JEAN-PAUL SARTRE*  
A CRITICAL TRIBUTE

by István Mészáros

I

'Without falling into manicheism, one ought to intensify intransigence. At the extreme limit any Left-position—in the measure that it is contrary to what they try to inculcate to the whole of society—is found to be 'scandalous'. This does not mean that one should look for scandal—that would be absurd and inefficacious—but that one should not dread it: it has to come, if the position taken is right, as a side-effect, as a sign, as a natural sanction against a Left-attitude.'

Jean-Paul Sartre is seventy: what does he mean to us?

He is a man who lived half his life in the limelight of extreme notoriety. An intellectual who already in 1945 had to protest against attempts aimed at institutionalizing the writer, turning his works into 'national goods', exclaiming: 'it is not pleasant to be treated in one's life-time as a public monument.'

What must be equally unpleasant is to be constantly subjected to abuse. And the fact is that no writer in his life-time has been the target of so many attacks, from the most varied and rather powerful quarters, as Jean-Paul Sartre.

What are the reasons?

How should we approach the work of this man: our contemporary?

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In October 1960, a mass demonstration of war veterans on the Champs-Elysées marches to the slogan: 'Shoot Sartre'. In the same period, Paris-Match carries an editorial with the title: 'Sartre, civil-war machine'.

Some of the demonstrators or readers of Paris-Match mean business: his flat is bombed on 19 July 1961, and again, a few months later, on 7 January 1962. For how could one leave in peace a 'Civil-war machine'?

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Nor is October 1960 the first time he is called a 'war-machine'. In June 1945—that time from the opposite side of the barricade—he is attacked as 'manufacturer of war-machine against Marxism'. The irony of it all. Is it Sartre who has changed so much? Or is it, perhaps, that this passionate advocate of every individual's full responsibility in the midst of the forces of impersonal institutionalization is deemed irrecuperable and thus, by a curious logic, must be declared to be an alien body, a machine—indeed, a mythical war-machine at that? How revealing is the shared, bombastic imagery? Why is it that powerful institutions in their confrontations with solitary individuals represent the relation of forces 'upside down' and denounce the voice of dissent as sinister sounds of the powerful enemy's war-machine?

In 1948 no less a power than the Soviet Government as such takes an official stand against Sartre: its diplomatic representatives in Helsinki try to pressurise the Finnish Government to forbid the performance of Sartre’s play: Les Mains sales (Dirty Hands). It is supposed to be 'hostile propaganda against the USSR'—nothing less, nothing more!

Who is this man called 'machine de guerre', armed with such mythical powers? During the war, when Churchill tried to back his own arguments by making references to the Pope, Stalin remarked with a sense of realism and candid cynicism: 'How many Divisions, did you say, the Pope had?’ Did the ageing Stalin think, in 1948, that Sartre was about to launch an invasion, with many more Divisions at his command than the Pope could ever dream about?

And while we are talking about the Pope, we should recall that in the same year—on 30 October 1948, to be precise—a special decree of the Holy Office put the totality of Sartre’s work on the Index. It is in the spirit of this Index that sixteen years later—in October 1964, on the occasion of Sartre's rejection of the Nobel Prize—the gentle Gabriel Marcel, spokesman of Christian existentialism, thunders against him in a very non-Christian voice: inveterate denigrator, systematic blasphemer, man of pernicious and poisonous views, patented corruptor of the youth, grave-digger of the West. Thus the decree of the Holy Office—under the reign of Pope Pius XII: the same man who blessed Hitler’s arms in their 'Holy Crusade—becomes the licence to open the flood-gates of unholy venom, in the name of Christianity and of upholding the 'values of the West'.

It seems, then, that Sartre is responsible for inflicting a mortal offence not only on the great powers of this world of ours, but also on the earthly representatives of the world of beyond. No mortal is likely to accomplish much more.

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Yet, every coin has two sides to it, and Sartre's case is no exception to the rule. And the rule is that institutions also try to neutralise—absorb,
recuperate, assimilate (Sartre)—their rebels.

To describe in any detail the 'temptations' extended towards Sartre would fill too many pages. We must be content with mentioning just a few.

Characteristically, offers of recuperation arrive from both directions. Not that long after being declared an enemy of the Soviet Union, Sartre is elected Vice-President of the Association France-USSR (a post he holds up to his resignation following the events of Hungary in 1956), and he is received with the greatest honour on his journey to Russia.

Once denounced by Stalin's literary spokesman, Fadeyev, as the hyena of the pen, now his books—products of the same pen—are published, and some of his plays performed, in the USSR. Even Les Mains sales—one of the subject of a diplomatic exchange between the Soviet and the Finnish Governments—is performed in the East, though not in Russia but in Prague, Ironically: not before but after the Soviet intervention of 1968.

Equally, his relations with the French Communist Party—notwithstanding some major setbacks, like Hungary: 1956—are on the whole quite good between 1949 and 1968. Until, that is, Sartre's evaluation of May 1968 leads to a complete, and it seems irreparable, rupture.

As to the other side, the number of offers is literally legion; from that of the 'Legion d'Honneur' to the award of the Nobel Prize.

In 1945, in recognition of his merits during the Resistance, he is offered the order of the 'Légion d'Honneur', but he declines. In 1959, though—almost as a clumsy attempt to take back an offer that had not been accepted—Malraux accuses Sartre of collaborationism, on the absurd ground that he allowed the performance of his anti-fascist play, Flies, during the German occupation, while in fact it all happened in complete agreement with the Resistance group of writers.'

In May 1949, following Mauriac's attack on his political position,6 Sartre turns down in public Mauriac's offer to get a seat for him among the selected few living 'immortals'—the forty members of the Académie française—insisting, in a tone of irony, that he is not going to 'learn equality' in the company of those who display their own 'sense of superiority'.7 In the same spirit, he rejects the idea of joining another pinnacle of French culture, the Collège de France, though his former friend, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, gladly did so.

Sartre's stature has to be recognised even as high as the very apex of the institutional pyramid: several Presidents of the French Republic address Sartre with respect. Vincent Auriol, in 1952, confides in Sartre that he found Henri Martin's sentence excessive, but he would not reduce it until he is allowed to get off the hook of political protest in which Sartre plays a prominent part. (Sartre, characteristically, does not oblige.) Giscard d'Estaing, twenty-three years later, hastens to assure him that he had found much spiritual nourishment and inspiration in Sartre's writings on freedom. And even the proud General De Gaulle, who considered him-
France's destiny, calls Sartre 'Mon Chèr Maître'—to which the latter retorts: 'It is to mark well, I believe, that he intends to address himself to the man of letters, and not to the president of a tribunal [the Bertrand Russell tribunal on Vietnam—I.M.] which he is determined not to recognize, I am no 'Master', except for the waiter in the café who knows that I write'.

But perhaps the most 'scandalous' of Sartre's refusals is his public rejection of the Nobel Prize in 1964. Though he makes it amply clear in his letter to the Nobel Prize Committee that he would turn down with equal firmness the Lenin Prize, in the unlikely event of its being awarded him, André Breton accuses him of performing a 'propaganda-operation in favour of the East bloc'. Sartre is condemned for an allegedly premeditated, calculated publicity-stunt (as if he were in desperate need of publicity, like surrealism gone stale)—although he writes to the Swedish Academy, in private, the moment the rumours start to circulate that he might be awarded the Prize, trying to prevent a decision in his favour, thus rendering unnecessary all publicity. Which confirms again Fichte's wisdom, namely that when the facts do not fit the preconceived ideas, 'umso schlimmer es für die Tatsachen': 'all the worse for the facts'.

The only institution that remains curiously aloof from this race for Sartre's soul is the church. But then, the church has a well established tradition of first burning the alleged heretics—as Jeanne d'Arc's fate reminds us—elevating them to the ranks of Sainthood long after they are dead and gone.

Thus no one can deny that Sartre generates intense passions. And when he rejects the generous offers of recuperation, he is attacked with all the greater indignation: for what could be more wicked than 'biting the hand' that wants to spoonfeed you?

There is another stratagem: pretended indifference. But it is not of much use with Sartre; the old adversary, Mauriac, illustrates this very well indeed. When Sartre assumes responsibility for the persecuted Maoist group's journal, La Cause du peuple, Mauriac writes in a tone of superiority: 'The thirst for martyrdom which Sartre possesses is no reason for putting in prison this incurably inoffensive character.' Sartre answers a few weeks later to all those who take up Mauriac's line of approach: 'They often said, for the ruse of the bourgeoisie is like this, that I want to be a martyr and get myself arrested. But I don't care at all for being arrested—quite the contrary! What I am interested in is that one should not arrest me, for in that way I can demonstrate, and my comrades with me, Louis Malle or someone else, that there are two weights, two

Here we can clearly see how Sartre, surrounded by the establishment
chorus of self-complacent laughter, succeeds not only in extricating himself from a difficult situation—despite the uneven odds that characterize nearly all the confrontations in which he is involved—but also, a somewhat unlikely outcome, in ending up on top. For if they arrest him, there will be an outcry the world over for imprisoning Sartre for a crime of opinion (i.e., a political, and not a criminal offence); and if they don't arrest him, fearing the consequences in world opinion, it is a humbling admission that the crime of those who are prosecuted by the Government is in fact a political 'crime'. A crime of opinion which can lead to imprisonment only in the form of trumped-up charges, under the 'conspiracy of silence' (often condemned by Sartre) of liberal public opinion.

This is how Sartre squeezes victory out of what is supposed to be a hopeless position of defeat. The positive outcome doesn't just happen: Sartre is highly conscious of the paradoxical constituents of his precarious position. It is by no means accidental that he returns time and again to the problematic of 'Winner Loses'. He explores the complex dialectic of defeat and victory in order to grasp and lay bare the ways through which one can reverse the prefabricated odds: so as to show how it does come about that 'Loser Wins'; indeed that at times 'Loser Takes All'.

How is it possible for a solitary individual, whose pen is his only weapon, to be as effective as Sartre is—and he is uniquely so—in an age which tends to render completely powerless the individual? What is the secret of this intellectual who defies, with immense pride and dignity, any institution that interposes itself between him and the realisation of the values he cares for?

The 'secret' is no secret really: Sartre loudly speaks it out when he defines the essence of living literature as commitment. All the controversy—indeed scandal—follows from such a definition. It is this passionate commitment to the concerns of the given world: the 'finite' (as against the fictitious pursuit of literary 'immortality') that acts as a powerful catalyst in the present, and a measure of achievement linking the present to the future. Not the remote future over which the living individual has no control whatsoever, but the future 'at hand', the one within our reach which therefore shapes and structures our present life. Other than such commitment to one's own, however painful, temporality, there is only the world of evasion and illusion, 'This is the measure we propose to the writer: as long as his books arouse anger, discomfort, shame, hatred, love, even if he is no more than a shade, he will live. Afterwards, the deluge. We stand for an ethics and art of the finite,' says Sartre. And he lives up, in every sense, to his own measure.

He is a strange grave-digger of the West—for one could hardly even imagine a writer more intensely concerned with moral values than this
'systematic blasphemer' and 'corrupter of the youth'. This is how he sees the writer's task: 'The most beautiful book in the world will not save a child from pain; one does not redeem evil, one fights it. The most beautiful book in the world redeems itself; it also redeems the artist. But not the man. Any more than the man redeems the artist. We want the man and the artist to work their salvation together, we want the work to be at the same time an act; we want it to be explicitly conceived as a weapon in the struggle that men wage against evil.' If talking in such terms means grave-digging for the West, who can say that it does not deserve the fate of being buried forever?

The work, as we can see, is defined in its total setting, and emphatically not on its own. It is its dimension of being an act in the struggle against evil that compels the reader to define his own position on the issues at stake. And since the act is always clearly in evidence in Sartre's works, no one can bypass him with indifference. They can reject the moral intensity of his measure but they cannot ignore it.

He applies with great consistency his criteria of commitment in literature throughout his development, even though he changes 'inside permanence'. Almost twenty years after writing the passage quoted in the previous paragraph, he asks the question: 'Do you think that I could read Robbe-Grillet in an underdeveloped country?' And he answers it with a self-critical affirmation: 'Facing a dying child Nausea has no weight.'

It goes without saying, the literary world recognizes, with hostility, its own indictment and 'defends' Sartre against himself (not to mention Robbe-Grillet). For didn't they try, already in 1945, to praise Sartre's first work—Nausea—as his 'literary testament', so as to lock him into the walls of this 'national good', produced by its author at the age of thirty?

But Sartre is not an easy one to lock into anything, let alone into the prison cell of timeless 'literary excellence'. His view of the writer's commitment is a total one: 'If literature is not everything, it is worth nothing. This is what I mean by "commitment". It wilts if it is reduced to innocence, or to songs. If a written sentence does not reverberate at every level of man and society, then it makes no sense. What is the literature of an epoch but the epoch appropriated by its literature?.. You have to aspire to everything to have hopes of doing something.'

This conception of literature as a 'critical mirror' of man and of the epoch the writer shares with his fellow men sounds an outrage—a scandal—to all those whose sensitivity has been modelled on l'art pour l'art and on the self-contemplating irrelevance of various 'isms'. Goethe could still take for granted that every poem was a Zeitgedicht—a poem of its time. But that was before the ravages of alienation succeeded in inducing the writer to fall back upon his own 'inner resources'. And while this isolation of the
writer from his epoch and from his fellow men is the real scandal—as a result of the general acceptance of alienation by prevailing literary opinion—Sartre's passionate rejection of it appears as unforgivable scandal, as betrayal, indeed as blasphemy.

To challenge established opinion, with all its institutions and institutionalized values, requires not only a set of firmly held beliefs but a very strong ego as well. And Sartre undoubtedly possesses them both. The articulation of his life-work is characterized by immense pride and dignity. For what could he accomplish with humility in a hostile environment? 'An insane pride is necessary to write—you can only afford to be modest after you've sunk your pride in your work,' writes Sartre. And he is by no means alone in this. His vision of total commitment reminds us of a great poet's words:

Pushing aside intruding Graces,
I didn't come to be an 'artist',
But to be everything.
I was the Master!
The poem: fancy slave.'"

In Sartre's view: 'Art in its totality is engaged in the activity of a single man, as he tests and pushes back its limits. But writing cannot be critical without calling everything into question: this is its content. The adventure of writing undertaken by each writer challenges the whole of mankind.' To take upon oneself the burden of this challenge—and consciously so, as happens to be the case with Sartre—is far from being an easy decision. But once the writer's 'fundamental project' is defined in such terms, he cannot shirk back from the magnitude of his task without losing his own integrity (or 'authenticity'). He has to articulate the concerns of 'the whole of his epoch', and follow them through, no matter what.

His vision of the whole carries with it a constant reminder of his own responsibility for it all. Even if they want to absolve him of this responsibility, he must—by calling into question everything—assert and reassert his own 'inalienable right' to assume the burden of total responsibility. For 'the whole of his epoch' and 'the whole of mankind.' This is why he cannot help being 'intransigent'—in an age dominated by evasion and subterfuge, compromise and escape; in short: by reified institutional self-assurance, in place of facing and tackling the contradictions which in their chronic non-resolution ultimately foreshadow the prospect of collective suicide. And since this unflattering truth cannot be brought home to ears deafened by the self-complacent noise of comforting compromise, except by the loudest cry of the voice of intransigence, uncompromising moral and intellectual intransigence—not to be confused with the quarrelsome pursuit of narrow self-interest—becomes the fundamental virtue of the epoch: a condition *sine qua non* of significant achievement.
Yes, every man 'carries a whole epoch within him, just as a wave carries the whole of the sea.' But there are waves and waves, as there are seas and seas. The sea which is our own epoch is far from being a quiet one—even in its most peaceful moments—but is the turbulent sea of a 'make or break' age of transition from one social formation to another. And Sartre is a giant wave of this mighty sea.

He can express many aspects of the dynamic turmoil, following its changes in so many different ways. However, what he categorically refuses to do is to assume the shape of entertaining ripples on the surface of the sea, so as to hide under some cheerful diversion the gathering storm.

It is not very comforting to be reminded of the coming of the storm. But Sartre cannot help being a constant reminder: one would look in vain for playful serenity in his massive oeuvre. No one in this century has summoned up with greater intensity the combined resources of philosophy and literature in order to demonstrate the possibilities and the limitations of the individual as situated at this crucial juncture in human history. If the tormented articulation of his vision is disturbing, it is not his fault. Nor is it surprising that precisely the most valid and farsighted elements of this vision—as we shall see later—should meet with the greatest incomprehension and hostility, leading to isolation: the ironical predicament of 'lonely notoriety'. In this, again, he shares the fate of the poet who says:

No easy comfort for men:
My words are rising mould.
Clear and heavy to bear
I am, like the cold.

The un comforting, cold clarity pervades many of Sartre's works, and no reader can assume in relation to them the attitude of cool detachment. There are two principal factors in Sartre's life-work which make such detachment impossible:

1. the organic connection of the methods of literature and philosophy and
2. the careful situation of every depicted detail in relation to the complex totality to which they belong.

Right from the beginning, Sartre's 'project' is characterised by a conscious effort to combine philosophy and literature in order to intensify the powers of persuasion and demonstration. We shall see later the specific forms of this effort across Sartre's development. The point here is merely to stress the purpose behind this method. It arises out of the author's conviction that against the power of prevailing myths and vested interests the force of 'analytical reason' is impotent: one does not displace an existing, firmly rooted, 'positive' (in the Hegelian sense positive) reality by the sheer negativity of conceptual dissection. If the weapon of criticism is to succeed, it must match the evocative power of the objects which it opposes. This is why 'The real work of the committed writer is... to reveal, demystify, and dissolve myths and fetishes in a critical acid bath.'
The imagery clearly displays the nature of the enterprise. It is to prevent opting out with 'cool detachment'. What is at stake is nothing less than a general assault on the well established positions of cosy comfort, whether they appear as the 'complicity of silence' or in any other form. Sartre wants to shake us all, and he finds the ways of achieving his aim, even if in the end he is condemned as someone constantly in search of scandals.

The other point—the concern with totality—is equally important. Sartre insists that 'The beauty of literature lies in its desire to be everything—and not in a sterile quest for beauty. Only a world can be beautiful: those who can't understand this—whatever they may have said—have not attacked me in the name of art, but in the name of their particular commitment.' Indeed, the real character of a particular commitment is not recognizable without laying bare its links with the given totality. Particularism can and must claim the status of universality in the absence of a comprehensive frame of reference, since the failure of being situated in perspective necessarily transforms particularism itself into its own perspective, and thus into the measure of everything else. Any attempt to reveal the proper connections with totality must, therefore, clash with the interests of the prevailing particularisms. At the same time, the unveiling of particularisms does not leave only their champions naked but suddenly exposes also the vulnerability of all those who were previously able to find self-assurance and, however illusory, comfort in the sheltered corners of various particularisms.

But there is no other way. The critical mirror cannot fulfil its functions if it is fragmented into a thousand pieces. Such a broken mirror can only show distorting details even when they appear to be 'faithful' in their immediacy: distorting because severed from the whole which alone can confer upon them their full (i.e., true) significance. The choice is, therefore, unavoidable. Either one abandons the aim of bearing witness to the age in which one lives, and thus ceases to be a critical mirror; or one appropriates the epoch the only way in which this can be done through writing—by the uncomforthing, cold clarity of a work which 'reveals, shows, demonstrates' the connections of the part with the whole, demystifying and dissolving the fetishes of the seemingly rock-solid, established immediacy in the dynamic framework of constantly changing totality. There can be no doubt which one is Sartre's choice.

The focus of Sartre's grappling with totality is his search for freedom. Everything appears in relation to this concern. He calls his novel cycle Roads to Freedom: a title that might well sum up the character of his work as a whole. (This applies as much to his literary as to his philosophical-theoretical work.) And precisely because his work has the focus it does have, Sartre never gets lost in the socio-historical totality of which he is a
tireless explorer.

Of course, his preoccupation with freedom goes through many metamorphoses. There is a world of difference—even if accomplished ‘à l’intérieur d’une permanence’: 'inside permanence'—between saying that 'Man is free so as to commit himself, but he is not free unless he commits himself so as to be free' and recognizing that 'No one is free unless everybody is free. . . . Freedom is conditioned—not metaphysically but practically—by protein.' The first quotation offers a solution only in the form of a verbal paradox; the second, by contrast, assumes a more modest posture, but indicates some tangible targets for human action. All the same—and this is why he is right to talk about change 'inside permanence'—the organizing centre and structuring core of Sartre's work remains his all-embracing concern for freedom. The removal of hunger and exploitation do not appear as ends in themselves but as necessary stepping stones towards the liberation of man, towards the realization of his freedom.

Sartre's work covers an enormous area and shows an immense variety: from occasional articles to a novel cycle, from short stories to massive philosophical syntheses, from film-scripts to political pamphlets, from plays to reflections on art and music, and from literary criticism to psychoanalysis, as well as monumental attempts at grasping the inner motivations of unique individuals in relation to the socio-historical specificities of the age which shaped them and which in their turn they helped to transform. Yet, one cannot say that the trees hide the forest. Quite the contrary. It is Sartre's life-work as a whole that predominates, and not particular elements of it. While one can undoubtedly think of unique masterpieces among his numerous writings, they do not account by themselves for Sartre's true significance. One might go as far as to say that it is his totalizing 'fundamental project'—with all its manifold transformations and permutations—which defines the uniqueness of this restless author, and not the accomplishment of even his most disciplined work. For it is an integral part of his 'project' that he constantly changes and revises his previous positions: the many-faceted work articulates itself through its transformations, and 'totalization' is achieved through ceaseless 'de-totalization' and 're-totalization'.

Success and failure thus become very relative terms for Sartre: they turn into one another. 'Success' is the manifestation of failure and 'failure' is the reality of success: 'in the domain of expression, success is necessarily failure.' He quotes his friend, Giacometti, according to whom when failure reaches its climax and 'all is lost, at this point. . . . you can throw your sculpture in the rubbish bin or exhibit it in a gallery.' The reason is—and this is not quite how Sartre puts it, tending at this point toward a timeless explanation—that the writer and the artist in our age have to assemble their work from fragmented pieces. For fragmentation and compartmentalization (or at another level: isolation and privatization) are
not mere figments of the intellectuals' imagination but objective characteristics of contemporary socio-historical reality. And this makes the work—even the one that consciously aims at 'totalization'—inherently problematical.

There are many different ways of facing up to this problem; the names of Proust and Thomas Mann indicate two clearly contrasting attempts. But neither Proust's ordered subjectivity, nor Thomas Mann's disciplined and restrained objectivity can be compared to Sartre's project. The relevant comparison is Picasso—whatever their differences. They both devour, with insatiable appetite, everything that comes their way, and produce not so much 'representative works' as a representative life-work.

Thus it does not matter that particular works are not paradigm summations of the artist, in the sense in which A la recherche du temps perdu and The Magic Mountain certainly are. It does not matter that the particular works (even Guernica) are more problematical than the ones which, by contrast, are constituted on the basis of a most careful sifting and elaboration of the given moments of reality. If Picasso and Sartre have to move on from a particular kind of synthesis to something quite different, it is because what is involved in their quest is a type of totalization which always refers to the artist's lifework as its immediate ground. Theirs is a singular form of subjectivity in comparison to Proust and Thomas Mann. The former produces his synthesis by dissolving the world of objects in his 'interiority' and subjectivity; the latter makes the writer's subjectivity quietly recede behind a carefully reconstructed objectivity. In Sartre and in Picasso subjectivity is always in evidence but uses as its vehicle the world of objects—not to subjectivize it but to 'nihilate' it (to use Sartre's expression) in the course of depiction. As a result of this dialectical process of 'objectivization-nihilation'—a first cousin of Brecht's 'Verfremdungseffekt'—the life-work is enriched, paradoxically at the expense of the particular work which it uses 'to stand on its own shoulders', so to speak. We are captivated by the process of nihilating objectification that produces the life-work and not necessarily by the particular results. Just how many of the individual works survive in the long run is quite irrelevant. What matters is the constitution of a representative life-work: a singular fusion of subjectivity and objectivity.

The great variety and mass of Sartre's particular projects readily combines into a coherent whole. The extraordinary coherence of his life-work is not preconceived. It is not the result of an original blueprint which is imposed on every detail as time goes by: that would be an artificial, external unity. Here we have to do, on the contrary, with an inner unity that prevails through the most varied manifestations of formal divergence. This is an evolving unity that emerges through the more or less spontaneous exploration of the 'roads to freedom'—or, for that matter, of the manifold obstacles to freedom—whatever they may happen to be. The unity is,
therefore, structural and not thematic: the latter would be far too restrictive for a life-work. (Some of Sartre's works are, though, characterized by an attempt to achieve a thematic unity, and by no means always with a happy result; most notably his novel cycle. But this is another matter.) Thus Sartre is right in rejecting suggestions that his conception of commitment in literature leads to thematic restriction and political illustration as well as to a paralysis of artistic spontaneity.

But to stress how the exploration of the 'roads to freedom' produces the structural unity of Sartre's work is not enough to take hold of its specificity. It is equally important to put into relief the structuring role of Sartre's conception of the individual in his work as a whole. For freedom does not appear in its generality—that would be thematically restrictive political illustration or abstract symbolism: both rejected by Sartre—but always as manifest through particular existential predicaments, be the subject taken from Greek antiquity or from modern France. It is in this sense that he is and remains an 'existentialist'.

Kant asserted the primacy of practical reason (i.e., the supremacy of moral judgment) in the architectonic of his system, and he carried through this principle with exemplary consistency. Sartre—not just the young one, but also the author of an ethical work written at the age of sixty—quotes Kant's 'you ought to, therefore you can', and insists on the primacy and centrality of individual praxis vis-à-vis collective and institutional structures. Such a statement, it goes without saying, assigns a prominent place to the world of morality. This could not be otherwise without undermining the inner unity and consistency of Sartre's work. For, as he remarked in 1944, 'Morality is... my dominant preoccupation; it always has been.' And so it has remained ever since; directly or indirectly; in theoretical and in literary forms. It is this primacy and centrality assigned to individual praxes—in close interrelationship with the problematic of freedom—which defines the specificity of Sartre's fundamental project through all the variety of its manifestations.

The point of reading a contemporary is to recognize and examine ourselves in his critical mirror.

But this is not a one-way business. For reading is interpreting—and thus necessarily implies not only an examination of ourselves, but at the same time also a critical examination of the mirror and of its relationship to the epoch which it reveals. As Sartre puts it—recognizably in terms of his own central concerns—'the reader freely allows himself to be influenced. This fact alone is enough to quash the fable of his passivity. The reader invents us: he uses our words to set his own traps for himself. He is active, he transcends us...'

This is particularly true of reading a contemporary author. For there are
many crucial junctures of experience which we share with him. This
confers a privileged position upon the reader in his critical dialogue with
his living contemporary.

But saying that only accounts for the credit side of the equation. The
debit side consists in the particular difficulties of evaluating the life-work
of a living contemporary. ‘All my works’—says Sartre—‘are facets of a
whole whose meaning one cannot really appreciate until I have brought
it all to an end.’

This is true enough. But not quite. Were it categorically true, evaluation
of a contemporary author would be a priori impossible. The job of the
‘critic’ would oscillate between arbitrary subjectivity (‘inventing’ the
author entirely out of one’s own concerns, using his words only as a
pretext for pseudo-objective self-exhibition) and the dead objectivity of
mere description of the works reviewed; a superfluous and hopeless
venture.

To be sure, evaluation can proceed only from the whole, which is, by
definition, incomplete, so long as the life-work has not been brought to its
end. All the same, when one deals with a significant author, whose
individual works are ‘facets of a whole’, new and possible additions are not
capricious attempts at a ‘radical break’, but additions which are possible
in relation to the given, and self-evolving whole. In other words, all
modifications represent change ‘à l’intérieur d’une permanence’, in
accordance with the dialectic of continuity and discontinuity. The
structuring elements of an original life-work are clearly visible at a
relatively early age; and the tendencies of a writer’s quest are displayed
through the type of variations the particular works represent in relation
to one another.

And there is a crucial—one might say strategic—point of reference: the
stubborn recurrence of some basic concerns which assume the form of
incomplete or unfinished (for within the given writer’s project
unfinishable) works. When a writer’s life-work is suddenly brought to its end,
what happens is that the former incompleteness is elevated to the level of
completion. Paradoxically, in the shape of works unfinishable for inner
reasons we find anticipations of the completed life-work; and we find these
in particular abundance in Sartre’s oeuvre. A closer look at them—not in
isolation but in relation to the rest—may help to provide the vantage point
from which a critical assessment of a living contemporary becomes
possible.

II

‘The important thing is not what one is but what one does.’

I. The Writer and His Situation

A writer creates his work from the ‘raw material’ of experience given to
him by the contingency of his situation, even if, as in Kafka, the end result seems to have very little in common with the immediate ground from which it emanates. Some writers, like Villon, throw themselves right in the middle of the turmoil of their epoch, and live through the events with great intensity at the level of particularized human conflicts and adventures. Others, like Schiller or Hegel, leave the ground of their direct experience much more radically behind them when they articulate in works their view of the meaning of their age. And, of course, there can be a virtually endless number of variations between the two extremes of the spectrum.

The interchange of life and work of which Sartre is intensely aware—it is enough to mention Saint Genet and The Idiot of the Family on Flaubert—constitutes the writer's life in the interest of his work and vice versa: he makes his work and his work makes its author. But, of course, it all happens within a given social framework which constitutes both the horizon and the ground of human achievement. The writer does not lead a life of 'double book-keeping'. He reaches out for experience in the spirit of his work in the course of its articulation, and he transforms the acquired experience into work. Thus, he turns contingency into necessity—within the broad framework of his social reality: the ground and the horizon of a 'free' and 'conditioned' work—and at the same time he turns the necessity of this ground and horizon into the new contingency of a somewhat modified starting point for his contemporaries, who are now challenged to define themselves also in relation to his work.

Three important questions arise in this context: 1. How and why does a writer choose writing as the specific form in which the interaction of life and work is carried out? 2. Given his original choice, how does he erect from the scraps of contingency at his disposal the structured necessity of his work? For no man comes in direct contact with the 'World Spirit', not even Hegel who thinks to glance at it in the shape of Napoleon on horseback on the battlefield of Jena. 3. What is the spectrum of his possible work, i.e., what can be successfully accomplished in the framework of his fundamental project, given the dialectical interchange between the sum of the writer's lived experience and the particular projects he embarks upon. In other words, what kind of works can he make while 'being made' by them?

The first question concerns the nature and constitution of the writer's 'fundamental project'. In a generalized form (i.e., asking the same sort of question about individuals in general, to whatever walk of life they may belong) it can be phrased like this: 'By what activity can an "accidental individual" realize the human person within himself and for all?' This makes it clear that the form in which we encounter the problem in so many of Sartre's works (Words, Saint Genet, 'Of Rats and Man', The Idiot of the Family, to name just a few) is a searching confrontation of a
typically modern problem rendered increasingly acute by a certain type of social development: a process of individualization and privatization inseparable from the advancement of alienation. As Marx puts it, 'The present condition of society displays its difference from the earlier state of civil society in that—in contrast to the past—it does not integrate the individual within its community. It depends partly on chance, partly on the individual's effort etc., whether or not he holds on to his station. The 'accidental individual', divorced from his 'universal being', must therefore embark on a project of great complexity: a journey of discovery how to realize the human person 'within himself and for all'. A journey that ends only by death: either the 'suicide' of a self-complacent coming-to-a-halt (e.g. the institutionalized and 'recovered' writer) or the natural death which is the completion of life. Thus, fundamental project and its articulation through particular projects become the same, and the originally envisaged discovery assumes the form of a constant rediscovery of authentic self-renewal, in accordance with the individual's changing situation, in the interest of realizing the human person within himself and for all. Accordingly, Sartre's often recurring examination of the constitution of a writer's project—whether of his own or of someone else's—which might appear to the superficial observer as a narcissistic obsession, is in fact concerned with the meaning of every individual's enterprise. A quest for a meaning in a society in which he cannot help being an 'accidental individual' but which he must in a way 'transcend' if he is to snatch back his own humanity—for himself and for all—from the powers of alienation.

To answer the second question in detail is a truly forbidding undertaking, for it involves the collection and evaluation of a virtually infinite number of data. And once infinity enters an equation—whether in quantum theory or in the Sartrean project on Genet and on Flaubert (not to mention the ones abandoned, after a few hundred or after many hundreds of pages, on Mallarmé and on Tintoretto—the whole question becomes methodologically problematical to an extreme degree. It is by no means accidental that Saint Genet, originally intended as a short preface to a volume of Genet's writings, grew into a massive work of five hundred and seventy three pages, only to be dwarfed later by the several thousand—and still incomplete—pages of the study on Flaubert, also originally envisaged as a much more limited project. If one adds to these the considerable mass of Sartre's abandoned works of this kind, there is clearly something to be explained. This must be attempted in its proper context, for it is inextricably linked to Sartre's conception of history as singular and 'non-universalizable'; a conception that seeks to demonstrate the 'dialectical intelligibility of the singular' and 'the dialectical intelligibility of that which is not universalizable. Here the point is simply to emphasize the relevance of the question to understanding Sartre himself. In two respects: 1. Sartre
always combines the investigation of a writer's 'fundamental project' with an enquiry, *in extenso*, into the concrete ways in which he squeezes necessity out of the contingencies of his situation, thus producing the exemplary validity of a work whose constituents are, in principle, readily available in each and every one of us. 2. Turning into necessity the scraps of contingency as encountered in everyday circumstances is much in evidence in Sartre's own development. This is the sense in which the unity of his work emerges, not out of some mythical original blueprint, but on the basis of a *totalizing determination* which aims at integrating the elements of transformed 'facticity' into a coherent whole. We can only indicate a few particular events and circumstances as *types* of such transformations, thus violating Sartre's own rule about the 'non-universalizability of the singular.'

In 1940-1941, while a prisoner of war, Sartre obtains the works of Heidegger—a *persona gratissima* with the Nazis—and gives a course on his philosophy to some fellow-prisoner military chaplains. Naturally, Kierkegaard is also an integral part of their discussions which, in their intensity, lay the foundations of *Being and Nothingness*, drafted a year later. Around Christmas, in the same company, Sartre writes his first play, *Bariona—or the Son of Thunder*. Both events acquire a major significance for Sartre's future. The experience of writing *Bariona*, and of its reception by his comrades, determines Sartre's view that the theatre 'ought to be—a great collective religious experience'—a view reaffirmed on many occasions, stressing the organic connection between theatre and myth. (The idea goes well beyond theatre only, as we shall see in the next section.) Similarly, the integration of Kierkegaard and Heidegger into Sartre's world of ideas and images carries far-reaching consequences. *Saint Genet* adopts as its structure (for interpreting Genet's 'metamorphoses') the Kierkegaardian stages: the 'Ethical', the 'Aesthetic' and the 'Religious', though the 'Third Metamorphosis' is now identified as the predicament of 'The Writer'. But as we learn in many places, 'In my imagination, literary life was modelled on religious life...I had transposed religious needs into literary longings.' Also, the depth of his contact with Kierkegaard can be measured with Sartre's innumerable references to 'the singular', or indeed to 'The Singular Universal'. The same goes for Heidegger. His role cannot be overestimated in the formation of Sartre's structure of thought. It would be useless to speculate what would have happened had Sartre been given the experience of a Russian instead of a Nazi prisoner of war camp, with the works of Marx and Lenin on the shelves. Useless not only because of the inherent sterility of counter-factual conditionals but also because his first acquaintance with Heidegger's writings, though not very deep, predates the war experience by some ten years. In any case, Sartre puts Heidegger to his own use. It would be as mistaken to read Sartre through Heidegger's eyes as the other way
round. All the same, one cannot build a crystal palace from stone. Thus, while Sartre is right in defending himself against sectarian attacks on account of Heidegger's Nazi past, his arguments on the real issue are far from convincing. He says: 'And then Heidegger, so what? If we discover our own thought a propos of another philosopher, if we ask him for techniques and methods susceptible of making us accede to new problems, does that mean that we marry all his theories? Marx had borrowed his dialectic from Hegel. Would you say therefore that Capital is a Prussian work?' The point is not only that Sartre borrows from Heidegger much more than 'techniques and methods' but also—and this is far more important—that he never submits Heidegger's work to that radical 'settling of accounts' which characterized Marx's relationship to Hegel.

What we can see in all these instances is that contingency is, in a sense, 'superseded'. Not that the writer can do whatever he pleases. (As a matter of fact, Sartre has to pay a high price for adopting a great deal from Heidegger's truncated ontology which can found only itself and therefore must coil back into itself. More about this later.) Contingency does not give way to some mystical freedom emanating from the intellectual's subjectivity but to a structured necessity. What happens before our very eyes is that the accidental character of contingency is transcended and 'metamorphosed' into the necessity of inner determinations.

The third question raised above—the spectrum of a writer's possible work—is directly linked to the range of his personal experiences. In 1959, after praising Françoise Sagan for producing 'something new' on the basis of 'personal experience', Sartre indicates that one of the main factors in his decision to abandon writing novels was his awareness of the deficiencies ('manque') in his own personal experiences. In a more generalized sense, his decision is linked to a definition of the novel as 'prose which aims at the totalization of a singular and fictive temporalization.' And since his own personal experiences cannot provide the ground of the kind of representative totalization required by the novel form, Sartre has to adopt in the end someone else's 'singular temporalization' by producing, in The Idiot of the Family, what he calls a 'true novel'.

Yet, this is not as simple as it looks. To be sure, Sartre's life is not very adventurous. In fact, most of it is spent on a 'demonic' dedication to work. The sheer mass of his production is staggering. Some five or six million words already published, and perhaps another two or three million sunk into manuscripts either lost, or abandoned, or yet to be published: more than enough to keep half a dozen scribes busy all their lives during the Middle Ages just copying out such an amount. When asked about his extraordinary wealth of production, he explains half-apologetically: 'One can be productive without too much work. Three hours in the morning, three hours in the evening: this is my only rule.
Even on journeys. I carry out little by little a consciously elaborated plan of work. It is daunting to learn that six hours of intensive work, every day, 'even on journeys', is considered 'little by little'. The whole truth, however, is even more daunting. For we know from other sources (primarily from Simone de Beauvoir's memoirs) that often he writes 'day and night', and that he is prepared to spend twenty-eight hours in one stretch just on revising one single article. Nor is such intensity reserved for rare occasions. Quite the contrary: it seems to be the rule, rather than the exception. Many of Sartre's literary works are written in a few days, or in a few weeks, as the case might be. More amazing still: his two monumental theoretical works, *Being and Nothingness* and *Critique of Dialectical Reason* were written in a few months each. Besides, as François Erval tells me, often whole chapters are rewritten from beginning to end just because Sartre is dissatisfied with some details. If one adds to all this the endless number of hours spent on discussions, correspondence, interviews, rehearsals of plays, lectures, political and editorial meetings, etc., clearly there cannot be much time left over for 'personal experiences'. One book authors, like Sagan, may abundantly afford them; not Sartre who just 'cannot stop, to take life as it comes: he must be active all the time.'

In any case, the meaning of a writer's personal experience is dialectical; it shouldn't be turned into a frozen fetish. Doesn't Sartre always insist, rightly, that 'the work makes its author while he creates his work?'

This dialectical interchange between work and experience could not find in fact a clearer manifestation than Sartre. We can sense it already in his first original piece of theoretical writing, a letter contributed to an enquiry among students published in *Les Nouvelles littéraires* at the beginning of 1929. There is only one earlier theoretical work by Sartre, an essay entitled 'The Theory of the State in Modern French Thought', but that is a very different proposition. It shows nothing of Sartre's future path. It merely gives a few sultanas of originality in the insipid dough of academic conventionality. By contrast, in the letter to the *Nouvelles littéraires* we get the first glimpse of the real Sartre: a formidable figure. It is not what he says but the way he approaches the problems that makes this letter a truly original beginning, well worth a longer quotation.

It is a paradox of the human mind that Man, whose business it is to create the necessary conditions, cannot raise himself above a certain level of existence, like those fortune-tellers who can tell other people's future, but not their own. This is why, at the root of humanity, as at the root of nature, I can see only sadness and boredom. It's not that Man does not think of himself as a being. On the contrary, he devotes all his energies to becoming one. Whence derive our ideas of Good and Evil, ideas of men working to improve Man. But these concepts are useless. Useless, too, is the determinism which oddly enough attempts to create a synthesis of existence and being. We are as free as you like, but helpless. ... For the rest, the will to power, action and life are only useless ideologies. There is no such thing as the will to power. Everything is too weak: all things carry the seeds
of their own death. Above all, adventure—by which I mean that blind belief in adventitious and yet inevitable concatenation of circumstances and events—is a delusion. In this sense, the 'adventurer' is an inconsequential determinist who imagines he is enjoying complete freedom of action. No doubt, this is already a—however preliminary—synthesis: the result of much questioning and dissecting, i.e., it is the summation of all the personal experiences which made possible such reflection and generalization in the relatively trivial context of a student enquiry. The mark of a commanding and imposing personality is well evidenced by the fact that he elects to voice precisely such 'heavy-going' metaphysical fundamentals on such an occasion—when others might be content to complain about digs and caterpilg. This is not simply an occasional piece, though it is that too. What matters more is that it is a project of life—with whatever implications it may carry for the personal as well as literary-intellectual development of its author. He grasps a major paradox, which in turn takes hold of him, and thus he gets involved in the lifelong project of reaching the roots of being (italicized by Sartre) through questioning Man and nature, mind and existence, humanity and ideology, Good and Evil, freedom and adventure, death and determinism. Quite a maiden speech for a student learning to fly in the world of ideas.

This quest for the roots of being is of necessity a project of totalization par excellence. It is the whole that predominates insofar as the elements and details of reality must be always brought into relation with their foundation: being. Thus the overriding characteristic of the work must be synthesis and not analysis: the latter can only assume a subordinate position, as a well marked preliminary stage to the emerging synthesis. This is why Sartre considers himself diametrically opposed to Proust, despite his great admiration for this French classic, insisting that Proust takes delight in analysis while the inherent tendency of his own work is synthesis. Sartre's description of his 'religious model of literature'—conceived as an all-encompassing and all-fulfilling enterprise—is only another name for this synthesizing totalization par excellence, which profoundly affects every facet of life and work, from character to work-method, from personal relations to the writer's perception of and attitude to the world of objects, and from the 'style of life' to the structure and style of the work itself. And since the ultimate point of reference is 'being', with its existential bearing on everything, the surveyed facets of the whole cannot be approached with detached objectivity—we are always inside the perimeters of the quest: integral parts and not sovereign observers of it—but with a powerful fusion of subjectivity and objectivity, more often than not under the predominance of the former. Kierkegaard spoke of 'infinite compelling subjectivity'. We are faced with 'compelling subjectivity' also in Sartre (sometimes identified as 'voluntarism'), even if with a more restrained form than in his great predecessor. No matter how abstract a problem
might be in itself, it is always converted into a 'lived idea' in the course of its situation in relation to being.

A few examples must suffice to illustrate this interpenetration of subjectivity and objectivity. Take, for one, the concept of space and distance. We are told by Sartre that distance was 'invented by man and has no meaning outside the context of human space; it separated Hero from Leander and Marathon from Athens, but does not separate one pebble from another.' The point is hammered home by describing a personal experience of 'absolute proximity' in a prison camp where 'My skin was the boundary of my living space. Day and night I felt the warmth of a shoulder or a thigh against my body. But it was never disturbing, as the others were a part of me.' This is contrasted with his return home: 'I had rejoined bourgeois society, where I would have to learn to live once again at a respectful distance'. And all this is to prepare the ground for an exploration of Giacometti's handling of space and distance—in relation to the 'plenitude of being' and the 'void of nothingness'.

Simone de Beauvoir writes of Sartre that 'if it had been necessary; he would have been willing to remain anonymous: the important thing was that his ideas should prevail.' Which is all very well, except that anonymity and the prevalence of Sartre's ideas—lived ideas—is a contradiction in terms. Ideas like Sartre's must be dramatically asserted, if necessary through the most extreme manifestations of 'compelling subjectivity'. Thus 'notoriety' and 'scandal' are necessary concomitants of his all-embracing project towards being, and 'anonymity' must remain at most some momentary longing for peace under the strain of scandal and notoriety.

Sartre's relations—to people, works of art, everyday objects, etc.—are sketched, in his works as much as in real life, with dramatic colours. He doesn't just like or dislike what he sees in the Prado but loathes and detests Titian and admires Hieronymus Bosch. One look at a gathering in an Oxford college is enough to make him detest the snobbery of Oxford society and never to set foot in that city again. It is part of the economy of life that he has to make up his mind about everything with great speed and intensity, always looking for an overall evaluation which can be integrated into his totalizing search. Similarly, in personal relations, even some of the closest friendships have to be dramatically terminated (e.g. with Camus and with Merleau-Ponty) as soon as he perceives that continued friendship would interfere with the realization of his aims. He orders all his personal relations—including the most intimate ones—in such a way that he should never be diverted from his single-minded dedication to the central concerns of his life: he refuses to accept the responsibility and burden of family life precisely for this reason. Also, he refuses to be trapped by the conditions of bourgeois comfort and tries to banish money and possessions
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from his personal life.

Equally, he explores, with great passion and imagination, modes of experience which to a less 'compelling subjectivity' would appear to be, in principle, a book closed forever. Thus he gets involved in a passionate discussion of Negritude, totally indifferent toward the possibility that his 'eidetic analysis' of it (since it cannot be other than that) might be, as it has been, dismissed as 'disastrous' by those who experience it from the inside. Problematical as such a venture might be, how could he do without it in his totalizing quest for being when racism looms so large, with the most devastating implications, in the totality of our predicament? Thus, paradoxically, 'compelling subjectivity' is the necessary condition of some degree of objectivity (the objectivity of facing up to the problem with real concern), whereas the 'objectivity' of modest withdrawal—the acknowledgement of a white man's inadequacies to such a task—would mean the worst kind of subjectivity, that of evasive complicity.

A similar manifestation of Sartre's 'compelling subjectivity' is when he tells Daniel Guérin that 'he doesn't understand anything of his own book'. Preposterous as such a statement must appear from the point of view of the criticized author, the relative justification for it is that the context into which Sartre inserts Guérin's account of the French revolution (a dialectical assessment of the 'ontological structure of history') imposes a significantly different angle on the particular events discussed and thus it puts into focus dimensions which remained hidden or secondary in the original context. One may thoroughly disagree with Sartre's conception of the ontological structure of history, born out of his own specific concerns and clearly exhibiting the marks of his compelling personality. What is impossible to deny is that it throws radically new light on our understanding of the structures and institutions we can identify in the course of historical development.

The 'I' is in the foreground of virtually everything Sartre writes, and his subjectivity is carried, if necessary, to the point of belligerence. He emphatically refuses to withdraw into the background and assume the role of an objective guide whose function is merely to point at objects, works, and events, or at some well established connections between them. In his view, just like 'distance', objects must be brought to life first by presenting them through the writer's subjectivity, before they can be inserted into meaningful human discourse, otherwise they remain dead things and fetishes. Critics often wonder why it is that Sartre does not write lyric poetry, not noticing that he does it all the time, though not as a separate genre, but diffused throughout his work. For what could be more lyrical than his description of Giacometti's handling of distance as linked to his own homecoming from prison camp to living life at a respectful distance?

Also, style is determined by the great complexities of Sartre's overall project of totalization. Talking about his *Critique of Dialectical*
Reason, he admits that its length (nearly 400,000 words) could be somewhat reduced if he could spend on it much time and effort. But he adds immediately: ‘... all the same, it would very much resemble the work as it is now. For, basically, its sentences are so long, so full of parentheses, quotation marks, of "insofar as..." etc., only because every sentence represents the unity of a dialectical movement. To convey the unity of a dynamic movement, with all its complexities, is quite impossible by using static devices, like short root sentences, simplified meaning, concentrating on one aspect only for the sake of univocal clarity, while neglecting many others, etc. The deceptive translucency of analytic dissection, ignorant of the need for meaningful synthesis, produces only irrelevance or misrepresentation. Style and method must match the full complexity of the task itself, otherwise they are prefabricated devices artificially superimposed on any subject matter, irrespective of its specific nature and inner demands. Sartre consciously opposes to this practice of Procrustean superimposition frequently witnessed in modern art and thought (from philosophy to sociology and from economics to anthropology) his own method of capturing movement and intricacy. If sharply focussing on one aspect at the expense of others represents distortion, since only the proper conjunction of the one with the many constitutes the relevant whole, he aims at clarifying and revealing indeterminacy, paradoxical as this sound. This is what he praises in Giacometti, stressing that it should not be confused with vagueness—the result of failure. For 'the indeterminate quality that comes from lack of skill has nothing in common with the calculated indetermination of Giacometti, which could more accurately be termed overdetermination (surdetermination).’

57 It is the adoption of this principle of overdetermination, corresponding to the structure of totality, in conjunction with what Sartre terms 'the principle of individuation', which define the specificity of his style and the vitality of his method as arising from the soil of his totalizing quest for being. The whole is grasped through the simultaneity of 'calculated indetermination' (overdetermination) and the shifting presence of graphic individuation whereby even absence (cf the discussion of Pierre missing from the café in Being and Nothingness) becomes tangible as a vital dimension of totality. Thus movement and rest, the whole and its parts, the centre and the periphery, the premier plan and the background, the determinations from the past and the anticipations of the future converging upon the present, all come to life in the synthetic unity of a dialectical totalization in which subjectivity and objectivity are inextricably fused together.

As we can see then, the work carries the marks of the writer's personality in every respect, from the choice of even astonishing subject matter (like Negritude) through modes of analysis and depiction to the style and method of writing. And viewed from the other side, the inner
determinations of a certain overall project determine in their turn a 'belligerent character', a 'compelling subjectivity', a writer's own way of defining himself in relation to institutions, people and property; in short, his style of life and the experiences he will embark upon in accordance with his vision of the world and of his own place in it. Thus we can see 'the singularization of the work by the man and the universalization of the man by the work'.

In Sartre's case, the spectrum of his possible work is circumscribed by that all-encompassing quest for being we have seen already in the groping words of the student confronting man and nature, mind and existence, humanity and ideology, Good and Evil, death and determinism. Since the target is being itself, what is certain is that conventional forms will not provide the ways of its unfolding. And since Sartre's works always aim at revealing it, or at indicating the roads towards it, they must a priori exclude anything whatsoever to do in literature with naturalism. On the other hand, symbolism is also excluded in that it would merely inflate isolated chunks of the given immediacy into some abstract and static generality, instead of reproducing the dynamic multiplicity of relations which characterize the whole. What is called for, then, is some form of mediation capable of conveying the 'plenitude of being' and the 'void of nothingness' without falling into abstract symbolism rejected by Sartre. He finds the mediation he needs in what he calls 'myth': a condensation of traits of character (in line with the 'density' or 'plenitude' of being) that elevates the perceived and depicted reality to the level of being without abandoning the grounds of sensibility. Such an intermediary of condensation provides the ground on which 'calculated indetermination' and graphic 'individuation' can flourish as truly creative principles.

We shall see in the next section the place of 'myth' in Sartre's work in general. Here we are interested in its implications for our present context: the range of works the author can successfully accomplish on such grounds in the framework of his totalizing quest. The first is Sartre's novel cycle, Roads to Freedom. Considered not in isolation but in the totality of Sartre's development, Roads to Freedom is a failure in the sense of being a blind alley from which there can be no exit, no further explorations, no branching out, no roads—not even a footpath—to freedom. Despite its partial accomplishments, numerous and impressive though they may be, this work remains completely peripheral in Sartre's lifework. He has to tear himself away from it, as late as 1949, extricating himself from the consequences of a false choice, in order to continue his quest in other directions. Ten years after abandoning work on the fourth volume, he gives his reasons as follows: 'The fourth volume was to speak of the Resistance. The choice was simple in those days—even if one needed much strength and courage to stand by it. One was for or against the Germans. The choice was black or white. Today—since 1945—the situation is complicated. One
needs less courage, perhaps, to choose, but the choices are much more
difficult. I couldn't express the ambiguities of our epoch in a novel
situated in 1943. These are what Sartre calls elsewhere his 'internal
difficulties' for abandoning Roads to Freedom.

In reality, the issue is much more complicated. For it is not only the
fourth volume which is problematical but the project as a whole. Reaching
1943 means only that things become more visible, at a point of climax, but
they are there right from the beginning. The problematic character of the
work manifests itself formally-structurally in a disturbing tension between
straightforward everydayness, depicted in its immediacy, and an abstract
'rhetoric which tries to project everydayness onto the plane of

In other words, it is the missing intermediary of 'myth' or 'condensation'
that renders the work structurally abstract and problematical in the frame-
work of Sartre's totalizing quest. The perception of a whole epoch within
the parameters of an extremely simplified conflict of 'black or white' is in
fact the consequence of this abstract structure, rather than its massively
objective cause as Sartre curiously suggests—very much out of character
with his dialectical conception of subject and object, author and work,
cause and effect in literature. Examining the conditions under which Roads
to Freedom is written we find that Sartre allows himself to be manoeuvred
into the adoption of its abstract structure. First, by the scandal that
follows the all-pervasive negativity of his early short stories and

which make him unwisely promise a positive continuation. And second,
more understandable but artistically just as problematic, by the 'abstract
heroism' of his perception of the Resistance movement in which he
cannot assume more than a very peripheral role, no matter how hard he
tries. While it is true to say that his dramatic work as a whole is free from
this structural abstractness, it would be quite wrong to see the reason for it
just in that here we are concerned with a novel—i.e. with 'prose which aims
at the totalization of a singular and fictive temporalization', as we have seen.
It is the type of prose which is in question: one that resists the necessary
condensation of characters and situations and thus tempts the author to
repeatedly intervene, in the form of abstract rhetorics, in order to compen-
sate by producing some 'philosophical condensation'. Prose showing affinity
with Kafka—or with the works of E. Th. A. Hoffmann, if one wants a much
earlier example—would be a very different proposition. However, as things
stand, the structure of Roads to Freedom opposes that 'calculated indeter-
mination' which is so vital to the realization of the Sartrean project.

We find the exact opposite in Huis Clos—No Exit. Written in a fortnight
in the Autumn of 1943 and first staged in Paris in May 1944, Huis Clos is a
most suggestive 'pièce de circonstance'. The occasion that calls it into being
is a friend's request for a play easy to stage, with few actors, by a
travelling theatre company. And since Sartre wants to create roles of equal
weight for his friends who are the principal actresses, he devises a
situation in which they must remain together on the stage all the time. First he thinks of a bomb shelter, with its exits caved in, offering no escape. The time of writing is not far from the completion of Being and Nothingness, and Sartre wants to explore in the medium of drama the conflict inherent in interpersonal relations, the threat to freedom represented by 'the other'. Thus, the setting of a bomb shelter would produce, clearly, a failure. For such a situation would offer at least as much room for the display of human solidarity and 'fusion' towards a shared end as for the intended manifestation of reciprocally paralysing enmity. It is Sartre's brilliant inspiration to locate the stage in hell, from which there can be really no exit, which turns the work into a masterpiece. Elevating a human situation of consuming conflict to the level of a myth—a myth in which the devastating negativity and all-consuming character of the conflict is intensified, to a degree inconceivable in whatever other form, by giving a dimension of eternity to destruction and consumption which are, normally, paradigms of temporal limitation and determination, bringing things to a predictable end—Sartre creates a tangible intermediary into which the concerns of everyday life and some of the most fundamental dimensions of the structure of being converge. In such a medium of extreme condensation sentences like 'hell is the other' arise spontaneously from the situation, whereas they could be only superimposed in the form of abstract rhetorics in the medium of, say, Roads to Freedom. Calculated indetermination, graphic individuation, multiple layers of ambiguous meaning, condensation and overdetermination, claustrophobic enclosure and its negation through the totality of being, constitute the hypnotic unity of movement and paralysis which characterizes Huis Clos. It is certainly No Exit for Inès, as well as for Estelle and Garcin; but many roads lead from it towards the realization of Sartre's project. It illustrates very well how much the very nature of his overall quest for what might appear at first sight as mere abstraction—the plenitude of being and the void of nothingness—brings with it forms of mediation through which even the most abstract ontological determinations can be conveyed as tangible manifestations of human destinies.

II. Philosophy, Literature and Myth

The importance of 'myth' is by no means confined to Sartre’s conception of Huis Clos. He sees in the same terms Bariona and Flies, The Trojan Women and Kean, as well as Lucifer and the Lord and Altona, etc. Concerning the latter which he describes as a kind of Götterdämmerung (‘crépuscule des dieux’), he stresses his aim as demystification through inflating its subject matter to the proportions of a myth. And in a conversation with Kenneth Tynan he reveals that he would like to write a play on the Greek myth of Alceste in such a way as to be able to condense into it the drama of women's liberation.
Equally, he praises the works of his contemporaries in the same key. In an article entitled 'Forgers of Myths—the Young Playwrights of France' he singles out Anouilh's Antigone, Camus' Caligula and Cross Purposes, and Simone de Beauvoir's Useless Mouths as examples of the same approach to character and situation that animates his own plays. And twenty years later, in December 1966, he gives a lecture in Bonn with the title 'Myth and Reality of the Theatre' in which he counterposes the form of drama he stands for to the 'bourgeois realist theatre whose aim was the direct representation of reality.' In the same spirit, shortly after this lecture he characterizes Georges Michel as a truly original playwright who succeeded in transcending realism through a 'deformation towards the myth,' sharply contrasting this with the abstract symbolism of Ionesco's Rhinoceros.

As we can see, ever since the time of writing Bariona—when Sartre reaches the conclusion that theatre must be a great collective religious experience—he remains consistent to a conception of drama as myth. The function of theatre is to present the individual under the form of myth—says Sartre in an interview. And he reiterates the same point again and again, with variations in stress and with clarifications. He insists in the conversation with Tynan that theatre must transpose all its problems into mythic form, and he spends much time clarifying his position in the interview given to New Left Review:

For me the theatre is essentially a myth. Take the example of a petty-bourgeois and his wife who quarrel with each other the whole time. If you tape their disputes, you will record not only the two of them, but the petty-bourgeoisie and its world, what society has made of it, and so on. Two or three such studies and any possible novel on the life of a petty-bourgeois couple would be outclassed. By contrast, the relationship between man and woman as we see it in Strindberg's Dance of Death will never be outclassed. The subject is the same, but taken to the level of myth. The playwright presents to men the eidos of their daily existence: their own life in such a way that they see it as if externally. This was the genius of Brecht, indeed. Brecht would have protested violently if anyone said to him that his plays were myths. Yet what else is Mother Courage—an anti-myth that despite itself becomes a myth?

It does not matter here that Sartre's assessment of the possibilities of the novel is highly debatable. What is important is the definition of myth in drama as 'the eidos of daily existence'. This makes it clear that the issue at stake transcends the limits of the theatre, and leads us right into the heart of Sartre's overall quest. Indeed, this is the key that opens not only the door of his literary vision but also of his conception of art in general, and beyond.

In an earlier essay on Giacometti than the one quoted above, Sartre emphasizes the totality of this artist's vision, saying that his characters are 'complete wholes' arising fully made in an instant and 'gushing forth in my
field of vision as an idea in my spirit. He adds: 'only the idea possesses such immediate translucidity, only the idea is in one blow all that which it is.' Giacometti accomplishes 'the unity of multiplicity' as the 'indivisibility of an idea.' His myth as eidos is not some mysterious, hidden absolute but the visible absolute, grasped as the 'unity of the act', in evidence as 'appearance in situation'. Similar considerations are applied to the work of Masson which is described as 'mythological in its essence' so that 'the project of painting does not distinguish itself from the project of being man'. And there is no contradiction whatsoever between the concern with myth and the absolute on the one hand and our historical predicament on the other. On the contrary, just like Giacometti who grasps the absolute as 'appearance in situation', Masson's 'monstrous universe is nothing else than the comprehensive representation of our own universe'. For the absolute cannot be taken hold of except precisely through the well defined temporality of human existence. 'How to make a man out of stone without petrifying him'—this is the great question for the sculptor. It is a question of 'everything or nothing'—just like the question of literature, as we have seen above. This is what applies everywhere, even when the medium is not representational, like Calder's mobile constructions which 'traversed by an Idea' capture live movements and 'they are, that's all; they are absolutes'—'strange beings, midway between matter and life'.

What transpires clearly from this brief survey of Sartre's conception of his own work as well as of the work of those he values highly is that the crucial terms of reference are: myth, drama, absolute, idea, act, totality, conflict, and situation. Philosophy fits organically into this picture.

Today I think that philosophy is dramatic in nature. The time for contemplating the immobility of substances which are what they are, or for laying bare the laws underlying a succession of phenomena, is past. Philosophy is concerned with man—who is at once an agent and an actor, who produces and plays his drama while he lives the contradictions of his situation, until either his individuality is shattered or his conflicts are resolved. A play (be it epic, such as Brecht's, or dramatic) is the most appropriate vehicle today for showing man in action—i.e., man full stop. It is with this man that philosophy, from its own point of view, should be concerned. That is why the theatre is philosophical and philosophy dramatic.

Thus, philosophy is not abstract self-reflection and detached contemplation but total involvement in the drama of being. The 'project' is concerned with choice and 'original choice' is 'absolutely' the same as 'destiny'. Exploring 'human destiny' at its greatest intensity is not confined to Sartre's plays but characterizes all his synthesizing attempts, from a general definition of contemporary European culture as only one aspect of a much greater problem, 'the whole destiny of Europe', to his fundamental works
on philosophy. Both Being and Nothingness and Critique of Dialectical Reason are centrally concerned with conflict as inherent in the ontological structure of being as manifest in human destiny. The same drama is indicated in Sartre's definition of the core of his moral philosophy, structured around a fundamental antinomy: 'In the choice I make of my freedom, the freedom of others is reclaimed. But when I find myself on the plane of action, I am compelled to treat the other as means and not as end. Here we are evidently in the presence of an antinomy, but it is precisely this antinomy which constitutes the moral problem. I shall examine this antinomy in my moral plane. The fact that after 2000 pages of examination Sartre remains dissatisfied with the solutions he arrives at and abandons the project does not mean that he changes his mind about the fundamental underlying drama, but, on the contrary, that he finds it even more overpowering than originally thought, as the evidence of his later work clearly shows.

The conflict and drama in question is, of course, not the quarrel between the petty-bourgeois and his wife: philosophy and theatre in his view do not operate at that level. The drama of philosophy is the same that makes him conclude that plays are the most appropriate vehicle today for showing man in action i.e. 'man full stop'. The difference is that while philosophy, being a discursive form, can address itself directly to the fundamental questions of being, theatre, a representational form, must proceed indirectly, through the presentation of individuals under the form of a myth, and thus producing an adequate artistic mediation between reality and the most general determinations of being. They are similar in that they represent the highest level of synthesis of 'condensation', and thus they get the closest to the heart of being. This is why drama, in its Sartrean conception, is the most appropriate—in Hegel's term the most representative—literary form today; and this is why philosophy, if it wants to be relevant, must be dramatic.

Naturally, philosophy and drama do not comprehend everything. More precisely, they cannot take hold of all levels of the human totality. In fact, according to Sartre, the sphere of 'singular individuality' is beyond their reach. 'Philosophy is dramatic but it does not study the individual as such.' Nor does drama, for that matter. Consequently, if Sartre wants to study Flaubert as an individual, he cannot do it in drama, nor in philosophy. We have seen Sartre's definition of the novel as the totalization of a singular and fictive temporalization. Accordingly, he could tackle this task in the form of a novel, incorporating as best he can all the available factual evidence needed for a satisfactory totalization of the singularity of a historical individual. The consequences of this approach would be an inevitable overflow of the factual-documentary material and a tendency to subdue the novelistic elements. He could also
approach the task from the other end, proceeding from the available material and filling in the gaps as they appear with the novelist's imagination. Paradoxically, however, the more totalizing his aim, the more scarce and inadequate the documentary evidence must appear and, consequently, the more the fictional-novelistic elements will tend to predominate. Thus, he either abandons the totalizing aim, or he accepts its consequences for the nature of his work. In fact, we can see this dilemma expressed in the curious answer he gives to the question: 'Why have you personally stopped writing novels?'

Because I have felt no urge to do so. Writers have always more or less chosen the imaginary. They have a need for a certain ration of fiction. Writing on Flaubert is enough for me by way of fiction—it might indeed be called a novel. Only I would like people to say that it was a true novel. I try to achieve a certain level of comprehension of Flaubert by means of hypotheses. Thus I use fiction—guided and controlled, but nonetheless fiction—to explore why, let us say, Flaubert wrote one thing on the 15th March and the exact opposite on the 21st March, to the same correspondent, without worrying about the contradiction. My hypotheses are in this sense a sort of invention of the personage.

As we can see, the beginning of the answer—which is simply an 'I don't feel like it' no-answer—gives way to a redefinition of the novel and fiction in general, leading to the conclusion that his Flaubert, in the course of his kind of totalization, turns out to be an 'invented personage' and thus a form of novel or fiction.

All this is inherent not in some a priori determination of the relationship between philosophy and drama and philosophy and fiction in general, but in their characteristically Sartrean conception. The crucial determining factor is the conception of his overall quest into which everything is integrated with great vigour. In this vision the overriding determinations are levels of generality—dramatic philosophy and philosophical theatre at one pole and the totalization of singular individuality at the other—which tend to blur the lines of demarcation between the discursive and the representational forms in Sartre's work. We can see three clearly distinguishable forms of the manifestation of this tendency:

1. In his shorter essays—on Giacometti, Nizan, Merleau-Ponty, Gorz's Traitor, etc.—discursive and representational forms are often fused together in lyric passages and in a conscious effort to give an evocative unity, a forceful Gestalt to the essay as a whole, no matter how abstract are the problems tackled in particular contexts.
2. Representational elements abound in Sartre's major philosophical works (e.g. the treatment of 'bad faith' in Being and Nothingness) and vice-versa.
3. Perhaps the most significant: fictional totalization tends to turn into philosophical treatise, to the point of forcing him to abandon it (see
Roads to Freedom, especially its fourth volume) and his most important literary monograph, on Flaubert (and this is by no means the only one) tends to turn into fiction.

These characteristics cannot be isolated from the innermost nature of Sartre's totalizing quest. For the concern with singular universality cannot stop at that level but must strive through totalization towards universality or the 'absolute', whatever formal transformations may necessarily follow from such movement. On the other hand, the Sartrean absolute is not some rarefied abstraction occupying a mysterious sphere of its own, but is existentially situated and therefore it must be always rendered tangible through the evocative power of condensation and individuation at the writer's disposal. This is why, despite his boundless admiration for Kafka, the latter's fictional style and method of representation, with its hidden yet threateningly-mysteriously omnipresent absolute, constitute an altogether different universe of discourse which, therefore, cannot conceivably be adopted by Sartre as the model of his novels.

Problematical as some of the formal characteristics of Sartre's work might at times appear, they are necessary manifestations of his overall vision in particular contexts, and thus they cannot be properly weighed up without comprehending the nature of the whole. Significantly enough, Sartre's closely integrated conception of philosophy and literature appears at a very early age. The same year as he writes the letter contributing to the student enquiry, 1929, he also conceives The Legend of Truth: a strange mixture of philosophy, myth and literature of which only a fragment has been published. It is a kind of 'Urnebel' (the Kantian 'primeval fog') from which the later creations emerge, through manifold differentiation and metamorphoses. What is clearly in evidence from the very beginning is that for Sartre 'form and meaning are always linked', and indeed in an organic fashion. The overall configuration of meaning determines the form, and the articulation of form carries with it the concrete definition of meaning.

The not very happy symbiosis of The Legend of Truth soon gives way to the primarily philosophical or predominantly literary works of the thirties, without completely abolishing the reciprocal interpenetration. Nevertheless Sartre feels that there are certain things in his overall quest which are 'too technical' and therefore prescribe a 'purely philosophical vocabula' and he promises to 'double up, so to speak, every novel with an essay'? This is still a rather naive diagnosis of the problem, characteristic of the avid learner of the new philosophical vocabulary of German phenomenology and existentialism. Once he has behind him this period of learning and succeeds in elaborating his very own vocabulary, he soon discovers not only that there can be no 'doubling-up' between philosophy and novels, except for a short transitory period, but also that the real affinity for him is between philosophy and theatre and not between
philosophy and fiction. Furthermore, in the course of articulating his original philosophical concepts in *Being and Nothingness* he realizes that they need not—indeed that they cannot—be kept in separate compartments, but call for the unity of philosophy and literature in the service of his monumental quest for man. Already *Being and Nothingness* is unthinkable without his conscious appeal to the idea of such a unity.

The specificity of Sartre's work cannot be understood without focussing attention on the network of terms and usages he introduces in the course of his development. They constitute a coherent set of closely interconnected concepts, each with its own 'field of radiation' and points of link-up with all the others. This is obvious if we think of such examples as 'authenticity', 'anguish', 'bad faith', 'the spirit of seriousness', 'contingency', 'nausea', 'viscosity', 'facticity', 'negation', 'nihilation', 'freedom', 'project', 'commitment' ('engagement'), 'possibilities', 'responsibility', 'flight', 'adventure', 'chance', 'determination', 'seriality', 'fused group', 'temporalization', 'totalization', 'de-totalization', 'condensation', 'overdetermination', 'mediation', 'progression-regression', 'singular universal', 'irreducibility', etc., etc. However, we are talking about a characteristic which is omnipresent and which comes to the fore even in the most unsuspected places and forms. Whether it is a direct confrontation of a major philosophical issue or of an apparently everyday matter, Sartre's terms of analysis and evaluation are always typically his own, and from any particular point of detail they link up with the main supporting pillars of his structure of thought. We can illustrate this with the term 'invention'. Talking about the intellectual, of his 'vain yearning for universality', he makes his point like this:

I remember seeing a puppy after the partial removal of the cerebellum. He moved across the room, rarely colliding with the furniture, but he had become thoughtful. He established his itinerary carefully. He pondered before going around an object, requiring a great deal of time and thought to accomplish movements to which he had previously paid no attention. In the language of the time, we said that the cortex has assumed for him certain functions of the lower regions. He was an intellectual dog. I don’t know whether this made him very useful or harmful to his kind, but we can quite well imagine that he had lost what Genet, another exile, has so well named, 'sweet natal confusion'. To sum up, he either had to die or reinvent the dog.

So we others—rats without cerebella—we are also so made that we must either die or reinvent man. Moreover, we know perfectly well that man will make himself without us, through working and fighting, that our models become obsolete from one day to the next, that nothing will remain of them in the finished product, not even a bone, but that also, without us, the fabrication would take place in the dark, by tinkering and patching, if we, the 'debrained', weren't there to repeat constantly that we must work according to principles, that it is not a matter of mending, but of measuring and constructing, and finally, that mankind will be the concrete universal, or that it will not be.
To suggest that the dog 'reinvents the dog' is, of course, most unusual, to say the least. And yet, it doesn't matter in the slightest whether or not Sartre's description would match an objective scientific account. For the point is not about the dog but about man who has to be 'reinvented'. And, again, 'invention-reinvention' is by no means the term that would most naturally present itself in the context. But then, is the idea less unusual than the term of which Sartre serves himself to convey it? How can one 'reinvent' man without falling into extreme voluntarism? Obviously one cannot if the term is taken in its literal sense. But that is not how it is intended. Nor is it intended as a poetic image. For the meaning is conceptual, not metaphorical. But is it conceptual in the sense of the earlier discussed totalizing 'condensation-overdetermination' which derives its full meaning from the multiplicity of structural-contextual interconnections. It would be relatively easy to find some terms that could express in a more literal and univocal form the central idea of the passage on 'reinvention'. But at what price? It wouldn't mean only the loss of the writer's characteristic style, but a great deal of the meaning as well. Sartre deliberately chooses a term which keeps the central idea somewhat 'out of focus', in order to bring a multiplicity of allusions and connections into a joint focus. For the depth as well as the field of radiation of any particular concept is determined by the totality of interconnections it can summon up whenever it appears on its own. The difference between a profound thinker and a shallow one is that the former always operates with a whole network of organically interpenetrating concepts, whereas the latter contents himself with isolated terms and one-sided definitions. Thus the first establishes connections even when he has to single out specific contexts and draw lines of demarcation, while the second loses even the most obvious connections when he sacrifices complexity to 'analytical precision' and to the univocal 'clarity' of over-simplification in place of 'overdetermination'.

Let us see, briefly, the field of Sartre's concept of 'invention'. We have already quoted one of the contexts in which he suggests that 'The reader invents us: he uses our words to set his own traps for himself.' This is not a paradox for the sake of a paradox. It underlines a firm belief that 'inventing' is not a sovereign activity, carried out from a safe distance, but a complex relationship of being inside and outside simultaneously, just like man who makes and reinvents himself by being both at one with his own projects and at some distance from them. (As we can see, the idea of distance is an integral part of these considerations, both as it appears in Sartre's discussion of Giacometti and in his references to Brecht's vision of the simultaneity of inside and outside achieved through his Verfremdungseffect.) Talking about Genet, Sartre brings another aspect into the foreground. 'Genius is not a gift but an outcome one invents in desperate situations.' Here 'invention' is response to a situation in which everything seems to be lost—it is like the sudden leap and escape of the
cornered animal above the head of its pursuers. Similarly, authentic feelings, essential to the production of good literature, are not just 'given, in advance: every one must invent them in his turn.' Thus, again paradoxically, the spontaneity of authentic feeling is an 'invented spontaneity'. Nor is this an isolated instance. The liberation of Paris, in 1944, is described as 'the explosion of freedom, the rupture of the established order and the invention of an efficacious and spontaneous order.' We are thus presented with invention as a fusion of negativity and positivity: 'invented discipline' triumphs over 'learned discipline', and Apocalypse is defined as 'a spontaneous organization of the revolutionary forces', foreshadowing a central problematic of Sartre's Critique of Dialectical Reason. Invention is the key term also when, in 1947, he speaks about the need to 'invent the road to a socialist Europe' in order to secure humanity's survival. And in 1968, appealing for 'Power to the Imagination', he recalls that 'In 1936 [the working class] invented the occupation of factories because that was its only weapon to consolidate and to exploit its electoral victory.' In a similar vein, he talks about the task of 'inventing a University whose aim is no longer the selection of an elite but the transfer of culture to all.'

One could go on giving further examples from different fields of Sartre's thought, from his ontology to his theory of language, but there is no need. The instances we have seen so far are amply sufficient to indicate the nature of the conceptual interconnections earlier referred to. As we can see, linking 'invention' to a paradox is not a formal-stylistic device but a recognition of objective constraint, to be transcended by the act of invention which itself is the paradoxical result of such constraint. (A 'cunning of history' against its own determinations, if you like.) Thus freedom and order, discipline and spontaneity, negation and self-affirmation, etc. are brought into play as necessary dimensions of invention as a human enterprise. All these dimensions must be simultaneously recalled, by means of the 'condensation' of a multiplicity of interrelations into a joint focus, in order to be able to link the part to the whole and thus to confer upon it its full significance. This is how, starting out from Sartre's invention of the dog which 'reinvents the dog', we arrive at the roots of the human enterprise: man 'reinventing man' and thus producing the 'concrete universal'.

But we must note not only the structure of conceptual interconnections but also its 'sign': not unproblematically positive attainment but prevalent negativity. For the way in which 'invention' articulates itself through its linkages is dominated by distance and constraint, determination and anguish from which 'invention' extricates itself only for an ecstatic moment. In such moments, when 'freedom explodes' and 'imagination assumes power' (or 'genius' commutes a man's death sentence into his life-imprisonment as a writer), the ecstatic fusion of human interchange
manifests itself as the doomed temporality of 'Apocalypse which is always defeated by order—by the 'established order', that is, to which 'invented discipline' and 'spontaneous order' do not seem to be able to provide a lasting answer. This is why in the end the positive moment of invention cannot be envisaged by Sartre except as a radical negation of the powers of alienation and negativity. Thus positivity appears only on the distant horizon, in the form of a passionate 'ought'. The inventive-task of 'making humanity' is spelled out 'not as the construction of a system (be it the socialist system) but as the destruction of all systems.'

It is necessary to introduce here another complex of problems: Sartre's conception of temporality as one of the most fundamental constituents of his system of ideas, determining the articulation of many of his specific concerns.

In a very early piece on 'L'Art cinématographique' (1931), Sartre contrasts the temporality of science—its conception of irreversible order and absolutely determining march forward, which would be unbearable as a feeling if it went with all our actions—with the sudden movements and spontaneous manifestations of life perceived by the individual. He suggests that the arts of movement (music, theatre, cinema) have the task of representing this irreversible order 'outside us, painted in things'. He talks about the 'fatality' of musical progression in the melody; of tragedy's 'forced march towards the catastrophe', and of a kind of fatality also in the cinema. He characterizes music as abstraction and tragedy as 'strongly intellectual... a product of reason... a logical deduction starting from certain principles proposed right at the beginning.' While the unfolding of action in the cinema too is described as 'fatal', it is contrasted with the theatre in that it hasn't got the 'abstract and cut time of the tragedy'. According to Sartre, it is the cinema which represents 'by nature the civilization of our epoch'. Cinema is the art form which is 'the closest to the real world'. It is the art form which captures best the 'inhuman necessity' of the durée of our life, and teaches us 'the poetry of speed and of machines, the inhumanity and splendid fatality of industry'. What saves the cinema from the abstract and cut time of the theatre as well as from its intellectualism is its simultaneity and overimpression (or over-printing, ‘surimpression’—the predecessor of Sartre's concept of 'over-determination'). He refers to Abel Gance's Napoleon in which the imagery of a 'tempest at the Convention' is intensified by the scenes of a tempest on the Mediterranean. The two themes are cut into each other in such a way that they 'accuse and enlarge themselves and in the end they fuse with one another'. Just as in Giacometti, the particular themes do not convey their meaning individually but only if they are taken together in a combined unity. Thanks to the formal characteristic of 'overimpression'
the artist can 'develop several themes simultaneously' and thus achieve a 'cinematographic polyphony'.

Many points of this analysis are changed in the course of Sartre's subsequent development. Yet, the enrichment and concretization of his views proceed from the concepts first spelled out in this article. As he discovers the theatre for himself through his own practice, he changes his views on 'abstract time' and 'intellectualism' as necessarily inherent in all theatre. That is to say, in the light of his own dramatic work, he identifies the intellectualist type of drama with a certain form of classical tradition which he continues to oppose. And talking about Flies he insists that he aims at creating 'the tragedy of freedom in opposition to the tragedy of fatality.'

Also, he retains his aversion to intellectualism when he criticizes Orson Welles' film, Citizen Kane, as 'an intellectual work, the work of an intellectual', which shows that the affirmation of spontaneity is a 'Leitmotif' of his work, from its earliest inception. And in terms of formal criteria, 'he retains and expands the idea of simultaneity linked to overimpression (overdetermination) and the polyphony of integrated multiplicity (condensation and joint focus), as we have seen.

But this is as far as we can go in identifying similarities. Sartre's 'tragedy of freedom' is inconceivable on the basis of his youthful conception of temporality and causation, since it accepts necessity and fatality as the guiding principle of all three art forms he refers to. Consequently, the characteristics of simultaneity and polyphony can only soften the blow: they cannot transcend the fundamental determination and limits of fatality. Characteristically, he has to ask us to admire cinema's 'inflexible but supple concatenation' (enchainement inflexible, mais souple), which is not much more than a consolation prize in the form of a verbal-paradoxical 'solution'. Ex pumice aquam—one cannot squeeze spontaneity and freedom out of fatality by calling it 'supple'.

We can witness in Sartre's youthful article on the cinema a tension between his passionate adherence to spontaneity, the surprise of life, and the acceptance of a conception of temporality as absolute concatenation in the world around us (which inevitably means that the cinema, 'closest to the real world', representing 'real man in a real countryside', 'real mountains and real sea', etc., is essentially trapped and only marginally free). This is a fertile tension because it is not simply a conflict of ideas but a contradiction between a restrictive theory and an existential strive towards freedom. In order to extricate himself from this contradiction he has to get rid of Bergson—whose 'libertk intkriere', with its evasion of the question of 'destiny', is, as Sartre later recognizes, an illusory freedom, remaining always merely 'theoretical and intellectual', but not real (existential)— and elaborate a conception of temporality which is in affinity with his own quest.

This new conception of temporality is clearly formulated in an essay on
Faulkner, written in 1939. It analyses *The Sound and the Fury*, concentrating on the question of time. The contrast between affective (emotional) and intellectual order of time we encountered in the youthful essay is recognized by Sartre in Faulkner's novel as treated in favour of the affective order, to Sartre's great satisfaction. What bothers him is the absence of the future. 'Nothing happens, everything has already happened... the present is only... past future.' Proust and Faulkner have simply decapitated time, they removed its future, that is the dimension of acts and freedom. The way Quentin's suicide is treated shows that he has no 'human possibilities'; what we are confronted with is not 'a human enterprise, it is fatality.' The whole problem hinges on the future: 'if the future is real, time moves away from the past and brings nearer the future; but if you suppress the future, time is nothing but what separates, that which cuts off the present from itself.'

But is it true, asks Sartre, that human time is devoid of future? The temporality of the nail, of a lump of earth, of the atom, is 'perpetual present. But man, is he a thinking nail?' Faulkner, in accordance with his vision of time, represents man as a creature 'deprived of possibilities'. He defines man as 'the sum of all that he has.' To this Sartre opposes his own definition of man as 'the totality of all that he doesn't have yet, of all that he could have.'

In *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), Lukács analyses 'possible consciousness' as the consciousness of a historically progressive class which has a future ahead of it and therefore has the possibility of objective totalization. In our epoch, according to Lukács, only the proletariat has proper temporality, inseparable from the possibility of socio-historical totalization, for the bourgeoisie has lost its future—its temporality, as Sartre puts it about Proust and Faulkner, has been 'decapitated'—in that its fundamental aims as a class are radically incompatible with the objective tendencies of historical development. Given this fundamental contradiction between aim and reality, the class without future cannot realize the 'unity of subject and object' but must, instead, produce a dualistic-antinomous structure of thought, centred around individualism and subjectivity, and dominated by the conditions of 'reification' which it can oppose only in and through subjectivity, thus exasperating the contradiction between subject and object. Heidegger, facing the Lukácsian problematic, proposes a 'solution' by transcending Lukács towards his youthful essay, 'The Metaphysics of Tragedy' (1910) published in the volume *Soul and Form*, in which nearly two decades before Heidegger Lukács had spelled out some of the central themes of modern existentialism. Heidegger offers a conception of temporality which ascribes possibility (projection towards the future ultimately identified with death, in the spirit of 'The Metaphysics of Tragedy') to consciousness in general. Thus, by turning possibility into an ontological dimension of
consciousness as such, Lukács' Marxian critique of bourgeois class consciousness is theoretically liquidated, and a project of unified ontology is announced, on the basis of the Heideggerian reconstruction of subjectivity. Significantly, however, the project is never brought to its conclusion. And twenty-five years after publishing Being and Time—originally intended as the founding preliminary to the overall project—Heidegger is forced to make an admission: 'While the previous editions have borne the designation "First Half", this has now been deleted. After a quarter of a century, the second half could no longer be added unless the first were to be presented anew.' Which all sounds very reasonable, except that no reasons are given for the failure to complete, not just in twenty-five years but ever since, the whole project. Clearly, we are not concerned with Heidegger's Nazism—which is more like a consequence than the cause—but with the nature of the project itself: the extreme subjectivism of its temporality and being. Ex pumice aquam—one cannot squeeze the foundation of being out of a mythically inflated subjectivity by calling it 'Fundamental Ontology'.

Sartre adopts some elements of Heidegger's conception when he writes: 'the nature of consciousness implies that it throws itself forward by itself into the future... it determines itself in its present being by its own possibilities: this is what Heidegger calls "the silent force of the possible".' At the same time, he goes well beyond Heidegger right from the beginning: he puts the German philosopher to his own use. Proceeding from his own existential quest for freedom and spontaneity, he finds support in Heidegger's conception of temporality against fatality and inertia. But this is only the negative side of his overall view. The positive aspect is clearly exemplified in a beautiful concluding passage of the essay on Faulkner.

How come that Faulkner and so many other authors have chosen such an absurdity which is so little in character with the novel, and so little true? I believe we have to look for reasons in the social conditions of our present-day life. It seems to me that Faulkner's despair precedes his metaphysics: for him, as for us all, the future is barred. Everything we see, everything we live through, incites us to say: 'It cannot last', and meanwhile change isn't even conceivable except in the form of a cataclysm. We live in the epoch of impossible revolutions, and Faulkner employs his extraordinary artistry to describe this world which is dying of old age, and our suffocation. I love his art, and I don't believe in his metaphysics: a barred future is still a future...

The sentence 'a barred future is still a future' (which becomes the model of many a Sartrean paradox, like 'refusal to commit oneself is a form of commitment', or 'failure to choose is itself a choice', etc.) doesn't mean much, if anything, in and by itself. What breathes life into this abstract formal tautology is the context (or situation) into which it is inserted. The subjectivism of the Heideggerian conception of temporality helps him
negate the 'barred future' of an epoch torn by the inherent contradiction of the necessity of change and the impossibility of revolutions. Yet, yet—and this is what decides the issue—the whether or not of 'impossible revolutions' is a question of real temporality which is being decided in the actual socio-historical arena. Thus while the abstract temporality of 'a barred future is still a future' negates the real temporality of social inertia (determined by the temporal-historical conditions of alienation and reification), this subjectivist temporality of abstract possibility is also being negated by the real possibility of actual revolutions.

Heideggerian purists would, no doubt, describe the way Sartre inserts the adopted concepts into the context seen above as 'eclecticism'. In fact, such 'eclecticism' constitutes Sartre's exemplary originality and philosophical significance. He succeeds in freeing himself of the tension manifest in his youthful conception of temporality by acquiring a much greater tension. The latter is not only much greater but it is incomparably more fertile as well. For from now on, even if he doesn't know it yet, (perceiving change in his own development as commitment initiated by the war) he is situated right in the turmoil of real temporality which he cannot just contemplate from the sideline, from the ‘temporalité intérieure’ of literary withdrawal. Indeed, his act of commitment during the war becomes possible within the framework of this new conception and intensified existential tension which are suitable to provide the basis of articulating a rich life-work. For without the changed framework he might well respond to the inhumanity of the war and the fatality of falling bombs in terms of the same decadent aestheticism of 'interiority' with which he once raved about the 'poetry of speed, of the machines' and about the 'inhumanity and splendid fatality of industry'. But 'cataclysm' arrives and is followed by upheavals and revolutions—some unfinished, others defeated, others still partially successful, or delayed, frustrated, brutally interfered with: but all real, painfully so. Could it be that they all should have no major consequences for the other side of the contradiction locked up in Sartre's new existential tension? Hardly, as Sartre's subsequent development clamorously proves.

This is not the point to anticipate Sartre's later development, but to lay bare the structure of his thought as the inner necessity that constitutes a vital condition of such development. In this sense, we have to point at another fundamental dimension: the way in which Sartre becomes a moral philosopher malgré lui. The problem arises out of the characterization of the present as an inert totality: a world dying of old age, an epoch of 'impossible revolutions' which spreads and intensifies the feeling of paralysis even through the consciousness of 'cataclysm' as the only feasible form of change. How can the abstract proposition of 'barred future is still a future' effectively negate such gloom and doom?
Only if it is turned into a categorical absolute which necessarily transcends all given temporality, no matter how suffocatingly real. And who is the subject of this 'barred future'? If it is the individual, the proposition is clearly false, because barred future for the individual is barred full stop. On the other hand, if the subject is mankind, the proposition is absurd, because mankind cannot possibly have a 'barred future' except by barring it for itself in the form of a collective suicide, in which case there is no future, barred or unbarred—nor indeed mankind, for that matter. Paradoxically, the existential (non-tautological) meaning of the proposition is produced by conflating the individual and the collective subject. Its meaning is, thus, not what it literally suggests (a tautology or a banality at best), but the functional meaning of a radical negation which cannot point at tangible historical forces as carriers of its truth and therefore must assume the form of a categorical imperative: the moral ought.

This dimension of Sartre's structure of thought, as inextricably linked to the question of individual and collective subject, remains a fundamental characteristic of his work throughout his development. Not that there can be no changes in this respect for the rest of his life, for there are many. The point is that such changes as may arise must always affect this whole set of relations, notably the problems of temporality and morality as articulated in terms of subject and object, the individual and the collective subject. We shall discuss these problems at length later on. Here the point is simply to stress the necessary interconnection between Sartre's conception of temporality and the paradoxical specificity of his moral philosophy. For the truth is that the latter is not an explicit but a latent moral philosophy—and it remains so, no matter how hard he tries in some unfinished (i.e., unfinishable) manuscripts to turn it into an explicit one. It is somewhat like his writing lyric poetry. He cannot write it because he does write it—in a diffuse form—all the time. It is inherent in all his analyses as the positive standpoint of the future which assumes the form of a radical negation while it is unable to identify itself with a historical subject. In the specific works which he is forced to abandon, his attempts at rendering explicit his moral principles are necessarily frustrated because he tries to accomplish the task while remaining within the confines of his phenomenological-existential ontology which renders redundant this explicitness. Paradoxically, in order to remain a moral philosopher his moral philosophy must remain latent. In order to spell out his latent moral philosophy in a fully developed form, as he tries again and again, he would have to substantially modify the structure of his philosophy as a whole, including the function of categorical moral ought in it. But such modification would radically displace—indeed, possibly render superfluous—precisely his moral ought in the structure of his thought. Thus he could produce his Morale only by ceasing to be a moral philosopher at all. This
is why, curiously, his conscious efforts aimed at transcending his earlier positions result in their strongest possible reaffirmation as the necessary precondition of the 'impossible enterprise' he is involved in: the deduction of a socially oriented moral philosophy from the ontological structure of individual praxes. No text is nearer to his original system as spelled out in Being and Nothingness than 'Determination and Freedom', a lecture delivered 23 years later, in May 1966, at the Gramsci Institute in Rome, and part of a substantial recent manuscript on his Morale: it could be inserted into the pages of the early work without too much difficulty. By the same token, if he wants to transcend some of his earlier positions, he has to do it 'without really trying'. That is, he has to transcend through expansion, by bringing into the picture new ontological structures—as indeed he does, in Critique of Dialectical Reason—which objectively imply a certain supersession, even if Sartre does not spell it out in what is intended again as a first volume. This means that the old and new structures must be left side by side, without integration. For as soon as the task of integration is attempted, in the second volume or in some related work, the inherent difficulty of moving from latency to explicitness presents itself with renewed intensity, and we are back to the world of Being and Nothingness through the route of 'Determination and Freedom'.

We can see, then, how right Sartre is when he characterizes his concern with morality as his 'dominant preoccupation'. With one necessary qualification. This concern enters his horizon malgré lui, in a paradoxical form, via his definition of temporality and transcendence as opposed to his earlier conception. Up to the time of writing 'L'Art cinématographique', and for a few years thereafter, there can be no room for morality in his world of sheltered 'interiority' which laughs of man's concern with Good and Evil as a 'useless ideology' and aesthetically reconciles itself with the 'splendid fatality' of capitalist inhumanity, without realizing the enormity of such pronouncements. Thus when Paul Nizan, his closest friend, notes while reviewing Nausea that Sartre's thought is 'entirely alien to moral problems', he is correct in characterizing an early phase in Sartre's development, although it is highly debatable whether one should include Nausea in it. (Nizan is no doubt influenced by the memory of their College discussions.) In any case, it is a very limited phase. By the time Nausea is published, it is certainly over, thanks to Sartre's investigation of the nature of emotion and imagination, and thanks to his radical redefinition of temporality.

Sartre's network of concepts constitutes an amazingly coherent whole in which the particular elements are organically linked together. The way he uses 'invention', for instance, might appear at times rather subjective, perhaps even capricious, so long as it is not related to the conceptual framework as a whole. But as soon as we become aware of the related
concepts, as we have seen above, the one-sided impression of subjectivity disappears. The Sartrean concept of invention would indeed seem extremely voluntaristic and utterly futile even within his own youthful vision of temporality. Not so in his later conception. Once the fatality of absolute determination and irreversible concatenation is banished from his picture, 'invention' and 'imagination' can come into their own and acquire a major importance in his system of ideas. Conversely, too, his preoccupation with the Imagination and with L'Imaginaire (translated into English as The Psychology of Imagination) greatly contributes to the elaboration of his conception of temporality.

'Past' becomes associated with the 'intellectual order'—a sombre condition, 'without surprise', ruled by the one-sided causality of concatenation—with inertia, lifelessness, despair. 'In Citizen Kane the game is over. We are not involved in a novel but in a story in the past tense. . . Everything is analysed, dissected, presented in the intellectual order, in a false disorder which is the subordination of events to the rule of causes; everything is dead.' The same goes for Zola with whom 'everything obeys the narrowest kind of determinism. Zola's books are written from the past, while my characters have a future.' And when he realizes that future is locked out from some of his own works, he doesn't hesitate to condemn them. Talking about Men Without Shadows (Morts sans sépulture—i.e. 'Unburied Dead') he insists that 'It is a failed play. . . the destiny of the victims is absolutely determined in advance. . . The cards are already on the table. It is a very sombre play, without surprise.' Similarly with volume IV of Roads to Freedom which he abandons. Simone de Beauvoir echoes Sartre's own strictures and imagery of gambline when she comments: 'For his heros, at the end of Drôle d'amitié [the chapter published from volume IV] the game is over.' It is the future that gets his approval, expressed with great consistency in the positive connotation of its field of associated concepts, from 'hope' and 'authenticity' to 'surprise' and 'life', and from the 'affective order' (the opposite of 'intellectual order') to 'dialectical totalization' which brings to life the object of its synthesis, instead of dissecting it on the mortuary table of analysis for the sake of analysis.

Of course, as has been stressed repeatedly, we are talking about a unique fusion of subjectivity and objectivity. Sartre makes no claims to 'scientific objectivity'. His network of concepts aims as much at evoking as at situating and explaining. Yet, his fused 'subjective' objectivity is infinitely more objective than the pretended 'objectivity' of academic jargon. Knowing only too well that we are always within the parameters of man's fundamental quest, Sartre doesn't just 'observe' and 'describe', but participates and moves at the same time as he demonstrates. His way has nothing in common with the pseudo-scientific 'objectivity' of socially insensitive academic jargon that resembles the enzymes of the
digestive system which turn everything that comes their way invariably into the same sort of end-product.

Sartre's conceptual framework is made of a radically different stuff. It is more like a sensitive prism which collects from all directions the light-waves of the epoch of which Sartre is an exemplary witness. He breaks up the received impressions into their constituents through the dual prism of his compelling personality only to synthesize them again in his totalizing vision that powerfully re-enters the world from which it is taken. 'To show and to move at the same time'—from the standpoint of the future—that is his aim. Which implies being simultaneously outside and inside. This is why he needs the combined powers of philosophy, literature, and 'myth'. 'I'd like it that the public should see, from outside, our century, this strange thing, as a witness. And that, at the same time, he should participate, for this century is made by him.' Sartre takes his full share in making this century, by attacking its fetishes and increasing its self-awareness. It is this character of participatory testimonial, creative and revealing commitment to a total involvement, which gives Sartre's life-work its philosophical depth and its dramatic intensity.

NOTES


Les Écrits de Sartre: Chronologie, bibliographie commentée by Michel Contat and Michel Rybalka (Gallimard, Paris, 1970, 788pp.) is invaluable for all those interested in Sartre's development. In addition to a complete bibliography of his works, up to 1969, it contains excellent summaries, with extracts from his numerous interviews, as well as nearly 300 pages of rare texts. Henceforth this volume will be referred to as C/R.

'La Nationalisation de la littérature' (1945), Situations, Vol. II, pp. 35 and 43. And in the same article he remarks on the absurdity of being called 'the Master of neosurrealism' who is supposed to have under his command Eluard and Picasso, while in reality 'I was still wearing short pants when they were already masters of themselves.' Ibid., p. 37.


'Réponse à François Mauriac', Le Figaro Littéraire, 7 May 1949.

Sartre's letter to the Swedish Academy, in which he tried to prevent their decision in his favour, was later published in Le Monde, 24 October 1964. The complete text of this letter, together with an account of the debate that followed his refusal, is given in C/R—pp. 401-408.

11. Le Figaro Littéraire, 4-10 May 1970.
16. Ibid.
17. 'La Nationalisation de la littérature', ed. cit., p. 38.
19. Ibid., p. 25.
21. From a poem by Endre Ady (1877-1919).
23. I have discussed these problems in my book on Attila József e l'arte moderna, Lerici, Milano, 1964.
27. Interview by Christian Gisoli, Paru, December, 1945.
30. Ibid., p. 19.
32. Interview by Pierre Lorquet, Mondes nouveaux, 21 December 1944.
33. 'The Purposes of Writing', ed. cit., p. 22.
34. Interview by Gabriel d'Aubarède, Les Nouvelles littéraires, 1 February 1951.
35. 'Réponse à M. Mauriac', L'Observateur, 19 March 1953.
40. 'The Purposes of Writing', ed. cit., p. 27.
42. Interview by Claude Sarraute, Le Monde, 17 September 1959.


To maintain a killing rhythm of work while writing, his *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, he consumes a tubeful of corydrone each day. Cf. Simone de Beauvoir, *La Force des choses*, p. 407.


'Si grand que soit mon admiration pour Proust, il m'est tout opposé: il se complait dans l'analyse, et je ne tend qu'à la synthèse.' Interview by Pierre Lorquet, *Mondes nouveaux*, 21 December 1944.

'It is perfectly true, isolated subjectivity is, in the opinion of the age, evil; but "objectivity" as a cure is not one whit better. The only salvation is subjectivity, i.e. God, as infinite compelling subjectivity'. *The Journals of Kierkegaard: 1834-1854*. Edited and translated by Alexander Dru. Fontana Books, p. 184.


'Jean-Paul Sartre has done the finest of critical appreciations of [Césaire's] *Cahier* as poetry, but his explanation of what he conceives Negritude to mean is a disaster.' C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins*, 2nd revised edition, Vintage Books, New York, 1963, p. 401.


See *C/R*-p. 429.


This is recognized to some extent when Sartre declares: 'If I had to rewrite *Roads to Freedom*, I'd try to present every character without commentary, without showing my feelings.' Interview by Jacqueline Autrusseau, *Les Lettres françaises*, 17-23 September 1959.

'Nausea has been accused of being too pessimistic. But let's wait for the ending. In a forthcoming novel, which will be the continuation, the hero shall redress the machine. We shall see existence rehabilitated, and my hero act, tasting action.' Interview by Claudine Chonez, *Marianne*, 7 December 1938.

This problem is discussed in the last section.

This is how Sartre describes in an interview the relationship between *Being*
and Nothingness and Huis Clos: 'This story of mine about souls in torment was not symbolic—I had no wish to "repeat" Being and Nothingness in different words. What would have been the point? I simply made up some stories with an imagination, sensibility and thought that the conception and writing of Being and Nothingness had united, integrated and organized in a certain way.' 'The Purposes of Writing', ed. cit., p. 10.


70. 'Sartre talks to Tynan', The Observer, 18 and 25 June 1961. Reprinted in Kenneth Tynan, Tynan Right and Left, Longmans, London, 1967, pp. 302-312. Reference is to pages 310-311. Other relevant passages are as follows: 'The theatre is not concerned with reality: it is only concerned with truth. The cinema, on the other hand, seeks a reality which may contain moments of truth. The theatre's true battlefield is that of tragedy—drama which embodies a genuine myth. There is no reason why the theatre should not tell a story of love or marriage, as long as it has a quality of myth; in other words, as long as it occupies itself with something more than conjugal disagreements or lovers' misunderstandings. By seeking truth through myth, and by the use of forms as non-realistic as tragedy, the theatre can stand up against the cinema.' (ibid., p. 304). 'I don't think theatre can be directly derived from political events. For instance, I would never have written Altona if it was merely a simple question of a conflict between Left and Right. For me, Altona is tied up with the whole evolution of Europe since 1945, as much with the Soviet concentration camps as with the war in Algeria. The theatre must take all these problems and transmute them into mythic form.' (ibid., p. 307). 'I am always looking for myths; in other words, for subjects so sublimated that they are recognizable to everyone, without recourse to minute psychological details.' (ibid., p. 310). Furthermore, there are also gradations or varieties of myth on the subjective to objective scale: the work of Tennessee Williams is 'permeated with subjective myths.' (Ibid., p. 308). And the whole category of 'myth', subjective as much as objective, is opposed to symbolism: 'I have not liked Beckett's other plays [other than Waiting for Godot, that is,] particularly Endgame, because I find the symbolism far too inflated, far too naked.' (Ibid., p. 307).

71. Published in Theatre Arts, (New York), June 1946.

72. Published in Le Point, January 1967.

73. Interview by Nicole Zand, Bref, February-March 1967.

74. Interview by Alain Kochler, Perspectives du Théâtre, March-April 1960.

75. 'Itinerary of a Thought', ed. cit., p. 56.

76. 'La Recherche de l’absolu' (1948), Situations, Vol. III, pp. 300-301.

77. Ibid., p. 301.

78. 'Mason' (1960), Situations, Vol. IV, p. 389.

79. Ibid., p. 401.

80. 'La Recherche de l’absolu', ed. cit., p. 293.

81. 'Les Mobiles de Calder' (1946), Situations, Vol. III, pp. 308-311. And he writes on Giacometti that his works, constantly in the course of making, are 'always half-way between nothingness and being'. 'La Recherche de l’absolu', ed. cit., p. 293.

82. 'The Purposes of Writing', ed. cit., pp. 11-12.

83. 'le choix libre que l’homme fait de soi-même s’identifie absolument avec ce qu’on appelle sa destinée.' Jean-Paul Sartre, Baudelaire, Gallimard, Paris, 1947, p. 224. And another important passage concerning this problem: 'Nous
touchons ici au choix originel que Baudelaire a fait de lui même, cet engagement absolu par quoi chacun décide dans une situation particulière de ce qu'il sera et de ce qu'il est.' Ibid., p. 20.

84. Interview by Claudine Chonez, L'Observateur, 31 May 1951.
85. ‘Défense de la culture française par la culture européenne', Politique étrangère, June 1949.
86. Interview by François Erval, Combat, 3 February 1949.
89. 'Itinerary of a Thought', ed. cit., p. 55.
90. 'Légende de la vérité', Bifur, June 1931. Reprinted in C/R—pp. 531-545.
91. 'Itinerary of a Thought', ed. cit., p. 56.
92. Interview by Claudine Chonez, Marianne, 23 November and 7 December 1938.
93. 'Of Rats and Men', Situations, ed. cit., p. 245.
94. Cf. Note 33.
98. 'Gribouille', La Rue, November 1947.
102. 'Détermination et liberté', CIR—p. 745.
104. Interview by Yvon Novy, Comoedia, 24 April 1943.
105. 'Quand Hollywood veut faire penser—Citizen Kane d'Orson Welles', L'Ecran français, 1 August 1945.
107. Ibid., p. 549.
108. Interview by Yvon Novy, Comoedia, 24 April 1943.
110. Ibid., p. 71.
111. Ibid., p. 72.
112. Ibid., p. 73.
113. Ibid., p. 73.
114. Ibid., p. 74.

Lucien Goldmann has discussed in several of his works the relationship between Lukács and Heidegger. Cf. Mensch, Gemeinschaft und Welt in der Philosophie Immanuel Kants (Europe-Verlag, Zürich, 1945), Recherches dialectiques (Gallimard, Paris, 1959), and in particular his posthumous volume, Lukács et Heidegger, edited and with an introduction by Youssef Ishaghpour (Denoël/Gonthier, Paris, 1973).

116. 'La temporalité chez Faulkner', ed. cit., p. 73.
118. Ibid., pp. 74-75.
119. *Ce Soir*, 16 May 1938.
120. 'Quand Hollywood veut faire penser...', cf. Note 105.