SARTRE ON 'ORIGINAL CHOICE'

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Abstract:

The vicissitudes of the concept of original choice illustrate the change, and yet the continuity, of Sartre's existentialist thought as he gradually changed the focus of his attentions from psychological to sociological aspects of "the human condition." The relationship of the doctrine to Sartre's own "existential psychoanalysis" is described. The point at which Sartre explicitly repudiated the earlier doctrine of original choice and the general characteristics of his revised doctrine are explicaded. In general, Sartre's current position is that the goal-directed structure of human endeavor is a freely-created variation upon the conditioning imposed by society, aiming at liberation from such external determinism. Sartre continues to reject the notion of a causal determinism, psychological or social, which makes the person a product--a "thing"--and which reduces human freedom to the status of illusion.
Sartre on 'Original Choice'

Attention to the function and fate of one key concept— that of "original choice"— provides much insight into the development of Jean-Paul Sartre's thought from his earlier, subjectivist, existentialism into its current quasi-Marxist form. Even Sartre's 1960 Critique of Dialectical Reason, with its social and political concerns, presupposes a kind of individual psychology which first began to take shape in the 1937 essay The Transcendence of the Ego.

In the early work, Sartre rejects Husserl's postulate of a transcendental ego as a fixed "given," constituting its intentional objects, the phenomena. Sartre declares that, rather, consciousness is nothing in itself, it is "a nothing." All fixed "givens," including supposed psychic structures, are objects of consciousness but make up no part of it. Sartre believes that only through such a view of consciousness can one avoid supposing a fixed human nature which would causally determine how we conduct ourselves. He argues that Husserl's doctrine (as Sartre understands it) is contrary to experience and raises insuperable theoretical difficulties. This view of the ontological status of consciousness underlies Sartre's later assertions that consciousness is "absolutely free" and that man is therefore completely responsible for all of his choices and actions.

Sartre says consciousness first appears as the "negation" of all its objects. He means by this that there is an absolute, categorical distinction between them and itself. Consciousness then structures itself by means of an "original choice." This choice is an attempt by consciousness, when confronted with the "problem of being," to "recover the totality of the non-conscious"--the universe of material things.

This choice is given a temporal, goal-directed structure by means of a fundamental or original project. In aiming at goals, consciousness is set in motion. The problem of being is the desire of consciousness--"nothingness"--to acquire "being"--physical existence. One's operative projects are relatively modest in scope: one desires to be an artist, a writer, etc. But all human projects have the formal structure of aiming to make that individual God: in other words, at making in-itself (objects of consciousness) identical with for-itself (nothingness, consciousness). The artist tries to create the world by means of paints, brushes, canvas, etc.; the writer makes his own world of words, and so on. The upshot is that all men are propelled into the world, trying to accomplish an impossible task: that of becoming God. God, Sartre tells us, is a contradictory concept (e.g. BN p. 615). Since man exhausts his life in pursuit of an impossible goal, "man is a futile passion." Nevertheless, human reality appears only within the dynamic field created by an original choice of, and projection toward, ultimate ideal ends (BN p. 443).

My ultimate and initial project--for these are but one--is, as we shall see, always the outline of a solution of the problem of being. But this solution is not first conceived and then realized; we are this solution. We make it exist by means of our very engagement, and therefore we shall be able to apprehend it only by living it. Thus we are always wholly present to ourselves; but precisely because we are wholly present, we can not hope to have an analytical and detailed consciousness of what we are (BN p. 463).

The following summary is based on Being and Nothingness, translated by Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956). First published as L'être et le néant (Paris: Gallimard, 1943). Hereafter referred to as BN in textual references.

BN p. 456. Also see pp. 462, 463, 68, 480, 509, 443 and 39.
Most of the time men are busy in the world, actively seeking to accomplish their ultimate or intermediate projects. But there come times when a person suspends his engagement in the world and becomes aware of the awesome freedom with which he chooses from the wide field of marvelous and terrible possibilities (BN pp. 39-41). Bad faith is, among other things, the attempt to ignore or repress awareness of possible actions or goals which have not been chosen. We are freer than we want to be, because we are free to do things we have not chosen to do: this freedom causes us to become anguished. Bad faith tries to avoid anguish by repressing awareness of freedom. A common form of bad faith is to believe oneself to be totally controlled by external factors. Freudian and behaviorist psychologies provide deterministic psychological doctrines; Marxism provides a deterministic social and economic doctrine. All such doctrines enable men to avoid anguish by telling them they are not free and, hence, are not responsible for what they have done or shall become. Deterministic theories always serve the purposes of "bad faith" if they purport to explain human conduct. "Bad faith"--la mauvaise foi--is one of the most celebrated of Sartre's concepts, but he gives it no one definition or use.

Early in the pages of Being and Nothingness, bad faith is analogous to what Freud called "repression," a component in "the secondary process." Sartre here describes bad faith as a negation directed inward, a denial of one's full potentialities, and he implies that all repression is (in some sense never made clear) at least mildly reprehensible. As such, bad faith is the anguished flight from recognition of "absolute freedom." Later (BN p. 471 ff), when Sartre is concerned to account for Freud's "unconscious" mental processes, we are told that bad faith involves a conflict between reflective volition (will) and unreflective intention. "...The for-itself can make voluntary decisions which are opposed to the fundamental ends which it has chosen. These decisions can be only voluntary--that is, reflective. In fact they can derive only from an error committed either in good faith or in bad faith against the ends which I pursue..." (BN p. 471). Volition is a product of impure reflection while unreflective intention is the direct expression of original choice and fundamental project. The person engaging in impure (naive) reflection wants to suppose that his "will" is the cause of his actions. But the will, itself, is a fiction (among others) manufactured in reflection when consciousness tries to account for its own functioning, and "willing" has no control over what a person actually will do.
But the "will" is a "thing," an object of consciousness but not a feature of consciousness in its actual functioning; like all objects (in Sartre's view) a will is inert and cannot act. "Willing" is a reflective act which only masks our "profound intention" from ourselves. The result is that our underlying "profound intentions" override what we "will." If we "will" to fall asleep, we stay awake; if we "will" not to think about something, we think about it for just that reason. To account for the impotence of volition, the psychoanalyst invents the fiction of the unconscious mind. But, says Sartre, it is not that an unconscious mind lurks like Svengali behind the conscious mind, controlling it by some occult process. Rather, the psychoanalytic theorist has only supposed that this fiction, the "will," actually describes an attitude of the total conscious mind and that he must invent still another fiction, an unconscious mind, to account for the impotence of the will. For Sartre, it is the unreflective intention revealed in action which always wins out over volition. "Since the upsurge of a voluntary decision finds its motive in the fundamental free choice of my ends, it can attack these ends in appearance only. It is therefore only within the compass of my fundamental project that the will can be efficacious..." (BN p. 475).

Both voluntary decision and fundamental free choice and also the apparent conflict occur within complete consciousness. The "unconscious mind" is an erroneous notion cooked up to remedy the consequences of a prior theoretical error on the part of the psychoanalyst. And this second version of "bad faith" serves to account for the supposed "unconscious" processes which cause mental illness. For Sartre, it appears, mental illness is "within the compass" of the fundamental project, since both ingredients in the conflict, willed decision and underlying "profound intention", are expressions of original choice and fundamental project. That is, we have chosen our mental illness: it is not something that happens to us from outside.

Use of the same term--"bad faith"--for two different processes creates some obscurity and confusion. Bad faith is inevitable, it would seem, in the type of repression mentioned in the early pages (BN pp. 39-49). If there is a choice of some ends, other ends must be excluded ("negated"). "I" come into existence in and through this exclusion of alternatives, and retain my personality and character only through some such repression of competing possible ends.
When I constitute myself as the comprehension of a possible as my possible, I must recognize its existence at the end of my project and apprehend it as myself, awaiting me down there in the future... But it happens that I force myself at the same time to be distracted from the constitution of other possibilities which contradict my possibility. In truth I can not avoid positing their existence by the same movement which generates the chosen possibility as mine. (BN p. 41)

Since one constitutes himself through a choice of ends one must reject alternative ends merely in order to exist. This act of repression is necessary to maintain one's existence. Fundamental project and original choice are merely two aspects of the "upsurge" of consciousness, for to choose and to be engaged in the world trying to achieve one's ultimate goals are equivalent (BN p. 443). Thus, any existing person must be in bad faith and this can be called the a priori formulation of bad faith.

On the other hand, the conflict of reflective volition and unreflective intention is contingent: one must await the actual appearance of such conflict to know that bad faith of this type exists. This can be called an a posteriori formulation of bad faith. This second type may be only a consequence of the former but its appearance during the unfolding of a life must be contingent, since a person could not know in advance that it must appear. The life might end too soon.

Whatever one's actual projects may be, they all only manifest one's fundamental (or "initial") project, which can be made explicit by means of a phenomenological method which, Sartre says, "is what we shall call existential psychoanalysis" (BN p. 480).

Existential psychoanalysis seeks to determine the original choice. This original choice operating in the face of the world and being a choice of position in the world is total like the complex; it is prior to logic like the complex. It is this which decides the attitude of the person when confronted with logic and principles; therefore there can be no possibility of questioning it in conformance to logic. It brings together in a prelogical synthesis the totality of the existent, and as such it is the center of reference for an infinity of polyvalent meanings. (BN p. 570)
The original choice is the source of all meanings, relationships and values and is identical with consciousness itself (BN pp. 462-463). This choice is non-reflective, spontaneous (BN p. 68), irrational and absurd (BN p. 448) and can be neither caused nor motivated because it not only creates all causes, motives, instrumental complexes and "coefficients of adversity" but it even "causes the in-itself to come into the world" (BN p. 509). We are always fully aware of "the choice which we are" (BN p. 464).

The doctrine of original choice offered by Sartre is quite similar to a doctrine of the German idealist Friedrich Schelling, as described by the historian Frederick Copleston:

Schelling...finds the determining ground of a man's successive choices in his intelligible essence or character which stands to his particular acts as antecedent to consequent... (Schelling depicts) a man's intelligible character as due to an original self-positing of the ego, as the result of an original choice by the ego itself. He can thus say both that a man's actions are in principle predictable and that they are free. They are necessary; but this necessity is an inner necessity, imposed by the ego's original choice, not a necessity externally imposed by God. 'This inner necessity is itself freedom, the essence of man is essentially his own act; necessity and freedom are mutually immanent, as one reality which appears as one or the other only when looked at from different sides...'5

What we find in both Schelling and Sartre is a kind of "freely-chosen" determinism. Sartre often has been misunderstood as claiming that each everyday choice and action is "absolutely free" or completely undetermined. On the contrary, Sartre says, rational, voluntary deliberation, as in our everyday decisions, "is always a deception" (BN p. 450). "When the will intervenes, the decision is taken, and it has no other value than that of making the announcement" (BN p. 451).

Sartre repudiates any notion that each everyday choice is undetermined.

(Is freedom) a series of capricious jerks comparable to the Epicurean clinamen? Am I free to wish anything whatsoever at any moment whatsoever? And must I at each instant which I wish to explain this or that project encounter the irrationality of a free and contingent choice?...We do not intend here to speak of anything arbitrary or capricious... (Freedom) does not mean that I am free to get up or to sit down, to enter or to go out, to flee or to face danger--if one means by freedom here a pure capricious, unlawful, gratuitous, and incomprehensible contingency. (BN pp. 452-53)

One's everyday choices and actions are called free only because they issue from the logically and temporally prior original choice. Says Sartre: "...Every action must be intentional; each action must, in fact, have an end, and the end in turn is referred to a cause...To speak of an act without a cause is to speak of an act which would lack the intentional structure of every act; and the proponents of free will by searching for it on the level of the act which is in the process of being performed can only end up by rendering the act absurd." (BN p. 437) Thus, a present-moment choice undetermined by the original choice and fundamental project would be an absurdity. One escapes the determinism of the operative choice and project only through "radical conversion...an abrupt metamorphosis of (the) initial project--i.e., by another choice of myself and of my ends," a change which is "always possible" (BN p. 464). Sartre says that such a conversion cannot be motivated or caused by the prior project. But a "liberating instant" can appear and become the occasion when a "new project...rises on its ruins" (BN pp. 475-76). But since a new choice and project must be no less irrational and arbitrary than the old one, any sort of choice at all might ensue. It would seem that only an "other" would be in a position to evaluate whether the conversion had produced an improvement, since only an observer would possess an undisturbed value system by which such an assessment could be made. Presumably this "other" would be an existential psychoanalyst
but, in Sartre's theoretical scheme, an analyst
could not govern or direct the new choice and
project. The new choice, like the first one,
must be irrational, spontaneous and self-generated.
So the result of "radical conversion" might well
be that some Dr. Jekyll might be changed into a
Mr. Hyde.

Sartre declares that unreflective consciousness--
the direct expression of original choice--"can never
be deceived about itself" while reflection often
leads to error (BN p. 471). Sartre here implies
that momentary impulse is more to be trusted than
a reasoned decision. Such views lend credence to
descriptions of him as an irrationalist, despite
the tone of rationalism and appearance of system
also present in these writings.

In these latter passages, Sartre has been dealing
with the relationship of reflective volition (will)
to unreflective intention. As has been noted earlier,
one kind of bad faith originates in a supposed conflict
between will and actual intention. We "will" one
thing but intend something else, and are fully aware
of our actual intentions, Sartre says. When things
miscarry, we proclaim our good intentions but actually
only what we willed was good--our intentions were
quite otherwise. This conflict between volition and
intentionality, strongly reminiscent of the views of
St. Augustine regarding choice and will, provides a
conceptual device by means of which Sartre believes
he not only can account for theories of the unconscious
mind but even for the complexities of neuroses and
psychoses. It is Sartre's evident preoccupation with
Freudian theory that has led him to place original
choice in a deterministic relationship to everyday
choices. "Original choice" fulfills the function of
the Oedipus complex in Freudian theory and the inferiority
complex in Adler's rival theory. Since, for Freud,
unconscious mental processes always control conscious
processes, Sartre feels compelled to make the original
choice "freely" chosen itself but deterministic with
regard to conscious volition. Since "original choice"
is prior to all experience, Sartre thinks he has out-
flanked deterministic psychological theories. Sartre
denies that original choice is unconscious. It
structures consciousness and is itself conscious, as
part of consciousness. We are aware of our choice and
initial project but are unable to make them objects of
conscious thought, since--as objects--they would be
unconscious in-itself, "things." Consciousness is a
nothingness--not-a-thing--and any attempt to make it
an object of thought (which occurs in what Sartre calls "impure reflection") results in the manufacture of fictive entities, such as "ego" and "will." Only "purified reflection"—reflection governed by Sartre's version of the phenomenological method—can avoid this hazard and disclose the structure provided by the original choice and project. Consciousness is structured but this structure has little in common with the mental hardware posited by rational psychology. The existential analyst will use the phenomenological method as both he and the subject seek to make explicit the original choice and project which the subject already is aware of but cannot formulate.

Some will declare that Sartre's approach is itself ensnarled in a kind of verbal confusion. Why not say, if choice and goal are not explicitly known, that they are unconscious? For Sartre, the issue of human freedom and responsibility is at stake. If an unconscious mind is an alien power which governs the conscious mind, man is not free. But the whole concept of an unconscious mind strikes Sartre as preposterous. As was noted in this study earlier, this psychoanalytic concept is deemed a fiction cooked up to remedy the consequences of a prior theoretical error. Once the Freudian theorist has populated the mind with a conscious volition, he must invent "unconscious" entities and processes to account for the impotence of volition. Sartre asks how a "censor" could be aware of the activities of the "complex," and vice versa, so that one could try to control or outwit the other? (BN p. 52) His answer is that all of this can be correctly understood as a project of consciousness to deceive itself: "bad faith."

However, Sartre's own strategy is expensive, in terms of credibility. The conditions of choice, in any ordinary sense, are lacking: only a person can "choose" and a choice can only be made between alternatives which already exist. But in Sartre's scheme, nothing pre-exists the choice, since it brings persons, world and alternatives into existence. Since the choice is "irrational" and "absurd," it seems to be just the kind of capricious event which Sartre purports to abhor. Original choice is called free only because it is undetermined. Obviously, it must be undetermined if nothing exists to determine it. Sartre's "original choice" is merely an event, not a choice, and a miraculous event at that, since it "causes" the appearance "in general" of a world (BN p. 39) and even "causes the in-itself to come into the world" (BN p. 509).
But unless a world exists and some set of meanings is operative, there are no alternatives between which to choose. If alternatives pre-exist a choice, then the world already displays a structure not derived from original choice and which may operate as a limit to that choice and to freedom. Original choice, if it exists, is a miraculous act of creation ex nihilo. If such a miracle can come to pass, why not any miracle at all, why not the coincidence of for-itself with in-itself? If logic entitles Sartre to dismiss the latter possibility, then logic equally rules out Sartre's own version of the miracle of creation. This incredible spasm, which Sartre calls "spontaneity," is said to be the origin of man's "absolute freedom." Such a notion is not merely an absurdity, it is a monstrosity.

Sartre, many years later, unequivocally repudiated this earlier theory of "original choice" with the following statement in the Critique of Dialectical Reason: "The fundamental alienation does not result, as Being and Nothingness would have it, wrongly, from a prenatal choice: it results from a univocal connection of inferiority which unites man as practical organism with his environment" (CRD p. 286). Here, Sartre is saying that man does not make a godlike undetermined "choice" which invests the world with meanings and values. Rather: "All is discovered in need: it is the first totalizing connection of this material being, a man, with the material ensemble of which he is a part. This connection is univocal and of inferiority"(CRD p. 166). By designating need (besoin) to be an interior relationship, Sartre is serving notice that need is subjective, but that this subjectivity propels man into the world. Further, need is not chosen. Man cannot escape entanglement in the world, not even by the marvelous concept of negation which played so important a role in Sartre's earlier views. Does this amount to an abandonment of the doctrine of man's "absolute freedom"? Evidently. But man is still free. "Need" motivates a man to act but does not determine either the selection of ends or of means. Specific ends and available means can be known only in terms of a factual situation, and this is the point at which man's freedom can operate. Although Sartre no longer indulges in his extravagant assertions about the extent of human freedom, a convincing case can be made for the view that Sartre's new viewpoint is largely a change of emphasis. It
continues to be true for him that: "The environment can act on the subject only to the exact extent that he comprehends it; that is, transforms it into a situation." (BN p. 572) "Comprehends" in this quotation corresponds roughly to the later term "interiorizes;" indeed the concept of "lack" in the earlier work can be understood in the sense of "need," as in the Critique, with a minimum of effort. One has comprehended or interiorized a situation once he assesses a value-neutral factual situation in terms of his own goals, values and needs, thus converting this situation into a field for action.

The consequences of Sartre's revision of his earlier psychological theory can be discerned in his 1952 "existential psychoanalysis" of the novelist-playwright Jean Genet. Genet is said to have made an original choice, but not during infancy or some pre-natal stage. Rather, this choice was the adoption of an attitude around which the character and personality of the maturing Genet crystallized. The choice occurred after a "conversion"--an experience whose effect was like a traumatic shock--which, Sartre says, changed the course of the youth's life, sometime between the ages of ten and fifteen years. But this conversion does not involve the change or abandonment of an earlier "choice." There is just a growing recognition by the young Genet of the fact that he cannot undo the events that led up to the traumatic experience of being caught during an act of theft. A significant new way of treating the old problem of freedom and determinism appears in Sartre's analysis. "We are not lumps of clay," Sartre asserts, "and what is important is not what people make of us but what we ourselves make of what they have made of us." (Genet p. 49) Later, Sartre tells us:

I have tried to do the following: to indicate the limit of psychoanalytical interpretation and Marxist explanation and to demonstrate that freedom alone can account for a person in his totality; to show this freedom at grips with destiny, crushed at first by its mischances,

then turning upon them and digesting them little by little; to prove that genius is not a gift but the way out that one invents in desperate cases; to learn the choice that a writer makes of himself, of his life and of the meaning of the universe, including even the formal characteristics of his style and composition, even the structure of his images and of the particularity of his tastes; to review in detail the history of his liberation. (Genet p. 584)

Sartre's analysis has received a rather sharp criticism from an otherwise sympathetic English psychoanalyst, D. G. Cooper.

The material presented by Sartre falls readily into place in a psycho-analytical conceptual framework within which mechanisms such as introjective and projective identification, idealization of the object, denial and splitting operate. These mechanisms function in that realm of experience known as unconscious phantasy, and have their origin in early infantile life, to which, in the case of Genet, Sartre too often accords only an implicit and unsystematic recognition.

Sartre's answer to this should be that Genet's own project spells out what significance the infantile experiences are to have. The past, being inert, cannot act on the present or the future. Rather, the future will reveal the significance of the infantile past, through the choices and actions of the individual involved—in this case, Jean Genet.

Complexes, the style of life, and the revelation of the past-surpassing as a future to be created are one and the same reality. It is the project as an oriented life, as man's affirmation through action. And at the same time it is that mist of irrationality which cannot be located, which is reflected from the future in our childhood memories and from our childhood in our rational choices as mature men.


8 Search for a Method, p. 108.
(Mechanistic philosophies) would like to explain the work, the act, or the attitude (of an individual) by the factors which condition it; their desire for explanation is a disguise for the wish to assimilate the complex to the simple, to deny the specificity of structures, and to reduce change to identity. This is to fall back again to the level of scientistic determinism...

It is the work or the act of the individual which reveals to us the secret of his conditioning. Flaubert by his choice of writing discloses to us the meaning of his childish fear of death—not the reverse. By misunderstanding these principles, contemporary Marxism has prevented itself from understanding significations and values. For it is as absurd to reduce the signification of an object to the pure inert materiality of that object itself as to want to deduce the law from the fact. The meaning of a conduct and its value can be grasped only in perspective by the movement which realizes the possibles as it reveals the given.\(^9\)

Sartre accuses both Freudians and Marxists of bad faith in taking recourse to two different, incompatible explanatory theories, as suits their purposes. On the one hand, they use causal explanations which regard an effect as following necessarily from prior causes: thus explanation always requires a regression to prior causes. But at other times they introduce goal-directed accounts which cannot be reconciled with strict mechanical causality: Freudians speak of goal-directed unconscious instincts and processes; Marxists speak of a historical necessity which inevitably brings about a kind of supposed progress. This double game is cheating, Sartre believes.

In asserting that "it is the work or the act of the individual which reveals to us the secret of his conditioning," Sartre spells out the basis of his latest denial of socio-economic or psychological determinism. It is the choice of the individual which will make earlier events take on the significance which will lead Freudians or Marxists to assign to them the role of determining factors. The choice is expressed in the individual's project. But this choice does not

\(^9\) Search for a Method, p. 151-52.
function deterministically: it does not sketch out an ineluctable fate. "The goal one sets at the beginning is abstract and consequently false. Little by little it is enriched by the means employed to attain it, and ultimately the concrete goal, the true goal, is what one wants at the finish." (Genet, p. 582)

Fundamental project and choice are concrete only after they have been fleshed out through actual choices and actions during the course of everyday life.

Sartre's revisions seem to have made his psychological theory more reasonable, more consistent with experience and more interesting. He has abandoned what appears to have been a deterministic theory of original choice, in that the choice— itself "free"— determined lesser, everyday choices and actions. In the newer theory, one's "choice" of an intelligible character presupposes a condition of need which has situated the individual in the factual world. The earlier Sartre would have placed the physical world, with the attendant "facticity," out of play through a grandiose process of "negation." For the later Sartre, negation provides only a "moment" in the dialectical confrontation between individual and environment, an occasion for some measure of free creativity.

While repeatedly insisting that human freedom is still of paramount importance in his thought, Sartre no longer describes man as "absolutely" free. But man is as free as he needs to be.

This is the limit I would today accord to freedom: the small movement which makes of a totally conditioned social being someone who does not render back completely what his conditioning has given him. Which makes of Genet a poet when he had been rigorously conditioned to be a thief.

Thus, in L'Être et Le Néant, what you could call 'subjectivity' is not what it would be for me now, the small margin in an operation whereby an interiorization re-exteriorizes itself in an act...The individual interiorizes his social determinations: he interiorizes the

10 From "The Itinerary of a Thought," included in Between Existentialism and Marxism (New York: Pantheon, 1974) p. 34.
relations of production, the family of his childhood, the historical past, the contemporary institutions, and he then re-exteriorizes these in acts and options which necessarily refer us back to them.11

Sartre's elucidation of his conception of praxis (human action) demonstrates how his old concerns have been carried over into his newer philosophical orientation.

...All praxis contains a moment of practical knowledge that reveals, surpasses, preserves and already modifies reality. This is the level of research and practical truth, defined as a grasp of being in as much as it encloses the possibility of its own directed change. Truth comes into being out of non-being, into the present out of the practical future. From this point of view, an enterprise that has successfully been accomplished is a verification of possibilities discovered in the course of it... From this we may conclude that practical knowledge is, in the first instance, invention. If various possibilities are to be discovered, utilized and verified, they must first be invented. In this sense, every man is a project: he is a creator, because he invents what already exists, starting with what does not yet exist; he is a scientist, because he will never succeed in anything without first assessing exactly all the possibilities that will help him to realize his project; he is a researcher and a challenger, for since the end in view will indicate only schematically the means needed to attain it, in so far as it is itself abstract, he must seek concrete means which will in their turn delimit the end and sometimes enrich it by deflecting it. The result is that he puts the end in question by the means, and vice versa, until the point is reached where the end becomes the integral unity of the means used to achieve it.12

Sartre continues to utilize the terminology of being and non-being, enriched by its appearance in the context of everyday human action. Any Hegelian will recognize the language of "knowledge that reveals, surpasses, preserves and...modifies reality" as the appearance of the stage of synthesis, but it should be emphasized

11 Between, p. 35.

12 Between, p. 231. From the article, "A Plea for Intellectuals."
that Sartre insists on the "moment of practical knowledge" which embodies human freedom. For Sartre, "dialectic is not a determinism." For orthodox Marxists, history moves to and through its stages with inevitability. For Sartre, the machine of history grinds on only because it is lubricated by human blood and sweat, and powered by free human action. Before technology and an economic system can "condition" man, man first must create that technology and economic system. Creative activity is possible only if man is free. Thus, the dialectic presupposes human freedom. It cannot, then, be deterministic. This seems to be the point at which Sartre is farthest removed from a reconciliation of his earlier views with orthodox Marxism.

Conclusion

Sartre has always been and continues to be a philosopher of freedom. This abiding concern has provided the central continuity through his writing, from the very earliest. The doctrine of original choice, and the vicissitudes it has undergone, has provided this study with a theme closely related to Sartre's paramount concern. In the earlier work, the doctrine grounded an assertion that man is "absolutely free." Subsequent revision of this doctrine has reflected some change in Sartre's views of the nature of human freedom but indicates, more profoundly, a greater concern with the concrete limitations to human life, in contrast with his earlier emphasis upon the abstract freedom of human thought. The related doctrines of original choice and fundamental project are still relevant in Sartre's later thought.

The most important theoretical shift in Sartre's existentialism has been his abandonment of the deterministic role he had assigned to the original choice. His modified theory allows a greater degree of freedom in everyday choices and actions than did the earlier theory, which at times threatened to provide for volition little other power than to initiate neuroses and psychoses. In his non-psychological passages, Sartre interpreted Cartesian doubt in terms of a quasi-Hegelian act of negation and asserted, for example: "Through doubt, man has a permanent possibility of disentangling himself from the existing universe and of suddenly contemplating it from above as a pure

13 Search for a Method, p. 73.
succession of phantasms." Where in the psychological theory, freedom is manifested in the miraculous spontaneity of original choice, in these metaphysical passages it is based upon man's being, as nothingness (consciousness, for-itself), completely other than the physical world, a being "realized" in the act of negation. Sartre's later views are the result of his recognition that whatever "total" negation consciousness can effect with regard to in-itself never actually disentangles the existing man from the physical world, with all its exigencies. The miseries of mankind are anything but "a pure succession of phantasms." Whatever "total" negation consciousness effects is empty. After total Cartesian doubt, one finds himself back where he had been before, with the same problems to be dealt with. Total doubt accomplishes nothing: such "absolute" freedom as is effected by a "total" negation differs little from total impotence. Sartre gradually became aware that drastic changes were needed in the tone and emphasis of his theory to reinsert man into the world. The most important structural change was to recognize that the original choice, as originally conceived, was a philosopher's fantasy. It remained only for him to restate original choice as a structuring of one's life that takes place during the course of life. Such a view can be regarded as being in accord with common sense—a phrase not often used to describe Sartre's existentialism, although frequently well-deserved.

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