümanizmadır* adlı eseri incelenmektedir. Önceki eserlerinden farklı olarak *Varoluşçuluk Bir Hümanizmadır*' da Sartre okuyucularına sorumluluk ve özgürlüğe dayanan bir etik sunmaktadır. Sartre bu kitapta “varoluş özü önceler” sözüyle yaratıcı ve özgür öz-belirlenimimize işaret etmektedir. Bu zemin üzerinden kendimizi ve ahlakımızı seçmek zorunda oluşumuza ışık tutmaktadır. Sartre'ın da işaret ettiği gibi, kendimizi seçmemiz insanlığı, insanlık gerçekliğini belirlememiz ve seçmemiz demektir. Başka bir deyişle, her edimimiz insan olmak ne demektir sorusuna ve insanlık durumuna bir katkı ve açıklama sağlamaktadır. Bu

yüzdendir ki Sartre kendimizi seçerken, *insanlık için* ve *insanlığı* seçtiğimizi iddia eder.

Bu noktaları açık kılmak amacıyla, beşinci bölüm, Sartre'ın hangi sebeplerle ahlaki görecelilik ya da sübjektivizm ve nihilizm ile suçlandığının ve eleştirildiğinin anlatılmasıyla başlamaktadır. Bu okumanın temel argümanı Sartre'ın tüm değerlerin varoluşunu insana dayandırması ve bu bağlamda etik değerlerin insana görece kılmasıdır. Bu okumaya, Sartre'ın özgürlüğü mutlak ve en temel değer olarak ortaya koyma yolları açığa çıkarılarak karşı çıkılmaktadır. Bunu yapabilmek içinse Sartre'ın insanlık durumu, sorumluluk ve seçimin keşfi kavramları açıklanmaktadır.

Tüm bunların ötesinde, beşinci bölümün son kısmı, Sartre'ın varoluşçu etiğinin etik üzerine yeniden düşünmemiz ve etiği yeniden kurmamız gerekliliğine işaret ettiği üzerinde durmaktadır. Varoluşçu etik, bize, etik ve dini teorilerin edimlerimize rehber olmakta yetersiz oldukları gerçeğini açığa çıkarmaktadır. Daha doğrusu, varoluşçu etik bize edimlerin *apriori* kurullarla belirlendiği mutlak bir ahlakın imkansız olduğunu göstermektedir. Ancak bu tarz bir iddianın etik alanda oldukça tehlikeli ima ve etkileri vardır ki ahlaki görecelilik ya da nihilizme yönelmek bunlardan bazılarıdır. Ancak biz etik alanda ki bu mutlak zemin yokluğunun etiğin zeminin ta kendisi olduğunu ve etiği temellendirdiğini iddia etmekteyiz. Bunun anlamı şudur: Sartre etik alan da ahlaki bir nihilizm ya da görecelilik sunmaktan çok öte, özgürlüğün temel bir zemin olduğu yeni bir ahlak kurmamız gerekliliğine işaret etmektedir.

Bu nokta da Sartre'a sorulması gereken sorulardan biri, eğer özgürce en temel değerimi seçebiliyorsam, özgürlüğü en temel değer olarak almamın ne demek olduğudur. Başka bir deyişle, Sarte en temel değer olarak neden haz yerine özgürlüğü seçmem gerektiğine dair bir cevap sunabilmelidir. Bu soruya Sartre, rasyonel tutarlılık argümanı ile cevap

vermiştir. Ona göre, insan gerçekliği içinde ki insanın herhangi bir şeye değer verip, tüm değerlerin zemini ve kaynağı olan özgürlüğe değer vermemesi rasyonel olarak tutarlı değildir. Başka bir deyişle, bir şeye değer verip onun dayandığı ya da kaynağı olan şeye değer vermemek irrasyoneldir. Bu yüzden Sartre, özgürlüğün kendi kendisi için istendiği ve ötekinin özgürlüğünün desteklendiği bir varoluşçu etik öne sürmektedir.

Rasyonel tutarlılık argümanının geçerliliği hakkında bazı problemler vardır ancak buna ek olarak Sartre'a sorulması gereken çok daha önemli bir soru vardır: eğer tüm edimlerimiz mutlak olarak özgürse nasıl olur da kendimizin ya da başkasının özgürlüğünü (ki başkası da bizim gibi mutlak olarak özgürdür) destekleyebilir ya da kısıtlayabiliriz? Aynı şekilde, tüm edimlerimizden sorumlu olduğumuz bir dünya da nasıl olurda sorumsuz olabiliriz?

Bu noktayı açabilmek için pratik ve ontolojik özgürlük arasında bir ayrım yapmak gereklidir. Ontolojik özgürlük; özgürlük, bilincin ve hiçliğin birbirleriyle özdeş oldukları özgürlük anlayışına denk gelir. Pratik özgürlük ise insanların temel ihtiyaçlarına ulaşma özgürlüğüdür. Dolayısıyla, insan gerçekliğinin kendi ya da ötekinin ontolojik özgürlüğünü kısıtlama ya da destekleme olasılığı yokken, pratik özgürlük alanında bunu yapmak mümkündür. Bu zeminde, ötekinin pratik özgürlüğüne zarar verecek ya da onu kısıtlayacak her davranış yanlış sayılabilecekken, onun pratik özgürlüğünü destekleyecek ya da ona katkı da bulanacak davranışlar iyi ya da doğru sayılabilir. Bu çerçevede pratik özgürlük edimleri birbirinden ve etik edimleri diğer edimlerden ayıracak zemini bize verebilecektir.

Ontolojik özgürlük ve pratik özgürlük arasındaki ayrımın aradığımız zemin için yeterli olup olmadığı, böyle bir ayrımın bizi politik olarak nasıl bir düşünceye ve yaşam tarzına götüreceği sorulmuş sorular olarak kalmaktadır. Ancak varoluşçu etiği anlamak adına sanatla yapacağımız

son bir analoginin faydalı olduğunu düşünürüz. Nasıl ki bir sanat eseri herhangi bir *apriori* ya da mutlak bir kurala dayanmıyorsa, varoluşçu etikte etik kararlar düzeyinde hiçbir *apriori* kural vermemektedir. Bundan ziyade, varoluşçu etiğin bu zemin eksiliği üzerinden yeni bir etik kurulması gerekliliğine ve verilebilecek tek *apriori* prensibin:“ kendinin ve ötekinin özgürlüğünü destekle” olarak ortaya konabileceğine işaret ettiğini söyleyebiliriz.

Bu araştırmadan ve son bölümden çıkarılabilecek sonuçlar, araştırmamanın son bölümünü oluşturmaktadır. Bu bölümde, Sartre’ın fenomenolojisinden varoluşçuluğuna uzanan yolla, bilinç ve ego ilişkisinin ve bu ilişkiden çıkan ahlak sorusunun kesişim noktaları anlatılmaktadır. Argümanlarımızın özetini içeren bu bölüm, aynı zaman da bu araştırmamanın eksiklikleri ve ilerde ki çalışmalara ne şekilde yön verip ışık tutabileceği üzerine de odaklanır. Araştırmamızın sonunda, bilincin özgür ve yaratıcı bir ürünü olan benlik kavramından tatmin olmakla beraber, dünya da somut olarak konumlanmış politik, tarihsel, kültürel ve sosyal bir beni açıklamak konusunda eksik kaldığını düşünmekteyiz. Bu konuyu merak eden okuyucular için Sartre’ın *Dialektik Aklın Eleştirisi* adlı eserini önerebiliriz. Aynı şekilde, Sartre’ın erken dönem felsefesiyle ilgilenen okurlar için *Gizli Oturum* (1944) ve *Duyguların Teorisi* (1939), adlı eserlerinin bu araştırmayla ilişkisi incelenebilir. Bunlara ek olarak, Sartre özellikle *Varlık ve Hiçlik*’de Descartes, Kant, Bergson, Husserl ve Heidegger gibi birçok filozofu eleştirmiştir. Bu araştırma çerçevesinde eleştirilerin haklılığı ya da haksızlığı okuyucuya bırakılmıştır ancak bunun üzerine yeni bir araştırma yapılabileceği söylenebilir. Son olarak, Sartre’ın çalışmalarıyla ilgili açıklanmayı bekleyen daha birçok soru, düşünce ve zorluk olduğunu belirtebiliriz. Özetle bu araştırma, bilinç ve ego ilişkisi incelenmesiyle ortaya çıkan kendilik sorusuna ve bu soruya verilen cevabın yönlendirdiği etik soruya bir cevap bulmayı amaçlamaktadır.

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Bölümü : Felsefe

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and the Ego: The Question of Ethics in Sartre's Early Philosophy

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