SOME ASPECTS OF SARTRE'S POLITICAL THEORIES

(WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO MARXISM)

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by

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INTRODUCTION

Sartre has always been a social critic as well as a philosopher. A large part of his social criticism stems from various French cultural traditions, and these will be briefly summarised before we turn to the main concern of this paper, which is his critique of society and view of man from the neo-Marxist position he was led to through his general left-wing inclinations and his philosophy.

It is useful to situate Sartre in the context of his time and environment as it helps in the understanding of some of his attitudes and opinions which are not directly the result of his philosophy. It should be borne in mind that the joint legacies of the Enlightenment and the Revolution of 1789-99 are extremely important for an understanding of the role of the intellectual in France, the history of the French left-wing and labour movements, and the various attitudes towards Marxism and the Communist Party.

Industrialization, the consequent formation of a proletariat and the development of labour and socialist movements all took place after, and in the light of, the Revolution. Socialist movements adopted both the rhetoric and the insurrectionary technique of violence which characterised the Revolution. The betrayal and crushing of the workers' movements by the bourgeoise in both 1830 and 1848 produced one of the great divisions in French society, ie., between the

bourgeoisie and workers. This division was reinforced by the defeat and massacre of the Communards of 1871. While the Commune looked like the culmination of the Jacobin spirit of sans-culottism rather than an embryonic socialist movement (as Marx said in 1881, "the majority of the Commune was in no way socialist, nor could it be."[1]) its utter defeat did not, as might have been supposed, clear the way for more orthodox, Marxist, socialism. The growth of the anarcho-syndicalist movement owes more than a little to Jacobinism and the legacy of Proudhon. The defeat of the Commune could not be said to have eradicated this insurrectionary violent approach typified by Blanqui and his host of abortive coups in the first half of the nineteenth century. As Lichteim observes: "the Blanquist tradition was only overcome at the cost of incorporating some of its features into the doctrine of the French labour movement that was reborn after the Commune."[2]

Simplifying greatly, one might argue that this fusion of Blanqui and socialism became the Guedist faction on the French Left which provided the perfect basis for the adoption of Lenin's version of Marxism, which was introduced into France after 1917. David Caute sums it up well:

> ...the movement which developed on the extreme left after 1917 can...be viewed partly as an outgrowth of a tradition of violence dating back to 1789.,... In their (the earliest French communists) eyes the theory and practice of Leninist Bolshevism were

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[1]Marx, Basic Writings, pp. 429-30.

[2]Lichtheim, Marxism in Modern France, p. 8.

> absolutely compatible with the sacred legacy inherited from the Jacobin Committee of Public Safety, from Babeuf's Conspiracy of the Equals, from the June Days of 1848, from the Commune of 1871, from the Marxist wing of the Socialist Party, from the anti-capitalist intransigence of the revolutionary syndicalists.,...[3]

The effects of the Enlightenment can be seen in the representative figure of the other main section of the French Left: Jean Jaurès. Jaurès was very much the democratic socialist:

> For Jaurès, as for his disciples down to Leon Blum, the question was Marxism could be incorporated (into democratic socialism)...without doing fatal damage to the basic assumptions of eighteenth-century rationalism and moralism.[4]

The (unstable) alliance of the two sections of Jaurès and Guesde in the S.F.I.O. in 1905 showed how broad the definition of the left-wing can be in France.

A further consequence of the Enlightenment, it might be argued, is the great importance attached to intellectuals and their comments, both by the intellectuals themselves and by society as a whole. Part of the explanation for this may lie in that they represent the secular faction in one of the other great divisions in French society: that between Catholicism and Reason, as it were. This is not to suggest that all intellectuals are either secular or left-wing, but as Caute shows, this is an observable phenomenon in France. Both sides of this issue use the intellectuals and their professions as theatres for this conflict, and so more attention

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[3]Caute, Communism and the French Intellectuals, p. 12.

[4]Lichtheim, p. 20.

is paid to the pronouncements of intellectuals than is the case in either Britain or the United States, for example. In a sense, they have taken it upon themselves to be the conscience of the nation, performing the necessary iconoclastic role of criticism to prevent stagnation. This is particularly noticeable in Sartre's case through his statements in Temps modernes.

Thus, there is a strong left-wing intellectual tradition in France, along with a common revolutionary tradition and approach, and, as Lichtheim demonstrates, very wide differences in the interpretation of Marxism. It was common for Marxism to be regarded as a revolutionary device or tool serving to further the cause of the already present goals of humanism in general, in fact the Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité of 1789. As an example of this, Lichtheim cites one Marxist of the period we are concerned with (the nineteen-thirties), Marcel Cachin, as saying, Nous sommes les fils des Encyclopédistes. Nous restons fidèles à leurs conceptions matérialistes, à leur souci du progrès matériel et moral de l'homme."[5]

It should be apparent from even this brief sketch that Sartre is a product of the culture outlined above. On the one hand, he seeks the goals of humanism, and maintains the traditional role of criticism, and, on the other, he often

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[5]Lichtheim, p. 63n.

adopts the rhetoric of the Great Revolution. Sartre points out that the purpose of existentialism is to supply the missing elements in a now nearly emasculated Marxism:

> Marxism for want of contradiction [i.e. criticism] ... has lost life.[6]

> From the day that Marxist thought will have taken on the human dimension (that is, the existential project) as the foundation of anthropoligical Knowledge, existentialism will no longer have any reason for being.[7]

In the course of this paper several crucial questions concerning Sartre's Marxism will be raised. It is often felt that it is impossible to combine existentialism, however defined, and Marxism because of the difficulties caused by differing ontologies and epistemologies, and factors such as the Marxist belief that existentialism is subjective and completely a-historical.[8] Perhaps the greatest difficulty lies in Marx's and Sartre's seemingly very different attitudes to man. Marx's vision of the eventual resolution of class conflict and alienation seems basically at odds with Sartre's view that a significant element of alienation is an inescapable part of the human condition, and, at first sight, this makes Sartre's Marxism difficult to understand. There are those for whom the key point in Marx's theory is that the complete elimination of exploitation and alienation is promised, and to such people it seems impossible for anyone

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[6] Sartre, Existentialism and Literature, p. 149.

[7] Sartre, Search for a Method, p. 181.

[8] See: Novack, Marxism versus Existentialism, and Schaff, A Philosophy of Man.

to be a Marxist while holding the position that alienation is an ontological condition. This is one of the points which will be resolved below, along with the whole question of the validity of Sartre's Marxism.

Before Sartre's views on man and society are discussed, the relevant background information concerning his philosophy is given, along with an indication of his pre-Marxist position on social responsibility.

After the investigation of Sartre's Marxist position, an evaluation of this approach as a critique of society and politics will be given, dealing with the questions of its consistency, validity, and utility.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS OF SARTRE'S THEORY OF MAN

As we will see below, it is negation which is the key to consciousness in Sartreanism, and it is through negation that consciousness is free. The free consciousness is, however, only free in 'situation', and characterized by the particular 'fundamental project' chosen and the desire to excape the consequences of its freedom through 'bad faith'. These are the fundamental features of Sartrean man in Sartre's early writings up to and including Being and Nothingness.

Sartre divides being into two categories, being-in-itself (l'en-soi) and being-for-itself (le pour-soi), and an understanding of these two terms makes it easier to understand hsi views of consciousness, negation, nihilation and nothingness.

What, then, is being-in-itself? To simplify slightly, one can say that it is the term given to things, to concrete observable objects in the world, objects having no consciousness. Such an object is described as in-itself, as it is complete and self-contained; it is what it is and nothing more, one can never know its essence because there is nothing to know. There is nothing to know other than its appearance, its feel and use in the world. In a sense one can be acquainted

with the in-itself, adept in its use, but one can have no further knowledge of it.

Sartre's descriptions of the in-itself are among his most evocative and well worth quoting at some length:

> Being-in-itself is never either possible or impossible. It is. This is what consciousness expresses in anthropomorphic terms by saying that being is superfluous (de trop) -that is, consciousness absolutely can not derive being from anything, from another being, or from a possibility, or from a necessary law. Uncreated without reason for being, without any connection with another being being-in-itself is de trop for eternity.[1]

Rocquentin's experience in Nausea illustrates the feeling that the in-itself is essentially alien to us as even language does nothing to bring us to an understanding of the in-itself because language is merely nominalism, according to Sartre. Rocquentin comes to realize that it is only the observer who makes the world into an order, and gives meaning to it through the device of language:

> I was aware of the arbitrary nature of these relationships which I insisted on maintaining in order to delay the collapse of the human world of measures, of quantities, of bearings; they no longer had any grip on things.[2]

Behind the impressionism of Nausea a valid point is being made, as the more sober language of Being and Nothingness demonstrates:

> In-itself is what it is, in the absolute plenitude of its identity. (A) cloud is not 'potential rain', it is in itself a certain quantity of water vapour, which at a given temperature and under a given pressure is strictly what it is. The in-itself is actuality.[3]

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[1] Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. lxvi.

[2] Nausea, p. 184.

[3] Being and Nothingness, p. 70.

What, then, of the for-itself, that which gives meaning to the in-itself? For the moment the for-itself can be considered as synonymous with consciousness. Consciousness itself is divided into two stages, the pre-reflective cogito and the reflective cogito. The pre-reflective cogito has various features, among them being that it is intentional, i.e., directional. Consciousness is active, not, as might have been supposed, purely a passive contemplation of phenomena and a vague perception of the environment.

The pre-reflective consciousness is consciousness as 'an operative intention'. The world presents itself as a succession of things to be done, actions and reactions to be called forth:

> I am then plunged into a world of objects: it is they which constitute the unity of my consciousness, it is they which present themselves with values, with attractive and repellent qualities--but me, I have disappeared.[4]

We can see why the pre-reflective consciousness is so termed: it performs without deliberately, explicitly, formulating what is being done at each step. It is not unconscious as, at any time, if asked what one is doing, a reply is immediately possible. In essence, then, pre-reflective consciousness is "implicit consciousness of being consciousness of an object."[5]

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[4] The Transcendence of the Ego, p. 48.

[5] Being and Nothingness, p. 548.

Sartre claims that the reflective consciousness is formed through the subject's realisation of what he is not. This is through a process of negation and nihilation. Consciousness in its primary form is "non-positional self-consciousness", and as "consciousness is always conscious of aomething", it is necessary that reflective consciousness see itself as an object. As far as Sartre is concerned, there is no self as such, which can be viewed as fixed, all that consciousness can be sure of is of not being the particular object perceived:

> The For-itself is not the world, spatiality, permanence, matter, in short, the in-itself in general, but its manner of not-being-them is to have to not-be this table, this glass, this room on the total ground of negativity.[6]

This, of course, reinforces the view that the in-itself is impossible to know in its essence as our relation to it is mainly negative, our only positive relation to it is in its use, which is, in a sense, divorced from it. Consciousness is, then, this constant negation or nihilation.

The basic form of this process is external negation:

> ...there are many ways of not being and some of them do not touch the inner nature of the being which is not what it is not. If for example I say of an inkwell that it is not a bird, the inkwell and the bird remain untouched by the negation.[7]

From this form develops the more advanced form of imagination:

> ...if negation is the unconditional principle of all imagination reciprocally it can never take place except by and in an act of imagination. What is

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[6] Ibid., p. 159.

[7] Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 62.

> denied mus t be imagined. In fact, the object of a negation cannot be real because that would mean affirming what is being denied--but no more can it be nothing because something is denied, so the object of a negation must be thought of as imaginary.[8]

Within the imagination one of the most important features of consciousness, nihilation, is found. It is more than negation as it is both the positing of images and their negation:

> ...negation is a refusal of existence. By means of it a being (or a way of being) is posited, then thrown back to nothingness...(Negation) can nihilate a being, cause it suddenly to arise and then appoint it to be thrown back to non-being.[9]

If the sine qua non of consciousness is the ability to negate, then what are the implications of this?

> The being of consciousness qua consciousness is to exist at a distance from itself as a presence to itself and this empty distance which being carries in its being is Nothingness.[10]

In other words, reflection causes nothingness to arise. Given that there are no drives affecting the consciousness, and that movement through time itself necessitates action of some description, then consciousness is permanently in a state of indecision, necessitating some choice. Imagination/ nihilation posits a great number of possible courses of action. The selection of one of these 'possibles' has to be made in the light of the others and its selection

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[8] Sartre, L'Imaginaire, p. 238, quoted Manser, Sartre, p. 35.

[9] Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. II.

[10] Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 54.

nihilates the others--it creates nothingness: "logically, nothingness is subsequent to being since it is being first posited, then denied."[11] It is possible to look upon the whole realm of the future as nothingness, but it should rather be thought of as potential nothingness, as it is nothingness in a realtion rather than a void as such. Later we will see that, according to Sartre, man has the constant desire to eliminate nothingness through attaining a plenitude of being in the form of the in-itself-for-inself.

This constant feeling of nothingness reveals our complete contingency in the world, the fact that we are permanently without any foundation or direction other than that we decide to give ourselves. It is this realization which explains the existence of anguish in the face of our constant responsibility for ourselves in the light of nothingness. As R.D. Laing aptly put it, there is nothing to be afraid of. The escape into bad faith is one of the most common reactions to this state of affairs.

According to Sartre, the way in which man gives himself an aim and direction in the world is through the choice of a 'fundamental project', which is a choice of one's being-in-the-world. As Sartre's theory of consciousness precluded the existence of instincts, in the Fruedian sense, which are instrumental in deciding personality and attitude to the world, an d Sartre himself could see that social

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[11] Being and Nothingness, p. 14.

conditioning alone could not produce a fixed reaction to the particular event in the manner of an automatic response to a stimulus, he was obliged to develop some theoretical device to explain the various attitudes towards life that in part constitute personality. The discussion of the fundamental project is outside the scope of this paper as it is more a concern of existential psychoanalysis.[12] Laing's work would seem to demonstrate that what Sartre calls the fundamental project is a reaction formation against the outside world and other people which develops when the 'impingement of reality', to use Winnicott's term, becomes too great. When one leaves the extreme case, such as Jean Genet, it is difficult, if not impossible, to establish anything at all about the 'normal' person's fundamental project because it is supposedly formed around the age of six to ten years and is thus masked by the effects of general socialization. It is difficult to separate this process from the child's growing awareness of others' expectations and the general demands of his upbringing. As Manser says, "It even seems questionable whether one can talk of such a thing as a 'choice' at all."[13]

Sartre developed this concept for various reasons. Apart from those mentioned above the main reason was that it provided one of the supports in his arguement that man was free. With the existence of the fundamental project is was

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[12] See Sartre, Saint Genet, for the definitive account of fundamental project formation and change. See Laing, The Divided Self, Self and Others, and Laing and Esterson, Sanity, Madness and the Family, for similar ideas.

[13] Manser, op. cit., p. 123.

man freely choosing his being, rather than man determined by his unconscious complexes, that Sartre could theorise about.[14] Man, having freely chosen his attitude towards life and the world, could, therefore, change at will, and this Sartre was concerned to demonstrate to people to jar them from their unthinking ruts and inform them that they were totally responsible for themselves and the society they perpetuated.

We are led from the subject of the fundamental project *per se* to the question of the degree and kind of freedom we have in choosing our project. As far as Sartre was concerned at the time of the early writings, man was totally free to choose, but free 'in situation'. In other words, we cannot choose when, where, and to whom we are born, or such factors as our class or physical make-up. Such things make up our situation, in effect, they are the 'givens' in life that we have to deal with. Our situation, of course, determines the range of our 'possibles', i.e. the number of options open to us at any one time. Within these constraints we are, supposedly, completely free to choose. Some situation is both an inescapable part of existence and the necessary basis for the exercise of our freedom: "Being situated is an essential and necessary characteristic of freedom. To describe the situation is not to cast aspersion on the freedom."[15]

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[14] See *Being and Nothingness*, p. 431.

[15] *Existentialism and Literature*, pp. 150-1.

Man is, then, in situation and free within situation. This state of affairs, Sartre argues, is unpalatable to virtually everyone. If one objects to various features of one's existence one does not wish to be reminded that one is responsible for one's mode of life, and it is because of this that most people escape into what he calls 'bad faith'.

Sartre considered bad faith to be the condition in which most people spent their lives. In some way or another virtually everyone tries to escape the responsibility of his or her freedom, and it follows that bad faith can, therefore, take almost an infinite variety of forms. The only necessary common factor is the refusal to accept that one is responsible for one's own actions, and thus bad faith includes all forms of hypocrisy and self-deception.

> What unity do we find in these various aspects of bad-faith? It is a certain art of forming contradictory concepts which unite in themselves both an idea and the negation of that idea. The basic concept which is thus engendered utilizes the double property of the human being who is at once a facticity and a transcendence.[16]

We see what this means by reference to one of Sartre's favourite examples, that of a café waiter, used in both Being and Nothingness and The Age of Reason:

> In vain do I fulfil the functions of a Café Waiter. I can be he only in the neutralized mode, as the actor is Hamlet, by mechanically making the typical

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[16] Sartre, Existential Psychoanalysis, p. 175.

> gestures of my state and by aiming at myself as an imaginary café waiter. What I attempt to realize is a being-in-itself of the café waiter, as if it were not just in my power to confer their value and their urgency on my duties and the rights of my position, as if it were not my free choice to get up each morning at five o'clock, or to remain in bed even though it meant getting fired.[17]

All attempts to be the in-itself facet (facticity) of one's being, rather than acknowledge one's ability to transcend this state at will, are in bad faith. One of the characters in Les Chemins de la Libérté, Daniel, serves to illustrate this theme. Daniel, a homosexual, desires to be free of the responsibility of maintaining this mode of being. It is his responsibility as, even if there were this original contingent instinctual tendency in his make-up once he is conscious of his state, he is, by definition, conscious of the alternative, owing to the nature of consciousness itself. And as man is seen as in control of his instincts. Daniel can be said to choose to remain homosexual for his own reasons, which are, in part, the desire to escape the anguish of his freedom. As he says, "I want to be ...To extinguish the inner eye. 'Extinguish' to be a pederast as an oak is an oak."[18] Other people, however,refuse to see him merely as a homosexual, he cannot take refuge in his being-for-others, which is the main sense of identity which we have. Finally, he concludes that in the sight of a permanent observer his identity will

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[17] Ibid., p. 184.

[18] Sartre , The Reprieve, p. 115.

become fixed and immutable, he will be a homosexual with no choice in the matter. The permanent observer's role he assigns to God:

> At last I am transmuted into myself. Hated, despised, sustained, a presence supports me to continue thus for ever. I am infinite and infinitely guilty. But I am Mathieu, I am. Before God and before men I am ...[19]

This is a demonstration of Sartre's point that we are greatly dependent on the perceptions others have of us for our own concept of ourselves.

Another character, Boris, demonstrates the mistaken attitude that one's future is determined and that one is helpless before fate. Because of the coming war, he feels certain to be killed in 1942, and, feeling that he is going along with the inevitable, he joins up for three years, only to find that war is averted. In this case it is he himself, not the situation, who is responsible for the limitation of his freedom.

The concept of bad faith becomes clearer when Sartre's view of the importance of time in understanding consciousness, and thus behaviour and attitude, is taken into consideration.

The important feature of time for our purpose is that it is man that temporalises, according to Sartre; consciousness to exist must temporalise: "Temporality is the being of the for-itself in so far as the for-itself has

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[19] Ibid., p. 346.

to be its being ekstatically...the for-itself temporalizes itself by existing."[20] Inasmuch as full consciousness is reflection, it is a looking back on the actions of the pre-reflective consciousness. To know what one is necessitates reflection, and, therefore, one can know only what one was:

> The past is what I am without being able to live it. The past is substance. In this sense the Cartesian cogito ought to be formulated rather 'think, therefore I was'.[21]

The idea of the present as a series of instants is an impossibility as time can be infinitely divided, and on this basis one can argue for the existence of past and future but not the present. For this reason the for-itself must constantly be in a state of doubt and uncertainty as it is always in the position of just having done some action and being called upon to make a further decision: "The for-itself is present to being in the form of flight; the present is a perpetual flight in the face of being."[22]

If consciousness, to be consciousness, is nihilation, then the awareness of an action is contemporaneous with its nihilation, which must take place in time. At each stage of reflection we look back on a past which cannot determine the future--there is a gap in being which means that we are constantly free:

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[20] Being and Nothingness, p. 112.

[21] Ibid., p. 95.

[22] Ibid., p. 99.

> Behind it [consciousness] was its past and before it will be its future. It is a flight out of co-present being and from the being which it was towards the being which it will be. At present it is not what it is (past) and is what it is not (future).[23]

It is partly the fact that "The future is what I have to be insofar as I can not be it"[24] which causes anguish because there is no way that the for-itself can escape its powers of nihilation and still remain conscious. As Heidegger says, being is always at a distance from itself. Here, in the division in being, we have reached the nub of Sartre's early existentialism.

This division in being between the for-itself (consciousness) and the in-itself element in man (his past, his actions reflected upon) is what leads Sartre to call alienation an ontological condition, a permanent condition. Man, however, strives to overcome the alienating aspects of this distance in being, and, according to Sartre, it is this striving to re-unite being which provides the drive in life rather than the play of instincts: "...it is a flight towards its being; that is towards the self which it will be by coincidence with what it lacks."[25] Obviously, however, this coincidence can be achieved only in the past, never in the present. And it is this which led Sartre to the famous

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[23] Being and Nothingness, p. 99.

[24] Ibid., p. 101.

[25] Ibid., p. 101.

statement that man was a 'useless' passion. It is impossible to be in-itself-for-itself.

This, then, is the picture of early Sartrean man. He is free from everything save his situation and the actions of others. He is totally responsible for his actions, yet frightened by this responsibility. He suffered anguish because of his ontological condition, the division in being between for-itself and in-itself. His life's major actions are prompted by the desire to 're-unite' being and become in-itself-for-itself, and because of this he frequently retreats into the illusory solution of bad faith. As MacIntyre observed: "So he concludes that we not only all are, but must be, in bad faith. We are all acting parts, pretending. Sometimes it seems there is no escape...".[26]

What, then, are Sartre's positions on individual and social action, and ethics, given this theory of man?

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[26]MacIntyre, "Sartre as a Social Theorist", p. 512.

CHAPTER TWO

SARTRE'S PRE-MARXIST POSITION ON MAN AND SOCIETY

In relation to the individual, Sartre felt that man should come to terms with his freedom. As the ontological alienation caused by the very nature of being and consciousness was seen as inescapable, man should realise this and reconcile himself to some degree of anguish. Sartre felt that if one could come to terms with being through greater self-honesty certain forms of bad faith, in particular the tendency to regard oneself as objectively a fixed character, role, and entity, could be avoided. Once man avoids the temptation to view himself as in-itself he is led by the nature of consciousness to question the basis of his existence, and in particular his actions and role in life.

This process Sartre terms 'authenticity',[1] and the concept of authenticity is used by Sartre in the form of a Kantian regulative idea. In other words, although, in the final analysis, one's most basic primary experiences (birth trauma, early bereavement, etc.) may have genuinely affected one in a permanent way, one should not take refuge in this as an escape and excuse but attempt to live as though totally free and responsible for all one's actions.

Before discussing the social implications of this one

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[1] See Sartre, Existential Psychoanalysis, and M. Grene, 'Authenticity: An Existential Virtue,' in Ethics, July, 1952.

can question authenticity as the solution for the individual condition. The point is that there is no solution for the individual; anguish will always be a human condition, as Sartre acknowledged in the 'sixties, even after his adoption of Marxism: "...the universe remains dark. We are animals struck by catastrophe..."[2] We will return to this 'catastrophe', what Sartre calls 'metaphysical evil', in a later chapter. The attempt to escape anguish, according to Sartre, has, however, made life much worse than it need be through the effects of generations of bad faith. Man's condition can be ameliorated even if it can never be made perfect.

This amelioration is a social question as bad faith has led to the creation of (social) conventions, traditions and institutions, such as nationalism, social position, or the concentration on material possession, which serve to give man an illusory sense of his own importance. It is impossible for the individual alone to transcend these features of society while they remain common values, and this is in part the explanation for Sartre's belief that authentic existence would necessarily lead to the recognition of the need for social change--he argued that the recognition of our own freedom leads to our desiring the freedom of others to complement our own:

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[2]Sartre, Encounter, p. 61.

> ...in wanting freedom, we discover that it depends entirely on the freedom of others and that the freedom of others depends on ours. Of course, freedom as the definition of man does not depend on others, but as soon as there is involvement, I am obliged to want others to have my freedom at the same time. I can take freedom as my goal only if I take that of others' as a goal as well.[3]

Sartre obviously did not believe that the bourgeois society of (for him) false values, which he detested, could survive this "self-recovery of being which was previously corrupted."[4] He felt that as bourgeois capitalist society was clearly based on exploitation it could not stand up to an honest appraisal on the part of the people composing it. As Sartre felt that society was merely the sum total of individuals' actions and attitudes ("The only concrete basis of an historical dialectic is the dialectial structure of individual actions. ... the group is not a hyper-individual."[5]), he believed that the change in people's individual attitudes would be sufficient to change society. This is, of course, a very individualistic and, the Marxists would say, a-historical approach to the problem of social change. The individual is seen as determining social institutions, rather than vice versa, and while there is an element of truth in this, Sartre's position at this time rivaled W.H. Auden's recommendation for the individual 'change of heart' as the necessary condition for social change in its naivete.

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[3]Sartre, Existentialism, p. 53.

[4]Sartre, Existential Psychoanalysis, p. 209n.

[5]Laing and Cooper, Reason and Violence, pp. 117, 134.

In Being and Nothingness and Saint Genet it is demonstrated that we are always in some relation to other people. Even when we are alone we exist in a human world, in the Marxist sense of the word, and the 'intentionality' of objects and artifacts is an illustration of this humanization. Sartre believed, therefore, that whatever actions we took or attitudes we held, even our non-involvement and apathy, affected others. The authentic individual would be aware of this, and, according to Sartre, aware that he was not only responsible for himself but for his inevitable effect on others. This is the meaning of Sartre's statements that each is responsible for all. As we have seen, Sartre felt that there was nothing over and above the sum total of individual action and reaction determining the direction taken by society and that, therefore, each person has a measure of responsibility for the direction taken by the whole. Sartre's position on responsibility is extreme, as we can see from one of his observations in Being and Nothingness:

> ...a community event which suddenly bursts forth and involves me in it does not come from the outside. If I am mobilized in a war, this war is my war, it is in my image and I deserve it first because I could always get out of it by suicide or desertion. ...For lack of getting out of it I have chosen it.[6]

Sartre's view was that tacit consent to anything is comp-

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[6]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 530.

licity, and on this basis we always get the government or the war we deserve. We find this position illustrated by his stand on the Algerian war in, for example, the Preface to Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth. He uses the law of excluded middle in discussing the supporters of neutrality and non-involvement:

> Very well, then: if you're not victims when the government which you voted for, when the army in which your younger brothers are serving without remorse or hesitation have undertaken race murder you are without doubt executioners. And if you choose to be victims and to risk being put in prison for a day or two you are simply choosing to pull your irons out of the fire.[7]

This is, of course, a very demanding position Sartre is putting forward. It is an example of his belief that the negative aspect of a moral system (i.e., that, given that our authenticity forces us to recognise the value of other freedom of others there can be no justification for social evil which infringes this freedom) should become positive. In other words, it is not enough that we avoid direct involvement in such activities, we should in addition strive for the removal of these evils, in this case an end to colonialism and torture.

Even if we accept this move in that it is not logically invalid, it is possible to question Sartre's views. Surely one has to have knowledge of the meaning and consequences of one's actions before one is responsible for them

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[7] Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, p. 25.

in any way other than that of simply having been their author. One can be responsible only for one's own acts rather than for those of others: This distinction has to be drawn, otherwise the problem of making the social ethic positive becomes impossible. By this is meant that there has to be some dividing line between self and other regarding acts as it is sometimes put. Where does one's duty to help eradicate social evil end? Sartre showed some recognition of this problem but, as the following indicates, no indication of its solution:

> If I occupy myself in treating as absolute ends certain persons, my wife, my son, my friends, the poor man I meet on my way, if I wear myself out in fulfilling my duties towards them, I shall have to pass in silence over the injustices of the age, the class struggle, anti-semitism, etc., --But on the other hand if I throw myself into a revolutionary enterprise, I take the risk of having no leisure for personal relations, and worse still of being brought by the logic of action to treat the greater part of man and even my comrades as means.[8]

Sartre's novel The Reprieve, an account of the 1938 Munich crisis, provides one of the best examples of this theme of responsibility. The multiple stream of consciousness technique, after the style of Dos Passos, is used to demonstrate the point of each's responsibility for all. Having one character finish a sentence started by another in another country and context gives the required impression that all our lives are inter-related, but it fails to convince on the subject of responsibility. At one stage the members of the female band are discussing the settlement reached at

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[8] Sartre, Situations II, p. 296.

Munich:

> Douce was very excited: she had always had a liking for politics.
>
> 'There seems to have been a misunderstanding,' she explained. 'Hitler believed that Chamberlain and Daladier wanted to make trouble, while, at the same time, Chamberlain and Daladier thought he menat to attack. So Mussolini came along and convinced them they were mistaken: now it's fixed up, and tomorrow all four of them will be having lunch together.'[9]

This understanding is, of course, absurdly simplistic; in what sense are they responsible for that which they could not understand? Their social situation and (lack of) education robbed them of the chance of understanding, as Sartre eventually acknowledged. To expect everyone to be knowledgable and 'involved' in this society is naive and unrealistic. The only level on which the 'man in the street' can be responsible in the Sartrean sense is not that of the individual government decision but that of the more basic responsibility involved in electing that government, on the one hand, and in manifesting some sign of opposition to its policies where appropriate, on the other. Changing one's vote or writing to the newspaper, however, is of little relevance in a situation such as Munich. The point is that the Munich crisis could be seen as the culmination of years of irresponsible political behaviour on the part of the French people (ignoring for the moment the English and German involvement). It is only on this level that Sartre's statements on

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[9] Sartre, The Reprieve, p. 360.

individual responsibility make sense. The more extreme interpretations make little or no sense, as we can see by reference to Philippe, another character in The Reprieve. He does, in fact, feel as if he were responsible for all and he attempts to act on the basis of this responsiblity. Despite the fact that he is shown as acting in bad faith in his solitary efforts to spread pacifism, the fact remains that even had he been genuinely committed to his cause his effect would not have been greater. In the bedroom scene (p. 165) all that the representative proletarian, Maurice, can perceive is that Philippe is an upper-class adolescent--the message itself is ignored. Similarly, when he shouts his anti-war slogans he is beaten up and otherwise disregarded. Philippe's ultimate individual attempt to prevent war would have been the assassination of those he saw as most responsible for the situation. Obviously, however, for someone of Philippe's station and ability to have attempted the assassination of Hitler, for example, would have been ludicrous, involving the probability of failure and death.

The conclusion on this point of responsibility is that the individual is responsible for his own actions (but not their unforeseen latent effects). In relation to any war it is one's own decision to support it or run the risk of imprisonment through one's opposition. In relation to society as a whole, one's responsibility is to be politically aware

and to further the freedom of all within the peramators of the democratic process.

This, then, was Sartre's position before he turned to Marxism, and, of course, it begs several questions. It can be argued that Sartre distorts the meaning and implications of his own view of freedom to provide the backing for his opinions about society, and that these opinions and judgements do not seem to follow from his ontology alone. This is the view of Sheridan, Murdoch and MacIntyre, among others. As Sheridan puts it: "Neither has he shown that the choice of any particular mode of commitment 'follows' from the general structures of Being."[10] Murdoch feels that Sartre fails to prove the basic and crucial point that my freedom requires that I should take the freedom of others as a value also, and that he fails to prove the connection between my personal project and public responsibility.[11] MacIntyre raises the question: "Why does it follow that my judgements must have such a content that they enjoin respect for the freedom of all?"[12] He answers that "The democratic ideal cannot be made to follow from the existential premises."[13]

One of the reasons why these commentators come to these conclusions is that they follow through Sartre's

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[10] Sheridan, Sartre:The Radical Conversion, p. 152.

[11] Murdoch, Sartre, pp. 100-1.

[12] MacIntyre,'Existentialism', in Warnock, ed., Sartre, p. 32.

[13] Ibid., p. 32.

specific arguments on freedom and authenticity and see the logical inconsistencies and weaknesses in them. The two most common sources of these arguments are both early works: Existentialism (also known as Existentialism and Humanism) of 1946, and What Is Literature? (Literature and Existentialism) of 1947. They are both popular works of propaganda rather than of rigorous philosophical argument; in fact, Sartre admits that the former was probably a mistake, and such points should be borne in mind when one looks at them.

In Existentialism Sartre claimed that "nothing can be good for us without being good for all."[14] This was because our choice of action, of being (our 'good') is not a private choice but one affecting all humanity since everyone is influenced by others to some extent. Hence;

> If I am a workingman and choose to join a Christan Trade union rather than be a communist...I want to show that the best thing for men is resignation...I want to be resigned for everyone.[15]

According to Sartre, through our actions we are making universal judgements and we should be aware of the fact, and act accordingly. The problem with this, however, is that it assumes what it purports to show, i.e., responsibility to our fellow men. If the individual is selfish/solipsistic, why should he care even if his actions do 'involve all humanity.?

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[14] Sartre, Existentialism, p. 20.

[15] Ibid., p. 21.

The point of information alone is valid--our actions do affect others; whether we care is a different matter. Sartre could have argued that what is good for all is good for each because the argument in this direction is circular; however, there is no logical reason why the good for me (particularly if I alone choose it) should be good for anyone else, let alone everyone else.

Existential freedom is, strictly speaking, simply the recognition of our autonomy in the sense of free will and control over our desires, passions and emotions.[16] In this case, as Olafson points out,[17] Sartre's argument that the recognition of our own freedom leads to an obligation to further the social freedom of others does not follow. Existentialism is concerned much more with social and political freedom than 'existential' freedom as defined above. A major problem with this pamphlet is that it fails to explain exactly what the free society is, or how it can be achieved. Murdoch points out that Sartre uses the term 'freedom' as a slogan, much like the traditional French Revolutionary idea of 'liberté'.

What Is Literature? is another attempt to prove that the freedom of one necessarily demands the freedom of all. Here Sartre uses the writer as his example, arguing that every author is involved in an exercise of freedom through

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[16] On this point, see Sartre, Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions.

[17] Olafson, 'Authenticity and Obligation', in Warnock, op. cit., p. 143.

his creation of a work of art. He maintains that one must be free before one can create. This is by no means a commonly accepted view of artistic creation--many would maintain that it is the artist's particular neuroses which are responsible for his art, and that the art is the result of, and often the attempt to resolve, some inner conflict. This is Freud's view; art is seen as escapism to some extent on the part of both artist and audience. Freud's views on this point seem to be echoed in a fashion by Sartre's theory of the escape into 'magical' behaviour in Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions. On occasion Sartre's views are more in accord with Freud's, for example, in his study of Jean Genet he claimed that "By infecting us with his evil, Genet delivers himself from it. Each of his books is a psycho-drama.,...His ten years of literature are equivalent to a psychoanalytic cure."[18] For the sake of argument, however, we accept Sartre's view of art as free creation, for the time being, and proceed with his explanation.

"...the operation of writing implies that of reading as its dialectical correlative. ...,"[19] without which writing is su perfluous, in Sartre's opinion--private art is no art at all. Given the need to communicate, the need of a reader, the 'alterity'[20] of communication makes it

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[18] Sartre, Saint Genet, p. 544.

[19] Sartre, Existentialism and Literature, p. 43.

[20] See below, p. 73, for an explanation of this term.

imperative that the reader be as free as possible. Reading being 'directed creation',[21] there has to be some empathy between reader and author so that the reader can follow the creative path of the author as closely as possible (thus even in art Sartre does not allow that consciousness can be mere contemplation -- consciousness must be activity of some form). It is argued that this empathy can only be on the basis of mutual freedom. Sartre's view that freedom is the only possible basis of empathy is, however, erroneous: it is only if this were indeed the case that we could agree that "the book is not like the tool, a means for any end whatever; the end to which it offers itself is the reader's freedom."[22] If th is were true, then Sartre's subsequent point that, as everyone is (or could be) a potential reader, the writer must take as a value the freedom of all would follow more easily. As it is, Sartre is guilty of what Murdoch calls 'stupefying ambiguity in the use of the word 'freedom' if he takes it as the only basis of empathy between reader and author. It is easy to call to mind writers appealing to a particular group of readers alone, i.e., those with a common experience and background, not necessarily 'free' but rather similarly alienated, as it were. The view that writers should appeal to man in general does not follow automatically from the nature of writing

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[21] Sartre, Existentialism and Literature, p. 45.

[22] Sartre, Existentialism and Literature, p. 47.

itself--it is merely a value judgement on Sartre's part for which he provides little or no convincing support. Freedom here is almost turned into an essence of man, something to which the author can appeal; whatever happened to the unique individual consciousness of each which, as we will see below (pp. 68-71), remains forever alien to the Other? Sartre's answer is that the author is one of those with a duty to help overcome this estrangement. In other words, Sartre's underlying ideology of freedom (in the sense of social freedom or liberté) influences his view of writing. Neither in Existentialism or What Is Literature? has he demonstrated that freedom for one demands freedom for all.

Is it, then, authenticity which demands the recognition and furtherance of other's freedom, as one might assume from page 22 of this paper? It will be recalled that authenticity is closely tied in with the concept of bad faith. Sartre's first task should be to indicate on what grounds bad faith is, in fact, bad. Why should one not choose to abdicate what Sartre calls 'freedom' and others merely 'anguish', and live in bad faith by choosing one's whole mode of existing and attitudes towards the world and others 'dishonestly'? Sartre's answer to this is sketchy indeed: "I reply that I am not obliged to pass moral judgements on him but that I do define his dishonesty as an error."[23]

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[23]Sartre, Existentialism, p. 53.

The additional comment that the 'dishonest' man creates values even in his dishonesty is, as we have seen, relevant only if the individual is at all concerned about others in the first place. For Sartre to say that such dishonesty is a mistake implies an *a priori* judgement of the proper nature or function of man, which has little to do with his philosophy *per se*. This judgement would seem to be that each individual is a part of humanity as a whole and that authenticity is the first step towards helping the human race "achieve a more rational balance beyond its present state."[24]

Owing to the nature of being, authenticity is a mode of action rather than a fixed state or characteristic.[25] Our actions always involve others, thus "some relation to others in their authenticity, some living communication, must play a part."[26] According to Manser, authenticity "must involve respect for other people."[27] Manser's further comment is significant:

> That the authentic individual must desire the liberation of other men would seem to follow from the description of authenticity. To understand oneself is to understand to some degree all men, for we all partake of a common condition, in that we are all free individuals in a free world.[28]

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[24]Sartre, *Literary and Philosophical Essays*, p. 232.

[25]Grene, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

[26]Manser, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

Manser recognises that the idea of social responsibility was one of the basic assumptions underlying the idea of authenticity; Sartre has 'loaded the dice', so to speak. We are led to conclude that the general background material presented in the Introduction provides a better basis for understanding Sartre's political position than does existentialism alone. It is recognised by most commentators that one should not expect to find the key to all Sartre's politics in his philosophy,[29] and on this understanding we can study his political theories, referring to his philosophy merely when it serves to further the understanding of various points.

One can give reasons why a particular person is a socialist, and the explanation may be quite instructive. In the final analysis, however, it is both fruitless and unnecessary to spend too much time in the discussion. The fact of a person's basic beliefs has to be accepted and his opinions and statements dealt with on their own merits. Thus the following is merely a brief indication of the social and cultural factors predisposing Sartre is socialism.

The basic fact of socialization into a liberal humanist environment is, of course, very important. One is taught to believe in the abstract equality of man and the value of the individual and his freedom, in fact, in everything Marx described as political equality. For many

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[29] See above, pp. 24,25, and Thody, Jean-Paul Sartre, pp. 200-227.

middle class intellectuals brought up to believe in the standard bourgeois liberal values, including the belief in continual progress and human emancipation, the experience of the first World War, its aftermath, and the economic and political events of the nineteen-thirties pointed out the contradictions of their own ideologies. There was no rational progression apparent in the development of society. Human emancipation seemed to have ceased for the time being. Many experienced a feeling of guilt at being associated with the class and ideology which were directly responsible for the disasters of the World War and the 'thirties. This led, in many cases, to an overcompensation in their reactions to the working class: there was a Romantic tendency to infuse it with all the qualities lacking in bourgeois society. There was a flirtation with the Marxist idea that the proletariat was to be the salvation of the human race.[30]

Apart from the guilt aspect, it was possible to view socialism as the way to achieve the values of liberalism which liberal society itself precluded (there is, of course, more than an element of this in Marx's own theory). These are, I believe, the main elements which characterise the left-wing intellectuals born around the turn of the century, and reaching maturity in the nineteen-twenties

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[30] As examples of these themes see: S. Spender, World Within World, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1951, and Forward from Liberalism, London: Gollancz, 1937.

and 'thirties. Sartre himself observed in 1946 that "Socialism is merely the means which will allow for the realization of the reign of freedom...because socialism establishes humanism as its end."[31] This statement comes after the war which marked a significant turning point in Sartre's development, but what can we say about Sartre's pre-war politics? In short, he held the values of liberal humanism, he saw that they conflicted with contemporary society, and he restricted himself to an individualistic critique of, and attack upon, bourgeois society in such works as Nausea and L'Enfence d'un chef. Politics and political involvement were ignored as beneath contempt, as Simone de Beauvoir concedes in her autobiography. Criticism and the belief in the individual solution provided by the transcendence of bad faith characterise Sartre before the war. Involvement played no part in the lives of either Sartre or de Beauvoir at this time, indeed, even though they were "engulfed by the drama that for the next two and a half years was to dominate our lives: the Spanish Civil War.--There was no question of our going off to Spain ourselves; nothing in our previous backgrounds inclined us to such headstrong action."[32]

The connection we can trace between Sartre's philosophy and politics at this stage is that his doctrine

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[31] Sartre, Literary and Philosophic Essays, p. 246.

[32] De Beauvoir, The Prime of Life, p. 231.

of existential freedom destroyed all justification for artificial creations with which Sartre felt the ruling class justified itself:

> Any member of the ruling class is a man of divine right. Born into a class of leaders, he is convinced from childhood that he is born to cammand. ...--Thus, in his own eyes, he is a person, an a priori synthesis of legal right and fact. Awaited by his peers, destined to relieve them at the appointed time, he exists because he has the right to exist. This sacred character which the bourgeois has for his fellows and which manifests itself in ceremonies of recognition (the greeting, the formal announcement, the ritual visit, etc.) is what is called human dignity. The ideology of the ruling class is completely permeated with this idea of dignity.[33]

The perfect judgement of Sartre's pre-war position is provided by Sartre's friend Simone de Beauvoir:

> At heart, he remained faithful to the same 'esthetic of opposition' he had believed in at twenty. Relentless in his denunciation of this society's faults, he still had no desire to overthrow it.[34]

Can Sartre, then, be characterised as merely a disappointed Kantian liberal at this stage? Like Kant, Sartre builds on a base of individual autonomy, and their views have similarities. Unlike Kant, however, Sartre's theory of consciousness precluded his acceptance of the noumenal/phenomenal distinction and the somewhat arbitrary device of the equivalence of all in the realm of noumenal reason necessary for Kant's moral system. This Sartre

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[33]Sartre, Literary and Philosophic Essays, p. 229. On this point, refer to p. 22, above.

[34]De Beauvoir, The Force of Circumstance, p. 5.

regarded as a metaphysical trick with no real basis, having the potential dangers which Stirner's The Ego and its Own pointed out in 1845.[35] Like Stirner, Sartre "jeered at all humanistic shibboleths: it was impossible he thought to cherish an entity called 'Man'. ...Sartre detested certain social groups but never inveighed against the human race as a whole: his severity was directed merely at those who professed to fawn upon it."[36] And it is on the basis of a common humanism that Sartre and Kant meet: the human condition will always have certain features, and the job of the moral scientist and social critic is to refine our codes of action, not to invent totally new ones.[37]

Sartre, however, saw insurmountable problems in the very idea of a categorical imperative; it was by no means congruent with his idea of freedom--freedom for Sartre is individual and not part of a rational whole. Of course, Sartre agreed with Kant that freedom had to have some order to it but he felt that each individual should decide his or her own order and direction.

Before the war, then, Sartre was more than a liberal but not yet a socialist. The Second World War jolted

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[35]"...liberalism is a religion because it separates my essence from me and sets it above me, because it exalts 'Man' to the same extent as any other religion does its God or idol..." Stirner quoted by Shatz, ed. The Essential Works of Anarchism. See also p. 38.

[36]De Beauvoir, The Prime of Life, p. 127.

[37]Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, p. 8n.

Sartre out of his individualistic iconoclastic attitude and put him on the road to socialism and, eventually, Marxism. Perhaps one of the most important results of the war from Sartre's point of view was that it demonstrated the existence and value of community and solidarity:

> His experience as a prisoner left a profound mark upon him. It taught him the meaning of solidarity... he took great joy in this participation in a communal life.[38]

Sartre's progression from individualism to the recognition of common goals and values can be traced by reference to Mathieu Delarue's evolution in Les Chemins de la Liberté (The Roads to Freedom); Mathieu is, to all intents and purposes, a self-portrait of Sartre.

By the end of the war it seemed that Sartre had adopted the goals and values of democratic socialism, judging by his decision to set up the Rassemblement Démocratique Révolutionnaire, "which might be described as an attempt to revive the pre-war Popular Front rather than as a political party in the full sense."[39] In 1948 Sartre desired

> ...the emergence of a socialist Europe, that is, a number of states with a democratic and collectivist structure; each state, while awaiting something better, would be deprived of a part of its sovereignty for the good of all.[40]

His ideals were, however, impossible to realise within the confines of the contemporary parliamentary democratic

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[38] De Beauvoir, The Force of Circumstance, p. 56.

[39] Manser, op. cit., p. 192.

[40] Sartre, Situations II, p. 315.

system; the 'something better' referred to in the above quotation was, in actual fact, the classless society of Marxism. Sartre was mistaken in thinking that the radical solidarity engendered by the war could survive in peacetime--the euphoria of victory soon vanished when it was realised that the old conflicts on the Left between the Socialists and Communists had been merely submerged, rather than overcome, during the war. There was no chance of a peaceful concerted democratic move to the classless society which, as we indicate below, Sartre desired at this time. Sartre advocated communist goals, yet refused to concede that he was a communist and refused to have anything to do with the PCF because it took its lead from Moscow which was, of course, Stalinist. Sartre managed to put himself in the political wilderness by his refusal to compromise his values, and he remained there criticising Western and Soviet societies and politics alike, and it is this role he still maintains despite his later, explicit adoption of Marxism.

One can argue that Sartre's move to Marxism, or at least communism, was much earlier than the date it is usually set at, i.e., in 1947-8 rather than 1957-8, judging by comments in What Is Literature? In this work he talked of the role of literature in the future "reflective self-awareness of a classless society."[41] This was to be a

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[41]Sartre, Existentialism and Literature, p. 158.

society "whose structure would be one of permanent revolution. ..."[42] Sartre felt that freedom implied the necessity for the "suppression of classes, abolition of all dictatorships, overthrowing of order once it tends to congeal.--...a collectivity which constantly corrects, judges, and metamorphoses itself. ..."[43] However, in 1947 he felt that "It is possible to conceive this society, but we have no practical means at our disposal of realizing it."[44] Marxism is later adopted to provide the necessary practical means, but what we can say about Sartre at this stage is that the combination of his new-found socialism, coupled with his philosophy of individual autonomy, made him far more radical, even revolutionary, than the post-war socialists of England or Germany, as the comments above (implying, as they do, a desire for 'direct democracy', with such features as provision for the recall of deputies, etc.) and the statements he made in 'Materialism and Revolution'[45] indicate.

Sartre thought that it was the business of philosophers

> ...(to) make the truths contained in materialism hang together and to build, little by little, a philosophy which suits the needs of the revolution as exactly as the myth (i.e. materialism) does.[46]

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[42] Ibid., p. 182.
[43] Ibid., p. 159.
[44] Ibid., p. 160.
[45] E.g., Literary and Philosophical Essays, p. 221.
[46] Ibid., p. 223.

As far as Sartre was concerned, revolutionaries were those having the ability to recognise that any social system could be transcended in the direction of a more rational humanist order, but, given that Sartre's description of revolutionary philosophy, as he called it, only indicates why transcendence is possible, we must finally concede that his radical stance is in large part an emotional value judgement. The requirements of revolutionary philosophy were that it should demonstrate:

> (I) That man is unjustifiable, that his existence is contingent...; (2) That, as a result of this, any collective order established by men can be transcended towards other orders; (3) That the system of values current in a society reflects the structure of that society and tends to preserve it; (4) That it can thus always be transcended towards other systems which are not yet clearly perceived since the society of which they are the expression does not yet exist. ...[47]

The Kingdom of Ends within a classless society which Sartre envisaged was described as "a harmonious enterprise of exploitation of the world ...defined by work, that is, by action upon matter."[48]

The major question here, of course, is whether his attempt to "plot the main lines of a coherent theory which will be superior to (crude mechanistic) materialism in being a true description of nature and of human relationships"[49] is, in fact, the retrieval of 'true' Marxism out

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[47] Ibid., p. 235.
[48] Ibid., p. 240.
[49] Ibid., p. 223.

of the distorted materialist concept he details in 'Materialism and Revolution' and Search for a Method. Can existentialism and Marxism be combined, and if so, how?

CHAPTER THREE

MARXISM AND EXISTENTIALISM

Marxism, of course, provides what Sartre was looking for, i.e., a revolutionary theory, and this was one of the prime attractions Sartre felt towards it.

It was pointed out on page seven of this thesis that negation was the main feature of Sartre's theory of consciousness, and similarly negation is the most important concept in his theories of society and revolution. Sartre had seen that solidarity was possible through his experiences during the war, first in the prisoner of war camp and then in the Resistance. Solidarity in this instance was a continuation of the negative freedom which characterised Mathieu in The Roads to Freedom; it was the logical progression of Sartre's theory of consciousness as negation and nihilation. The features of this negative freedom and solidarity were cooperation and commitment against a common enemy. The war had, in many ways, simplified matters--issues became more clear-cut as there was one main referent and end in the winning of the war and the liberation of the country. It was against this end that most issues were judged and subordinated. Sartre himself pointed out that, paradoxically, he and his companions were

most free under the German occupation because of the existence of a concrete enemy and clear-cut issues. It is a well known political fact that it is relatively easy to unite people against a common enemy. The common factor in such solidarity is merely the jointly shared opposition. Of course, if this is the only uniting feature, as is often the case, then when the particular object and end is achieved the unity tends to evaporate, the conflicts which have been temporarily subordinated come to the surface again. One can demonstrate this through such banal examples as groups of people sheltering from a thunderstorm, or through important ones, such as the fate of many colonial independence parties throughout history.[1] As we indicated above, the unity in France suffered this fate when the danger had passed.

Sartre, however, managed to find another easily identifiable enemy, to replace the Nazis, against which he could exercise his negative freedom in the shape of the Western Governments which pursued policies of colonial expolitation. Thus, he supported the struggle against French colonialism in Indo-China and Algeria. In this context the great attraction which Frantz Fanon had for Sartre can be explained by the fact that Fanon was not only an opponent of French colonialism but in addition developed a theory which was compatible with his concentration on

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[1] An extremely good example of this is provided by the experience of Nkrumah and the CPP in Ghana before and after Independence.

negation. Fanon thought that violence was necessary as the only way in which the cumulative effect of generations of foreign domination could be purged, and a genuine national and cultural identity created.

In the same way that it is relatively easy to identify the 'enemy' in the colonial question it is easy for a Marxist to identify the internal enemy against whom support can be fused through the exercise of negative freedom. Marx had absorbed enough of Hegel's philosophy, and was enough of a realist, to see the influence of, and the necessity for, negation in social change. His revolutionary theory depends largely on the appeal of negative opposition as the binding factor for groups within an alienated society:

> For a popular revolution and the emancipation of a particular class of civil society to coincide for one class to represent the whole of society another class must concentrate in itself all the evils of society, a particular class must embody and represent a general obstacle and limitation. A particular social sphere must be regarded as the notorious crime of the whole society so that emancipation from this sphere appears as a general emancipation. For one class to be the liberating class par excellence, it is essential that another be openly the oppressing class. The negative significance of the French nobility and clergy produced the positive significance of the bourgeoise.[2]

On the negative level alone Marx exercised a considerable attraction on Sartre. Our concern, however is to establish

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[2]Marx, Selected Writings on Sociology and Social Philosophy, p. 188.

on what other levels it is possible to combine Marxism and Sartre's version of existentialism.

As Marx observed in The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonarparte, history tends to repeat itself, and it is interesting that Sartre's development followed that of Marx in that they learned some of the same lessons. Marx started his intellectual and political career as a humanist--this is beyond all question,[3] and it is only questionable to a limited degree whether his humanist interest remained to provide the driving force of his later works. As Tucker observed:

> It must be said, and can hardly be stressed too strongly, that the search for freedom was the whole urge and inspiration of his myth and system.[4]

His concern for human liberation and freedom never disappeared. Like Sartre, he was concerned for individual freedom and value, and this led him to the recognition of the need for group or class action to achieve anything in the social realm.[5]

Marx himself recognised that

> The first premise of all human history is, of course, the existence of living human individuals. The first fact to be established therefore is the physical constitution of these individuals. ...[6]

Marx first developed this theoretical foundation of human

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[4]Tucker, Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx, p. 114.

[5]The argument that Marx's concern with class action is more the result of his need to find a social group to take the place of a notion in an idealist dialectical system should not be forgotten.

[6]Marx, Selected Writings, p. 69.

nature, or essence, and then proceded to build a theory to achieve, or rather to speed, the optimum development of society, and of the individual within society. Thus, as Bottomore puts it, "In his later writings Marx took for granted the moral ideas which he had acquired in his youth."[7] These ideas were a continuation of the individualistic humanism inherited through the combined effects of such events as the Reformation and the Enlightenment, and such thinkers as Kant and Hegel. As it is "Only in his early writings, and especially in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts (that) he gave any connected account of the moral commitment which directed all his subsequent activity"[8] it is to these that we turn.

Whereas Sartre developed his theory from the basic fact of existence ('existence precedes essence', as the cliché has it), Marx did not go back so far. He felt that there was essence and that a human nature of sorts could be discovered.[9] He followed Feurbach, among many others, in adopting Aristotle's opinion that man was essentially social, rather than made social, as Rousseau had it, or as

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[7] Ibid., p. 43.

[8] Ibid., p. 43.

[9] This is not to ignore that Marx saw human nature as constantly changing and developing, along with society. As man is virtually his activity, and his activity changes society, man himself is changed in the resulting interaction of man and man, and man and environment. However, the change and development are seen as in a certain, and progressive, direction.

a creature merely using society to further his own ends in the way Hobbes or Stirner maintained.[10] Through the very consciousness that separates him from the animal world man is able to stand at a distance from himself to gain some idea of his nature and essence, i.e., he has the quality of being self-conscious. This self-regard indicates to him that he is essentially the same as other men in the sense of sharing the same faculties: "Man is a species-being...in the sense that he treats himself as the present, living species, as a universal, and consequently free, being."[11]

For Sartre consciousness itself, being negation and nihilation, meant freedom, and, as we shall see, Marx's view of consciousness includes imagination, which Sartre declared to be nihilation. Is, then, Marx's view of freedom that of sartre? It is difficult to believe this in the light of Marx's later works. Obviously, the two ideas of freedom are different, even though Marx could write the

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[10]Marx's view was that Feurbach had given "--whether intentionally, I do not know--a philosophical basis to socialism, and the communists, too, have immediately understood these works in this sense. The unity of man with man, which is based on the real difference between men, the concept of a human species drawn down from the heaven of abstraction to the real earth, what can this be but the concept of society?" Marx to Feurbach, August 1844, quoted in McLellan, Marx before Marxism, p. 250.

[11]Marx, Early Writings, p. 126. There is some debate about what Marx understood by Feurbach's term 'species-being'. For my understanding of Marx's use of the term, see the Appendix.

seemingly existentialist statement that "freedom is so thoroughly the essence of man, that its very opponents bring it into actuality even while they struggle against its reality.[12] Kamenka points out that this freedom is not the "absolute freedom of the will", but the freedom to act in accord with one's nature. While freedom is self-determination and autonomy,[13] Marx, in not accepting the Kantian noumenal/phenomenal distinction, is virtually required to have a vision of freedom as action in accord with nature. Marx's conclusion is that man acts on the basis of a form of natural law.[14] Through one's consciousness of species-being one realises that one is the physical and, more important, the cultural culmination of countless generations of human activity, and a factor in changing and developing the contemporary and future society. This is not to suggest that Marx's vision was of man as merely a fraction of a greater whole, existing for the sake of the state, nation or race. He was as much the individualist in his early writings as Kant, if not Sartre, as the following indicates:

> Authentic common life arises not through reflection; rather, it comes about from the need and egoism of individuals, that is, immediately from the activation of their very existence. It is not up to man

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[12] Marx, "Discussion of Press Debates", 1942, quoted in Kamenka, The Ethical Foundations of Marxism, p. 28.

[13] As Marx put it in his thesis "...man's self-consciousness (is) the highest divinity. There shall be none other beside it." Quoted in McLellan, op. cit., p. 82.

[14] This statement should be seen in the light of those made about nature on pp. 58-9 below, and on man's freedom and autonomy, also below, p. 70.

> whether this common life exists or not.--Men as actual, living, particular individuals, not in an abstraction, constitute this common life.[15]

As a species-being, the only way in which man, a fraction of a whole yet still an individual, can realise his true nature is through cooperative activity, because it is this activity which produces the 'human' world within which man's developed faculties can be exercised.[16] Like Aristotle and Hegel before him, Marx saw man as realising himself through activity,[17] the necessary condition for which was the objectification and manipulation of

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[15] Marx, Early Writings, p. 157.

[16] See below pp. 57-60 for an explanation of the 'humanisation' of the world.

[17] 'Activity' is a term open to many interpretations, Aristotle, for example, called thinking an activity, indeed, the highest form of activity (Politics, III, chapter 3). Marx uses the term in various ways. On the one hand, there is praxis, physical action in and on the world around us, and, on the other, activity as the highest form of consciousness. Marx regarded the former as the sine qua non of the latter. This means that Marx did not hold consciousness to be the passive reception of sense data, but followed Kant to a certain extent in agreeing that a thing, in order to become an object of knowledge, had to conform to the a priori notions of the subject. According to Kant, man makes the world, but the world which is made (ordered) is the phenomenal world of appearance. 'Things in themselves' remained outside the range of knowledge. Marx, of course, was unwilling to go so far and he accepted the world as given to our senses--the concept of things in themselves seems to have had little meaning for him. It is in the ability of the mind to work on the input gained through the senses, using imagination, that the meaning of activity lies:

> Things are the unquestionable basis of knowledge for Marx. But what are these 'things'? They are entities existing independent of relation to other things.Marx proposes a realist basis for the existence of objects depending for their existence upon mind; mental entities (ideas) are dependent upon objects for their existence. (Livergood, Activity in Marx's Philosophy, p. 19.)This means that a mind with no input from the external world would not be able to function, to think, to conceptualise.

the external world. Objectification in this context means the use and development of objects in the world for our own purposes through our work/activity. Rather than the external world being alien and divorced from us, it complements our nature. As we shall see below, it is the necessary condition of our having any nature at all. Hegel, it should be rembered, called every faculty, as well as every object necessary to our nature, our property. Property is that in which one embodies one's will: "... property is the embodiement of personality."[18] Man makes the world and through so doing gains greater insight into his nature: "It is quite understandable that a living, natural being endowed with objective faculties should have real natural objects of its being."[19]

Consciousness permits imagination, and man's activity enables him to actualise this power of imagination on the world:

> It is just in his work upon the objective world that man really proves himself as a species-being. This production is his active species-life. By means of it nature appears as his work and his reality. The object of labour is, therefore, the objectification of man's species-life: for he no longer reproduces merely as intellectually as in consciousness, but actively and in a real sense, and he sees his own reflection in a world he has constructed.[20]

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[18] Hegel's Philosophy of Right, p. 45 et. seqq.

[19] Marx, Early Writings, pp. 205-6.

[20] Ibid., p. 128.

In other words, man can recognise his true communality and universality through the demonstration of universal intelligibility, which, as Feurbach pointed out, implies the existence of universal standards. It is because man is a universal being that the very existence of language is possible, and that the actions of others can convey meaning to one. All these features reveal that one is essentially similar to others, and, as Marx points out elsewhere, this is what distinguishes man from the animals.

Thus, as in Sartre's theory, man makes himself and the world, he is a continual coming-to-be; man is activity. ("What is life but activity?"[21]). And because man is universal, his labour is active cooperation with others:

> The real, active orientation of man to himself as a species-being, or the affirmation of himself as a real species-being (i.e., as a human being) is only possible so far as he really brings forth all his species-powers (which is only possible through the cooperative endeavours of mankind).[22]

The point, of course, of Marx's life work was to develop the theory which could be used to transcend the alienation and exploitation he perceived, which prevented the true 'cooperative endeavours of mankind'. His approach to the problem of overcoming alienation is crucial for understanding his social and revolutionary theories.

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[21] Marx, Early Writings, p. 126.

[22] Ibid., p. 202.

Given his basic view of man, and of man's relation to the world, Marx proceeded to hypothesise that there would eventually be no (alienating) gap between man and the world, and man and man, because, as mentioned above, all life is objective:

> The fact that man is an embodied, living, real, sentient, objective being with natural powers, means that he has real, sensuous objects as the objects of his being, or that he can only express his being in real, sensuous objects.[23]

This point should, I think, be stressed. Marx believed that man externalized, found an object for, all his feelings, desires, and passions. Below, we shall see how Marx believed that he could demonstrate this, and incidentally minimise what might be perceived as the necessary alienation implied by materialism. One might surmise that Marx's approach was first to hypothesise that man can fully realise himself in the external world, which is the only world. By this is meant that (a) one can attain happiness and a large measure of contentment (though not complete contentment, it seems, as Marx acknowledged that existence itself involves a degree of suffering[24]), and that (b) the

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[23] Ibid., p. 207.

[24] As Marx put it in his Critique of Hegel's Dialectic, "Man is an objective sentient being is a suffering being, and since he feels his suffering, a passionate being." (Early Writings, p. 208.) It is, however, open to some doubt exactly what he means here, whether this is meant in any metaphysical sense, or is merely an extension of the line immediately preceeding it, namely; "To be sentient is to suffer (to experience.)." If the latter is the correct interpretation, then the choice of the term 'suffer' seems an unfortunate one on Marx's part.

feeling of alienation associated with the subject/object dichotomy can be transcended through the complete humanisation of the world. This point can be illustrated by reference to the 'Excerpt-notes of 1844':

> Our productions would be so many mirrors reflecting our nature. What happens so far as I am concerned would also apply to you. ... My labour would be a free manifestation of life and an enjoyment of life. ...Furthermore, in my labour the particularity of my individuality would be affirmed because my individual life is affirmed. Labour then would be true, active property. [etc.][25]

The second step was to consider the empirical evidence, which demonstrated that man was not 'realising his essence' in the external world of work by any stretch of the imagination. This led to Marx's conclusion that there must, therefore, have been some factor precluding this realisation. Man being essentially activity, this factor must lie in the realm of this activity in some way: "How could the worker stand in an alien relationship to the product of his activity if he did not alienate himself in the act of production itself?"[26]

From this step Marx moved to the further conclusion that alienated labour was the key factor in all alienation, even that of man from man: "A direct consequence of the alienation of man from the product of his labour, from his life activity and from his species-life is that man is

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[25]Marx, quoted McLellan, op. cit., p. 231.

[26]Marx, Early Writings, p. 124.

alienated from other men. When man confronts himself [in the man-made, humanised, world, the result of man's cooperative activity], he also confronts other men."[27] Marx, therefore, as is well known, concentrated his attention on the problem of alienated labour and the capitalist system, which produced and perpetuated it. In this context Marx's concept of the humanisation of the world is crucial. While Hegel wished to return the world to the one element of Geist to overcome alienation, Marx's idea of humanisation serves the same purpose from the materialist approach. To explain this, it is necessary to have some idea of the Marxian view of nature. Nature, seen as 'a damp place with birds', i.e., natural in the sense of untouched by man, was, in Marx's opinion, essentially alien, even hostile to man. Man himself is regarded as the highest point in nature, and the natural world as existing for man's use. Nature merely provides the conditions and the material for man's development, as the following examples demonstrate:

> Plants, animals, minerals, air, light, etc., constitute from the theoretical aspect, a part of human consciousness as objects of natural science and art; they are man's spiritual inorganic nature, his intellectual means of life, which he must first prepare for enjoyment and perpetuation.
>
> Nature is the inorganic body of man; that is to say, nature, excluding the human body itself.

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[27] Ibid., p. 129.

> To say that man lives from nature means that nature is his body.[28]

Gradually, through the centuries, man has transformed nature, taming it for his own use, and it is this process which Marx considered to be the 'humanisation' of the world.[29] This is the process which will, in theory, eliminate alienation:

> ...it is only when the object becomes a human object, or objective humanity, that man does not become lost in it.
>
> It is just in his work upon the objective world that man really proves himself as a species-being. This production is his active species-life. By means of it nature appears as his work and his reality. The object of labour is, therefore, the objectification of man's species-life; for he no longer reproduces himself merely intellectually, as in consciousness, but actively and in a real sense, and he sees his own reflection in a world he has created.[30]

With this in mind it is possible to understand the following:

> Communism as a fully developed naturalism is humanism and as a fully developed humanism is naturalism. It is the definitive resolution of the antagonism between man and nature, and between man and man. It is the true solution of the conflict between existence and essence, between objectification and self-affirmation, between individual and species. It is the solution of the riddle of history and knows itself to be this solution.[31]

How, then, is the problem of the alienation of man from man to be overcome? The key to this lies in the above, also. As the process of humanisation takes many generations of

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[29] E.g., Ibid., p. 213.

[30] Ibid., pp. 160 and 128.

[31] Ibid., p. 155.

activity (and as far as Marx was concerned, activity is joint activity and social cooperation), man comes to exist in the truly human world of common meaning and values:

> Activity and mind are social in their content as well as in their origin; they are social activity and social mind.
>
> Even when I carry out scientific work, etc., an activity which I can seldom conduct in direct association with other men, I perform a social, because human, act.[32]

It is necessary to stress this point as it is Marx's main argument in support of man's essential sociality. The essence of man is the activity which humanises the world. Given the development of the human world, man has to be in some relation to other men to be human because "The cultivation of the five senses is the work of all previous history"[33] and, of course, 'cultivated' senses (Marx cites music as an example) are dependent on others for their realisation: "His own sense experience only exists as human sense experience for himself through the other person."[34]

Man, then, transcends alienation through coming to live in a world of common values and meaning, created through the joint activity of the species through time wherein each is dependent on others for the realisation of

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[32] Marx, Early Writings, p. 157.

[33] Ibid., p. 161.

[34] Ibid., p. 164.

his cultivated (i.e., civilized or human) faculties. Once the real scarcity in the world has been eliminated through the achievements of capitalist developed industry, and the artifical scarcity created by the capitalist system has been overcome with the passing of capitalism, man would cease to be a dangerous competitive threat to man and realise his true affinity with other men.

We will return to the question of Marx's view of alienation in the discussion of Sartre's concept of ontological alienation as a 'metaphysical evil'. At present, we are concerned with the way in which it led Marx to his social theory.

It should be remembered that Marx was influenced by the Greek view of nature, and that he would probably have agreed with Aristotle's statement that "nothing that is contrary to nature is right."[35] Marx's thesis was ostensibly based on the significance of the Greek concept of nature, and, in fact, his general interest in the Greeks continued all his life. At first sight this may appear incompatible with the attitude of modern science since Bacon, i.e., the belief that one fought against nature or matter, forcing it to reveal its secrets. We have seen, however, that Marx considered man to be the apex of nature; nature exists in large part to serve him, and the manipulation of nature by man is thus natural. It can be argued

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[35]Aristotle, The Politics, (London: Penguin, 1970), p. 263.

that the underlying feature of nature is harmony, and it was on this basis that Marx wrote in his thesis that

> ...it is an absolute norm that nothing can be ascribed to an indestructible and eternal nature that destroys ataraxy [calm], which produces danger. Consciousness must understand that this is an absolute law. Nothing suggestive of conflict or disquiet is compatible with an immortal and blessed nature.[36]

If man lived in accord with nature, then, in theory, there would be harmony in the species, as Darwin and Kropotkin later pointed out.

Arguably, it is this belief in nature as harmony, coupled with the obvious empirical evidence of social disharmony, which led Marx to posit the social origin of disharmony, discord, and alienation, in opposition to the view that man's nature caused strife, and that alienation was an ontological feature of consciousness.

Kamenka points out that Marx's view of Good and Evil, while not prescriptive as such, was that the Good was that which tended to maintain itself, while Evil was parasitic on the Good, being chaos and destruction, and, in fact, in the final analysis, self-destruction. The idea that evil tends to destroy itself has been common at least since Plato's mention of it in the Republic (Bk 1) and, in fact, it is similar to Sartre's view as expressed in Saint Genet. It foreshadows the belief that evil, the

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[36]Marx, quoted in Livergood, op. cit., p. 105 and 105n.

discord in society, will eventually destroy itself through the dialectic of class conflict. There does not seem to be sufficient evidence for this point to be stressed particularly, however. Freedom being accord with nature, and nature being harmony, the moral imperative (if indeed there is one in Marxism) is to speed the process whereby evil destroys itself. Thus, one might argue that Marxism contains the vision of, the imperative to achieve, and, in its revolutionary theory, the tools to attain, an un-alienated society.

Turning now to Sartre's relation to Marxism, one can list the basic similarities between Marx and Sartre without too much difficulty. The problems, however, lie in what are perceived as the differences, e.g., the social determinism, the philosophy of history, and the possibility of attaining the totally un-alienated society. These are features of Marxism which seem incongruent with Sartrism. Hopefully, some resolution of these problems are arrived at in the course of the following discussion.

First, however, with regard to The Critique of Dialectical Reason, one notices perhaps more than anything else the degree to which Sartre changes from considering man in an individual capacity to viewing him in the social context. Sartre's study of Genet is the one work which best demonstrates his progression. Indeed, as Cooper puts

it, "Sartre is at pains to stress that Genet's 'original crisis' can be understood only when seen against the setting of the French village community, with its narrow and rigid system of prohibitions,...".[37] It remains open to doubt whether Sartre's vision of man is as collective as the Marxian, however, and whether praxis is the solution for Sartre as it was for Marx.

The following few examples are merely to demonstrate similarities in Marx's and Sartre's view of the individual's relation to others:

> ...any one human life whatever, if the historical totalization must be able to occur, is the direct and indirect expression of the whole (the totalizing movement) and of every life, to the extent to which life opposes itself to everything and everyone.[38]

It is difficult to imagine that Marx would have disagreed with this statement, or indeed with the following:

> Now human relations...are relations of reciprocity; this means that one individual's praxis in its practical structure recognises, in order to accomplish its purpose, the praxis of the other.[39]

Sartre parallels Marx's views of man in alienated society in saying that reciprocity turns to hate and antagonism:

> In pure reciprocity, what is other than me is also the same. In reciprocity modified by scarcity, the same appears to us as the counter-man in so far as this same man appears as radically Other (that is, the bearer for us of the threat of death).[40]

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[37] Laing and Cooper, Reason and Violence, p. 75.

[38] Sartre, The Critique of Dialectical Reason, quoted in Cumming, ed. The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre, p. 425.

[39] Ibid., p. 439.

[40] Cumming, op. cit., p. 440.

Sartre uses the term 'seriality' to denote many of the features which would come under the heading of alienation in Marxist terminology. It is basically the description of people within this society. Sartre means by seriality that people tend to exist in solitude, related to each other merely through the common use of objects and tools, or through activities according to general, impersonal instructions.[41] Simple examples of serialization are provided by people waiting in line for a bus, or the audience at a film, the readers of a particular newspaper, and so on.

> The persons in a serial group...are characterised by their interchangeability. They are identical in their separation...a series finds its tentative unity in an object held in common by each member of the series. The members of a series are appendages, as it were, of their common fantasy object.[42]
>
> Serial unity is a negative totality.[43]

This is, of course, strikingly similar to Marx on 'commodity fetishism' in Capital: "...their own social action takes the form of the action of objects which rule the producers instead of being ruled by them."[44] Sartre would regard this as being partly a result of the original move to seriality caused by the increasing division of labour during the

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[41] Cf. the description of one form of this in Being and Nothingness, pp. 243 and 486-488.

[42] Laing and Cooper, op. cit., pp. 122-3.

[43] Ibid., p. 125.

[44] Marx, Capital 1, quoted in Hook, Marx and the Marxists, p. 147.

course of the Industrial Revolution, which, in turn, perpetuates this seriality/alienation; thus, "man is alienated from other men."[45]

Obviously, however, the similarities between these two thinkers might be attributed to the fact that Sartre simply adopts Marx's concepts to some degree, in which case the demonstration of their agreement is redundant. Equally well, one might point out their common roots in Hegelianism. The above should, however, be sufficient to illustrate the truth of Sartre's statement in Search for a Method that:

> The very notions which Marxist research employs to describe our historical society-exploitation, alienation, fetishizing, reification, etc., are precisely those which most immediately refer to existential structures.[46]

What, then, of the objections? Determinism seems the biggest stumbling block here, but Sartre maintains that his theory "puts nothing (of Marxism) into question except a mechanistic determinism which is not exactly Marxist and which has been introduced from the outside into this total philosophy."[47] As we saw above, freedom for Marx was the freedom to work within the bounds of one's socially and historically determined situation, and in accord with one's nature, moulded as it is by one's situation.

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[45] Marx, Early Writings, p. 129.

[46] Sartre, Search for a Method, p. 175.

[47] Ibid., p. 175.

He was a determinist to the extent that he recognised the inevitable effect of socialization, both "macro" and "micro", as it were. Marx's refusal to accept the Kantian noumenal/phenomenal distinction meant that, as far as he was concerned, man would inevitably be conditioned by the phenomenal world. We know from Sartre that the existence of consciousness demonstrates to us the possibility of a condition other than our own. Marxian man is not so alienated that he cannot realise the misery of his condition and desire its change. What, however, it took Sartre so long to concede, and which Marx recognised all along, is that the recognition of a problem is not necessarily its solution; there are prior conditions to be achieved in this case. Owing to the nature of alienation, these conditions, freedom from hunger, want and overwork, will often be desired in an egoistic and selfish way to some extent. This is inevitable and largely irrelevant. Like Kant and Hegel before him, Marx could imagine the 'cunning of reason' bringing the optimum, or at any rate superior, society to be out of actions taken through self-interest alone.

> The realm of freedom only begins, in fact, where that labour which is determined by need and external purposes cease--Beyond it (the labour of necessity) begins that development of human potential for its own sake, the true realm of freedom, which, however, can only flourish upon that realm of necessity as its basis. The short-

> ening of the working day is its fundamental prerequisite.[48]

This famous quotation from Capital mirrors Sartre's position that freedom is the prior condition of the creation of value. In both cases there is the desire to achieve the situation of physical, social, and through this, mental, freedom, within which 'true' value will emerge.

Sartre has come to accept the existence of social determinism, and Search for a Method makes constant reference to the effects of childhood experience on later life: "Of course, our prejudices, our ideas, our beliefs, are for the majority of us unsurpassable because they have been experienced first in childhood. ..."[49] Our 'situation', within which our freedom operates, is much more restricted than Sartre originally thought: each person is a victim of existing institutions "even prior to his birth. The previous generation had defined, even before he was born, the institutional future of his generation. ..."[50] In this case do Marx's and Sartre's views of determinism coincide by the time of Search for a Method and the Critique? They are, if not identical, at least very similar. Marx's concept of freedom would be destroyed if all social action and change were inevitable and determined by forces

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[49] Sartre, Search for a Method, p. 64n.

[50] Cumming, op. cit., p. 479.

outside of man himself--freedom for Marx is not, as Engels put it, the recognition of necessity. The dialectic of society is the result of man's activity, not the inevitable unfolding of history, and Marx criticises Hegel on this very point:

> History does nothing; it 'does not possess immense riches', it 'does not fight battles'. It is men, real living men, who do all this, who possess and fight battles. It is not 'history' which uses men as a means of achieving--as if it were an individual person--its own ends. History is nothing but the activity of men in pursuit of their ends.[51]

The relationship between man and society is an inter-relationship: "...circumstances make men just as much as men make circumstances."[52]

Marx did not adopt a full philosophy of history on the Hegelian scale, in fact, Marx, like Kant, uses history in the form of a 'regulative idea'. Kant put it as follows: "...how is history a priori possible? Answer: if the diviner himself creates and contrives the events which he announces in advance."[53] There is, of course, an element of faith in this view of history, presenting, as it does, the guidelines to what we would like to see emerge:

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[51] Marx, Selected Writings, p. 78.

[52] Ibid., p. 71.

[53] Kant, On History, p. 137.

> It can serve not only for clarifying the confused play of things human...but (also) for giving a consoling view of the future (which could not be reasonably hoped for without the presupposition of a natural plan). ...[54]

Marx, having discarded the Hegelian Absolute of Geist, had to hold such a view of history, since the dialectical movement of the economic tendencies in society can only create more favourable conditions for man's praxis. Thus,it is necessary to agree with Marcuse's judgement that

> The revolution depends indeed on a totality of objective conditions: it requires a certain attained level of material and intellectual culture, a self-conscious and organised working class, on an international scale, acute class struggle. These become revolutionary conditions however, only if seized upon and directed by a conscious activity that has in mind the socialist goal. Not the slightest natural necessity guarantees the transition from capitalism to socialism.--Marxian theory...is incompatible with fatalistic determinism.[55]

In this way the Marxist vision of development can be used as the inspirational ideal for the oppressed, illustrating what will happen if, and only if, they take the appropriate action; without an adequate consciousness leading to action the theory is useless. It should be remembered that the 'truth' of a regulative idea can be established only ex post facto. For Marx his theory of social emancipation

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[54]Kant, On History, p. 25.

[55]Marcuse, Reason and Revolution, pp. 318-9.

would hopefully become a 'self-fulfilling prophecy'. It is the regulative idea aspect of Marxism which Sartre adopts because it has the virtue of preserving man's freedom and autonomy:

> Why then are we not simply Marxists? It is because we take the statements (of Marxism) as guiding principles, as indications of jobs to be done, as problems--not as concrete truths--they appear to us as regulative ideas.[56]

With some reservations one can see how Sartre accepts the Marxian revolutionary attitude and theory as the ones best suited to end the social exploitation in contemporary society, this being the basic condition for all other emancipation. As Sartre observed:

> ...the fundamental relation in our history is the reciprocal of need -scarcity.--Scarcity makes real the impossibility of co-essential existence. As long as scarcity remains our destiny, evil is irremediable, and this must be the basis of our ethic.[57]

We have seen that what looked like problems in this context (the questions of freedom, determinism and History) can be cleared up to a great extent. A brief discussion of Sartre's theory of groups and the group action required by the demands of the revolution should, however, bring us to question the basis of Sartre's concept of Marxism.

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[56] Sartre, Search for a Method, p. 35. See also p. 5.

[57] Laing and Cooper, op. cit., pp. 113-4. As this work is a paraphrase of Sartre's own words, and Sartre himself in the Foreword called it, "a very clear, very faithful account of my thought", all further quotations from it are used in lieu of Sartre's own wording.

How is alienated man to be transformed into a revolutionary, and what are the consequences of this for Sartre's concept of freedom and the value he attaches to it? What freedom can there be within the group or party, and is not any party some limitation of our freedom? As Sartre demonstrated through the example of Mathieu in Roads to Freedom, freedom is meaningless without commitment, in addition to which our freedom, once we have knowledge of it, cannot be eliminated even inside the group. It is because of this very freedom, in fact, that the drastic methods Sartre proposes for turning the series into the group, and for maintaining the group once formed, are seen as necessary.

People remain individuals, but they can be transformed into a group through a common hate which is their negative unity. This process will be revealed in action, and it is termed the group-in-fusion by Sartre. This demonstrates the continued orientation towards negation in Sartre's theories. An example of a group-in-fusion is provided by a key incident in the French Revolution, i.e., during the course of the attack on the Bastille one could recognise that the attack itself was fusing the assailants into a group. Sartre calls this "a fusion in the face of material danger. In this fusion real work is done."[58]

[58]Laing and Cooper, op. cit., p. 136.

In other words, it is the group-in-fusion which is the active vanguard of a movement. Again, as in seriality, it is the object which provides the unity of this form of group. In this case it was the Bastille which was the common unifying factor, symbolising, as it did, the hatred felt for the regime. Once more we see that it is negation which transforms the series into the group. This negation happens to have a violent nature, in Sartre's view, owing, one suspects, to the fact that Sartre saw the necessity for some device to change attitude and outlook on the part of the rebellious, i.e., something to change opposition into transcendence, rebellion into revolution. In 'Materialism and Revolution' Sartre characterises the revolutionary as one with the ability to envisage a transcendence of the society on levels other than the purely material, and he, like Marx and Fanon, seems to have adopted the concept of therapeutic or cathartic violence. Sartre did in fact have many long conversations with Fanon during the Algerian crises before he wrote the Critique. Thus Sartre seems to agree with the (relatively early) Marxist statement that

> ...revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew.[59]

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[59] Marx, Basic Writings, p. 37.

Obviously, if it is the object desired destroyed which provides the unity, then this unity is liable to evaporate after the immediate aim has been realised. A social movement consists of more than the achievement of immediate objectives--some continuity is absolutely necessary. The group, as Sartre is often at pains to point out, is not a hyper-individual; individuals merely become more powerful through cooperation. The danger is that each individual, content with a limited achievement, will tend to reassert his individuality and freedom. Max Stirner pointed out what looks most like the (early) Sartrean existentialist attitude to any part or group:

> ...is one to hold with no party? In the very act of joining them and entering their circle one forms a union with them that lasts as long as party and I pursue the same goals. The party has nothing binding (obligatory) for me, and I do not have respect for it, if it no longer pleases me I become its foe.....he cannot let himself be embraced by the party. For him the party remains all the time nothing but a gathering.[60]

Obviously, this attitude is of little use for anything but limited ends. Sartre is fully aware of this tendency--the 'enemy' is not always apparent, or immediately present as an object or symbol to be overcome, as was the Bastille. He substitutes the 'oath' and the internal terror of the party for the fear of the external enemy. This device is

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[60] Stirner, The Ego and His Own, pp. 237-8.

all that is left when "the immense pressures that determined the liquidation of the serial relationships have temporarily disappeared, (and) its permanence must be salvaged."[61] This oath or pledge (the French term is serment) is said to have been made when "freedom becomes a common praxis in order to establish the group's permanence, producing its own inertia by itself and in mediated reciprocity."[62] In other words, it is implicit in the continuation of a group after the achievement of its immediate goals--it is not an oath or contract as such. However, Stirner's point still holds, even the implicit oath "cannot annul the permanent possibility that I can 'freely' that is by my individual praxis, abandon my post, go over to the enemy. Treason and desertion can never be annulled as possibilities."[63] This being the case, there has to be sufficient fear on one's part to make one remain in the party--if the external fear has (temporarily) disappeared it must be replaced by the internal fear of the consequences of one's desertion or resignation. This seems to be a variation on the 'forced to be free' theme, i.e., as it is only the group which can achieve (social) freedom it must be maintained at all costs: "... freedom lies in the praxis, not in each individual action."[64]

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[61] Cumming, op. cit., p. 474.

[62] Ibid., p. 474.

[63] Laing and Cooper, op. cit., p. 135.

[64] Cumming, op. cit., p. 476.

Paradoxically, freedom seems to lie in the alienation of that freedom: "Right and obligation, in the pledged group, present themselves...as my free alienation of freedom."[65] Sartre has, then, arrived at the Marxist position that freedom is a luxury during the revolutionary struggle. Even though freedom is the end for both Marx and Sartre, it cannot be the means. This, it seems, is beyond all doubt:

> It is astonishing to find Marxists rejecting the notion of Terror, of violence both against the Other and against the 'selves' as structures of the revolutionary group, and dismissing these concepts as the product of Sartre's 'aesthetic romanticism'. The real romantics--bourgeois romantics--are those wistful dreamers who think that groups constitute themselves not out of revolt against the necessity of the practico-inert, as a violent refusal to be subjected to violence, but as the result of some sort of social contract or convergence of individual interests.[66]

The question which concerns us now is whether Sartrism can accept much more than merely the Marxist revolutionary attitude, which, of course, is not all there is to Marxism. One of the problems here is that one does not need to be a Marxist to agree that man is the cultural product of his society, i.e., produced by the inter-action of others inside a particular attitudinal framework which is itself the continual culmination of a changing society. Given such points, we need to question Sartre's Marxism to see if it is indeed Marxism, and, perhaps more importantly, what the consequences of it are from the point of view of the individual's relation to society, state and government.

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[65] Laing and Cooper, op. cit., p. 151.

[66] Gorz, 'Sartre and Marx', p. 47.

CHAPTER FOUR

SARTRE'S INTERPRETATION OF MARXISM

One of the main beliefs of Marxism is that scarcity can be overcome.[1] In large part it is seen as a function of the mis-application of science and technology in the capitalist system. As scarcity is to a large extent an artifical condition, it is possible for man's praxis to eliminate it. The elimination of alienation goes hand in hand with that of scarcity, even though it is not a simple relationship--alienation can increase as scarcity decreases. The resolution of alienation, however, it is seen as following from the removal of scarcity as part of the same process.

Marx was willing to praise the productive powers of industrialism under capitalism: "It has been the first to show what man's activity can bring about. It has accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals."[2] He believed that these productive powers, when put to better use, would remove basic material want, and we can thus say that Marx clearly carries on the optimistic spirit of progress of the Enlightenment and

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[1] As Gorz points out, this idea is becoming harder to believe given such factors as the vast increase in world population: "Victory over scarcity--abundance--remains for us inconceivable." Gorz, 'Sartre and Marx', p. 47.

[2] Marx, Basic Writings, p. 52.

Liberalism in general. This spirit is, however, less in evidence when we turn to Sartre.

Despite the adoption of Marxist terminology one should not suppose that Sartre uses it to denote the same concepts. For Sartre scarcity is an inevitable feature of the human condition. He re-evaluates one of his early concepts, coming to different conclusions about its implications, in this case the idea of the variable 'coefficient of adversity'. In Being and Nothingness Sartre explained how our freedom, our decisions about which particular projects to undertake, reveal to us a different coefficient of adversity of the world in each instance:

> What is an obstacle for me may not be so far another. There is no obstacle in an absolute sense, but the object reveals its coefficient of adversity across freely invented and acquired techniques. ...it is I who choose my body weak by making it face the difficulties which I choose to be born (mountain climbing, cycling, sport.)[3]

As we saw above, all freedom is 'in situation' and the situation can be looked upon as the necessary condition of the exercise of freedom. Thus, in a way it facilitates rather than limits freedom. By the time of Search for a Method, however, Sartre had recognised the obvious point implicit in each of the two concepts of situation and adversity, and obvious when the two are taken together. We

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[3]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, pp. 464-5.

are always and necessarily in situation, and while we choose in a situation, we do not choose the situation itself. We are, then, always faced with a world having some degree of adversity. There is no easy way of living some situations, and in this way coefficient of adversity can take on the appearance of an absolute limitation. For many, sheer survival is the main preoccupation--they have little opportunity to indulge in choosing courses of action involving low coefficients, or, on the other hand, the opportunity to gain the skill to make activities with high coefficients the challenge they are for some. For Sartre, what was once merely situation has changed into "the hell of the practico-inert", the inevitable limitation imposed on our freedom through the free actions of others and of previous generations.

The practico-inert is a latent function of the actions of others in the sense that it is impossible to foresee all the consequences of our actions and, therefore, some may have the opposite effect from that intended. Sartre cites China as an example of the creation of a practico-inert conditions. The actions (praxis) of previous generations in clearing all available land for cultivation have led to the present dangers of flood and famine. Through the de-forestation of the countryside the topsoil

is more easily eroded and washed into the rivers silting them up: "...deforestation as the elimination of obstacles becomes negatively the absence of protection. The positive system of cultivation is turned into an infernal machine."[4] Involved in the idea of the practico-inert is a combination of terms and concepts present throughout Sartre's writings but now weighted somewhat differently, those of situation, coefficient of adversity, and freedom. Sartre is pointing out that we do not have, and cannot have, perfect knowledge of the consequences of our actions, and in this sense our freedom is limited. His vision of the practico-inert has great similarities with Marx's view as expressed in The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte:

> Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living.[5]

It is this fact that Sartre chooses to call scarcity, and as the practico-inert is always with us so, therefore, is scarcity. The term is used to designate almost any limitation on our actions rather than the material shortage of commodities per se. As the free actions of others

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[4] Cumming, op. cit., pp. 451-2.

[5] Marx, Basic Writings, p. 360.

limit our freedom, then "scarcity is environment in so far as it is the unitary relation of a plurality of individuals."[6] Obviously, under such a definition scarcity can never be overcome completely, nor, in fact, can other forms of what Sartre calls scarcity, such as the scarcity of time: we are all finite beings and our 'possibles' are, therefore, limited. One further example will suffice to indicate the degree to which scarcity is used as a blanket term for all limitation. In relation to hunting, "one must not forget that the speed of the game, the average distance it keeps...,dangers of all kinds constitute factors of scarcity."[7] The term is also used to designate disequilibrium in society, and as society is dialectically dynamic, constantly changing, then disequilibrium/scarcity must be permanent. Obviously, these conclusions can hardly be called Marxist--even after redistribution and a change in the mode of production, etc., scarcity would continue, hence Desan's comment: "...scarcity is the cornerstone of the whole Sartrean building."[8] Tied in with the concept of scarcity is that of need. Sartre was obviously not completely wrong when he observed that there has to be some complete idea of our projects to enable us to see the limitations which do arise

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[6]Cumming, op. cit., p. 435n.

[7]Ibid., pp. 445-6.

[8]Desan, The Marxism of Jean-Paul Sartre, p. 50.

as limitations. There has to be some idea of a need which is difficult to satisfy before scarcity can become a meaningful concept. The need for food and so on is self-evident, but, again, need means something more to Sartre.

As scarcity was the development of earlier themes, so,too, is need. Need is defined as a lacking,[9] and as we have seen the very structure of man involves a lacking, a division in being. To have any concept of 'lack' entails a teleological judgement, i.e., some idea of the totality which would exist but for the particular lack. On this basis we seem to return to the impossible desire of the for-itself to be in-itself-for-itself, the completed self which Sartre described as the desire to be God. In the Critique man is still seen as having the desire to be whole, and 'need' refers to all the facets of our existence in which we attempt to unite being. As in Hegel and Marx, man is seen as realising himself through activity, activity dependent on the external world that is. As man has to objectify himself in order to act, "A human organism becomes a thing. He makes himself a thing in order to act."[10] It is, therefore, in this sense that our internal lack is manifested in the external world as need.[11] We can never achieve the security of the in-itself-

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[9] Cumming, op. cit., pp. 428-9.

[10] Sheridan, op. cit., p. 97.

[11] On this point, see Freud, The Ego and the Id, p. 10.

for-itself, ending the anguish of freedom yet remaining conscious, and thus our attempts to objectify and use the world will always be, at best, partial failures:

> ...need is the organism itself, living itself in the future through present disorders, as its own possibilities, and, consequently, as the possibility of its own impossibility.[12]

Need comes down to desire, and therefore as long as life lasts desire and need will exist, as Sheridan points out:

> Need is not a function of the structures of the field of scarcity which happen to be the most pervasive characteristics of the world we happen to have. It is the result of the intrinsic 'nature' of the organism which would hold in any field, whether that field features (material) scarcity or not.[13]

We can see that Sartre has not given up his existentialism in favour of a completely Marxist concept of man; his original categories are still in use under different names and slightly reinterpreted. There is merely greater concern to eliminate the excessive practical constraints on our activity so that the attempt can be made to deal with the "metaphysical evil which is a luxury."[14] It is the concession on Sartre's part that there is such a thing as 'metaphysical evil', on which we can focus in regard to the possible basic differences between Marxism and Sartrism.

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[12] Cumming, op. cit., p. 431.

[13] Sheridan, op. cit., p. 149.

[14] Sartre, 'A Long, Bitter, Sweet Madness', p. 61.

First and foremost, we need some indication of what constitutes 'metaphysical evil'. It is basically the alienation of man from the world and, more importantly, from other men. This alienation, according to Sartre, would occur even in a condition of material sufficiency. Sartre's view of this seems almost the necessary result of his fundamental approach of the selection of the individual consciousness as the basic datum. This involves the dangers inherent in extreme individualism, i.e., the tendency towards solipsism, the problem of the existence of others and of our relations to them.

Given the form and structure of consciousness, and given that it is individual, our relations to the world and others are, in the first instance, negative. Our self exists to the extent that our initial realisation is of what we are not. It is difficult, if not impossible, to discover what we really are, and we spend, according to Sartre, a major part of our lives in trying to establish our identity. In this task the attitude of others is crucial--we need others both to illustrate through our negation of them what we are not, and because they reflect back to us our being-for-others, which, by definition, we can never know completely. The attempt to be merely our being-for-others, as Saint Genet demonstrates, is both an impossible task and bad faith. Yet, as we continually

strive for the state of the in-itself-for-itself, we constantly attempt some communication, some union, with others on some level other than that of object/instrument, and the necessary failure of this union is what constitutes metaphysical evil. It is because of this failure, the fact that our relationships are always imperfect, that Sartre could claim that the very existence of the Other's consciousness, forever alien and a mystery, is a 'crime', and that he, through Garcin in No Exit, could claim that Hell is other people.

In one sense man is just a positional consciousness, a particular point of view. Thus, the world we perceive is a particular and unique one in that no-one can have exactly the same view of it. The existence of another, alien, consciousness is a threat to our whole world order in that he or she has a different, and equally unique, view of the world--one which cannot include our own. In Sartre's view, when we think of this, our tenuous grasp on 'reality' is endangered. The famous illustration of this is of the man in the park suddenly realising the presence of another person:

> ...suddenly an object has appeared which has stolen the world from me. 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.[15]

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[15]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 231.

As he puts it graphically, the world 'bleeds' in a different direction, all the relationships we perceive between objects disappear and are reconstructed from a different standpoint. From this standpoint we become an object in the eyes of an alien subject. One receives a strong, and, for some, frightening, intimation of this from the 'look' of the Other. Sartre often spoke of being pierced by the gaze of others wherein we become fixed entities, almost as the look of Medusa petrified.[16] To regain our world and our being we have to disregard the look of the Other, if possible reducing him to the status of an object through our own look. Unfortunately, this does not solve the problem because once we consider others as objects our identity begins to disappear. If virtually all we have is the mirror image of our being-for-others, and we then eliminate the Other, our identity slips away. It slips away because, as Sartre points out elsewhere, we cannot be 'x' or 'y' in any long-term sense, our being is always in question through the very nature of consciousness itself, and therefore we need a constant input to be reassured. In this analysis the Other as subject is always necessary for us. We have to attempt to form some (reciprocal) relationship to end the constant battle of wills and the oscillation between subject and object, to

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[16] E.g., Ibid., pp. 228-31.

bring some stability into our existence.

Out of this relationship we desire an indication of our identity, and yet we desire to retain the world as our own, which is the only one we can know inasmuch as it is at all possible to have knowledge of the world. This, however, is said to be impossible. I cannot remain subject and know the other as subject without being both myself and the other consciousness, and, therefore, Sartre is led to conclude that "So long as consciousness exists, the separation and conflict of consciousness will remain."[17] This conflict is in some ways similar to Hobbes's state of war, which is not war as such but the permanent possibility of it; conflict between consciousnesses is always present, even if it is implicit and latent rather than explicit and manifest. Because of this gap between consciousness, man is permanently suspicious of the other's intentions. Even if we do have the other's promise, this is an event in the past, and the Other, being a similar freedom to our own, is not bound by any act in the past. All we can know (and this imperfectly) is what the Other's attitude towards us was, not what it is now. We need some reassurance that the Other's apparent agreement, empathy, or friendship towards

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[17] Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 220.

us will not suddenly disappear, or prove to have been an illusion or device for the Other's own ends. We can never completely trust the Other, as Olafson points out:

> Even if the other moral consciousness proved to be in harmony with my own evaluations, there could be no guarantee of the indefinite continuation of that harmony in which the possibility of conflict is therefore always latent. Thus either by anticipation or in actual fact, the presence of another autonomous moral being like myself imposes upon me the ordeal of having my actions devalued in the medium of another consciousness.[18]

We feel that our freedom is taken away from us and that we become de-humanized by the existence of others. This, of course, is in striking contradistinction to Marx's view that we are only truly human when in some relation with other people. Sartre's view is that we have to live and work in a world of others, the intentions of whom, in fact, the worlds of whom, we cannot know. He points out by reference to Kafka's 'K' that we live in ignorance of the world even while we attempt to exist in it. In essence, then, what Sartre is saying is that the humanisation of the world in the Marxian sense is not possible to the degree that Marx thought, and that this confusion and ignorance which (Sartre) details "is nothing but the description of our-being-in-the-midst-of-the-world-for-others."[19] We become slaves trapped in worlds of others' values.[20]

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[18] Olafson, 'Authenticity and Obligation', in Warnock, ed. Sartre, p. 128.

[19] Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 242.

[20] Ibid., p. 243.

The Marxist position is, of course, that this is merely the result of socially created alienation, not an ontological condition, and bound to disappear given the elimination of scarcity and the arrival of socialism. Gorz maintains that Sartre's position on this is, in fact, Marxist since:

> ...alienation does not present itself as necessity except in the world of serial dispersion and of scarcity, that is to say, in a world in which each is for himself and for others an Other than himself. The use by Sartre of the terms 'Other' and 'alterity' seems to have made some inattentive readers believe that for him there was an alienation inherent in the co-existence of a multiplicity of individuals; it is inherent in the coexistence of a multiplicity of dispersed individuals acting separately in a common situation of scarcity.[21]

In reality, however, the elimination of scarcity, while removing the need to fear the other consciousness, still leaves a gulf between consciousnesses which we can never completely bridge, which, in itself, sometimes brings a feeling of fear and dislocation. Language itself, as Sartre points out, is a less than perfect device for communicating; not only is it often very difficult to express feelings in words,but it is also virtually always the case that our words take on different meanings from those we intend for the listener. This Sartre calls alterity, the permanent possibility that our words and

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[21]Gorz, op. cit., pp. 42-3.

actions will be misinterpreted. It is facile to claim that it is the suspicion and caution caused by the exigences of living in a world of scarcity which causes all misunderstanding:

> In no case is the result ever identical with the intention of the agent. For an alteration occurs when my action passes from my-action-for-me to my-action-for-you. From being mine-for-me it becomes other-for-the-other.[22]

Thus, "Alienation in its two primary forms of alteration and objectification is an a priori necessity."[23] One might, however, argue that this is a question of degree. Language itself does provide considerable evidence pointing to the very high degree of common experience we do have, and it might be hoped that communication will improve given the lessening of fear and antagonism (although, as Orwell pointed out years ago, language is being undermined and used with less precision or for purposes other than communication alone, the dangers of which are indicated in 1984). Sartre's statements on intentionality, which he found to demonstrate alienation, need little reinterpretation to be looked upon as evidence of the common human structure of the world. As with Marx, we could take language as proof of our universal nature.

An alternative approach to this question is the attempt to demonstrate that some residual alienation remains

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[22] Laing and Cooper, op. cit., p. 118.

[23] Ibid., p. 115.

even under the Marxist analysis, in which case there is little problem in reconciling the Sartrean and Marxist approaches. One can argue that Sartre gains many of his ideas of the nature of consciousness from Hegel--is it not as least as likely that Marx would have done so also? Assuming this to be the case, this might well account for Marx's recognition of alienation which in some respects is very similar to Sartre's descriptions of the reaction of the for-itself to its consciousness, i.e., the recognition that being is at a distance from itself.

> The animal is one with its life activity. It does not distinguish the activity from itself. It is its activity. But man makes his life activity itself an object of his will and consciousness. He has a conscious life activity. It is not a determination with which he is completely identified.[24]

The description of animal activity is very reminiscent of the in-itself aspect of the pre-reflective consciousness as described by Sartre: activity without reflection. The view of man expressed here is similar to the for-itself of Sartre. Sartre, of course, locates anguish in this lack of complete identification with activity, and it might be argued that Marx's statement that "To be sentient is to suffer"[25] can be explained in this way, but there is

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[24]Marx, Early Writings, p. 127.

[25]Ibid., p. 208. See note on page 56 above in regard to this quote.

not sufficient evidence to stress the point.[26]

One can, then, argue that social change would no more provide the solution of all alienation for Marxian man than for Sartrean man, particularly when one takes into account that there is in fact little evidence for Marx's belief in man's capacity for the extreme of social cooperation which would result in a world sufficiently 'human' in Marx's sense of the word to overcome all alteration. As Kamenka puts it:

> Marx's proof that man's alienation from his species is implied by his alienation from the product of his labour...consists of nothing more solid...than metaphorical transitions. ...[27]

> Cooperation and production are taken as the 'normal' way of working of the individual freed from the pressures of external determination; a view for which Marx provides no evidence and could provide no evidence.[28]

In the light of the above arguments we can conclude that there is enough common ground shared by Marx and Sartre for Sartre to be termed a Marxist of some description, if one so desires, even if one merely agrees with MacIntyre's

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[26]There are many interpretations of Marxian alienation. Tucker for instance feels that it is a feature of the individual and that it is not directly dependent upon society for either its occurence or its solution. Neither, however, does he consider it to be a necessary feature of consciousness in the Sartrean manner.
Tucker, op. cit., pp. 148-9.

[27]Kamenka, op. cit., p. 77.

[28]Ibid., p. 159.

observation that "Sartre distinguishes sharply between Marx and Engels; his Marx is a young Hegelian rather than an old economist."[29]

The one remaining problem which concerns us is that of the form and the place of the dialectic in Marx and Sartre, and this subject provides perhaps the best opportunity for Sartre's most important criticisms of what has come to be considered Marxism. One of the things noticeably absent in Sartre's theory is any concept of an all-encompassing, uni-directional dialectical process involving all society. He stresses that, while social actions are dialectical in nature,[30] there can be no uni-directional process as long as one insists on the primacy of individual praxis; for Sartre, any such process would be a metaphysical imposition involving something of the order of the Hegelian World Spirit. In Hegel, the Spirit, or Reason, has the primacy and autonomy, it moves and realises itself, it emerges rather than develops. In Hegel's case the dialect is not an imposition on the structure of society but the movement of a whole. As Marcuse points out:

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[29] MacIntyre, "Sartre as Social Theorist", p. 512. For Sartre's own position on this see Literary and Philosophical Essays, pp. 217 and 248n.

[30] By which is meant merely, I suspect, there is a constant action-interaction in society. All actions have effects, intended and unintended, which, in turn, affect the actions to be taken in the future. It would seem that Sartre's concept of a dialectical process is something like that of R.D. Laing's as expressed in, for example, Knots (London: Penguin, 1971).

> Marx, on the other hand, detached dialectic from (its) ontological base. In his work, the negativity of reality becomes a historical condition which cannot be hypostatized as a metaphysical state of affairs. In other words, it becomes a social condition, associated with a particular historical form of society. The totality which the Marxian dialectic gets to is the totality of class society, and the negativity that underlies its contradictions and shapes its every content is the negativity of class relations.[31]

In this case, to impose a dialectical framework on the movement of society as a whole would require a considerable degree of teleology. In other words, there has to be some idea of the final (or at least later) condition before one can posit the one dialectical movement and progression of society. Unless this end can, in some way, 'pull' the preceding events towards it, i.e., help determine them (a metaphysical concept with which very few would agree) the idea of a uni-directional dialectic can only be a corruption and extension of the original 'regulative idea'.

The 'end' (begging the question in this instance of the validity of the idea of the possibility of any end to the dialectic) of the dialectic, however, can be only an opinion, a desired state of affairs, or an extrapolation of certain trends. In Marx's case, the dialectic was to realise the end of alienation the 'humanisation' of the world, and the superior community of man. On these grounds, according to Marx, history as we know it is but the history of alienated society, and

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[31]Marcuse, Reason and Revolution, p. 314.

> The Marxian 'inversion' of Hegel's dialectic remains committed to history. The driving forces behind the historical process are not mere conflicts but contradictions because they constitute the very Logos of history as the history of alienation.[32]

It is still, however, the case that the concept of the end of alienation can be only desire, opinion, or extrapolation, and, therefore, anything but certainty, as even Engels admitted: "...our conception of history is above all a guide to study, not a lever for construction after the manner of the Hegelian."[33] And as Sartre puts it: "How did the dialectic retain its necessity in its fall from heaven to earth?"[34] According to Sartre, society can only be a perpetual movement which "has no necessary sequence. A group-in-fusion may dissolve into seriality immediately, or go on through a pledged group to become an institution. Just as possibly, the institution may arise directly from a serial collectivity."[35] All this is, of course, in keeping with the criticisms Sartre made of Marxism in 1948 when he pointed out that

> If constructive forces are to triumph, historical determinism assigns them only one path. But there are many possible varieties of barbarism and socialism, and perhaps even a barbarous socialism.[36]

Thus, the basic modification Sartre made to the Marxism he had contact with was to reject the dangerous notion of the Hegelian Absolute Spirit, or uni-directional dialectic

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[32]Marcuse, Soviet Marxism, p. 125.

[33]Engels to Schmidt (August 1890) in Feuer, op. cit. p. 435.

[34]Sartre, Literary and Philosophic Essays, p. 215.

[35]Laing and Cooper, op. cit., p. 167.

[36]Sartre, Literary and Philosophic Essays, p. 253. see also p. 37. above.

brought down from heaven to earth. As many people have pointed out,[37] it is virtually impossible to 'turn Hegel on his head' and retain his system, using material facts or social classes in place of notions or moments; as Sartre himself observed, "matter itself thereby becomes an idea."[38] While this may be a good and necessary judgement of Marxism, does it do justice to the Marxian dialectic?

It is erroneous to attribute to Marx the idea that society will inevitably unfold as it should, i.e., to socialism, through an automatic dialectical process, as Marx himself said: "One will never arrive there by using as one's master key a general historico-philosophical theory, the supreme virtue of which consists in being super-historical."[39] It is the fact that, in the final analysis, it is, according to Marx, the economic level of society which is the determining factor in social development which can lead to the misleading impression that Marx was describing a total social dialectic. In actual fact, Marx describes the dialectics of systems. Dialectic has to be internal to a system or process: 'external' dialectic is an invalid concept. For example, society itself would have to be regarded as a system or process, i.e., a structure

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[37] E.g., Meszaros, Marx's Theory of Alienation, p. 216.
[38] Sartre, Literary and Philosophical Essays, p. 216.
[39] Marx, in Avineri, op. cit., p. 152.

with a clear purpose and explicit goals analogous to the capitalist goals, such as profit maximization, for instance, before internal social conflict along the lines proposed by Machiavelli in the Discourses could have any resemblance to a dialectical process. Mere conflict is not contradiction or inconsistency, and it can only produce ideas such as 'social Darwinism'.

One could argue that the capitalist system and ideology have been, at some stages, so all-pervasive that they encompassed all society through such features as the class structure, and so on. To be strictly accurate, however, Marx describes only the dialectics of capitalist development. It is redundant to go into this in this context--the basic ideas are too well known to need description. In brief, the system produces the conditions,and only the conditions, for its own transcendence into socialism through such features as its (alienated) humanisation of the world, the development of ample productive forces, and the by-product of the creation of a high degree of association in the proletariat, and so on.[40] The very modifications which are made to the 'pure' system of capitalism to ensure its survival are those which can be used for different purposes by the socialist 'sovereign'.[41] Thus we can see that there are no mystical or metaphysical

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[40]See, for example, Marcuse, Soviet Marxism, p. 5, for the conditions capitalism creates for its transcendence.

[41]See Avineri, op. cit., p. 178.

elements in the Marxian dialectic, and that Sartre's criticisms are directed more against the distortion of Marxism than Marx's own ideas.

Sartre pays little attention to the dialectics of the capitalist system per se, and hence we have to turn to his treatment of revolutionary movements for his approach to dialectical movement in society. Sartre sees a successful revolution taking the following course. The vanguard of the movement, the group-in-fusion, manages to make the transition into the group, i.e., an efficient and lasting revolutionary party. If this group can actually manage to sieze power, it is faced with the problem of holding power and constructing a socialist society. Once the group has become the new ruling class and forms the government, it tends to turn into the 'institution' for various reasons. The negative unity has necessarily disappeared, and there are more, diverse, and different tasks to be performed--all of which demand an organized administration, which Sartre terms the institution. At this stage the movement is faced with the dangers of stagnation, rigidity, and loss of direction: "External structure signifies internal ossification", and "Organization becomes institution, organized individual becomes institutionalized individual..."[42] In other words, the danger is

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[42]Laing and Cooper, op. cit., p. 160.

of the revolution turning into a bureaucracy.

Before and during the revolution the group has relatively simple aims, and the power structure is clearly defined in relation to this end, in addition to which negative unity binds the group together at this stage. All of this vanishes in the bureaucratized institution; power and control are themselves institutionalized into an official corpus--a revolutionary religion, as it were: "This degradation perhaps evokes Stalinist Russia--or China today, where the unity and truth of the society reside for each member in the political thought of Mao, source of all rights and duties."[43] As we will see below with reference to The Ghost of Stalin, Gorz is correct in this judgement, as, of course, is Laing's paraphrase: "The institution, as rebirth of seriality and impotence, must consecrate power to assure its permanence by law."[44] Once there is a 'sovereign' of this order, it can be seen that man becomes serialized again, this time in relation to the leader or corpus, and all relationships become vertical rather than horizontal.

One can see that what Sartre is dealing with is the form of progression of post-revolutionary Russia or Cuba, and he clearly points out its dangers, i.e., that the

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[43]Gorz, op. cit., p. 50.

[44]Laing and Cooper, op. cit., p. 161.

necessary centralization of the sovereign and institution tend to become permanent. Sartre regards the sovereign/institution as analogous to the traditional Marxist idea of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat in the sense that it serves the same purpose. He, however, regards the idea of a dictatorship of the proletariat as 'absurd',[45] and it seems that his ideas are closer to Lenin's on this point that to Marx's in that Sartre envisions a group working for the proletariat as necessary at this stage. Sartre's attitude is that the sovereign should do the job of reorganization as quickly as possible and then 'wither away'. Historically, however, this has rarely occurred, because of, amongst other things, a basic misunderstanding on the part of both the group and the people in general:

> The mystifications at the heart of this diffused sovereignty are in forgetting that serial impotence is the necessity of freedom, and in believing that by incarnating the State in the sovereign, or sovereignty in the State, something more than a phantom unity of a congealed serialized mass is achieved.[46]

This misunderstanding leads to "a further form of alienation of our individual freedom."[47] It is because of factors such as these that Sartre proposes a form of the permanent revolution, i.e., enough internal criticism of the movement to keep it aware of its immediate goals, and to prevent stagnation. The dangers of ossification mean that the

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[45] Sartre, Critique de la raison dialectique, (Paris: Gallimard, 1960) p. 630.

[46] Laing and Cooper, op. cit., pp. 162-3.

[47] Ibid., p. 163.

sovereign should ideally exist for only a brief period, merely long enough to consolidate power and set up the machinery for the transition to socialism. According to Sartre, the institutionalized serial bureaucracy can achieve little apart from its own petrification; only the 'fused group' can be effective in dealing with particular problems. Thus the job of the revolutionary institution should be to set up fused groups to deal with the individual tasks involved in the socialist transition:

> The Critique...suggests that the only true model of 'voluntary cooperation' is the fused group. That the fused group cannot have a durable basis is due to several factors: (I) to scarcity and to the multiplicity of antagonistic processes in the world; (2) to the nature of tools (or means of production), that is to say, the resistance, the inertness and the complexity of the practical field structured as it is by available techniques.[48]

What Gorz argues in this quotation is true up to a point; the solution, however, is contained within the problem. The very coefficient of adversity which he describes can lead to unity, as it provides a focus for activity and a challenge. Laing summarises Sartre's position as follows:

> A new type of praxis has to be envisaged, a praxis whose unitary and dialectic temporalization, starting from the objective to be attained, is developed in the unity of multi-dimensional reciprocities between heterogenous structures, of which each contains the other in itself.[49]

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[48] Gorz, op. cit., p. 51.

[49] Laing and Cooper, op. cit., p. 171.

Presumably, there must be some provision for some official body to perform the function of overall planning and coordination. Sartre, however, is unclear on this point--he does not specify either its make-up or the extent of its powers, but one suspects that he desires it to be administrative and regulative rather than the supreme body of authority and power.

Throughout Sartre's dialectic we can see that negation is necessary to provide the impetus for the process. It is negation in the form of opposition which creates the group-in-fusion, and negation in the form of internal 'terror' which maintains the group once formed, and it is the lack of negation which starts the ossification of the institution and the deification of the sovereign or corpus:

> As soon as praxis loses awareness of end and means, and this entails the ends and means of its adversary, and the means of opposing this adverse praxis--it becomes blind, ceases to be praxis but becomes the unconscious accomplice of other action which overflows it, alienates it, and turns it around against its own agent as enemy force.[50]

Marcuse, in fact, comes to the same conclusion in relation to the post-revolutionary history of the U.S.S.R.:

> Left without a conceptual level for the 'determinate negation' of the established system, for comprehending and realising its arrested potentialities, the ruled tend not only to submit to the rulers, but also to reproduce in themselves their subordination.[51]

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[50] Ibid., p. 174.

[51] Marcuse, Soviet Marxism, p. 174.

It is only the re-introduction of negation in relation to the resistance provided by scarcity and the coefficient of adversity which is seen as being able to maintain the movement.

While Sartre sees the necessity for negation as the central feature of any dialectical system, one can argue that once Sartre moves from the dialectic of the individual project to that of the social, he approaches the borderline between dialectical contradiction and ordinary conflict. It is, however, difficult to draw an exact line between the two in this case.

Having briefly, and by no means thoroughly, discussed the basic aspects of theory, we can give an indication of what this means in practice through reference to a work written before the Critique but in basic agreement with it: The Ghost of Stalin. In fact the Critique was a theoretical re-working of the practical subject matter of The Ghost of Stalin.

Wilfred Desan concluded from the evidence of the Critique that what Sartre wanted was "the relinquishing by the sovereign of the monopoly of the group (democratization) and the 'progressive wilting of the state in favour of a regrouping of the different extereo-conditioned serialities' (decentralization and de-bureaucratization)."[52]

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[52]Desan, op. cit., p. 207.

This conclusion is borne out by evidence presented in The Ghost of Stalin.

One can identify the basic requirements which Sartre demands of a socialist society as being the socialization of the means of production[53] and the collectivization of agriculture.[54] More important than the statement of basic aims are, of course, the methods to be used. In this context Sartre talks specifically of France, and this should be borne in mind. He reverts to the pre-war idea of the Popular Front because "Only a Popular Front can save our country; it alone can cure our colonial cancers, wrest the economy from stagnation (etc.) ...".[55] Sartre has a good reason for his seemingly anachronistic attitude. Ruling out violent revolution as impractical in the French context, he recognised that a united Left would have sufficient voting power to take over parliament democratically. Once the Left controlled parliament, the parliament could be used as the tool for transforming society:

> ...it is not a matter of obtaining, thanks to universal suffrage, a continuous succession of improvements which would imperceptibly lead to the disappearance of capitalism: the Popular Front, carried to power by the votes of

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[53] Sartre, The Ghost of Stalin, pp. 68, 132-3.

[54] Ibid., p. 70. This particular point results from the fact that Sartre is dealing with countries having strong residual peasant populations, such as post-revolutionary Russia, post-World-War-Two Hungary, and contemporary (1956) France.

[55] Ibid., p. 128.

> peasents, workers and intellectuals, will have to realise, in a dictatorial manner, the radical transformation of society. The Revolution, as an abrupt passing from a dying regime to the beginning of a new regime, will be accomplished on the taking of power. Only it will have lost its violent character.[56]

Sartre's immediate object in this work was to demonstrate that the policy being pursued by the P.C.F. at this time (1956) would necessarily sabotage this plan even if the alliance of the Left could be achieved. As we saw from the Critique, the sovereign should last only long enough to consolidate power and hand over power to de-centralized groups. Given the policy of the P.C.F. at this time, this would have been virtually impossible owing to the fact that the Party was extremely centralized and hierarchical, taking its lead from Moscow, which was still Stalinist. The Party fitted the description Sartre was to give in the Critique, it was stagnant and ossified, and its support was being alienated. There was little prospect that such an organization would be suited to a rapid de-centralization of power, particularly as it has created no groups with any experience of even semi-autonomous action. Thus Sartre was criticising the Party leaders on two levels: not only were they following the wrong program to gain power (owing to the policy of the Cominform[57]), but even if they did come to power in some way, their

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[56] Ibid., p. 132.

[57] See Marcuse, Soviet Marxism, pp. 55-7.

policy would be a danger to the rapid realization of socialism. As it stood, the P.C.F. merely had the potential for another dictatorship along Stalinist lines.

As a solution, Sartre proposed that the Party become a mass movement on the Italian model,[58] i.e., it should expand and change its structure by agreeing to be run by the rank and file. In other words, the workers themselves should have control through local, and reasonably independent, councils:

> If the C.P. wants to regain the support of the working masses, it must accept their control. As long as the elements of the base communicate only through the top, the C.P. will remain closed. if it wishes to weld itself to the masses to give unity back to them and find life again through them, it must become decompressed. It is this very operation, based on a policy of expansion, which we call democratization.[59]

It should be remembered that Sartre is discussing a developed industrial nation, and thus there is no need for authoritarian centralized control as there is no requirement to build an industrial base as in the U.S.S.R. Sartre's comments on the Hungarian episode demonstrate his great faith in the idea of workers' control,[60] and this, in turn, indicates his basic faith in the 'masses'. Sartre still relies on each person's own sense of responsibility to a great extent: ..."it is not true that the

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[58] Sartre, The Ghost of Stalin, p. 138.

[59] Ibid., p. 141.

[60] E.g., Ibid., p. 41.

construction of socialism intensifies class struggle... you don't always count on the worst and man is not always evil; one must prepare for peace by peace."[61] Even though Sartre seemingly wants to create a genuine workers' and people's party, one that would take its lead directly from the people, presumably through such devices as direct democracy and the right of recall of representatives, there will always be a tension between freedom and democracy inside the party and its ability to function efficiently. Sartre comes down on the side of freedom. He shows that the negation, as it were, of internal criticism is absolutely necessary to prevent the stagnation of the party or regime:

> The time of revealed truths of the gospel has passed: a Communist Party can live in the West only if it acquires the right of free examination.[62]
>
> Factions will be avoided only by encouraging on every level criticism and discussions.[63]

We can conclude from both the theoretical and practical aspects that Sartre retained his belief in the individual's autonomy, freedom and responsibility, and his ideas for a socialist society both demand and seek to further these ends. It is noticeable that Sartre does not advocate the violence which is implicit in his support of Fanon and explicit in the Critique, when it comes to

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[61] Ibid., p. 103.
[62] Ibid., p. 139.
[63] Ibid., p. 141.

practical politics; as Manser observes, he has merely "what has been described as a typical intellectual's feeling for it."[64] Sartre's position on violence is that it is sometimes necessary; it is implicit in politics: ..."politics is necessary and no one can take part in it...if he does not accept in advance that violence, in certain cases, may be the lesser evil."[65] Where there is a chance of a non-violence transition to socialism violence is, of course, pointless, but in situations as in Algeria or Chile, for example, there is a greater need and justification for it. In general, Sartre deplores the use of violence, as it is, in many cases, dys-functional--violence breeds violence, and often very little else.

Finally, we should consider aspects of the classless society in both Marx and Sartre. In Marx, the classless society is, to a great extent, an end in itself; one finds fulfilment in the communal life and activity. Marx does not rule out individuality as such, his point is that even when the individual is as free as possible to choose his interests outside the realm of necessity, these interests will tend to be social interests, i.e., interests which require other people, either directly or indirectly.

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[64] Manser, op. cit., p. 195.

[65] Sartre, quoted in Manser, op. cit., p. 196.

Sartrean Marxism is, however, concerned to improve the conditions of the 'realm of necessity', making it as bearable as possible through eliminating such malign features in the social superstructure as rank, tradition and status, and so on (see above pp. 22, 39). Within the optimum society, i.e., socialism, it still remains true for Sartre that "Conflict is the original meaning of my-being-for-others",[66] and that

> Unity with the Other is...in fact unrealizable. It is also unrealizable in theory, for the assimilation of the for-itself and the Other in a single transcendance would necessarily involve the disappearance of the characteristics of otherness in the Other.[67]

Socialism can merely eliminate many of the reasons for conflict. In the final analysis, each is still alone and, to a great extent left to his own devices. This is why Murdoch concludes that "The future which seems to him real is the warm living future of the individual project."[68]

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[66] Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 340.

[67] Ibid., pp. 341-2.

[68] Murdoch, op. cit., p. 101.

CONCLUSION

In 1963 Sartre claimed that he had

> ...always been an optimist, perhaps even too much so (even though)...the universe remains dark. We are animals struck by catastrophe... But I discovered suddenly that alienation, exploitation of man by man, under-nourishment, relegated to the background metaphysical evil which is a luxury. Hunger is an evil; period. I am on the side of those who think that things will get better when the world has changed.[1]

This is the realisation which led Sartre to change his attitude to life; as we have seen, he came to acknowledge that he had paid too much attention to the individual and his relation to the 'Other' rather than to society in his early works. He came to see that his view of, and recommendations about, personal morality were, therefore, unsound; the repression exercised by society was more effective than he admitted in the nineteen-thirties and 'forties. Like Marx, he came to the conclusion that it is fruitless to attempt to devise a 'true' moral system inside a bourgeois society:

> From the period when I wrote La nausée (1938) I wanted to create a morality. My evolution consists in my no longer dreaming of so doing. What matters first is the liberation of man. First of all, men must be able to become men by the improvements of their conditions of existence so that a universal morality can be created.[2]

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[1] Sartre, 'A Long, Bitter, Sweet Madness', Encounter, p. 64.

[2] Ibid., p. 62.

Thus we see in Sartre the progression from perhaps the most individualist philosophical position since Max Stirner's to the acceptance of Marxism. Sartre has rendered a considerable service to socialism by demonstrating that individual freedom can really be appreciated only in a free society. It was this realisation by Sartre which has led him to Marxism, and his explicit avowal of Marxism has had the (beneficial) effect of forcing other Marxists to take his comments and criticisms more seriously.

Sartre, along with other figures, such as Jean Hyppolite and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, was partly responsible for the recent increased debate on the foundations and nature of Marxism, and, in fact, his own contributions on this topic are very illuminating. On the fundamental question of materialism/idealism Sartre has always provided a valuable corrective to the mechanistic interpretation of materialism.[3] In the course of this paper, we should have seen that Marx was by no means a total materialist, nor Sartre an idealist. In fact, even though Marx was "not concerned either with the ontological problem of the relation of thought and being, or with problems of the theory of knowledge",[4] it seems true that "Marx...sees the active aspect of human consciousness and the practical activity of man engaged in transforming

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[3]Most noticeably in 'Materialism and Revolution' in 1948.

[4]Marx, Selected Writings, p. 36.

nature as a basic category in his theory of knowledge."[5]

As his "Theses on Feuerbach" indicate,

> Marx's epistemology occupies a middle position between classical materialism and classical idealism. Historically it draws on both traditions; and, since it synthesizes the two traditions, it transcends the classic dichotomy between subject and object.[6]

Sartre, of course, is much more explicitly concerned with ontology, and from his considerable writings on the subject it is immediately apparent that he, like Marx, occupies some of the middle ground between idealism and materialism. He accepts the existence of the material world independent of consciousness in the form of being 'in-itself'. The only grounds on which Sartre could (mistakenly) be labelled an idealist are that he asserts that it is man who imposes meaning on the external world, and if this is idealism, then Marx is guilty of this to a considerable degree in his theory of the 'humanisation' of the world. In fact, the statement Avineri makes in relation to Marx serves for both Marx and Sartre: "Marx maintains that there always exists a 'natural substratum' which is a necessary condition for the activity of human consciousness."[7] Sartre's position is distorted by many Marxist critics, e.g., Adam Schaff, to mean that Sartre recognises no natural physical laws in the external world. While this might be true of existentialists such as Camus, it is

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[6]Avineri, op. cit., p. 69.

[7]Avineri, op. cit., p. 68.

wide off the mark in relation to Sartre. His point is that without man there would be no meaning in the world as it is only through man's consciousness, operating through time, that any order can be either recognised or imposed on material. This rather obvious point seems to have been wilfully ignored or misinterpreted. As Sartre often observed, "consciousness is always consciousness of something" so much for idealism. Hartmann's judgement will serve to conclude this matter:

> ...Sartre is an empiricist. He does not intend to 'generate' content, either of consciousness or of phenomena. Discounting further ontological ramifications, we can say that all he intends to do is to establish a relationship in terms of being, between subject and object.[8]
>
> Sartre gives no 'positive' ontology on this level which would show how the relation between subject and object is founded in an encompassing being.[9] (Which an idealist would.)

On the practical level also, Sartre has had the effect of spuring other Marxists, such as Schaff, to attempt to give Marxism 'a human face', and if this were, in fact, Sartre's only contribution, it would still be a considerable and extremely useful one, since once Marxism loses sight of the individual it loses its entire raison d'être. While critics like Sartre still exist, the danger of this is considerably lessened; he provides the essential function of being a critic of all institutions

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[8] Hartmann, Sartre's Ontology, p. 139.

[9] Ibid., p. 31. see also pp. 135 and 143.

and dogmas. Sometimes this criticism becomes extreme, and this tendency towards extremes in any argument has alienated many from what he is saying, but it should be remembered that this extremism is for effect--in many cases he deliberately exaggerates his real position, as, for instance, in his treatment of violence. Occasionally however, one gets the impression of iconoclasm for its own sake. Sartre himself admits this, but, as he points out, "that is how one should think: revolting against everything 'inculcated' that one may have within oneself."[10]

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[10]Sartre, 'A Long, Bitter, Sweet Madness', p. 63.

APPENDIX: MARX'S IDEA OF SPECIES-BEING

Feuerbach meant by the term 'species-being' that man, because he had the capacity for consciousness of self, could recognise that he was an example of a particular type or species: man. In other words, man could recognise that others were in fact like himself, that they experienced and thought in the same way. Man is thus conscious that he is a 'universal' being, by which is meant not that he is a part of a metaphysical or mystic idea of a greater whole, but that rather than being a unique creation he is an example of a type. Universality is demonstrated through the existence of language:

> ...man can perform the functions of thought and speech, which strictly imply such a relation (i.e., that to the species) apart from another individual. Man is at once I and thou; he can put himself in the place of another, for this reason, that to him his species, his essential nature, and not merely his individuality, is an object of thought.[1]

Through consciousness man can abstract from the immediate and form the concepts of man's general attributes--his 'nature': "...the positive final predicates which he gives to these other individuals, are always determinations or qualities drawn from his own nature--qualities in which he in truth only images and projects himself."[2] However

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[1] Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity, New York: Harper, 1957, p. 2.

[2] Ibid., p. 11.

the abstraction which he makes is of the following order:

> Consciousness, in the strict or proper sense is identical with consciousness of the infinite... ...in the consciousness of the infinite, the conscious subject has for his object the infinity of his own nature.[3]

According to Feuerbach, man recognises his own characteristics as particular examples of the general attributes of man. As merely a particular, man feels himself to be limited because it is inevitable that he will not be the complete epitome of human perfection. This is the key to man's anguish, that which will eventually lead him to religion:

> Every limitation of the reason, or in general of the nature of man, rests on a delusion, an error. It is true that the human being, as an individual, can and must--herein consists his distinction from the brute--feel and recognise himself to be limited; but he can become conscious of his limits, his finiteness, only because the perfection, the infinitude of his species, is perceived by him, whether as an object of feeling, of conscience, or of the thinking consciousness. If he makes his own limitations the limitations of the species, this arises from the mistake that he identifies himself immediately with the species--a mistake which is intimately connected with the individual's love of ease, sloth, vanity, and egoism. For a limitation which I know to be merely mine humiliates, shames, and perturbs me. Hence to free myself from this feeling of shame, from this state of dissatisfaction, I convert the limits of my individuality into the limits of human nature in general. (etc.)[4]

Even though Feuebach claims that perfection lies in the universal nature of man, the fact that the concept of

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[3] Ibid., pp. 2-3.

[4] Ibid., p. 7.

perfection has sprung from man himself as the reflection of his self-consciousness, he (Feuerbach) is saved from charges of Platonism or transcendendalism in general in this question of universal standards by the fact that he restricts himself to the material level of the evidence of the senses. In other words, for Feuerbach everything in man's consciousness can, and must, find an object in the external world; the mind can only work from its phenomenological input. This being the case, the idea of the 'perfection' of the species must have some foundation in the species as it exists, and in fact in the species as a whole rather than the particular. Thus we can say that for Feuerbach species-being means the existence of each man as an individual and limited example of a (perfect) type:

> The fundamental unity mankind that the idea of a species presupposes arises from the fact that men are not self-sufficient creatures; they have very different qualities, so it is only together that they can form the 'perfect' man. For Feuerbach all knowledge comes to man as a member of the human species and when man acts as a member of the human species his action is qualitatively different. His fellow human beings make him conscious of himself as a man, they form his consciousness and even the criterion of truth. 'The species', says Feuerbach, 'is the last measure of truth...what is true is what is in agreement with the essence of the species, what is false is what disagrees with it.'[5]

Before discussing Marx's debt to Feuerbach it is

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[5]McLellan, The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx, London: Macmillan, 1969, p. 92.

necessary to criticise Feuerbach's approach on one point. It is not the case that if one starts from the basis of phenomenology, or sense perception based on objects, that one's mind can only operate on the (extant) object level. Consciousness can abstract, generalise and imagine, it can create fantasy objects or concepts which can have no realisation in the phenomenal world, even if this is where they originate. In this case there is the danger that man's ideas of perfection and standard may, in fact, be unattainable, not only for the individual but for the species as a whole. The counter argument here is that if man is all there is (i.e., transcendental 'forms' are not admitted) then the idea of perfection must refer to man as a species or totality. This, of course, is the meaning Feuerbach attaches to the term.

Turning to Marx, one can immediately see that on whatever basis he accepts Feuerbach' idea of species-being anguish will be a feature of man's existence, either in the strict Feuerbachian sense of the failure to be the epitome of man, or because Feuerbach seems to foreshadow Sartre's description of (reflective) consciousness as the 'for-itself', in which case the alienating division in being which is 'at a distance from itself' is implicit in Marx's concept of being to the degree to which Marx adopted

Feuerbach's theory of consciousness.[6] Marx, however, did believe that man's individual anguish could be overcome in the perfection of the species. One can argue that Marx's concept of man was different from Feuerbach's in that Marx was an individualist rather than a believer in 'generic' man. To that extent Marx had a different conception of the perfection of the species, i.e., he felt it to be a social condition within which each individual could realise his true essence or nature, and thus this conception had to be posited as a future condition: "...man...is not yet a real species-being."[7]

Thus it can be argued that what Marx took from Feuerbach was the idea of the complete objectification of man's consciousness,[8] the idea of universality through thought and language, and the conclusion that communality, a social nature, was an essential feature of man. It was this communality which Marx saw as the basis for the realisation of man's universal nature, i.e., the theatre of man's civilized/'human' faculties such as the appreciation of music (see p. 50 above).

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[6]Feuerbach, of course, did not draw Sartre's conclusions from his theory of consciousness: "Consciousness consists in a being becoming objective to itself; hence it is nothing apart, nothing distinct from the being which is conscious of itself. "Feuerbach, op. cit., p. 6. This was, in part, because of his ideas of objectification: "Man is nothing without an object." "In the object which he contemplates, therefore, man becomes acquainted with himself; consciousness of the objective is the self consciousness of man." pp. 4,5.

[7]Marx, Early Writings, p. 20.

[8]See pp. 44-6. above, and McLellan, The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx, p. 108.

The basic interest Marx had in the idea of species-being was in the social/communal aspect as the prior condition for real, human, civilization. Feuerbach frequently mentions the theme of communality, as the following indicates: "...the essence of man is contained in community, in the unity of man with man."[9] Marx's letter of August 1844 demonstrates his interest in this feature of species-being:

> The unity of men with other men, the concept of the human species brought down from the sky of abstraction to the real ground of earth, what else is it if not the concept of society.[10]

In conclusion one can argue that Marx's concept of species-being is not that of an organic whole in which the state, nation, or volk has precedence over the individual, nor that of a static view of man's alienated condition like Feuerbach's, but a developmental idea of continued human progress and emancipation.

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[9]McLellan, The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx, p. 100.

[10]Meszaros, op. cit., p. 235.

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