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MAN AS NOTHINGNESS : AN EXISTENTIALIST VIEW

Although a great deal of writing and philosophising has been done in philosophy about man, his nature and existence, no other philosopher has perhaps been so predominantly and uniquely concerned as the existentialists with the problem of human existence not however in general, but in particular and concerte sense. Existentialists, based on their religious faith or the denial of faith, tend to explain the nature of man, broadly speaking, from two different viewpoints: theistic and atheistic. Kierkegaard and Sartre, for instance, fundamentally differ as regards their views about the nature of man. Kierkegaad because of his strong religious ideas explains the nature of man from the Christian point of view; Sartre, on the other hand, looks into the nature of man from the atheistic standpoint because of his powerful a religious orientation. Kierkegaard seems to be leaning on more towards the theistic philosophers, namely, Spinoza, Leibniz, etc., for characterizing man as one who is created and designed by God and who is thus metaphysically determined. Sartre is, on the other hand, strongly opposed to determinsim and is characterstically Nietzschean in so far as he denies God and along with that objective morality as well. In the present study I propose to examine Sartre's views on the nature of man.

In 'Existentialism and Humanism' Sartre tries to explain what seems to be fundamental point of his thought that man is absolutely free since there is no God to determine his action or to design him according to a universal essence. In his principal philosophical work 'Being and Nothingness' he expands his views and claims something more than this: man is free not simply because there is no God but also because the structure of his nature is such that he cannot but be free-he is essetnially free because he is a non-being, a nothingness. The two poles of reality, the being-for-itself and the being-in-itself, are opposed to each other, for while the former refers to consciousness, the latter refers to the world of objects; but Sartre nevertheless attempts to relate them in his concept of negativity. The being-in-itself is a complete positivity; it maintains in itself always a principle of identity; it is what it is; a table, for example, is purely and absolutely a table, nothing

more and nothing less. This is what Sartre calls a being o 'fullness'. The being-for-itself, on the other hand, is a non-being or what Sartre identifies as nothingness. This non-being or nothingness is not a property of the being-for-itself, the human reality, but is, in fact, its own being. Sartre analyses this non-being of man in three different forms: interrogation, destruction and simple negative judgment.

In order to determine Sartre's exact position it is essential to know first his views and the arguments he advances. We, he maintains, often ask questions either philosophical like 'What is the relation between man and the world ?' or ordinary like 'Is Pierre there ?' By asking a question one thus puts oneself in an attitude of interrogation. In other words, he immediately posits himself as in a state of indetermination, since he does not know whether the answer will be negative or affirmative. The question is, therefore, a bridge between two non-beings: "the non-being of knowing in man " and " the possibility of non-being of being in transcendent being ".[1] The very act of asking questions, Sartre argues, implies an ignorance on the part of the questioner. This absence of knowledge is what Sartre calls a 'non-being' in the being of man. " In every question we stand before a being which we are questioning. Every question presupposes a being who questions and a being which is questioned".[2] If the answer is negative as there is always a " permanent objective possibility of a negative reply," then, Sartre holds, a new form of non-being is born in the world. But even an affirmative reply gives rise to another form of non-being, for it affirms something and eliminates the other, such as, " it is thus and not otherwise ".

Non-being, Sartre argues, appears always within the limits of human expectation. If, for example, I think that there are fifteen hundred francs in my wallet and after counting I find only thirteen hundred, it is because I have expected fifteen hundred. Similarly, a physicist gets a reply, either positive or negative, of his hypothesis because he expects some particular results. Non-being is thus always posited as possibility in some way or another.

It follows from Sartre's assertions that intrregoation implies a negation and negation in turn introduces some for of non-being in the world. In the ordinary sense negation is always of the form 'x is not'. But it is ont merely a quality of judgment. A question

formulated by an interrogative judgment is not itself a judgment, but a pre-judicative attitude. A question may be asked by a look or by a gesture. In posing a question the questioner stands facing the being in question in a certain way and judgment is just an optional expression of it. Again it is not necessarily a person that is asked about the being. If the car breaks down, for example, it is the carburettor, the spark-plugs etc., that the driver will question. If the watch stops, its owner can ask the maker for its cause, but the maker in turn will question the various mechanisms of the watch. What the driver and the watch-maker expect is not a judgment but 'a disclosure of being' on the basis of which a judgment can be made. This eventually leads them to the expectation of a disclosure of non-being. For instance, if the driver questions the carburettor, it may be due to the fact that he considers that " there is nothing there " in the carburettor. So the question by its very nature involves a " pre-judicative comprehension of non-being"[3]

Sartre describes destruction as a non-judicative conduct because it " cannot be defined as uniquely or even primarily judicative ".[4] For him destruction is a man-made phenomenon. " In a sense ", he says, " man is the only being by whom a destruction can be accomplished. A geological plication, storms do not destroy—or at least they do not destroy directly; they merely modify the distribution of masses of beings."[5] If a cyclonic storm, for example, has caused the death of a certain number of living beings, the death can be regarded as destruction, in Sartre's view, only if it has been experienced as such. The same is true of fragility. It is due to man that things are made to be fragile or destructible. So for Sartre, destruction is essentially a human thing: " it is man who destroys his cities through the agency of earthquakes or directly, who destroys his ships through the agency of cyclones or directly".[6] What Sartre means to say is that through destruction a non-being is created in the world, but since there can be no destruction without man this non-being appearing in the form of destruction is purely a human creation.

A negative judgment essentially negates something, such as 'X is not P', 'A is not B' etc. This kind of simple negative judgment according to Sartre, can cause a non-being to appear at the heart of being, the being-in-itself. He describes the situation of a common experience in a cafe where a non-being arises simply out of

a friend's absence. " I have an appointment with Pierre at four o'clock. I arrive at the cafe a quarter of an hour late. Pierre is always punctual. Will he have waited for me ? I look at the room, the patrons, and I say, " He is not here ".[7] A non-being is born again. The cafe of course, " by itself with its patrons, its tables, its booths, its mirrors, its light, its smoky atmosphere, and the sounds of voices, rattling saucers, and footsteps which fill it—the cafe is a fullness of being..Similarly Pierre's actual presence in a place which I do not know is also a plenitude of being ". But Pierre's absence gives rise to a non-being in the cafe. My perception of Pierre's absence has been formed on a ground constituted by the cafe. As soon as I realize that Pierre is not there the cafe with all its objects and people in it stands as a ground; the whole cafe is nihilated, for I look at the cafe in which Pierre is not to be found.

For Sartre non-being is thus not merely a product of negation. Negation is a refusal of existence by means of which something may be posited and thrown back to non-being. When consciousness produces a negation, it does so in the form of consciousness of non-being. The 'not' must appear as the consciousness of the 'not'. Sartre argues that " no question could be asked, in particular not that of being, if negation did not exist. But this negation itself.. referred us back to Nothingness as its origin and foundation. In order for neagtion to exist in the world and in order that we may consequently raise questions concerning Being, it is necessary that in some way Nothingness be given ".[8] But where does this nothingness come from ?

As stated, being is a full positivity and hence devoid of non-being. " There is not the slightest emptiness in being, not the tiniest crack through which nothingness might slip in ".[9] Being 'is' while nothingness' 'is not'. But nevertheless, nothingness, the 'is not' is given at the heart of being. Non-being is not as, Hegel thinks, a component of the real, since being and non-being are not two complementary parts of the real—like light and darkness—two empty abstractions, thesis and antithesis, whose union alone could give rise to concrete realities. For Sartre, " non-being is not the opposite of being; it is its contradiction "[10] This implies that logically being comes first and then comes non-being, since there can be no contardiction of being, if being did not exist first. This

logical precedence also means that being is the ground of non-being and that non-being derives all its efficacy from being; Pierre's absence, for instance, cannot arise or happen without the cafe, the being, as a ground. That is why Sartre says, " nothingness hanuts being " or " non-being exists only on the sturface of being ".[11] Sartre experiences this implication as Roquentin in *Nausea:* " in order to imagine nothingness, you had to be there already, right in the world, with your eyes wide open and alive."[12]

But although non-being is founded on being, it is by consuciosness, that is to say, by man, in Sartre's view, that it comes to the world. Nothingness cannot nihilate itself; it is to be nihilated. It follows then that there must be a being whose propoerty is to nihilate nothingness and to sustain it in its very existence. Such a being cannot be the being-in-itself because it is inconceivable that as full positivity it should maintain a nothingness outside itself; not can it be non-being which has no power to nihilate itself. Sartre thus concludes that it is by consciouness and consicousness alone that nothingness comes to things in the world. Nothingness is the very being of the being-for-itself. That is, consciousness itself is nothingness: " The being by which Nothingness arrives in the world must nihilate Nothingness in its Being.. The Being by which Nothingness comes to the world must be its own Nothingness. "[13]

What Sartre wants to say is perhaps not difficult to understand. What seems difficult is to refute his views too easily, as some critics have tried to do. We may refer here to Professor Ayer's criticism of Sartre's notion of non-being: " In particular, Sartre's reasoning on the subject seems to me exactly on a par with that of the King in 'Alice through the Looking-glass'. 'I see nobody on the road', said Alice. 'I only wish I had such eyes', remarked the King. 'To be able to see no body'. And at that distance too"..In these cases the fallacy is easy enough to detect, but although Sartre's reasoning is less engagingly naive, I do not think it is any better. The point is that words like 'nothing' and 'nobody' are not used as the names of something insubstantial and maysterious; they are not used to name anything at all. To say that two objects are separated by nothing is to say that they are not separated; and that is all it amounts to ".[14]

Professor Ayer's criticism seems to be pertinent one; but he seems to have failed to understand the real meaning and significance

of Sartre's use of the term 'non-being' or 'nothingness'. One should not perhaps disagree with Ayer that terms like 'nobody' and 'nothing' are not used to name something non-existent or insubsantial and that 'to say that two objects are separated by nothing is to say that they are not separated'. But it seems unfortunate to suppose that Sartre should make such an elementary mistake. Ayer's criticism is based on the common, ordinary meaning of 'notnihg' while, for Sartre, 'nothing' or nothingness has a deeper meaning. In common usage, as in Ayer's sense of the term, if nothing separates one object from the other, it means that they are absolutely inseparable. But when Sartre maintains that consciousness is separated from being (in-itself) by nothing or nothingness, does it mean that they are inseparable ? Consciousness is certainly separated from being and it is nothingness that distinguishes it from being. It is this nothingness which is, according to Sartre, the very being of consciousness.

The fundamental mistake of Ayer's criticism lies in his wrogly supposing that by 'nothing' Sartre is referring to something absolutely non-existent, void or empty or what he calls 'insubstantial' or 'mysterious'. Both in western and Indian thought the term 'nothing' seems more or less to signify this sort of meaning, i. e., the absolute emptiness or voidness. In Parmenides' philosophy as well as in Heraclitus' this meaning is perhaps most clearly evident when the former claims that non-being or becoming, the opposite of Being, is unreal and illusory, that Being is, non-being simply is not; and when, in complete reverse, the latter maintains that only the non-being is real, the being, the eternal or the permanent is illusory. In Śaṅkara's Advaitavāda, a Vedānta monistic theory of reality, the sensible world is described as Māyā (illusion), māyā being a power of Brahma, the ultimate reality—insubstantial and mysterious therefore signifies nothing. An extreme form of the philosophy of 'nothing' is also to be found in the Mādhyamika School of the Buddhist tradition, according to which, the phenomenal world is absolutely void (Śūnya), unreal or illusory, i. e., nothing.

It will be wrong and unjust to identify the Sartrean notion of nothingness with the ordinary or the traditional philosophical meaning of nothing. Sartre uses the term 'nothing' in order to characterize the peculiar nature of consicousness, the human reality as distinguished from being, the unconscious. When he claims

that man or consciousness is a nothingness, he does not mean that human reality is unreal or illusory, empty or void, 'insubstantial' or 'mysterious'; he rather means to imply that consciousness is different from being, that is, it is non-being or 'no-thing'. One may of course question whether the distinction Sartre intends to make between being-for-itself and being-in-itself is a perfect one, but one cannot deny that there is a certain fundamental difference between the two, that consciousness is different from a table, a knife etc.

Sartre tries to explain this point of difference by characterizing the immediate structure of the for-itself. In the introduction of 'Being and Nothingness' he writes: " Consciousness is a being such that in its being, its being is in question in so far as this being implies a being other than itself."[15] The being Sartre is referring to here as implied by consciousness other than itself is the being-in-itself, which, in other words, means to say that consciousness is always consciousness of something other than itself, i. e., being. But what he means by saying that "consciousness is a being such that in its being, its being is in questions ". Sartre explains latter in separate pages of the same book. " This means ", he writes, " that the being of consciousness does not coincide with itself in a full equivalence ".[16] Such equivalence is the character of the being-in-itself which he expresses in the simple formula: being is what it is. " In the in-itself there is not a particle of being which is not wholly within itself without distance "; there is no duality in it; 'it is a fullness'. " The distinguishing characteristic of consciousness, on the other hand," argues Sartre, "is that it is a decompression of being. Indeed it is impossible to define it is as coincidence with itself ".[17] The being-in-itself is static, fixed; it is what it is; it coincides with itself and is absolutely identical with itself. To repeat the same example, a particular table is simply and purely a table; it cannot be other than what it is. But consciousness cannot be limited by any particular quality or character. A consciousness is neither a belief, nor an imagination, nor a thinking. It cannot be thought as what it is; it is not what it is.

This is what Sarte calls 'presence to itself'. Consciousness he maintains, exists as presence itself as not being identical with itself, as being its own negation. To be present to itself means not to be wholly itself. Consciousness is present to itself means it is not what it is. "Presence is an immediate deterioration of

coincidence, for it supposes separation".[18] Ordinarily, separation occurs by a distance in space, by a lapse of time or by a psychological difference, and so on. But consciousness separates itself from itself by nothingness. It exists at a distance from itself as a presence to itself due to nothingness which it carries in its own being.

To say that man is nothing, therefore, does not mean to consider him void or empty or 'insubstantial', but rather to characterize him as non-static who, as distinguished from the in-itself, is not merely conscious but also defining and deciding himself, striving towards an open and virgin future, surpassing himself, transcending beyond himself, acting, choosing, negating or nihilating, and so on. All this implies the essential being of man's freedom which Sartre tries to explain through his idea of nothingness. In the Sartrean sense, in fact, nothingness and freedom are one and the same thing. That is, to say that man is nothing is simply to say that he is free, and vice versa.

This idea of freedom or nothingness may be illustrated by reference to the principal character in Sartre's famous trilogy 'Roads to Freedom'. In the first chapter Marcelle characterizes the nature of Mathieu when the latter visits the former : "When you look at yourself, you imagine you aren't what you see, you imagine you are nothing. That is your ideal : you want to be nothing."[19] Although Mathieu denies it in order just to please Marcelle he is, in fact, a nothingness and wants to be nothing i. e. wants to be free. That is why when Marcelle alleges again by saying "Yes-you want to be free, Absolutely free. It's your vice", Mathieu agress that he wants to be free but denies that his freedom is a vice : "Its not a vice. It's. . what else can a man do ?" Marcelle repeats : 'Yes, yes-its your vice'; But Mathieu still denies : 'It's not a vice. It's how I'm made'. Marcelle then objects : "Why aren't people made like that, if it isn't a vice?" But Mathieu claims that everybody is made free : "They are, only they don't know it". Sartre makes Mathieu here say the same thing as what he says through the mouth of Zeus in 'The Flies'. Zeus says to Aegisthus, "The bitterness of knowing men are free. Yes, Aegisthus, they are free. But your subjects do not know it, and you do".[20]

Man is thus, in Sartre's view, a being with a flexible nature, with a non-static and fleeling character. He is not what he is; he

is not wholly himself; he does not coincide with himself and separates himself for himself by his own nothingness; he is not a being (non-being) and not a thing (nothing), i. e., he is free. But nevertheless, Sartre holds, consciousness is and dose exist " even if it is a being which is not what it is and which is what it is not..... The for-itself is, in the manner of an event, in the sense in which I can say that Philip II has been, that my friend Pierre is or exists. The for-itself is, in so far as it appears in a condition which it has not chosen, as pierre is a French bourgeois in 1942, as Schmitt was a Berlin worker in 1870; it is in so far as it is thrown into a world and abandoned in a "situation".... It is in so for as there is in it something of which it is not the foundation—its presence to the world".[21]

Consciousness, Sartre thinks, is or exists simply as pure contingency like every other object in the world and never as a necessity. Sartre's Roquentin suffers from nausea of this new discovery of contingency: " The essential things is contingency. I mean that, by definition, existence is not necessity. To exists is simply to be there....There are people, I believe, who have understood that. Only they tried to overcome this coningency by inventing a necessity, causal being. But no necessary being can explain existence: contingency is not an illusion....it is absolute, and consequently perfect gratuitousness. Everything is gratuitous, that park, this town, and myself."[22] It is this contingent natute of thing and of human reality that Sartre calls de trop or superfluous: "Superfluous, the chestnut tree, over there, opposite me, a little to the left. Superfluous, the Velleda.....And I—weak, languid, obscene, digesting, tossing about dismal thoughts—I too was superfluous"[23]. Thus the original question for Sartre is: " why is this being exactly such and not otherwise?" He finds no reason why objects and consciousness exist in a certain way but not is a different way. He thinks their existence is contingent or superfluous; they are simply there. Consciousness, he says, " has the feeling of its complete gratuity; it apprehends itself as being there for nothing, as being de trop".[24] Satre is using here the trem 'nothing' in a different sense meaning 'no reason'.

It will be perhaps worng to identify the views of Roquentin in 'Nausea' as Sartre's, but anyway the statement that 'no necessary being can exalain existence' may be rightly questioned. For a theist or a follower of Kierkegaard may easily find an explanation to

offer as to why men and objects should exist in a particular way but not otherwise by inscribing a sort of telos on their existence. Whether one accepts such explanation or not is of course a different matter. If a necessary being is assumed to exist who cerates men and every other object in the world with a purpose, there is no reason why existence could not be explained. But to an atheist like Sartre such explanation does not seem to have any value. Sartre, on the other hand, claims that man has been thrown into world without his own choosnig and abandoned alone, without excuse, without any justification and without any necessity. He is condemned to freedom; he has not created himself but nevertheless he is free. Mathieu is such a free person: "He was free, free in every way, free to behave like a fool or a machine, free to accept, free to refuse, free to equivocate: to marry, to give up the game, to drag this dead weight about with him for years to come. He could do what he liked, no one had the right to advise him, there would be for him no Good nor Evil unless he brought them into being. All around him things were gathered in a circle, expectant, impassive and indicative of nothing. He was alone, enveloped in this monstrous silence, free and alone, without assistance and without excuse, condemned to decide without support from any quarter, condemned for ever to be free".[25]

But Sartre's own views, in fact, do not allow a man to be infinitely free, that is, to do what he likes, because when a man is thrown and abandoned in the world, he cannot but assume the historical situation in which he finds himself, and the moment he assumes it he is to be held responsible for everything he does. Everyone of us, according to Sartre, is thrown into the world and is tied up to a particular situation—to a family, a nation, a group and so on. One cannot escape these contingent situations; one must assume them because one has to exist always on the foundation of a given situation. We do not create a situation; it is already there in the world as an itself, contingent and superfluous; we are simply present to it—we cannot escape it, and once we assume it, we are responsible for it. In Sartre's view, the burden of such responsibility is tremendously great because in acting or choosing for himself a man is responsible not only for himself but for the entire human race.[26]

A contingent situation which one assumes is what Sartre calls facticity. "Without facticity, Sartre argues, consciousness could

choose its attachments to the world...I could determine myself to 'be born a worker' or to 'be born a bourgeois'.[27] The for-itself or consciousness remains non-essential and contingent in relation to the situation but the moment it assumes it, exists in that facticity. It is thus by assuming this facticity that, according to Sartre, it is possible to say that consciousness is, that it exists, although it is not what it is and it is what it is not. The being of consciousness is thus contingent and is never necessarily determined by any particular situation. The for-itself is or exists, but it is only in the form of not being what it is. A cafe waiter, for example, is a cafe waiter in the mode of not being one. If one could be a cafe waiter solely and absolutely, he should certainly constitute himself as a contingent block of identity like an object. But consciousness is never in coincidence with itself—it is without an identity with itself. A cafe waiter is not a cafe waiter in the way an object is simply an object because his being does not solely consist in becoming a cafe waiter; he is free : free to surpass himself, i. e., to give up being a cafe waiter and assume something else. Nevertheless he is still a cafe waiter in so far as he is acting or behaving as a cafe waiter and not as a diplomat or a journalist. That is why Sartre thinks man is what he is not and he is not what he is.

What Sartre says about this general structure of man as a free being seems very interesting and there should perhaps be little dispute over this. The problem is, however, a different one : how is this free nature of man implied by the concept of negation? If the aim or significance of Sartre's concept of nothingness, as argued earlier, is to characterize man not as 'empty' or 'void' but as a free being as distinguished from the being-in-itself, it is questionable whether his method of doing so in the forms of interrogation, destruction and negative judgment is necesssary at all. It seems that such a method is both dangerous and confusing. Dangerous because Sartre's views on destruction go contrary to the facts and by his own use of the term, 'nothing' has a new implication different from the common one.

Concerning destruction Sartre confuses two different things : (1) experiencing by somebody that something is destroyed and (2) that it is destroyed by the person experiencing. He argues that nothing in nature is destroyed; what is called destruction is simply a change. By such a destruction or change something

is no more there; a non-being comes into existence; but there can be no such non-being unless there is a person to experience such a change. Sartre, therefore, concludes that it is the experiencing person who causes this change or destruction and he is not only the origin of such non-being, he himself is a non-being Such an argument seems nonsense and sounds very ridiculous. Whether we call a particular occurance in nature a destruction or a change matters little; it is simply a case of using different terms. for the same thing. But what is important and matters most is whether an occurance, destruction or change, is itself to be regarded as being caused by the man, the human witness. No doubt a change in nature in the form of destruction will remain unknown and unexperienced until somebody is there to witness it. But does it imply that the change itself is caused by man the witness ? Man is at best responsible for the knowledge of what may be called natural or cosmological change, but not for its making. If an earthquake kills one thousand people, we will experience it, but to say that the destruction or the change through the earthquake is caused by us is to say that we are responsible for the loss of the thousand lives. Or, again, to say that we bring forth destruction in nature is equivalent to saying that we maintain the heat of the sun or the temperature of the day.

Almost similar to this notion of destruction is Sartre's argument on negation. Something is not there ; this is a negation. And it is this negation Sartre often refers as non-being. Pierre's absence from the cafe is the example he offers. I expect to see Pierre at the cafe but he is not there. A non-being is born in the world. According to Desan, " this is a negative judgment, it is not at all a ' non-being ' localized either in the cafe or in my mind"[2] .Desan does not seem to have grasped Sartre's real implication. If Sartre wishes to call Pierre's absence from the cafe a ' non-being ' there is no reason why he should not do so. Desan further argues : " Non-being is not even phenomenologically perceptible; how can Sartre as a phenomenologist treat of it and change it with complex activity, activity of which non-being certainly is incapable ?" Sartre may here argue that, whether positively or negatively, Pierre's absence is at least realizable, that we can feel or experience that he is not present at the cafe.

The real problem is thus not whether Pierre's absence produces a non-being or not but rather whether his absence implies a

non-being in me. Just as destruction or change in nature is independent of the human witness although he experiences it, so is Pierre's absence from the cafe independent of me although it will remain an unknown fact without me. In other words. just as destruction is not caused by the witness so is Pierre's absence not created by me. My non-being thus does not follow from Pierre's absence under any condition whatsoever. I simply experience his absence from the cafe, but it is not the fact that I create his absence from the cafe.

As regards interrogation, Sartre argues, when a question is asked, an absence of knowledge is thereby implied in the questioner and this creates a non-being in him. If the absence of knowledge is what Sartre calls a non-being, asking a question is then not at all essential, for if I lack a knowledge of somethining, I shall continue to lack it until I learn it and this will create a non-being in me, whether I ask a question or not is of no importance. Again, a question, Sartre argues, implies always an objective possibility of a negative answer; and even a positive reply implies a negation and thereby creates a non-being, for in it something is affirmed at the exclusion of the other like "it is thus and not otherwise". If this is the case, then not only in interrogation there is a permanent objective possibility of a negative reply, in our every language such a possibility is always there because when we use a language, i. e., talk, we say a particular thing at the exclusion of the other such as, we talk about 'this and and not that'.

It should now be clear that in order to show that man is a non-being or nothingness i. e., free, these forms of interrogation, destruction or negative judgment are not essential. Throughout his entire writings Sartre makes a ceaseless effort to show how man is condemned to freedom or how his nature is that what is not and is not that what it is. He has shown, for example that a cafe waiter is a cafe waiter in the manner of not being one or that man is free to surpass or transcend himself, free to accept or reject the facticity, free to obey or denounce God, free to make his own nature and values, and so forth. In order to show this free nature of man it is not at all necessary to refer to interrogation, destruction or negation. Apart from asking questions, experiencing destruction in nature or experiencing sombody's absence, there are other innumerable human activities

which are sufficient enough to prove how consciousness is distinguished from being, that is, how man is a nothingness and free.

On the other hand, by using the term 'nothing' in what may be called a completely new and extraordinary sense Sartre may be said to be guilty of misleading his readers. This becomes dangerous particularly when other existentialist thinkers use the same term in the ordinary sense. Kierkegaard's use of the term 'nothing', for instance, seems to be in accord with the common meaning and hence is opposed to Sartre's. In an innocent state as Adam's before the Fall, Kierkegaard contends, a man is ignorant of good or evil; his spirit may be dreaming but is not yet realized; there is peace and repose in him; but there is something more, not dissention nor strife—it is what Kierkegaard calls 'nothing'.[2] 'Nothing' here does not mean anything specified, positive or substantial; it simply means nothing at all—nothing to strive for or to be concerned with. But Sartre uses the the term 'nothing' with a quite different meaning from this anyone who is not thoroughly acquainted with his views about the nature of consciousness is sure to be misled. Such use of a term in discord with its ordinary meaning is arbitrary and it seems that Sartre could have explained the nature of consciousness or man's free predicament in the world, he has certainly attempted, more satisfactorily in many other ways but not necessarily through the notion of nothingness.

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NOTES

1. J. P. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes, London, 1957, p. 5.
2. Ibid., p. 4.
3. Ibid., p. 7.
4. Ibid., p. 8.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., p. 9.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., p. 22.
9. Ibid., p. 74.
10. Ibid., p. 14.

11. Ibid., p. 16.
12. J. P. Sartre, *Nausea*, trans. Robert Baldick, Penguin Books, 1965, pp. 192-93.
13. *Being and Nothingness*, p. 23.
14. A. J. Ayer, "Novelist-Philosophers : J. P. Sartre", *Horizon* Vol. xii, pp. 18-19.
15. *Being and Nothingnesss*, p. xii.
16. Ibid., p. 74.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid., p. 77
19. J. P. Sartre, *The Age of Reason*, trans. Eric Sutton, Penguin Books, 1961, p. 13.
20. J. P. Sartre, *The Flies* (along with Altona and Men without Shadows), Penguin Plays, 1962, p. 291.
21. *Being and Nothingness*, p. 79.
22. *Nausea*, p. 188.
23. Ibid., p. 184.
24. *Being and Nothingness*, p. 94.
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