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PHILOSOPHY and REVOLUTION

Part Two - Alternatives

Chapter 6 - Jean-Paul Sartre

"... In the still spaces of thought which has come to itself and is purely self-existent, those interests are hushed which move the lives of peoples and of individuals." Hegel, Science of Logic, Vol. I., p. 42

"It will always remain a matter for astonishment how the Man-tian philosophy knew that relation of thought to sensuous existence, where it halted, for a merely relative relation of bare appearance, and fully acknowledged and asserted a higher unity of the two in the Idea in general, and, particularly, in the idea of an intuitive understanding; but yet stopped dead at this relative relation and at the assertion that the Notion is and remains utterly separated from reality; so that it affirmed as true what it pronounced to be finite knowledge, and declared to be superfluous and improper figments of thought that which it recognized as truth, and of which it established the definite notion." Hegel, Science of Logic, Vol. II., p. 226

"The standpoint of the old materialism is civil society; the standpoint of the new is human society, or social humanity." Marx, Theses on Feuerbach, 1845

"It is of course easy to imagine a powerful, physically superior person, who first captures animals and then captures man in order to make them catch animals for him; in brief, one who uses man as a naturally occurring condition for his reproduction like any other living natural thing; his own labour being exhausted in the act of domination. But such a view is stupid, though it may be correct from the point of view of a given tribal or communal entity; for it takes the isolated man as its starting point. But man is only individualised through the process of history." Marx, Grundrisse, 1857.

"... development of human power, which is its own end..." Marx, Capital, Vol. III, 1878.

PART II - ALTERNATIVES

Chapter 3 - JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

The totality of the world crisis signalled by the Depression, rise of Fascism and outbreak of World War II had a cataclysmic affect also on French philosophers who had absorbed, at one and the same time, Hegel and Heidegger, not to mention equal attraction to Marx and the Proletariat (with a capital P). The most prodigious philosophic product of the 1930's which was not completed till 1943, was Jean-Paul Sartre's Being and Nothingness. Membership in the Resistance both enhanced the new form of Existentialism and seemed to presage a totally new type of philosopher, not merely because Sartre had already gained fame as novelist (Nausea) and ~~other~~ ^{TST} (The Flies) whose play had been stopped by the Nazi occupiers, but because both thought in its most rigorous form, Dialectic, and action in its most dangerous form, Freedom, were united as one.

The "gala" years (1) extended themselves into the immediate postwar period when it did indeed appear that philosophy and revolution were not just rhetoric. Masses were in motion, revolution was in the air, and the intellectuals were "committed". It did not matter whether Sartre's political radicalism did, or did not flow, logically from his philosophy of existence. Existentialism held the youth, and not only in France, unthrilled. Though Sartre kept assured the CP that he considered it "the only revolutionary party", and it was obvious he was not competing with it for "leadership of the masses", the Communist Party was worried and the attacks directed against him were of the venomous kind levelled against a "deviating political tendency."

In one fundamental respect the Communists were, of course, "right": the readership of the magazines, Les Temps Modernes, founded by Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, were "activists", and in 1949 did try to establish a new party, Revolutionary Democratic Rally, in his name. Sartre disclaimed

"authorship" and, in any case, while it did attract the intellectuals, no masses followed it. Clearly, however, the postwar generation of philosophers did not restrict their role to one of interpreting the world. They meant to change it, or substantially influence its direction, in any case. Whether one viewed Sartre ^{can} as Existentialism as the only "true" philosophy of freedom, or considered it the factor that disoriented the revolutionary generation, there was no doubt that Sartrean Existentialism was not enclosed in any ivory tower. Within a decade, there had been both a split within Existentialism and a "conversion of Sartre to Historic Materialism."

Cataclysmic events were happening in the world. The one that preoccupied Sartre, and which led to Merleau-Ponty's break (2) with him, was the Korean War and the Communist-inspired "World Peace Movement" it engendered and which Sartre fully embraced. The other world-shaking event, however, -- the East German Revolt on June 17, 1953, that signalled a totally new page of freedom, in fact and in thought, the first ever within the Communist orbit -- seemed to have had no serious effect upon either form of Existentialism. That changed when, in February 1956, Khrushchev officially declared deStalinization, and by the fall of that year, the whole of East

(1) The expression for the years 1944-45 is Jacques Guicharnaud's. His article: "Those Years: Existentialism, 1943-1945" expresses well Existentialism's spell. It is included along with articles by Jean Hyppolite, Pierre Burgelin and Pierre Arnaud, an interview with Jean-Paul Sartre in a special issue of YALE FRENCH STUDIES, Winter 1955 and 1956.

(2) Cf. Merleau-Ponty's Les aventures de la dialectique, also Sartre's Merleau-Ponty in Situations IV, pp. 225-326

Europe was in flames, and Russian tanks rolled into Hungary to put down the outright revolution there. Sartre did oppose the Russian tanks -- they were "not necessary" and did not enhance "the security of socialism". Most important of all, insofar as the development of Existentialism was concerned, was that, for the first time since the publication of Being and Nothingness, Sartre was working on a comprehensive philosophic treatise, which was to demonstrate the "infusion" of Existentialism into Marxism:

"I consider Marxism the one philosophy of our time which we cannot go beyond and ... I hold the ideology of existence and its 'comprehensive' method to be an enclave inside Marxism, which simultaneously engenders it and rejects it." (3)

Sartre now desires Existentialism "to be integrated into Marxism."

Although he still holds on to Existentialism's origin in Kierkegaard, he now attributes the reappearance of "the Dane" at the beginning of the 20th century, to the fact that it was a time "when people will take it into their heads to fight against Marxism by opposing to it pluralisms, ambiguities, paradoxes." (p. 15)

Nor does Sartre flinch from using himself as an example of Marx's dictum, that the ruling ideas of any epoch are the ideas of the ruling class. Indeed, he goes so far as to say that what the students of his day did to oppose "the sweet dreams of our professors" was to become proponents of "violence": "It was a wretched violence (insults, brawls, suicides, murders, irreparable catastrophes) which risked leading us to fascism ..." (p. 20). The war, however, "shattered the worn structures of our thought" and they "discovered the world". (p. 21) They were then "convinced at one and the same time that historical materialism furnished the only valid interpretation of

(3) Jean-Paul Sartre, Search for a Method, p. xxxiv. All the references here will be to this translation by Hazel E. Barnes. (Alfred A. Knopf, N.Y., 1963). However, because I think that Sartre is announcing, not searching, for a method, I will, in text, use Sartre's own title, Question de la Methode."

history and that existentialism remained the only concrete approach to reality ... Marxism, after drawing us to it as the moon draws the tides ... abruptly left us stranded, Marxism stopped." The reference is to "Lazy Marxism", "today's Marxists." This is the villain in the philosophical ^{STL 11/12/62} ~~or cap.~~

The massive (755 pages) tome, Critique de la raison dialectique (preface de Question de methode) published in 1960, comprises but the first volume of Sartre's new philosophic work. A second volume has not been completed. ^{that} which is relevant to the subject of Alternatives with which we are dealing -- Question de Methode -- is, however, complete in itself. Although it was originally written in 1957 as a separate essay, entitled "Existentialism and Marxism", for a Polish journal, Tworczosc, Sartre considered it so important that he not only altered it "considerably so as to adapt it to the needs of the French readers" and published it in his journal, Les Temps Modernes, but decided that it was the proper introduction for the Critique. Indeed, he felt that "logically" it belonged at the end of the whole work since it comprised the method for which the Critique laid the foundation. As a philosopher, Sartre is weightily aware of the fact that methodology is the most concentrated expression of theory, a result of a complex interaction of the spirit of the times, class base, theoretical analysis, practical activity, including a struggle with rival theories, rival praxis, rival methodologies. In a word, to use one that is a favorite with Sartre, it is a "totalization." By this it needs to be judged.

Periods of philosophic creation are so rare, says Sartre, that "Between the seventeenth century and the twentieth, I see three periods, which I would

designate by the names of the men who dominated them: there is the 'moment' of Descartes and Locke, that of Kant and Hegel, finally that of Marx. These three philosophies become, each in its turn, the humus of every particular thought and the horizon of all culture; there is no going beyond them so long as man has not gone beyond the historical moment which they express. (p. 7)

Notwithstanding this proclamation that Marxism, and Marxism alone, which is the

philosophy of our age while Existentialism is "a parasitic system which lives on the margins of real science" (p. 21), the argumentation that follows over the rest of the 101 page text seems to contradict it either directly or indirectly. It is true that this book presents a new Sartre, a convert to Historical Materialism. It is true that the central attack is directed, not against Marx, but against "today's Marxists", in which loose category are included not only Communists but also Trotskyists and independent Marxists. Many instances are recounted against these "dogmatists" who fail to see the particular individual, the concrete events, the singular experience, the new, in a word, reality. Since, however, of all the examples, from the French Revolution to microphysics, cited, there is only one current event -- the Hungarian Revolution -- it is to that one we will have to turn to test the Sartrean dialectic.

Here quoted from p. 1

Sartre himself, as we saw, opposed the bloody suppression of the Hungarian Revolution by Russian might, though it was only on the ground that it was "not necessary", nor enhanced "the security of socialism." We can now trace the consequences of an opposition that did not see in the Russian "intervention" a counter-revolution. He pours forth his indignation, not against that, but against "today's Marxists", and here, definitely, he is referring, not to Communists, but to Trotskyists and independent Marxists who were making a new category out of the birth of the Workers' Councils as "a democratic institution." Here, continues Sartre, we can see the "method in all its nakedness." It is true the Councils were such "a democratic institution." One can even maintain that they bear within them the future of the socialist society. But this does not alter the fact that they did not exist in Hungary at the time of the first Soviet intervention; and their appearance during the Insurrection was much too brief and too troubled for us to be able to speak of an organized democracy." (p. 24)

And because the Workers' Councils were not an organized democracy, because the spontaneity of this self-organization of the Workers councils was "much too brief and too troubled" (p. 24), the forced suppression becomes sufficient ground for not grappling with the elemental creativity to penetrate an existential "unsurpassable opaqueness." The exponent of the "unsurpassable singularity of the human adventure", instead, dons a full suit of administrative armor. The myriad of new tendencies -- whether in the actual Hungarian Revolution or the near-revolutionaries in Poland, ~~and the near-revolutionaries~~ the new audience Sartre is addressing because it has given him "a means of expressing, in a country with a Marxist culture, the existing contradictions in its philosophy" -- one and all of these living forces, the true human dimensions, get head-shrunk into a non-differentiated category, "revisionism", which has already been dismissed by Sartre: "As for 'revisionism', this is either a truism or an absurdity." (p. 7) and now they get shrugged off with a "despite their good intentions ..."

The fact that the revisionist appellation was not theirs, but that of "Other", their tormentors, Khrushchev and Mao, who have long since transformed Marx's theory of liberation into state-capitalist enslavement does not seem to disturb the philosopher of existence. Though those who fought for freedom from Russian Communist overlordship were the real "existents" in the Poland of 1957 whom Sartre was addressing, the philosopher of "the individual's freedom" ^{out to personalizing a sense of -- unless the question is closed that} didn't take time ^{and that} place for launching an attack on the only truly ^{free} original Communist philosopher who, after more than a quarter of a century of capitulation, finally got swept up by the revolution in his native land -- George Lukacs -- can be called "personalization": "It is not by chance that Lukacs -- Lukacs who so often violates history -- has found in 1956 the best definition of this frozen Marxism." (p. 28)

Theory and Practice in Life Today and in Marx's Capital, 1967-75

In his preoccupation with theoreticians, Sartre not only fails to probe the ~~past~~ praxis of the masses of East Europe in the mid-1950's, but he seems totally unconscious of the meaning of what he is telling them, those live human beings who had just suffered through a life-and-death struggle with official Marxism as he concludes "that among the Masses, Marxist practices

does not reflect, or only slightly reflects, the sclerosis of its theory. But it is precisely the conflict between revolutionary action and the Scholastic justification which prevents Communist man -- in socialist countries as in bourgeois countries -- from achieving any clear self-consciousness." (p. 29)

Not only that, suddenly, in a very lengthy two-page footnote (pp. 32-33) we are thrust into a critical confrontation, not with "today's Marxists", but with the Marxism of Marx himself on the pivotal question of consciousness. "One must develop a theory of consciousness. Yet the theory of knowledge continues to be the weak point in Marxism." (p. 32ftn.) Sartre draws this conclusion after he has quoted one sentence from Marx on the materialist conception of history, and one from Lenin on consciousness as "reflection of being", after which Sartre remarks triumphantly: "In both cases it is a matter of suppressing subjectivity; with Marx, we are placed beyond it; with Lenin on this side of it." (p. 32) That this baseless generalization flies in the face both of all Marx wrote, all Marx did, that the new Sartre wishes to resuscitate, does not deter them.

He stubbornly maintains that the sentence he quoted from Marx which happens to be from Engels, not Marx, ~~that~~ which is a repeat of the very sentence the old Sartre used 15 years ago in his attack on historical

materialism, (4) -- that "The materialist conception of the world signifies simply the conception of nature as it is without any foreign addition." -- amounts to nothing less horrific than this: "Having stripped away all subjectivity and having assimilated himself into pure objective truth, he (Marx) walks in a world of objects inhabited by object-men." (p. 32n)

Once again: "Both (the reference is again to the single quotation from Marx and the half of one sentence from Lenin) of these conceptions ^{amount} among to breaking man's real relation with history, since in the first, knowing is pure theory, a non-situated observing, and, in the second, it is a simple passivity." (p. 32n) These straw ideas that Sartre has just strung up and attributed to Marx and Lenin, he labels "anti-dialectical", and "pre-Marxist" (p. 33n, emphasis is Sartre's). He notes condescendingly that "in Marx's remarks on the practical aspects of truth and on the general relations of theory and praxis, it would be easy to discover the rudiments of a realistic epistemology which has never been developed." (p. 33n)

- (4) "Materialisme et revolution" (Les Temps Modernes: Vol. I, Nos. 9 and 10, June-July, 1946). In 1947 the old periodical, Politics, translated this essay on "Materialism and Revolution". It reappeared as Chapter 13 of Sartre's Literary and Philosophical Essays (New York, Criterion Books, Inc.) in 1955. This edition bears a footnote by Sartre, which reads: "As I have been unfairly reproached with not quoting Marx in this article, I should like to point that my criticisms are not directed against him, but against Marxist scholasticism of 1949. Or, if you prefer, against Marx through Neo-Stalinist Marxism." The truth, however, is that the article couldn't have referred to "the Marxist scholasticism" of 1949 since it was written in 1946. Nor could it have been directed against "Neo-Stalinist Marxism" which did not arise until after Stalin's death. Sartre, at the time of writing his original article in 1946 (which duly quoted Stalin) was such a millenium away from thinking about "Neo-Stalinist Marxism" that the chief target of his was -- Frederick Engels. Instead of being then wrought up about "Neo-Stalinism" which was yet to appear historically, he couldn't find it in himself to resist footnoting even the favorable mention of Marx's Humanism as follows: "It is, once again, Marx's point of view in 1844, that is, until the unfortunate meeting with Engels". It is one of the marks of our state-capitalist age that our intellectuals seem more adept at re-writing history, than at writing it.

Within the text, Sartre continues: "The theory of fetishism, outlined by Marx, has never been developed; furthermore, it could not be extended to cover all social realities. Thus Marxism, while rejecting organicism, lacks weapons against it. Marxism considers the market a thing and holds that its inexorable laws contribute to reifying the relations among men. But when, suddenly, -- to use Henri Lefebvre's terms -- a dialectical conjuring trick shows us this monstrous abstraction as the veritable concrete ... then we believe that we are returned to Hegelian idealism." (p. 77)

One would be hard put to match the number of errors Sartre succeeds in squeezing into less than four sentences. Judged by them, Marx has wasted the arduous labor he put into the creation of the three volumes of CAPITAL, which aims at establishing that both the pivot of his theory, as well as the actuality, of capitalism is not to be found in the market -- the favorite hunting ground of utopians, underconsumptionists and capitalistic buyers of labor power -- but it is to be found in the process of production, and only there.

? For the moment, it is necessary to set aside the vast accumulation of errors in order to take note of Sartre's methodological approach -- and Marx's -- after more than a quarter of century of labor on gathering facts as well as working out the theoretical analysis, Marx, under the impact of a new wave of class struggles in Europe, the Civil War in the United States, and the struggle for the shortening of the Working Day, decided to restructure his massive manuscripts to take the shape of Capital, Volumes I. The year of publication was 1867. By the time the French were ready to publish a French edition, the Paris Commune erupted, and Marx decided to introduce some very fundamental changes to which he calls attention in the foreword to the French edition, 1872-75. They "happen" to be precisely on the two points that most concern Sartre in 1960; the fetishism of commodities, and the direction of

"THE LAW OF MOTION" of capitalist society toward its collapse. I HAVE elsewhere dealt in detail with MARX'S restructuring of Capital. The whole point is this: because it involved a total break with the very concept of what theory is, the argumentation with other theoreticians was left for the final book. Here, instead, "history and its process", specifically the proletariat itself shaping history through class struggles over the length of the working day, in and out of the factory, became not merely "facticity" but theory itself. (Not only had) relations of men at the point of production replaced argumentation with intellectuals.

"At one and the same time" -- a favorite phrase of Sartre's, when he is on the point of forcing a unity of two irreconcilable opposites, but which we here use purely factually -- the fetishism of the commodities still dissatisfied him. When the Parisian mass "stormed the heavens", the form of the new universal, both as workers' rule and as the absolute opposite to commodity fetishism became so clear to the theoretician that he then changed the section, Fetishism, as he put it, "in a significant manner".

A comparison of the two editions will show that, where in 1867, Marx laid the main emphasis on the form of value giving the relations of men in production the fantastic form of appearance of a relation of things, in the 1872 edition Marx shifts the emphasis to the necessity of that form of appearance because that is, in truth, what relations of people are at the point of production: "material relations between persons and social relations between

things." (5)

One further word needs to be stated before returning to Sartre's economic concepts since, besides Marx, the only other person Sartre singles out for attack as failing to comprehend "subjectivity" is Lenin. While Lenin wrote many profound economic studies, the "economist" statement of Lenin's that he quotes is not from those, but from his very superficial philosophic works, specifically the 1908 Materialism and Empirio-Criticism ^{in which} he gave the green light to vulgar materialism. This is the one Stalinists, Khrushchevites, Maoists, and fellow-travellers base themselves on.

No serious student of Marxism, especially not a philosopher, can disregard the break in Lenin's philosophic thought at the time of the collapse of the Second International. For it is this fact, at the outbreak of World War I, which led Lenin to reread Hegel and reconstitute his own ^{Marxist} very method of thought. It is then, and only then, that he began fully to appreciate the inseparability of Hegelian philosophy from Marxian philosophic and economic categories. Nothing so lucidly expresses the transformation of Lenin's view of ^{theory} theory as simple philosophy of reality than his own words:

"Alias: Man's cognition not only reflects the objective world, but creates it."

For some one in 1960, to write as if, to Lenin, consciousness was only the reflection of being "at best an approximately accurate reflection" and on the

(5) Capital, Vol. I, p. 84. Although on the question of reification of labor, Sartre acts as if without Existentialism Marxism lacks "the human foundation", actually, in his attack on historical materialism, quoted above, he lashed out precisely against Marx's Humanism, which claim to unite materialism and idealism, i.e. be the human foundation. Whereupon Sartre writes: "Let us make no mistake; there is no simultaneous transcendence of materialism and idealism..." which Sartre footnotes as follows: "Although Marx sometimes claimed there was." At one and the same time Sartre did credit the Marx of 1844 with a revolutionary realism which could not conceive of "a subjectivity outside the world nor a world which would not be illuminated by an effort on the part of subjectivity ..."

basis of that half sentence run, helter-skelter, to the wild conclusion that "by a single stroke he (Lenin) removes from himself the right to write what he is writing" (p. 32n) speaks very poorly indeed for Sartre's "comprehensive" method, not to mention his (Marx) scholarship.

Now then, to return to the content of those four sentences by Sartre from page 77, which contended that it was "a dialectical conjuring trick" to consider "this monstrous abstraction" -- reification of the relations of men -- to be "the veritable concrete." First, let us note that Sartre is standing Marx on his head when he continues blithely to talk of the market's inexorable laws where Marx demonstrated the inexorable laws to arise out of production. They are, of course, manifested in the market, but they cannot (can not) be controverted any place but in production, and only by human beings, specifically the laborers, who had been transformed into appendages of machines but whose "quest for universality" had given birth to "new passions", thus making them the forces for the overthrow of capitalism. The market, no doubt, contributes something to the mystification of human relations since the only thing that relates men in the market place is money. But that was not Marx's point.

On the contrary, Marx insisted that in order to understand what is taking place in the market it is necessary to leave it and go into the factory. It is there that relations among men get "reified", made into things. It is there, at that "process of suction" (6), that capital grows monstrous big, but, far from being an "abstraction", is the "veritable concrete" which "sucks dry living labor", and makes it into a thing. Far from this being the result of "a dialectical conjuring trick", it is the literal truth of relations of men

(6) In the Russian edition only of the Archives of Marx and Engels, Vol. II (VII) p. 69. This is from the chapter that was originally (in manuscript form) to have been the ending of CAPITAL, Volume I.

at the point of production. The "inexorable laws" that arise out of this, out of this and not out of the market, make inevitable the collapse of the type of insane productive system that makes man into a thing.

Marx states and restates all this in a thousand different ways, in thousands of places throughout all his works -- philosophy, economics, history, and even in the analysis of the relations of works of art to the specificity of history. Marxist theoretical battlefields are strewn with the bones of those, including the martyred revolutionary, Rosa Luxemburg, who thought that this talk of labor as capital was not reality, but only a matter of "language". Marx, on the contrary, states over and over and over again, that unless one grasps this, just this, there is nothing to distinguish "scientific" from utopian socialism, proletarian democracy from "a workers' dictator like Lassalle", or the new (Marx's) humanism, which unites materialism and idealism, from both the vulgar materialism of "vulgar communism" and the de-humanized bourgeois (Hegelian) idealism, which, despite the revolutionary dialectic, had to lapse both into a vulgar idealization of the Prussian bureaucracy. "Thus", concluded also the young Marx, "nothing need be said of Hegel's adaptation to religion, the state, etc. for this lie is the lie of his principle."

And thus also, the chapter in Sartre's book which is supposed to be a plea "to reconquer man within Marxism" (p. 83), ends, instead, with a plea for integration of intellectual disciplines -- and from "the West" at that! "We have shown that dialectical materialism is reduced to its own skeleton if it does not integrate into itself certain Western disciplines," concludes Sartre. "Our examples have revealed at the heart of this philosophy a lack of any concrete anthropology ... The default of Marxism has led us to attempt this integration ourselves ... according to principles which give our ideology its unique character, principles which we are now going to set forth." (pp.83-4)

"The Progressive-Regressive Method"

The greater part - fully a half of the whole Question of Method - is devoted to the "unique character" of Existentialism as manifested in what Sartre calls "The Progressive-Regressive Method." The "brief formulation" consists of three fundamental observations: One, "the dialectical knowing of man, according to Hegel and Marx, demands a new rationality" (PR.111); two, "Our method is heuristic; it teaches something new because it is at once both regressive and progressive;" (p. 133) and, three, "the totalization" of past and present, and projection into the future: "Man defines himself by his project." (p. 150). This is the new Existentialism "integrated" within Marxism, or, if you wish, Marxism infused with Existentialism, freed from the "mechanical materialism" of today's Marxists, expanded to include certain "Western disciplines", though it will not be fully developed until Sartre has completed Volume Two of the Critique. The Method will indicate how Marxism can conquer "the human dimension."

As against "Idealist Marxism" with its "Determinism" which transformed man into an inert object and thrown him into "the social world amidst equally conditioned inertias," where it could change society only "in the way that a bomb, without ceasing to obey the principle of inertia, can destroy a building" (p. 85), Sartre proposes to work out what Marx himself "suggested". He holds that Marx's wish to transcend the opposition of externality and internality, of multiplicity and unity, of analysis and synthesis, of nature and anti-nature, is actually the most profound theoretical contribution of Marxism. But these are suggestions to be developed; the mistake would be to think that the task is an easy one." (p. 87, fn.)

Because no one has been willing to establish "new rationality within experience", Sartre exclaims:

"I state as a fact, —absolutely no one, either in the East or in the West, writes or speaks a sentence or a word about us and our contemporaries that is not gross error." (p. 111)

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Unfortunately, in his projection of the truth of "contemporary" history, be it of the French Revolution of 1789-94 or of Hungary of 1956, or of Mao's China today, the "dialectic of time" "transcends" man himself. Thus, Sartre writes:

"For the man in China, the future is more true than the present."
(p. 97)

Since, to a philosopher, an "alienated existence" is an analytical phrase rather than an exploitative reality, it becomes easy for him to think that introducing another idea, such as the "dialectic of time", the "future", therefore, means the achievement of a "synthetic transcendence" rather than man's giving up today for the tomorrow, though the revolution men have made has "abandoned" them. What, precisely, does existentialist rhetoric about "the incommensurability of existence and practical knowledge" propose to do, for "its (socialist society's) abandonment" of "the man in China."

Why is this master of language so ambivalent, contradictory, so rootless on the warp and woof of Hegelian and Marxian philosophy -- the theory of alienation -- and on the Marxian concept of the actual, the historic, the new praxis where he should, as "a philosopher of existence" get along so swimmingly? The Humanism of Marxism is grounded on this theory. Here Marxism transcended Hegelian dialectics, stood Hegel "right side up", and at the same time, separated itself from what Marx called "quite vulgar and unthinking communism" which was "only the logical expression of private property" and "completely negated the personality of man." Clearly the "infusion of Marxism" into Existentialism did not lead the latter to abandon its concept of Other as enemy. On the contrary, Sartre is presently identifying Other with Alienation and not in Class societies but also in "socialist (sic) societies." Indeed, "the new reality" hardly differs from the Old, and the old as the Sartre of Being and Nothingness perceived it. The substitution of the Proletariat with

a capital P for the individual, and History of man defining themselves by the project rather than the past seem not to have resulted in any change whatever in methodology.

Sartre seems to revel in "revealing" that the Proletariat is not "an abstract ideology of universality", but a concrete separateness. This leads him to write not only of differences in nationalities but dramatically, shockingly, deliberately to bring out of the blue the question of Etienne de La Boetie, "La Boetie's pessimism", we are told, joins with that of the unequal laborer, to whom the bourgeois revolution gave nothing, and who perceived at about 1794 that he was excluded from the 'universal' class." (p. 117). This is later followed up with the question: "Wasn't Thermidor rendered possible by the growing disension between the sans-culottes and the controlling faction of the members of the Convention?" "It is true that the people supported the Revolution and true, too, that their distress had counter-revolutionary tendencies." (p. 121)

All that Sartre reveals by intellectually forcing the unification of irreconcilables was that he was a true son of bourgeois society dominated by the dogmatism of the concept of the backwardness of the masses who are supposed to be incapable of thinking on their own, and therefore must be managed, lead, and made to work the harder and produce the more. By his insistence on the particular against the general, the concrete -- "incident by incident" -- as against the "abstract ideology of universality", the historic event against the a priori judgment, "absolute empiricism" as against dogmatism, Sartre may have destroyed as many dogmatisms as he claims. But one, unstated, yet all-pervading dogmatism continues to be the underlying motif of all Sartre thinks, writes, does. It is the dogmatism of the backwardness of the masses, now called "practice-inert" and including the individual as well as the masses.

Just as one does not have to encounter "Other" as Heidegger to become aware of anguish, frustration, impossibility of effecting a union between consciousness and being in Being and Nothingness, so one does not have to wait to encounter the ~~practico-inert~~ practice-inert ^{in the Critique} to recognize the kinship.

Just as Sartre's disregard of History in Being and Nothingness, far from allowing him to embrace the human condition in its totality, closed all exits to resolution of contradictions, so his "embrace" of History sans the masses as subject in the Critique made it impossible to open any doors to revolution. Just as it could not be otherwise when the human condition was anchored in perpetual failure, frustration, contingency -- all finite situations and each a constantly collapsing finite, it could not be otherwise when upon actual history, there was imposed the ontological invention of practico-inerts who could be made to move rationally only through an outside force -- "the group infusion", the Party" (7) It is true that, where in Being and Nothingness, the singular was always singular, never universal, in the Critique, the problem was reversed. But this was only the opposite side of the same coin -- a stasis; a listing of opposites, not a live struggle. Just as, in Being and Nothingness, despite the language of opposition, there was no higher ground emerging from the contradiction in the Hegelian sense of Idea, so in the Critique there was none in the Marxian sense of spontaneous revolts and actual class struggles. Where, in Being and Nothingness, the process of collapse was everything, in Critique, the terror of the "collectivity" was everything. Out of neither does there emerge a method, a direction, a development. It may be, as one historian put it, that the Critique had transformed "perpetual failure" of Being and Nothingness into "perpetual success." But the more

(7) This, just this, glorification of the Party is what characterized Sartre as non-Marxist anti-materialist Existentialist. "We shall call revolution the party or the person in the party whose acts intentionally prepare such a revolution," ..Sartre in Materialism and Revolution. In the same way, we cannot call the American Negroes revolutionaries, though their interests may coincide with those of the party which is working for the revolution... What the American Negroes and the bourgeois Jews want is an equality of rights which in no way implies a change of structure in the property system. They wish simply to share the privileges of their oppressors ... The silk weavers of Lyons and the workers of June, 1848, were not revolutionaries, but rioters ... The revolutionaries, on the other hand, is defined by his going beyond the situation in which he is placed ..."

critical is the fact that the proletariat, nevertheless, is present, not as creativity, but as "materiality". Above all, the masses have none of the "human dimension" the individual had in Being and Nothingness.

It had taken Sartre some 17 years to return to comprehensive writing on the question of philosophy. No matter what one thought of Being and Nothingness, there was no doubt either about its originality or its being a carefully elaborated, closely argued work. No matter how a beatnik existentialism seized upon the slogan-like statements of Sartrean philosophy --- "There is no moral law. Man is a useless passion. Life is meaningless. The world is a nauseating mass. Hell is other people". To Sartre, these emerged only after arduously working out his philosophic categories of Being-for-itself (man's consciousness) and Being-in-itself (the objects of conscious, or non-conscious reality.) to demonstrate that the very nature of the individual was to be free. In a sort of purgatory created by "Nothingness", the Void, Consciousness, and the objects it was conscious of, the struggle was ceaseless as in the confrontations between the "for itself", and the "in-itself", and the permanent frustrations which ended in "No Exit" as the confrontation with "for-other", only led to the recognition that "Hell is Other People." Now it is true that the prevailing theme was that "respect for Other's freedom is an empty word." That since Sartre's theory of human relations are bound hand and foot and confined to but two "fundamental attitudes" -- the equally deplorable extremes of masochism and sadism -- then can lead to nothing but anguish, loneliness, frustration in a sort of an infinite regress. But it is also true that this fantastic and totally false theory of human relations was in conflict with Sartre's other theory, that of individual freedom. Now, on the other hand, the very nature of the Individual, as of the masses, seems to allow himself to be reduced to inert practicality.

It is true that in B/N too, -19-

Not only were Sartre's two theories -- that of human relations and that of individual freedom -- in irreconcilable conflict but, as Herbert Marcuse noted, the theory of "FREE choice" itself under extant fascism was a macabre joke. Herbert Marcuse's analysis of this as well as of the dialectical methodology of ontological identification of freedom and frustration were profound:

"The coincidentia oppositorum is accomplished not through a dialectical process, but through their complete establishment as ontological characteristics. As such, they are transtemporally simultaneous and structurally identical.

The free choice between death and enslavement is neither freedom nor choice, because both alternatives destroy the 'realite humaine' which is supposed to be freedom. Established as the locus of freedom in the midst of a world of totalitarian oppression, the pour-soi, the Cartesian Cogito is no longer the jumping-off point for the conquest of the intellectual and material world, but the last refuge of the individual in an 'absurd world of frustration and failure. In Sartre's philosophy this refuge is still equipped with all the paraphernalia which characterized the holiday of individualistic society.." (8)

However, the conclusion that "Behind the nihilistic language of Existentialism lurks the ideology of free competition, free initiative, and equal opportunity" does not, it seems to this writer, hit the nail on the head. The real tragedy was that "behind" Sartre's nihilistic lurked -- nothing. Just nothing. And, because there was no past and no future, and the present world was "absurd" nothing could, to the isolated intellectual, appear as a "creative" Nothingness, a blank page of history on which he could write what he wished. Sartre, himself, must have had some recognition that existential philosophy had reached an impasse. How else account for the footnote which pointed to a possible "radical conversion" which "could" resolve the irreconcilable conflicts between total individual freedom unrestricted by "other", and the 'fundamental' human attitudes of masochism and sadism?

(8) Herbert Marcuse, "Existentialism" (Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, March, 1948)

No doubt this was a vent which the Resistance created for itself. At the same time, it was also a lack of "totalization" that Sartre, as philosopher felt. (10) It is true that what was "real" to Sartre was the ontological dehumanised "human reality", for which the author of Being and Nothingness had invented a new language. But it is no less true that no academic philosopher ever desired more desperately, not merely to interpret the world, but to change it.

(9) "These considerations (the attitudes tending toward masochism and sadism) do not exclude the possibility of an ethics of deliverance and salvation. But this can be achieved only after a radical conversion which we cannot discuss here." Being and Nothingness, p. 409.

(12) (10) George Lichtheim, "Sartre, Marxism and History", History and Theory, II, 1963. (11) Lefebvre
One analyst ~~leaves~~ ^{leaves} this early. (Reviewing the Critique in Dissent (Spring, 1961) under the title, "Metaphysical Stalinism", History and Theory writes: "The only entity or character in Sartre's Critique which can be called human is thus the political group or party; compared with it both individuals and classes have the inhumanity of Being as such. Now this is a metaphysic; it should be properly designated: it is the metaphysic of Stalinism for its places against the horizon of Being the historically limited form of the Communist Party of the period when Stalin was its leader." The weakness of that analysis stemmed from the fact that Abel, at one and the same time, closed all the loopholes Sartre had created and, above all, did not facing the ambiguity of the existentialist method. Indeed, he praised Question de Method but disregarded it, both as methodology and as an indication of the whole work. Instead, he preferred treating Volume I as a complete work.

(10) See Leonard Kravitz

It took a full decade, and the end of the Korean War, and the split within Existentialism to break with Morlesau-Danty and, above all, a movement from ^{Paris} Paris to push him toward a "new" philosophy, Marxism. That is to say, to make him see Marxism "as the philosophy of the age", the praxis of revolution. The fact, however, that to this day, Sartre credits, not the "destalinisation" initiated from below by the East German Revolt in 1953, but the destalinisation officially proclaimed by Khrushchev in 1956, for creating the conditions for "the new" Sartre to emerge signifies that there is no new Sartre.

Sartre's "radical conversion" to historicism has not made the Critique a more dialectical work. On the contrary, the Critique jumps all over vast fields of thought -- from philosophy to science, from literature to anthropology, from economics to psychoanalysis, from analyses of revolutions to those of the Proletariat (the capital P is Sartre's), and from history to the time of day. But it lands nowhere. And the reason is actually the same for both works, for different as the content, the methodology, or, if I may dare say so to a master of the dialectic "in language, in the novel, in drama, and of philosophy.. the lack of dialectic methodology. Let me explain. The impasse in Being and Nothingness was arrived at, in part, in a fundamental part, but only in part nevertheless, from failure to see the social individual. What Marx called "history and its process", (~~synonymously~~) meant seeing masses making history, the dialectic of liberation, whether it was the "quiet" civil war of the 100 year struggle for the shortening of the working day, or the open revolutions of 1848 or Paris Commune, didn't simply "concretize" the Hegelian dialectic as "an algebra of revolution", it emerged out of history, proletarian history, the actuality of the freedom struggles. In a word, the Marxian dialectic was not a mere standing of Hegelian philosophy on its feet, instead of on its head. It is true it had been standing on its head, and had to be anchored in reality as well. But Marx saw masses, not merely as "matter" but as Reason. It wasn't they who were "practicing" Marxism. It was Marx, who was

universalizing their praxis. For Sartre, however, writing in 1957, it isn't the movement from practice -- the Hungarian Revolution -- that constitutes "the profundity of the lived." The sum total of these procedures -- regressions and cross-reference -- has revealed what I shall call the profundity of the lived." (p. 145) But "the profundity of the lived" is "excerpted" not from life, but from literature at best, and, at worst, from mere speculative thinking/ Lefebvre was right when he wrote "precisely because he, Sartre, pursues speculatively, the search for the foundation, he does not attain anything fundamental." (14) History there is not only subordinated to ontology but also reduced either to "examples" or "anology" George Lichtheim noted, "Sartre's humans don't cooperate, they are thrown together or, as he put 'serialised' ... Thus human nature is shown by a state of affairs which bears a marked resemblance to a concentration camp. (15) (11) (12)

Whatever it is that Sartre, the committed intellectual, who presently claims an adherent of Marxism, believes in and bases his activities on, Sartre, the Existential philosopher, is following a straight line of being grounded in defeats and only defeats. Just as, in the 1930's, it was neither the sit-down strikes in France which destroyed the pretensions of fascism in his native land, nor the Spanish Revolution in the other Europe but rather the proletarian defeats by German and Spanish fascism that set the mood for Being and Nothingness, so it is that, in the 1950's, it was neither the HUNGARIAN Revolution from Communist totalitarianism nor the African Revolutions from Western imperialism that set the mood. ~~facomunism~~ Rather, it is the stasis of the existing Communist totalitarianism that set the mood for Question de Method.

The anti-STALINIST, ANTI-CAPITALIST, REVOLUTIONARY petty-bourgeois intellectual, himself the victim of the absolute division between mental and manual labor, the climax of centuries of division between philosophers and workers seemed always to have been ready to hand over the role of workers' self-emancipation into the hands of "the Party" even though its "philosophy" amounted to ordering the workers to work hard and harder. In the Critique Sartre creates a veritable mystique about Stalinist terror since it is always "the political group" which is the "action group" that overcomes the "inertia" of the masses: "the communal freedom creates itself as terror."

One would have thought that Sartre who returned to a work of philosophic rigor after he became an adherent Marx's Historical Materialism, would, at least in theory, attempt to end the bifurcation between subject and object, would concretize his project of "going beyond" as the Subject appropriating objectivity, not vice versa. Instead, having laid a foundation for a metaphysics of Stalinism, Sartre seems totally unconscious of the fact that his methodology is at the opposite pole, not from Communism, but from the Marxism of Marx. Despite all rhetoric about praxis Sartre's methodology is no upsurge from praxis. Far from being any "algebra of revolution", Sartrean methodology is the abstraction which ~~knows~~ ^{reduces} history to illustrations and analogy. The "progressive-regressive" method is neither Hegelian nor Marxian, resembling more that of the young Left Hegelians/~~whom~~ ^{of} Marx, in The Holy Family wrote: "history, like truth, becomes a person apart, a metaphysical subject, of which the real individuals are merely the bearers."

It may not be fair to judge Sartre by the incomplete Critique, especially as he announced that the subject of history proper would first be analyzed in Volume II. But we concentrate on the question of method precisely because it is complete in itself and has been recognized by Sartre himself as belonging at the end of the whole work since there is no other proof of dialectic methodology but the whole content of what preceded it. Unfortunately, Sartre also asserted that Volume I, riddled in scarcity and the practice-inert, contain "the formal elements

of any history, which is, indeed, the old, perennial enemy of Hegel which he characterized as the synthetic method of abstract identity. Having superimposed abstract understanding on the concrete manifold of actual history which has been transformed into object in the technical sense in which Hegel depicted as "rounded in itself as a formal totality and indifferent to determination by another", (13) ^{an} no movement forward was possible except through/outside, alien force.

For Sartre, there stands, to one side, the abstraction--"formal elements of any history"--and, to the other, Marxism, the class struggle, the twin co-existing but never clashing in a way that a transition arises from it, and not superimposed upon it, by "the political group." For Marx, on the other hand, there no such supra-historical abstraction as "the formal elements of any history." There is only one history, the concrete, the actual, and of that process, which contains both the historical and logical development, the class struggle as force and as logic, there is a bursting of the class structure. Because Sartre has ahistorical process as an abstraction, in stasis, it has remained motion-less. Precisely because Sartre is unable to conceive the specific content having specific forms of movement, he is always driven to accept an outside force as the mediator. Despite his hatred for that word, driven, Sartre seems always to obey its dictates, to use categories of a lower order like inert practicality which he himself has created and which preclude self-movement. Just as, in Being and Nothingness, the Being-in-itself and Being-for-itself remained as apart at the end as at the start, so, in Critique, there is no self-development though the individual is now social man, and the past is not rejected but recognized as History with a capital H.

Thought Question de Methode Sartre indeed acts as if the "default of Marxism does not forgive "today's Marxists" for that default, and had begun with Marx. It is true he/seems to forgive Marx because it evidently could not have been otherwise in his period where the objective situation made it necessary for Marx to limit himself to "clarification" of praxis, ^{And he is full of praise of Marx for} ~~the elements~~ ^{the elements} "the elements" and "suggestions" for others to develop theory. Nevertheless, Marx ~~has~~ ^{has} left theory in its "infancy" and when

Sartre starts infusing it with Existentialism, they all turn out to be non-Marxian
were not fully anti-Marxian. Since he wished so hard to become a Marxist, how
could this have come about? Methodologically, it all flows from his abstractions,
his total misunderstanding of what it is that Marx meant by praxis, and his total
misunderstanding has nothing whatever to do with not being able "to read" Marx, and
everything to do with his isolation
~~from the proletariat~~

at the very point where Sartre thinks that Marx, because he had to, to
turn to "clarifying" practice, had stopped developing theory, Marx had broken
with the bourgeois concept of theory, created his most original concept of theory
out of
--"history and its process" not only in the class struggles outside the factory
but in the factory, at the very point of production, faced with the "automaton"
transforming him into but an "appendage", Marx's whole point was that,
which was dominating him, reifying his labor. ~~Marx's whole point was that,~~
the worker was
thinking his own thoughts, ~~expressing his total~~ expressing his total
opposition to the mode of labor both instinctually and by creating new forms of
struggle and new human relations with his fellow-workers. Where, in Marx, history
comes alive because the masses have been prepared by the daily struggle at point
of production to burst out spontaneously, creatively "to storm the heavens" as
they had done in the Paris Commune, in Sartre Practice appears as inert practicality
bereft of all historic sense and any consciousness of consequences. Where, in Marx,
Individuality itself arises through history, in Sartre History means subordination
of individual to group-in-fusion who alone know where the action is/ Sartre the
Existentialist used, rightly, to laugh at Communists for thinking man was born on
his first pay day, Sartre "the Marxist" sees even as world-shaking an event as
the Russian Revolution, not at its self-annunciatory moment of birth with its
creation of totally new forms of workers' rule--Soviets--but rather at the moment
when it was transformed into opposite with Stalin's victory: the totalitarian initia-
tion of the Five Year Plans with their forced labor camps, Moscow Frame-up Trials
And yet it is the same philosopher whose theory of individual freedom acted as a
polarising force for a whole generation of youth in the immediate postwar period
in the West, and for East Europe in the mid-1950's. It is no accident, however,

that, just when he developed his existentially Marxist is when he lost out both with Marxists and the "New Left", or a great part of it, that is moving toward a new relationship of theory and practice that, basing itself on a movement from practice, would philosophically meet that challenge and make freedom a reality, not an institution. In a word, it is not so much the political fellow travelling that has served to break the spell of existentialism, but the fact that he has no more filled the theoretic void since Lenin's death than have the Communists.

The methodological enemy is the empty abstraction which has helped cover up soured revolutions and failed to disclose new roads to revolution even in theory, much less in fact, for the center of existentialism has always been petty-bourgeois subjectivity. The philosophy of existence failed "to merge" with Marxism because it has remained Subjectivity without a Subject, wish for revolution without the forces for revolution, escapism into "world revolution" just at the very moment when what is required is the concretization, the unity of philosophy and revolution.

*There are times when Sartre himself felt so. Thus, although one interview, he referred to matters he proposed to deal with in Volume II, he also said it was "interesting that the reasons why I was to write exactly the contrary to what I wanted to write. But that is another subject altogether--the relationship of a man to the history of his time. Thus, what I will write one day is a political testament." (New Left Review, 11-12/69) Interview with Jean Paul Sartre: "Itinerary of a Thought." The following month, January 1970, Le Temps Moderne printed an interview Sartre had with Italian Marxists to whom, in stating that the analysis of the Soviet Union under Stalin "belongs to the second of my Critique of Dialectical Reason, but this volume will probably never be published."