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THE EXISTENTIALIST ETHICS OF MARTIN BUBER AND JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

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the requirements for Ordination

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DIGEST

Existentialist ethics differs from traditional ethical theories in that there are no universally valid rules of conduct that are applicable in all situations. The yielding to any objective criteria of what constitutes moral goodness is inimical to general existentialist philosophy, which emphasizes the freedom of the human person. For this reason, existentialist ethics has come under attack as having no content which can guide the direction of one's life. Through an analysis of the ethics of Martin Buber and Jean-Paul Sartre, I argue that such criticism is ultimately unfounded.

As a non-theist, Jean-Paul Sartre finds all meaning in the world to derive from one source: the individual human person. By equating human consciousness with freedom, Sartre claims that one can lead an authentic life only by inventing one's own moral values. With no external authority to appeal to, be it Divine or human, the only assurance one has as to whether an action is right is the fact that it was chosen in freedom. On the one hand, critics hold that without any objective criteria in which to pass judgement on a particular action, Sartrean ethics leads to moral anarchy. On the other hand, supporters claim that implicit within Sartrean ethics is the universal value of freedom for all people, which would render certain actions, such as slavery, morally wrong.

My own position lies between these two divergent camps. On the

one hand, I argue that while Sartrean ethics does not subscribe to any "objective" criteria in the generally accepted sense of the term, this does not preclude all moral judgements. Therefore, Sartrean ethics, although subjective in nature, does not lead to moral anarchy. On the other hand, I find that the evidence for the position that Sartrean ethics values freedom for all people is insufficient. Although Sartre himself made this claim in one of his lectures, I argue that it is inconsistent with the proposition that all human relations inevitably result in conflict, a position Sartre takes in Being and Nothingness, the primary source for the ethical implications of his existentialist philosophy.

The philosophy of Martin Buber is based on the notion that the human person is not an isolated being, but a social, or relational being. Influenced by both secular philosophy and Judaism, Buber claims that authentic human existence occurs in the genuine dialogue between a person and a partner, be it inanimate, animate, or spiritual. Therefore, contrary to Sartre, he believes that one cannot invent moral values from within the self, but must discover them in a special type of relation with the world and with God, called the I-Thou encounter. As a consequence, no written code of law can supersede the moral demands of one's own revelatory encounter with a Thou.

Critics insist that without any objective criteria by which to distinguish authentic and delusory I-Thou encounters, Buber's ethics precludes all moral judgements, and ultimately falls prey to subjectivism, if not antinomianism. Although Buber affirms many

traditional ethical norms, some of which are contained in the Decalogue, critics nevertheless claim that such universally valid rules are inconsistent with the essential nature of the I-Thou relation, which requires that one respond to a Thou in the address of the particular situation at hand.

It is true that Buber does reject law in the name of the spontaneity necessary to true moral decision. However, I argue, as does Buber, that implicit in the I-Thou relation are certain absolute values, such as love, which serve as objective criteria for distinguishing between authentic and delusory revelatory encounters. Since each of these absolute values are, within limits, subject to individual interpretation in the unique situation, I argue that Buber's ethics is a synthesis of both subjective and objective elements. Therefore, in the final analysis, the charge that Buber's ethics is purely subjective, or worse, antinomian, is unfounded.

DEDICATION

One thing that my parents always stressed while I was growing up was that I should "apply myself." I consider the completion of my rabbinic thesis to be the realization of that goal. In addition to this valuable piece of advice, I am particularly grateful to my parents for teaching me by example how to achieve that delicate balance between the desire to shape and influence the life of someone you love, but without restricting that individual's need for the freedom to discover his own direction in life.

My decision to become a rabbi at the age of 21 came as somewhat of a shock to my mother, who was certain that I was headed towards more practical endeavors. My father, John Muller 5"3, who died two years prior to my entrance into rabbinical school probably would have been just as shocked. That is something I, unfortunately, will never know. Despite her initial apprehension, it has been my mother who provided me with unending encouragement, support, and understanding throughout my years of study at the Hebrew Union College. It is only fitting that this thesis be dedicated to her, Inge Muller.

I would also like to express gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Alvin Reines, for his constant support of my work, as well as his patience in helping me to understand the intricacies of the subject. I hold in high regard the special rapport we established during my two years at the Cincinnati campus.

Finally, I would like to thank Lori Puthoff for the typing of a nearly flawless manuscript, as well as the production of voluminous amounts of material in a very short time. She has been a delight to work with.

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INTRODUCTION

Existentialism is not so much a particular philosophy as it is a general way of thinking. Therefore, while existentialism does not refer to a specific set of philosophic beliefs, there are common elements which bind together those philosophic systems that are included in existentialism. Three of these unifying factors are of particular importance. The first is a general repudiation of all traditional philosophical systems, each of which attempt to define the human predicament, the second is an insistence on the uniqueness of each individual, and the third is an emphasis upon human freedom. For the existentialist, detached, impirical analysis is futile, for a person's ultimate reality lies not within the cosmos, but within the self. Yet, these common elements eventually give way to the fervent individualism of each thinker, serving to create within the existentialist movement a wide variety of positions, ranging from the non-theistic existentialist to the theistic existentialist.

The ethical systems of these existentialist thinkers, which also share a number of common characteristics, the most important being that there can be no universally valid rules for the guidance of conduct, ultimately yield very different notions as to how the human person should conduct his life. The purpose of this thesis will be to analyze the ethical systems of two modern existentialist thinkers, Martin Buber and Jean-Paul Sartre. However, from the outset, it must be stated

that the word 'system' is something of a misnomer, for the fact is that neither thinker formulated a systematically developed philosophical ethics. Moreover, neither Buber nor Sartre ever produced a work on ethics per se. Bearing this in mind, it is more accurate to speak of the ethical implications that are contained within their basic philosophic works, for this is essentially the only way that one can obtain an understanding of their respective views regarding ethics and morality.

Jean-Paul Sartre is considered by many to be the main exponent of modern existentialism. He transformed the ideas of his predecessors, most notably Soren Kierkegaard, into his own unique conceptions. While his achievements as a novelist and playwright were primarily responsible for his acquiring an international reputation of high acclaim, it is his voluminous philosophic work, Being and Nothingness, that contains the major ethical implications which are of interest here. In addition, his brief lecture, "Existentialism Is A Humanism," intended for popular audiences, has also been referred to, although not nearly as extensively as the former work. Due to the length of Being and Nothingness, only those sections that have relevance for ethics will be analyzed. While there are numerous secondary sources which elucidate the essential elements of Sartre's ethics, only one work was found that is devoted exclusively to the topic. That book is The Foundation and Structure of Sartrean Ethics, by Thomas C. Anderson.

The point of departure for the analysis of Sartrean existentialist ethics is that Sartre is a non-theist, that is, he believes that the human

person inhabits a world in which there is no God. As will be seen, the absence of God plays a critical role in what Sartre sees as the basic human existential situation. The ethical implications that derive from this place an immense burden on the human person, who in complete freedom must invent his own ethical values without any pre-existent criteria to guide him in doing so. While Sartre considers such individual autonomy to be the beauty of existentialist ethics, his critics find it to be a curse, paving the way to a morally bankrupt society in which any action is permitted, be it theft, rape, or even murder. To the extent that Sartre's critics are correct, the value of the ethical implications in his philosophy diminishes, until what is left is nothing more than an ethic of moral anarchy, if such a state of affairs can be called an ethic at all. However, it remains to be seen whether Sartre's critics are at all justified in their claims. To the extent that they are not, Sartre's ethics becomes a viable alternative to more traditional ethical theories. The resolution of this issue is the primary goal of Chapter 2.

Martin Buber is a Jewish thinker whose unique vision combines both the existential and the religious. The fusion between the two is most clearly understood by Buber's insistence that the authentic life of faith is not to be found in any sort of mystical search for the Divine, which can only be experienced apart from the routine of daily life. Rather, the key to the religious life involves the human person's genuine involvement with the world around him. This general under-

standing has distinctly Jewish roots, manifested most clearly in Hasidism, which emphasizes a positive and joyous attitude to the world as the way to enter more fully into relationship with God.

Attesting to Buber's diverse scholarly abilities, he made contributions to other fields, most notably education, psychology, and political science. But for all his various contributions to the social sciences, Buber is best known for his unique approach to human relations, as developed in his "philosophy of dialogue." Buber is different from most philosophers and theologians in that his use of language is not conventional. He writes as a religio-philosophical thinker with a poetic bent, thus creating a style all his own. Buber's philosophy of dialogue is most fully articulated in his famous work, I and Thou, as well as in Between Man and Man and Eclipse of God. These three primary sources contain the major ethical implications of Buber's philosophy. Secondary sources include various articles and books by Maurice Friedman, the primary scholar-interpreter of Buber, two theses, one of which is devoted exclusively to Buber's ethics, as well as numerous articles written by critics of Buber's ethics.

As opposed to Sartre, who is a non-theist, Buber is a panentheist, which signifies the belief that the universe is contained in the being of God, but is not the totality of God. One's relation to God, then, occurs through the relation with the world. The primary ethical implication of this is that the human person is able to discover, by means of the

relation, his own ethical values. However, just what these values are constitutes the dilemma as to the nature of Buber's ethics. While the emphasis of the philosophy of dialogue is certainly on achieving positive human relations, there are those critics of Buber who maintain that no objective moral values derive from one's relation to God and the world, and that ultimately Buber's ethics condones moral anarchy.

It cannot be argued that Buber rejected the belief of Orthodox Judaism that the individual Jew can achieve soteria (i.e. salvation) through external conformity to the Mosaic Law. In fact, he severely criticized Orthodoxy for making the Revelation at Mt. Sinai into an absolute code of law to be adhered to in all situations. As a reaction to this, Buber's ethics emphasizes creative spontaneity in response to concrete situations that confront each individual. However, to maintain, as do his critics, that Buber's ethics precludes moral judgements of any kind is incorrect, for at various places throughout his writings Buber distinguishes between actions that he considers good and those that he finds evil. Whether these random moral judgements are incompatible with his affirmation of the need for individual decision in the concrete situation, or whether Buber's ethics depends on both elements, is the critical issue that must be resolved. This is the primary goal of Chapter 3.

While the ethics of both Sartre and Buber are subject to similar criticisms, they are nevertheless very different in nature. A comparison of the essential differences between them will be reserved for the conclusion to this study.

I. GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF EXISTENTIALISM AND EXISTENTIALIST ETHICS

A. Essence and Existence

The word 'philosophy' is defined in the dictionary as "the rational investigation of the truths and principles of being, knowledge, or conduct."[1] Implicit in this definition is the idea that the human mind is capable, through rational deliberation, of apprehending the truths of the universe, the nature of being, and ultimate reality.

"...there is a long philosophic tradition that thought and reality are one, going back at least to Parmenides; [who said] 'for thinking and being are the same.'"[2] In the history of philosophy, this idea found its most systematic expression in the early 19th century, in the philosophy of Hegel. It was Hegel who believed that the rational powers of the human mind could explain all phenomena in the universe, and he built his entire philosophic system on this premise. Reality for Hegel, like much of traditional philosophy, was based on a total theory of the known universe, where the natures of God, the world, and the human person were defined and explained. This entire theory, in turn, is based upon what existentialists term 'essentialism,' an idea which lies at the heart of much of traditional philosophy.

Essentialism is the notion that the reality of all things can be apprehended through their description, definition, classification, and categorization. The specific qualities and attributes that make up a thing

become its essence. "...essence tells what distinguishes one form of life or one form of an object from another."[3] Part of the essence of an apple, then, would be its redness and its roundness, an essence which all red, round apples share. Similarly, the human person can be defined, described and categorized in general terms that are common to all people. The essence of one human being applies to every human being, and reveals the qualities all persons have. Accordingly, the essence of humankind does not distinguish one human individual from another, rather it distinguishes humans as a class from a species that possesses a different essence.

> The philosopher realizes that the essence of man, the nature of man, is that which is common to every man. Therefore, the philosopher does not concern himself with individuals as is the case in literature. We often err in saying that because the philosopher deals with the concept of man, rather than with the sensory, intellectual, and spiritual experience of specific people living in definite places at definite times, that he is divorced from reality. Such is not the case. He handles the greater reality because no one man can have any quality that is not in the nature, the essence, of every man.[4]

What, then, according to essentialists, is the essence of the human person? The answer they give is the human mind, which, with its ability to think and to reason, is what separates a human being from all other animals and objects. Since the essentialist values the power of the mind over the brute existence of the body, we arrive at the philosophical maxim, 'essence precedes existence,' in which essence refers primarily to reason. Descartes' famous phrase, "I think, therefore I am," reflects exactly this idea, in that ratiocination is the proof that a

person exists, and therefore is prior.

If one should reject essence as preceding existence, and maintain instead that existence precedes essence, one is no longer an essentialist, but an existentialist. In the history of philosophy, there have been systems which emphasized existence over essence. Although such systems are not new, and go back to the mythological period, it is not until much later that the rejection of the essentialist position became a viable force in philosophic circles. "Modern existentialism begins with Kierkegaard's championing of the concreteness of existence over against what he took to be the essentialism of Hegel."[5] What bothered Kierkegaard about Hegel's philosophic system was that it reduced all of reality to universal concepts, ignoring the concrete human individual. Kierkegaard was troubled by the mystery of individual human existence, along with the infinity of things which he felt were beyond reason. Since human knowledge is always incomplete by Hegel's own coherence theory of truth, and therefore incapable of comprehending the world as a whole, Kierkegaard countered Hegel by maintaining that thought alone is incapable of revealing reality. The real question, the 'why' of our existence, can never be answered by speculation and abstract logic. The rational can never hope to explain the irrational. For Kierkegaard, the human person gains access to reality not by speculation, but by experience.

> Kierkegaard insisted that philosophy should not be abstract, but based on personal experience, on the historical situation in which man finds himself, so that it could become the basis, not of speculation, but of each man's life.[6]

The existing individual is, then, the starting point of existentialist philosophers. Seeing reason as only one aspect of human existence, they try to go beyond it, to grasp human existence itself. The human person must be seen as a finite entity caught in a particular existence, rather than as a thinking subject. Attempting to understand the essence of humankind in general, and then applying it to particular individuals, is seen as a fundamental error of traditional philosophy. Essence can define what a thing is, listing its characteristics and attributes. However, existence cannot be defined, for it is paradoxical and cannot fit into a system constructed by rational thought and abstract logic. It simply 'is.' Therefore, philosophy must understand the brute reality of an individual's particular existence before defining a general nature of the human person which must apply to all.

> A particular man's encounter with his world is what needs clarification, and a system of general ideas will not help to achieve this. Such a system leaves out the living reality of existence. In its concern for abstract logic, it completely ignores the subjective immediacy that is the heart of man's actual situation.[7]

Along these lines, existentialists have attempted to find out what a person is, starting from the fact that he is, that he exists. The sheer givenness of existence must precede the rational, descriptive analysis of essence, which is abstract and eternal. In short, existence precedes essence.

While anyone who subscribes to this notion would most likely consider himself an existentialist, there is a strong aversion to the use of

this, or any other name. Any kind of classification or categorization is anathema, because each existentialist philosopher considers himself an individual. To gather a group of existentialists and form a 'school' would be impossible, primarily because the phenomenon of definition is entirely alien to existentialism. Defining is seen as the rational process of setting up characteristics that would necessarily describe every person. But this is exactly what existentialism seeks to avoid. Moreover, there are many different kinds of existentialists. As Sartre has written, "...the word is now so loosely applied to so many things that it no longer means anything at all."[8] Perhaps in the end, what is common to existentialists is their emphasis of the uniqueness of each individual.

The preoccupation of the existentialists with the life of the individual, along with a general repudiation of all traditional philosophical systems which attempt to define human existence, gives rise to a description of personal being. Specifically, at the core of personal being is human freedom. "It is the exercise of freedom and the ability to shape the future that distinguishes man from all the other beings that we know on earth."[9] The theme of freedom is present in all the existentialist writers, especially Sartre, for whom to exist and to be free are virtually synonomous. But what is meant by freedom? Clearly, the human person does not have complete freedom, for each person is born in a certain place, at a certain time, and in a particular environment. These are the given conditions of our existence, over which we have no control.

Moreover, each person has certain physical and intellectual limitations which prevent that person from accomplishing whatever he wishes. It would be impossible for one afflicted with leprosy to win a beauty contest, just as it would be inconceivable that one who has a severe learning disability could become an academician. Yet, human freedom is not equated with the ability to accomplish an objective. The conditions of birth and our own natural limitations are not obstacles to philosophic freedom, for such freedom means possibility, and the ability to take action that solely results from free choice. "The true philosophical notion of freedom distinguishes it both from a mere internal intention and from the ability to succeed in an enterprise."[10] It is sufficient, therefore, that the leper does some action, such as enter the beauty contest, in order to learn the value of his own freedom. The existentialist notion of freedom as possibility for undetermined action is crucial for human existence, for it defies all rationally intelligible patterns which determine a person's future. Since there is no general human type which each individual is obliged to realize, each person is free to invent their own personhood. By choosing from among the myriad of possibilities for action, one can determine his own future, and in the process, his own history. This situation that each person is confronted with has definite implications for the ethics of existentialism, as will now be shown.

B. Introduction to Existentialist Ethics

The word 'ethics' has many meanings, but in its practical application

it refers to a set of rules of conduct, or a moral code. "The most urgent problem of ethics is to discover how to steer one's life."[11] On another level, ethics is an investigation of the sources of rules of conduct. In this sense, ethics is a branch of philosophy called metaethics. The use of the term metaethics for the philosophic treatment of ethics is relatively recent. The primary problem of metaethics is to determine what is meant by the terms 'good' and 'bad.' A standard or rule that determines what is meant by 'good' is a moral principle. Different solutions to this problem will give rise to different ethical theories. Each great system of philosophy has its own system of ethics built upon certain moral principles. While a solution to the problem of moral principles will indicate what 'good' means, it will not reveal the specific actions that must be carried out in order to achieve that standard of 'good.' The discovery of what things are 'good' or 'bad' is the business of casuistry. The solution to the problem of casuistry would be the formulation of a moral code which would specifically enumerate the good and bad things, enabling a person to choose the right course of action should the need arise.

Like that of any ethical theory, existentialist ethics must grapple with the problems of metaethics and casuistry. This means that before a detailed account of existentialist ethics can be attempted, some clarification of what is meant by 'good' must be made, for "...it is obvious that the problem of casuistry must wait for a solution to the problem of moral principles."[12] Determining what moral principles come out of

existentialism, however, is extremely difficult. As has already been noted, it would be impossible to gather a group of existentialists and form a 'school,' because of the antipathy towards definition generally, as well as the diversity among existentialists themselves. Yet, it is nevertheless possible to convey something of the spirit of the movement as a whole, as has been shown above. Thus, before proceeding to an outline of existentialist ethics specifically, it will be more beneficial to begin by examining what existentialism as a movement finds distasteful in other ethical theories generally.

Many ethical theories are authoritarian-legalistic in nature. An authoritarian-legalistic ethical system is one where the moral principle used for determining what is good is obedience to laws that have been laid down by an authority. An action is right only if it is performed in conformity with the rules and laws established by the authority. In an authoritarian-legalistic ethical system, ethics deals with an objective set of rules that constitutes rational guidelines valid for all people. "With this approach one enters into every decision-making situation encumbered with a whole apparatus of prefabricated rules and regulations."[13] These rules and regulations are usually written down in a code. Most Jewish religious systems, especially Pentateuchal and Pharisaic Judaism, have followed the authoritarian-legalistic model. The authority is Yahweh, the Creator God of the Universe. Through revelation, the Creator God makes known His will to all people who are tied to the covenant community. In general, the ethical systems

of all major Western religious traditions have been authoritarian-legalistic. The critical point to understand is that authoritarian-legalistic ethics are completely independent of human wishes or desires. The standard of what is good and bad is objective and beyond the authority of the individual to alter in any way.

Most ethical theories historically established objective moral principles. For example, in Aristotelian ethics, the highest good is human happiness attained through the life of reason. In hedonism, the highest good is pleasure. In utilitarianism, the highest good is the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. In terms of casuistry, acts are justified on the basis of whether they follow the moral principle of the system in question.

In existentialism, however, there can be no objective criteria of moral goodness because such moral principles are incoherent with a philosophy that has asserted the ultimacy of the existing free individual. Since there is no general nature of the human person, there can be no principles that are valid for all individuals.

> ...the existentialists rightly reject even [sic] all principles, all "generally valid" ethical norms or axioms, as well as all rules or laws or precepts that legalistically absolutize such general principles.[14]

As a consequence, existentialist ethics cannot yield general rules of conduct, because the basis of justification is in nothing objective. On the contrary, any action taken by an individual is determined by the subjectivity of that person's inner life, which he can feel only within

himself. Clearly then, the notion that an act is justified because it is mine cannot possibly serve as the basis of a reasonable ethical theory for anyone other than myself. Existentialist ethics as a system of values and rules intelligible for all people is completely counter to the spirit of the movement. Since the starting point of existentialism is the freedom of the individual, a person must stand out as a unique individual, refusing to be absorbed into a system. A person exists in terms of his own experience, which he creates for himself by choosing it. Born with nothing other than the factual circumstances of birth, an individual becomes what he is by his choices. We are each the molder of our own nature. This theme is borne out in a passage from an "Oration on the Dignity of Man" by the Italian Renaissance scholar Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. God is represented as saying to humanity:

> A limited nature in other creatures is confined within the laws written down by us. In conformity with thy free judgement, in whose hands I have placed thee, thou art confined by no bounds and thou wilt fix limits of nature for thyself... Thou, like a judge appointed for being honorable, art the molder and maker of thyself, thou mayest sculpt thyself into whatsoever shape thou dost prefer.[15]

This freedom, however, is a double-edged sword. While each person is blessed with the opportunity to create his own nature through free choice, it is this very situation that makes freedom awful, in the sense of his being overwhelmed by the prospect of having to make his own decisions.

Freedom becomes a source of both awe and dread when a person realizes that there is no authority other than his own choice for a right decision. This is because existentialist ethics utilizes no standards

against which one can equate that which is right. Each individual is responsible for his own choices.

> Individual responsibility means in this context that there is no authority for the rightness of a decision which can serve as its justification, and that the individual must bear the weight of his freedom in solitude.[16]

The realization that responsibility for a decision falls entirely on the individual can be a frightening one, for it means that only he is in control of his life at all times.[17] Such freedom is extremely hard to endure, and a common theme among existentialists is the anguish that the human person suffers in bearing the constant and never ending responsibility of making decisions about the life he leads. At every moment of a person's life, decision is necessary. Faced with many different choices, the person reaches a state of anxiety and depression. For existential philosophy, each decision is a crisis situation, and a person's life simply goes from one crisis to another.[18] These constant crisis situations, along with a multitude of choices to choose among for every decision, prevent a person from achieving a harmonious relationship with his environment. The result is a feeling of anguish. Pain and dread fill the person who must endure the responsibility of being the source of his own acts, and of being free to 'make' himself.

Many people attempt to reduce or eliminate the negative feelings of anxiety and depression by denying their own freedom and responsibility. They try to hide from the anguish that living in freedom brings. They try to escape. It is no doubt easier to defer one's own authority to what

one perceives is a higher source of authority. For example, the passive adoption of the norms of the society in which one lives can alleviate an individual from making his own decisions. In this case, the justification for any action is no longer because its source is the person, but because society says that it is a right action. The person is freed from bearing the anguish caused by taking responsibility for his own choices and the turmoil caused by the constant facing of crisis situations, each with new choices. Decisions are made for the individual by having prefabricated rules and regulations for every conceivable type of situation. The person thereby gives up the freedom and responsibility of deciding for himself, in exchange for the reduction or even the elimination of anxiety and dread.

Existentialism is opposed to any individual who attempts to escape from the freedom and responsibility that is rightfully his. To do so is to try to avoid what is the human condition. What is meant here is that the negative emotional states of anxiety and depression are normal states of affairs that every person must face up to as part of the process of realizing their freedom. While these negative emotional states are certainly not desirable, they are far better than facing the consequence of the escape from freedom and responsibility. This consequence is the experience of asoteria. "Asoteria is the name given to the state of meaningless existence that arises from a failure to resolve the conflict of finitude."[19] The conflict of finitude, on the existential level, occurs when a person is aware of his own inevitable death, but simultaneously

desires never to die. While the conflict of finitude is itself peripheral to the discussion, it should be pointed out that the asoteria which arises out of this conflict, from the existentialist point of view, comes out of a person's refusal to face up to his own eventual death. The knowledge that death is inevitable is crucial to the existentialist position. "Each individual is... thrown, rudderless and alone, into a world he little understands and in which nothing but death is certain."[20] Every decision, then, must be made with the understanding that death could occur at any time. Such knowledge gives every moment a certain urgency and immediacy, where each new decision is critical, for it could be the last. The acceptance of death is how the existentialists resolve the conflict of finitude.[21]

While the conflict of finitude is an interesting phenomenon, the real concern is to show how asoteria can arise because of one's escape from freedom and responsibility. In a general sense, asoteria is a state of meaninglessness that can arise from any number of circumstances. From an existentialist perspective, when an individual allows someone else to make decisions for him, or simply oscillates between two or more different choices in any given situation, that person's life will escape him and fall into meaninglessness. Unable to shape his own essence through the repeating process of decision and action, a person will become lost in the world. This is the experience of asoteria.

The making of a choice is thus the moral principle of existentialist ethics. What is chosen is not as important as the choice itself. The

existentialists use a special word to indicate the life of one who makes a choice exercising freedom and responsibility. Such an individual exists "authentically."[22] Conversely, to deny one's freedom and responsibility is to exist "unauthentically."[23] "When we live decisively in the anguish of a full awareness of the terrible responsibility of complete freedom in the face of nothing, we exist authentically."[24] In existentialist ethics, authentic existence is what is meant by 'good.' The specific choice that is made can never be right or wrong. As long as a person makes a decision with his whole being in freedom, that decision is good, and that person is living an authentic life. The only evil in existentialist ethics, then, is a decision to transfer the free choice that a person has to someone or something else, or by refusing to choose at all. This individual is living an unauthentic life.

Existentialist ethics has at its core the idea that the intensity and passion of our choices is more important than their actual content, that is, the actual choice made. When it comes down to specifics, existentialist ethics supplies no content at all. There are no standards that can tell a person that an action is right or wrong. In this system, a bank robber is the moral equivalent of a philanthropist, and a terrorist is no worse than one who obeys the law. The choice made authentically is the only criteria of 'good.'

Critics of existentialism maintain that such a state of affairs precludes any notion of an existentialist ethics. They insist that a system which condones all actions and behavior cannot support any notion of

ethics whatsoever.

> It is true that a widespread conception holds that existentialism contains no ethics at all, but rather that according to its innermost essence it undermines all ethical behavior since it abrogates all stable norms and surrenders man's behavior to subjective arbitrariness.[25]

Such a conception leads critics to equate existentialism with nihilism, the "doctrine which denies any objective ground of moral principles."[26] This is a serious charge indeed, for if it were proven to be true, existentialism would be a nihilistic philosophy that proposes no ethical value. What else can be said about a system which makes no moral distinction between a mass murderer and a pacifist?

Nihilism has been associated with the term 'antinomianism.' Antinomianism is a system which is against all laws and rules. In every situation that one is confronted with, no principles exist which can aid in the making of a decision. One must rely solely upon the freedom of the moment in deciding what choice to make. Antinomianism is the polar opposite of an authoritarian-legalistic ethical system, where an established set of laws and rules is crucial for the making of decisions. Moreover, it is opposed to moral judgements of any kind.

In attempting to determine where existentialist ethics fits within the broad spectrum which places authoritarian-legalistic ethics at one end and antinomianism at the other, it seems clear that it would tend toward the latter. At first glance, one might even suggest that the two are synonomous. Certainly they share a number of common characteristics, the most important being that each choice one makes is

always determined by the unique situation in which one finds himself, and never by some predetermined standard of conduct.

The extreme position of antinomianism is easy to criticize, for it has many faults. It suffers from a total orientation towards individualism, without any regard for the ramifications one's particular choice might have on society as a whole. Furthermore, it fails to understand how a set of societal norms can be internalized by a community of individuals.

> If everyone is unique and is to determine who he will become, have we not abandoned any idea of a true humanity, and perhaps even any idea of morality that could be universally binding? Are we not going to end up with a chaos in which everyone "does his own thing"...and does it without regard to anyone else? And is this not an exaggerated liberty, which has become sheer license?[27]

The cost, then of this preoccupation with the individual who is isolated and alone, seeking to achieve authentic existence, is moral dissolution which borders on anarchy. While some people may authentically choose to pursue a life of communal responsibility, there is no structure inherent in existentialist ethics which requires this. Left entirely to the individual, existentialist ethics becomes synonomous with antinomianism and nihilism.

While there are students of existentialist philosophy who would agree with this statement, and whereas this study has up to now leaned in that direction, there is more to the matter of existentialist ethics that must be analyzed before reaching a decision on its morality, or lack thereof. Interestingly enough, there are those who maintain that

the confusing of existentialist ethics with nihilism and antinomianism is a judgement that is both superficial and incorrect. They have found reason to believe that certain actions on the part of an individual are outside the boundary of what an existentialist ethic would consider proper. Specifically, actions that fail to take seriously into account the social dimensions of existence would be precluded. To the degree that such a position has validity, it would cause a shift away from the notion that existentialist ethics is individualistic and anarchistic, and toward a conception of it as being a unifying force in modern society.

To a large extent, the debate continues. On one side are those who find existentialist ethics to be antinomian and nihilistic. On the other side are those who consider existentialist ethics to occupy a position within the extremes of authoritarian-legalistic ethics and antinomianism, albeit closer to the latter. The resolution of this conflict is by no means simple, and requires an in-depth look at what existentialist ethics really is. Through an analysis of the ethics of Jean-Paul Sartre and Martin Buber, we shall begin to probe this dilemma, and eventually hope to resolve it.

II. THE EXISTENTIALIST ETHICS OF JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

A. Basic Elements of Sartrean Existentialism

Jean-Paul Sartre, born in Paris in 1905, is firmly established as one of the outstanding philosophers and creative writers of the twentieth century.[1] He first achieved widespread popularity in France during World War II, primarily as a novelist and playwright. It was during this time, in 1943, that he also produced what is considered his major philosophical work, Being and Nothingness. However, due to its technical nature and level of difficulty, Sartre's eminence as a philosopher was not immediately recognized. This was soon to change, particularly as the movement of modern existentialism took hold in postwar Paris. As Sartre acquired the reputation of being the spokesperson for modern existentialism, Being and Nothingness was taken to be the principle philosophic text that elucidated the principles of the movement. In the ensuing years, as the fervor of existentialism carried to the United States, the book, along with most of Sartre's literary works, was translated into English.

While it should be pointed out that Sartre's thought is to a large degree based on the work of his predecessors, primarily Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Husserl, Being and Nothingness is considered by many to be the most systematic, thoroughgoing treatment of the main features of existentialism. Moreover, Sartre, through his creative abilities,

transformed those original ideas into his own unique conceptions, some of which would be completely foreign to his precursors. The result is a brand of existentialism that stands on its own merits, and which many consider to be the 'true' existentialism.

Given Sartre's preeminence as an existentialist philosopher, it stands to reason that any discussion of existentialist ethics must necessarily involve an analysis of Sartrean ethics. However, to speak of Sartrean ethics is sure to invite skepticism, for the fact is that he has never published a work on ethics per se. Those who hold that existentialism is incapable of formulating any ethical principles at all refer to the last section of Being and Nothingness, entitled "Ethical Implications," in which Sartre wrote that his ontological description of the human condition "...cannot formulate ethical precepts."[2] Yet, those who maintain that Sartre's philosophic system does reveal an ethics point out that Sartre's admission must be understood in the light of the very next sentence in the book.

> Ontology itself cannot formulate ethical precepts. It is concerned solely with what is and we cannot possibly derive imperatives from ontology's indicatives. It does, however, allow us to catch a glimpse of what sort of ethics will assume its responsibilities when confronted with a human reality in situation.[3]

Thus, the absence of a systematically developed philosophical ethics does not exclude the fact that Sartre's thought is carried by a basic ethical conception. This conception lies within his basic philosophy, and must simply be made explicit in an investigative manner. Hazel

Barnes, who translated Being and Nothingness into English, firmly supports this notion.

> Although Sartre did not formulate an abstract system of ethics, one felt everywhere the presence of an implied ethics, whose general outline at least was clear.[4]

While this presents a case for a Sartrean ethics, there is still another factor to consider. Even if Barnes' assertion could be proven beyond doubt, it must be pointed out that an 'implied ethics' was not Sartre's final ambition. The very last sentence in Being and Nothingness is Sartre's promise to devote an entire work to the formulation of an ethics, one that up to that point could only be 'glimpsed.' Despite his intentions, however, there has not appeared any investigation into the matter. Nor will such an investigation ever appear, at least at the hand of Sartre, since he died in 1980. Reasoning that he must have found a systematically developed ethical system based on existentialism impossible, critics of Sartre consider this proof that existentialism cannot yield anything which resembles an ethical theory.

Exactly why Sartre did not follow his original plan to write a study on ethics is a mystery. Possible explanations include: his own failing health; two thousand pages of writings on ethics which were never published, and subsequently lost; events since 1943 that made a work on ethics less necessary in his eyes than the other works he published; the irrelevance, in Sartre's eyes, of a theoretical ethics during a time when there were oppressed people, who were not free.[5] This last explanation is particularly interesting, and implies a complete shift in

Sartre's conception of the role of literature and philosophy.

> On this latter point Sartre, in a number of interviews and in his autobiography, has admitted that until he was in his forties he suffered from a "neurosis," a belief that his existence was fundamentally justified by writing. He considered literature to be his means of salvation, his religion. In the early 1950's he concluded that the ethics he was writing while gripped by this "madness" was actually a form of escape from reality, an escape prompted "when technical and social conditions render positive forms of conduct impossible." He came to realize that the ethics he was working on was so idealistic as to be impossible, for it presented moral good as if it were attainable without evil.[6]

Thus, for Sartre, the formulation of any theoretical ethics in a society in which there are oppressed people is not only irrelevant, but unjustified. Associating theoretical ethics with his own need to justify his existence, Sartre refocused his concern to helping people liberate themselves. He continued to write, but recognized that literature and philosophy were of secondary importance to direct political action in effecting a better world. Despite this shift away from the theoretical toward the practical, Barnes feels that Sartre had not really abandoned ethics. "He has chosen to act in accordance with the practical ethics of Marxism in preference to the theoretical ethics of existentialism."[7] This does not mean, however, that Sartre chose one over the other. Rather, it means that Sartre's theoretical ethics of existentialism were to be written only after the realization of the practical ethics of Marxism, as Barnes later indicates.

> Everything is judged in relation to the central imperative of hastening that ideal future state of society when the problems of production will have been solved, when the true philosophy

> of freedom will emerge. Then men and women can afford to speculate about metaphysics, writers may be novelists without feeling guilty at not being politicians, and Sartre--if he lives that long, will feel ethically justified in publishing his Ethics.[8]

The major point of the preceding discussion is not to question whether Sartre renounced existentialism in favor of Marxism, or whether he was a Marxist at all. These issues are beyond the scope of this study. Rather, it is simply to show that his critics cannot justifiably cite the absence of a systematic work on existentialist ethics as irrefutable proof that such a task is impossible. In reality, there are several possible explanations as to why Sartre failed to produce the work he promised, only one of which is that existentialism cannot form ethical precepts.

Going on the assumption, therefore, that existentialism is carried by a basic ethical conception, which, although implied, can be made explicit through an analysis of Being and Nothingness, then it is proper to treat the book as the main source for existentialist ethics. If one accepts the description of human reality in Being and Nothingness, and wishes to live a life consistent with that philosophy, then to what kind of existence is one committed? It is this question that is of primary concern.

Before undertaking an analysis of Sartrean ethics, however, it is necessary to sketch briefly some of the key underpinnings that form his general existentialist philosophy. First and most important, is that Sartre is a non-theist. Without going into specifics, he finds the idea

of a God to be contradictory.[9] From this, Sartre reasons that a world without a God necessarily implies certain unchangeable facts about the human condition. Most significant is the fact that the human person can have no essence prior to existence. Without a creator God who makes the human being according to a predetermined conception, a person's essence at birth is a void, overshadowed by the brute reality of existence. It is only through one's particular actions and experiences in the world that essence will be determined, and this essence will necessarily be different for each individual existant. Sartre outlines this proposition in a brief lecture entitled "Existentialism Is A Humanism," which has served as a general description of existentialism intended primarily for the public.

> Atheistic existentialism, of which I am a representative, declares with greater consistency that if God does not exist there is at least one being whose existence comes before its essence, a being which exists before it can be defined by any conception of it. That being is man or, as Heidegger has it, the human reality. What do we mean by saying that existence precedes essence? We mean that man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world--and defines himself afterwards. If man as the existentialist sees him is not definable, it is because to begin with he is nothing. He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself. Thus, there is no human nature, because there is no God to have a conception of it.[10]

For Sartre, one's essence is the product of one's existence, not some fixed nature that is characteristic of all people and which precedes their existence. Until the human person creates an essence through being and acting in the world, he is nothing at all, and life has no meaning. "Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself. That is

the first principle of existentialism."[11] This is existentialism in its purest form for, in rejecting any religious claim, what is key is the complete autonomy of the individual. Sartre considers the human person to be the sole creator of meaning and value in the world, because the absence of God precludes any given human nature from which absolute values can be drawn. Without any absolute values, however, there is no reference point that can legitimize any human action, nor is there any standard by which to justify one's behavior. "Thus we have neither behind us, nor before us in a luminous realm of values, any means of justification or excuse."[12]

The ethical implications of such a state of affairs is at the very least precarious, for there can be no objective definition of what is meant by 'good.' Put another way, there are no limits as to what constitutes 'good,' since an individual can make any act good simply by choosing it. Critics hold that under these circumstances existentialism has no morality at all, since the condemnation of either the point of view or the action of someone else is impossible without any notion of what is good.

> For Sartre, every action, every choice, is necessarily right. But morality presupposes that there is a something morally at stake when I choose or act; there is the possibility of right and wrong, better or worse.[13]

Lacking any objective moral values to aid in the making of decisions, Sartre has been accused of creating a system of nihilism, where judgements are meaningless. Dostoevsky, the 19th century Russian

novelist, summed up the challenge best when he said, "If God is dead, everything is permitted."[14]

While "Existentialism Is A Humanism" gives a general description of existentialism, Sartre also attempts to respond to various charges made against him, among them the charge just discussed, namely, that his position renders impossible the making of any judgements about the good or evil of anyone's actions. Sartre's reply is as follows:

> Furthermore, I can pronounce a moral judgement. For I declare that freedom, in respect of concrete circumstances, can have no other end and aim but itself; and when once a man has seen that values depend upon himself, in that state of forsakenness he can will only one thing, and that is freedom as the foundation of all values. That does not mean that he wills it in the abstract: it simply means that the actions of men of good faith have, as their ultimate significance, the quest of freedom itself as such.[15]

Clearly, freedom is what Sartrean ethics takes as its fundamental value. Moreover, the 'Ethical Implications' section in Being and Nothingness leaves no doubt that freedom is the source of all value. This being the case, it can be shown that Sartre will find certain kinds of behavior appropriate and others reprehensible. Specifically, any action that upholds Sartre's idea of freedom he will find 'good.' Conversely, any action that denies freedom Sartre will label as 'bad.' Though he has in one sense rejected absolute moral values, in another sense he accepts the absolute value of freedom, recommends this value to persons, and passes moral judgement upon those who try to deny this freedom. This is the main ethical implication that is present within Being and Nothingness. Through an analysis of only those particular ontological positions

that underly this ethical structure, it will be seen how Sartre arrives at his theory of freedom, and what it implies for the human person. There will also be an analysis of the types of behavior that deny this freedom, all of which Sartre condemns. The overall goal will be to show that from this, it is incorrect to label Sartrean ethics as nihilistic or antinomian. To all this, we now turn.

B. Sartre's Ontological Description of Human Reality and its Ethical Implications

The only reliable account of Sartre's philosophic system is in Being and Nothingness. Yet to understand this work is difficult, even for philosophers, because it is fraught with paradoxical language and unfamiliar concepts. The first of these unfamiliar concepts is the subtitle of the book, A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology. Ontology is "the science of being or reality; the branch of knowledge that investigates the nature, essential properties, and relations of being, as such."[16] Modern philosophy has been concerned with the epistemological problem. With existentialism, the order is reversed and the dominance of epistemology is challenged. Ontology becomes the primary concern, studying "...the structures of being of the existent taken as a totality."[17] Focusing on a description rather than an explanation of being, ontology deals with the conditions under which there is a human reality. It answers the question "What?" and leaves the "Why?" to epistemology. Phenomenology is "the branch of a science dealing with the description and classification of phenomena."[18] The phenomenologist seeks to

understand "Being as it appears or is revealed."[19] Through this approach, conclusions can be drawn regarding the nature of consciousness and of the world, and of their relations.

Sartre's ontology is a theory of the nature of reality, or the doctrine of being. He seeks to understand the concrete situation of the human person's existence. While no attempt is made to give a formal critique of the ontology, apparent inconsistencies in Sartre's work will be noted, especially those that reveal problems with the ethical structure.

The first thing to understand about Sartre's theory of the nature of reality is that any description of the world must be a description as seen by some individual human person. One is aware of the world around him through what Sartre calls "the prereflective cogito."[20] Simple non-reflective awareness, or apprehension of objects in the world, is its function. However, Sartre argues that one's apprehension of objects in the world is always accompanied by a kind of personal awareness that one is engaged in the process of apprehension. An awareness of being aware, if you will. This reflection on the state of being aware is called the "Cartesian cogito."[21] Human consciousness is thus composed of both mental states, where there is consciousness of the world, and also consciousness of oneself apprehending the world. These mental states do not originate simultaneously, however, for the Cartesian cogito is simply a possibility of the prereflective cogito, and can only occur subsequent to it. As Sartre says, "...it is the non-reflective consciousness which renders the reflection possible; there

is a pre-reflective cogito which is the condition of the Cartesian cogito."[22] To see what this implies in the concrete, Hazel Barnes provides the following situation:

> According to Sartre, the first moment of consciousness, so to speak, cannot be expressed verbally as "I am aware of a bright light" or some such equivalent. One should rather say, "there is a bright light." The "there is" implies an awareness on the part of consciousness that the awareness and the object of awareness are not the same.[23]

It is through the prereflective cogito that objects are apprehended, and for Sartre this is the primary form of consciousness. This leads to the second thing one must understand about Sartre's theory of the nature of reality; the distinction between objects in the world and human consciousness.

An object in the world Sartre terms "being-in-itself,"[24] while human consciousness is referred to as "being-for-itself."[25] The fundamental distinction upon which the whole structure of Being and Nothingness is based is the distinction between these two terms. An object, or being-in-itself, is essentially what it is. "Being is. Being is in-itself. Being is what it is."[26] What is meant by this is that any object, such as a rock or a chair, is totally one with itself, no more and no less. "The in-itself has nothing secret; it is solid."[27] Objects have a definable essence from which they can never escape. Their behavior is predictable, and can be encompassed within scientific laws. Most importantly, material objects can be nothing other than what they already are. They cannot even try or hope to be other than what they are because they are non-conscious.

Human consciousness, being-for-itself, is clearly distinguished from being-in-itself. Only the in-itself is perfectly identified with itself, as a chair is a chair. "The principle of identity is valid only within the region of being, it is not valid for consciousness."[28] Consciousness is not identified with itself because it does not direct itself toward an object as an object. Rather, consciousness is an emptiness which becomes identified with whatever object it perceives. While consciousness reflects totally that object, in its own being it is "pure translucency."[29] Therefore consciousness is never opaque and solid like the object it perceives, but is translucent, and remains separate from it. An example will clarify.

> The relation between consciousness and its object might be compared with that between a mirror and the objects which are reflected in it; the mirror has no content of its own, containing merely reflections of objects before it, yet it is always separate and never merges with the object.[30]

Since consciousness is always consciousness of something, it is evident that apart from its objects of reflection, consciousness is nothing at all. Human consciousness, nothingness, and being-for-itself mean the same thing, as Sartre says, "...the for-itself must be its own nothingness."[31]

So far it has been shown that consciousness is nothing other than the reflection of whatever object is perceived, and that it is not directly its own object. This is the activity of the prereflective cogito. However, any act of consciousness must also involve the Cartesian cogito, which is a reflection on the state of being aware. As a result, consciousness,

through an awareness of objects, becomes aware of its own existence as nothingness. At its initial stage consciousness is simply a reflection of an object. But a true awareness of the object can only come about when consciousness is aware of itself as not being that object. Sartre calls this activity "nihilation," or a consciousness that acts by "negation." It is possible to see what Sartre means by this through a more concrete example. Consider the individual human person. By being aware of some object, one distinguishes between this object and one's self. This self-awareness in perception involves the drawing of a distinction between the observer and the object of observation. Instead of saying "there is a tree," one really says, "I am aware that I am not that tree." Thus, consciousness can be the awareness of an object only by "nihilating" itself from what is perceived.

> Human reality can annihilate nothing in being. One might say that it has a hold only upon itself. What does change is simply its relation with things. It is human reality alone which is receding, escaping, annihilating itself... Endlessly, it breaks away and falls off. I am not the scenery I am admiring, nor the man I apprehend.[32]

The fundamental relation, then, between conscious beings and the world is derived by Sartre from the power of negation. This power, or force, creates a psychic distance between consciousness and its objects, as consciousness realizes what it is not. This distance, filled by exactly nothing, is a nothingness, although not quite the nothingness which consciousness is. "Consciousness, or human reality, is the being by which nothingness comes to the world because it is itself

nothingness..."[33] The nothingness which is brought to the world by consciousness is equivalent to a gap, or an empty space. It is through the existence of this empty space, separating a person from the world of things, that the possibility arises of thinking and acting as one chooses. The empty space has to be filled, and it is filled by whatever the person plans to do, or to be. The manner in which the space is filled is through a technical term which Sartre calls "project," used both as a noun and a verb. As a noun, a project is simply the realization of "...certain transcendent goals, which represent the ultimate values of an individual."[34] An individual, through the choice of a particular project, makes a decision as to what he or she considers important and of value. Human projects upon the world include perception of it, feeling things about it, and making plans to change it. Since one cannot act without a project of oneself in the world, all individual acts are seen to have underlying motives that reflect the project one has chosen to pursue. Used as a verb, 'project' refers to the casting, or impelling of one's consciousness onto the empty space that separates a person from objects in the world. This idea of the projecting of a consciousness refers to a person who is in "...constant movement beyond where he is at any given time."[35] As one chooses a particular course of action, one goes beyond what he has been up until that moment.

> In the long run, however, what is really chosen is oneself. It is out of its decisions that the self emerges. A self is not given readymade at the beginning. What is given is a field of possibility, and as the existent projects himself into this possibility rather than that one, he begins to determine who he shall be.[36]

Two important ideas are presented here. First, the empty space that a consciousness is projected onto is really the full range of choices, or projects, that an individual may undertake. It is not an empty space as much as it is a 'field of possibility.' Second, it is one's choices and decisions that determine what the person will become. Sartre substantiates this claim in "Existentialism Is A Humanism."

> Man is nothing else but what he purposes, he exists only in so far as he realizes himself, he is therefore nothing else but the sum of his actions, nothing else but what his life is.[37]

As one chooses a project within one's 'field of possibility,' and realizes that project through action, the essence of that person will manifest itself. The existentialist idea that existence precedes essence becomes clearer when understood in light of Sartre's ontology. To reiterate, the human person first exists as nothing, because it has already been shown that consciousness is nothingness. Then, through the power of negation, consciousness becomes aware that it is nothingness. Finally, in projecting oneself onto the field of possibility, and choosing a particular project which is constantly being realized through action, a person determines his own essence.

> The essential meaning of the doctrine that existence precedes essence, is that man has no nature or defining characteristics prior to his existence as a choosing being who decides what he will be.[38]

Clearly then, there is no universal pattern of humanity that can be imposed on all or to which all must conform. Human consciousness, inasmuch as it is nothingness, is able to be shaped however the person

desires. The ability to do whatever one desires is called freedom. Freedom, as has already been stated, is what Sartrean ethics takes as its fundamental value.

> That man is free is the absolute starting point of an existentialist ethics. At no point will we admit the validity of any position which either denies the reality of this freedom or deliberately ignores it. [39]

However, as was stated in the previous chapter, the human person does not have complete freedom. There are given facts of each person's existence which cannot be changed. One's place of birth, one's environment, bodily condition, and intellectual ability can limit, or enhance, as the case may be, the ability to succeed in achieving one's goals. Sartre refers to these given conditions as one's "facticity." The word "freedom" for Sartre, however, does not mean the ability to succeed in achieving one's goals, rather it refers only to the autonomy of choice.

> In addition it is necessary to point out to "common sense" that the formula "to be free" does not mean "to obtain what one has wished," but rather "by oneself to determine oneself to wish" (in the broad sense of choosing)... The technical and philosophical concept of freedom, the only one which we are considering here, means only the autonomy of choice. [40]

Therefore, an individual who is severely limited by his own facticity still has freedom in the philosophic sense, which is the ability to choose.

A person is free to choose whatever he wishes by projecting the nothingness of consciousness onto the nothingness or space which is the field of possibility, and filling it with the choice of a project. The project is thus a product of the free choice of an individual. It is important to recognize, however, that the choice of a particular project

is not a one-time occurrence, but is a constantly recurring event. At every moment a person must either choose his particular project again, or succumb to the temptation to abandon it and choose a new project. Sartre terms this the "instant," which is "...the ever present possibility that the for-itself may at any point suddenly effect a rupture in its existence by choosing a new project of being."[41]

> The drunkard who decides to go home with his paycheck instead of to the bar becomes a family man and a reformed drunkard. But this new project is no more permanently guaranteed than the old, and it depends on the reaffirmation of the values presiding over this decision in future acts to confirm him as a new person.[42]

Sartre terms the change from one project to another a "radical conversion."[43] The ability for a person to adopt a radical conversion in his behavior is critical for a complete understanding of what Sartre means by freedom. In the specific example of the drunkard, he was able to change his ways by recognizing his own freedom. One project was thus substituted for another through a radical conversion. Of course, a radical conversion can occur in the opposite direction, if for example, the drunkard spent his next paycheck at the bar. The moral consequences of any given radical conversion are not what concern Sartre, however. More significant is that radical conversion opens up the possibility for change. One is never bound by a particular project, for it can always be changed by the choice of a free individual.

> Commitment to the value system one has chosen should never be so complete as to suppress one's awareness that one has chosen it and that one is always free to effect a totally new orientation to Being and one's relation to the world.[44]

It is clear from this that Sartre, in his theory of human reality, rejects any form of determinism, which postulates that all behavior and action of the human person can be linked to prior causes over which the individual has no control. Sartre argues that since human consciousness is nothing in and of itself, it cannot contain an unconscious which causes an individual to adopt certain behavior patterns or perform certain actions without the individual being aware of it.

> Sartre rejects completely the Freudian concept of the unconscious. Most startling of all, the accumulation of memories, habits and personal characteristics... all of this psychic material Sartre puts over one the side of Being-in-itself, making it the object and product of consciousness rather than an intrinsic primary structure of Being-for-itself.[45]

If memories and habits are part of the in-itself, then consciousness can separate itself from these things through negation. Consciousness, by becoming aware that it is <u>not</u> those things, is free to project itself into an undetermined future. Existentialism maintains that the human person is free to revise his attitude toward his own past. It need not play any part in one's choice of a future. For these reasons, Sartre has been categorized as a "'hard' indeterminist."[46]

Sartre's 'hard indeterminism' leads to an affirmation of complete human freedom. Every human person can choose the relation which he wishes to establish with the world and with his own past. Unlike being-in-itself, which exists according to a set of pre-determined reactions and is exactly what it is, being-for-itself, or consciousness, is not pre-determined and has the ability to transcend what it is and

become whatever it chooses within its own field of possibility. In one of his famous paradoxical definitions, Sartre states that we must consider the human person as "...a being which is what-it-is-not and which is not what-it-is."[47] First, a person is 'a being which is what-it-is-not' in the sense that one has a future that lies ahead which cannot be known in the present. A person is the possibilities that comprise the future, which at present are not. Until all of one's future possibilities have been realized, which can only occur after death, a person is therefore that being which is what-it-is-not. Conversely, a person is a being which 'is not what-it-is' in the sense that one cannot be identified with the past. "He is not his situation in the sense of being determined by it and finally identified with it."[48] One is not encumbered by buried experiences from the past which determine one's behavior in the present and future. A person is free to transcend his past by choosing new projects in the present. This is a very anti-determinist position. Sartre's paradoxical phrase, where a person is a being which is what-it-is-not and which is not what-it-is, is really two different ways of saying that the human person is free. In one sense, free to adopt new future projects, and in another sense, free to avoid being determined by the past. The for itself is not the past it is, and is the future it is not. The following statement sums it up best: "The human reality opens up possibilities by always projecting beyond what-it-is to what-it-would-become."[49] Thus, human existence is dynamic, where a person is in constant movement beyond where he is at any given time.

The most evident of the conclusions to be drawn from Sartre's description of human reality thus far is that the human person is a free being, who has an open future and no prior causation. Sartre maintains that freedom and human existence are indistinguishable. To be human is already to be free. Sartre writes: "[M]y freedom...is not a quality added on or a property of my nature. It is very exactly the stuff of my being."[50] Thus, freedom is identical with the being of human reality. The human person is freedom. What must be examined now are the consequences that the human person as freedom has for ethics. A good beginning is a particularly revealing statement from "Existentialism Is A Humanism."

> For indeed if existence precedes essence, one will never be able to explain one's action by reference to a given and specific human nature; in other words, there is no determinism--man is free, man is freedom. Nor, on the other hand, if God does not exist, are we provided with any values or commands that could legitimize our behavior. Thus we have neither behind us, nor before us in a luminous realm of values, any means of justification or excuse.[51]

The consequences of having an ethics which takes as its ultimate value the freedom of the individual is clear. First, since there is no determinism, one has no recourse to an unconscious part of the mind as an excuse for one's particular course of action or pattern of behavior. One has, in fact, been removed from the comfort of all excuses.

> Under the heading of "excuses" can be put all theories which interpret man's behavior in terms of some natural or supernatural deterministic system--fate, the will of God, the promptings of the unconscious or the prodding of external stimuli.[52]

To give an example, a person is no longer in a position to say 'I couldn't help doing that.' Second, since God does not exist, one cannot point to any universally valid moral absolutes as a justification for any action or behavior. Since there are no objective standards of good and bad by which actions can be judged right or wrong, there is no external authority to which a person can turn to in order to justify his actions. A person is left alone to justify himself through the freedom of his own being. The projects that one chooses to realize are 'good' simply because one has chosen them. Without a priori values in the world, the human person creates his own values through his choices. "Sartre...holds that values are created by our choices. We do not choose an antecedent good but make something good by choosing it."[53]

The result of the grouping of all human projects together in this way is to concentrate attention primarily on the individual. This general point of view necessarily determines what kind of ethical system can be derived from Sartre's ontology. It is not surprising to see that Sartre thought each person had to devise his own ethic, by making choices without the help of a priori rules or principles. This point will be reiterated again and again. For now, however, the important point is that without any excuse or justification, the human person is solely responsible for his own choices in the world. The justification for any action can be found nowhere but within the person that chose it. Sartre for the first time gives freedom a negative connotation, as it now places a strain on the individual. In a famous passage, he develops this idea:

> ...man being condemned to be free carries the weight of the whole world on his shoulders; he is responsible for the world and for himself as a way of being. We are taking the word "responsibility" in its ordinary sense as "consciousness (of) being the incontestable author of an event or of an object." In this sense the responsibility of the for-itself is overwhelming since he is the one by whom it happens that there is a world; since he is also the one who makes himself be, then whatever may be the situation in which he finds himself, the for-itself must wholly assume this situation with its peculiar coefficient of adversity, even though it be insupportable.[54]

The realization of one's own freedom and responsibility is something many people find hard to deal with. Knowing that everything is open to them, that they may do or be anything that they choose, leads to what Sartre refers to as 'anguish.'

> I emerge alone and in anguish confronting the unique and original project which constitutes my being: all the barriers, all the guardrails collapse, nihilated by the consciousness of my freedom. I do not have nor can I have recourse to any value against the fact that it is I who sustain values in being. Nothing can ensure me against myself, cut off from the world and from my essence by this nothingness which I am. I have to realize the meaning of the world and of my essence; I make my decision concerning them--without justification and without excuse.[55]

Anguish is the agony of knowing that everything is up to the individual, who realizes that there is no one on whom to shuffle of responsibility. Sartre identifies this anguish with what Kierkegaard called the "anguish of Abraham."[56] When Abraham hears the voice of the angel telling him to sacrifice his son Isaac, he obeys. However, it was his choice to take the voice to be a genuine message from God. There could never be any proof that it was genuine. Therefore, sacrificing his son in obedience to the voice of the angel was his own choice as well. No one was

responsible for the act but himself.

Another source of anguish comes from decision making itself. Every decision that is made comes from a choice among possibilities. Therefore, to decide for one possibility is to reject every other possibility that was open in the situation. While the choice of a particular possibility affirms one's freedom, it also creates anxiety within the individual because of the alternative possibilities that it cuts out.

> For if to decide is on the one hand to thrust forward into a new level of existence, it is on the other hand to take the risk of cutting oneself off from the other possibilities that were open. It is to pledge or engage one's future, and since no one can foresee the future, such an engagement is always freighted with risk and attended by anxiety.[57]

Yet, on the other hand, anguish is also experienced when one realizes that the possibility which was finally chosen may at any time be abandoned for another. "If I form a project, I cannot necessarily count on myself to carry it through, and this uncertainty is a source of anguish."[58]

Thus, the human person, faced with his own freedom, experiences anguish from all sides. While this may be considered to be an unfortunate aspect of human existence, existentialists call for this anguish to be endured, and not avoided by the individual. This is because anguish, they feel, awakens the human person from illusions and false securities. It confronts the person with his responsibility, and calls upon him to make free choices with the whole of his being. This allows a person to live what is referred to as 'authentic' existence. However, inasmuch as the feelings of anxiety and despair produce tension within the human person,

many individuals wish to avoid experiencing them altogether. To escape anguish, they devise ways of concealing their own freedom from themselves. As soon as an individual does this, existentialists claim that the person is trying to escape from a basic reality of the human condition, and is therefore living an 'unauthentic' existence.

Sartre acknowledges this distinction between the individual who confronts his own freedom in anguish, and one who seeks to avoid it. However, he rarely uses the words 'authentic' and 'unauthentic' in his description of such individuals. For Sartre, authentic existence is more than a person making free choices. It involves in addition to this, a commitment to action. The human person is nothing apart from his actions. Therefore, Sartre does not speak of authenticity, but of "engagement,"[59] by which he means a free commitment to a course of action. To exist authentically, from his perspective, means to commit oneself to action, but with the awareness that at any time one can freely choose to engage oneself in another course of action. "What counts is the total commitment, and it is not by a particular case or particular action that you are committed altogether."[60]

As has already been stated, unauthentic existence characterizes those who seek to conceal their own freedom in order to avoid anguish. The most common way this is done, according to Sartre, is by lapsing into what he calls "Bad Faith."[61] The concept of bad faith is both elusive and ambiguous. Perhaps the best place to begin is by contrasting it with 'good faith.' "...Sartre repeatedly states that bad faith is an

attempt to flee from our freedom, whereas good faith is an attempt to face our freedom."[62] In order to flee from one's own freedom, an individual must somehow deny that he is free. Thus, bad faith consists in pretending that one is not free. A description of the various kinds of pretenses that the human person adopts, and an account of the origin of the ability to so pretend, is dealt with to a large extent in Being and Nothingness.

The very possibility of bad faith derives from the nature of human consciousness. As was stated earlier, one's conscious apprehension of the world depends on the power to stand back and distinguish oneself from objects in the outside world. This is the process of negation or nihilation. In order to apprehend a table one must say "I am not that table." While the process of negation also occurs when one is in bad faith, it is a negation that differs in one important respect from the normal apprehension of objects. Instead of negating oneself in relation to an object, the person in bad faith negates himself in relation to his own being.

> Man, Sartre says, not only directs negations outward toward the world, . . . but often directs negations to himself as well. Rather than consider these internal negations in general, Sartre states that he prefers to study the particular attitude of directing negations toward one's self that he calls "bad faith."[63]

This type of negation, or "self-negation,"[64] is the response of those individuals who wish to avoid the anguish that the realization of their own freedom brings. Instead of confronting their freedom and

responsibility, they hide behind the comfort of their own self-negation, which says, "I am not the free individual that I am." Thus, the human person denies his freedom by pretending that he is not free. In reality, of course, the person is indeed free, for the simple reason that if one were not in fact free one could not 'pretend' that one was not. A child, for example, cannot pretend to be an animal unless he knows that he is not an animal. Similarly, the human person cannot pretend to have no freedom unless he knows that he is free. Sartre compares this situation to the individual who lies to himself. "We say indifferently of a person that he shows signs of bad faith or that he lies to himself."[65]

Sartre is aware that it is a very difficult thing to understand how, being conscious of one's lies, a person can believe them. At this juncture he addresses himself to Freudian psychology, which offers an explanation. "To escape from these difficulties people gladly have recourse to the unconscious."[66] Sartre considers Freud's distinction between the 'id,' or unconscious, and the 'ego,' or conscious mind, to result in a fundamental division within the human psyche. Freudian psychoanalysts maintain that the human person is consciously unaware of certain repressed truths within the unconscious. In this way, the unconscious can lie to the conscious just as one person is capable of lying to another. The lie is committed by the "hypothesis of a censor,"[67] which attempts to conceal the truth from consciousness.

> Thus psychoanalysis substitutes for the notion of bad faith, the idea of a lie without a liar; it allows me to understand how it is possible for me to be lied to without lying to myself

> since it places me in the same relation to myself that the other is in respect to me; it replaces the duality of the deceiver and the deceived, . . . by that of the 'id' and the 'ego.'[68]

From a Freudian perspective, then, persons are not guilty of bad faith, but are simply innocent victims of their own unconscious, which the analyst attempts to unite with the conscious self through therapy.

Sartre finds the Freudian explanation of lying to oneself to be unsatisfactory, because it fails to take into account instances in which a person consciously lies to himself. Specifically, it does not take into account the phenomenon of anguish.

> . . . anguish is, in some way, the consciousness of the totality of our experiences in the light of our freely chosen goals, which we sometimes attempt to avoid in all their demanding consequences.[69]

Inasmuch as the person in bad faith strongly desires to rid himself of anguish, he pretends that he is not free to such an extent that he actually believes it. Clearly, there is a conscious motivation involved here which renders the Freudian explanation inadequate. Thus, the problem of bad faith must be faced on the conscious level.

One of the conscious pretenses that a person adopts in order to deny his own freedom involves the pretending to be oneself, or oneself in a certain aspect. This is to stand back and see oneself in a certain role, and then play the role as if it were an unalterable fact of one's existence, and thus impossible to transcend. This deliberate filling of a role, so that one may seem to oneself to have no choices left, is an example of bad faith. Sartre illustrates it by describing a waiter in a cafe.

> His movement is quick and forward, a little too precise, a little too rapid. He comes toward the patrons with a step a little too quick. He bends forward a little too eagerly; his voice, his eyes express an interest a little too solicitous for the order of the customer... All his behavior seems to us a game.[70]

The game he is playing is the game of being a waiter. The outside world expects him to behave in this way, and becomes worried if he should deviate from his role.

> We often conceive that we have the obligation to make ourselves be what we are called... In a similar way, most of us play roles assigned to us by society, and society expects us to stay within the limits of that role.[71]

Moreover, to be wholly a waiter is the aim of the man himself who is acting the part. Every conscious being, or being-for-itself, is without an essence, as has been shown. One has to freely choose an essence. Every object, or being-in-itself, on the other hand, is solid and is identified with itself. It is wholly what it is. Conscious beings long for this safe, solid condition. The hollowness which afflicts them is the same as their freedom, and it is difficult to bear. Thus, the aim of this kind of bad faith is to enable the person to consider himself as a thing, an object, and a being-in-itself. The waiter sees himself as a waiter through and through, with no choice but to behave in a manner that would be considered appropriate for a waiter. In playing out his role, the waiter is able to avoid the anguish that the realization of his own freedom would bring.

In considering this example, it is possible to comprehend the kind of self-deception that is involved in bad faith. The individual who

pretends to be identified with a particular role can do so only because he is aware of his own freedom. Otherwise, there would be no need to pretend. One would simply be identified with the role. "...the waiter knows that being a waiter is only a role for him and that his consciousness is not identified with his role."[72] Moreover, at each moment one can freely divest himself of any given role, because it never encompassed him to begin with. Despite this realization, there are people who persist in pretending not to be free, because it allows them to avoid anguish.[73]

At this point it is necessary to raise the question of the relevance of bad faith to ethics. If one accepts the moral principle of existentialism, which is the making of a choice, where what is chosen is not as important as the choice itself, what can be said of the individual who chooses bad faith? Given the fact that Sartrean ethics takes the freedom of the individual to be its fundamental value, on what grounds is the free choice to pretend not to be free unauthentic? It would seem, based on Sartre's affirmation of complete human freedom, that an individual who freely chooses to be in bad faith is still within the realm of authentic existence. However, such is not the case. Sartre considers the choice of bad faith to be unauthentic. The reason for this is that while one may freely choose to adopt a pretense, which is bad faith, such a choice precludes all other free choices in the future. From the moment that such a decision is undertaken, the individual shuts himself off from all other possibilities that could have been realized in the future. Sartre

finds this to be reprehensible. At every moment a person must either reestablish the commitment to a certain project or abandon it and choose another project. To simply opt out of this responsibility by pretending not to be free is for Sartre not only unauthentic, it is wrong. In general, anything that is an obstacle to free choice is both unauthentic and wrong. This is an essential feature of existentialist ethics.

Another kind of pretense included in unauthentic existence is characterized by those individuals who hold fast to either the illusion of excuse or justification, or both.[74] "Both of these types are examples of what Sartre terms, using the word in a pejorative sense, the 'serious' mentality."[75]

Concerning "excuse," it has already been stated that the human person has no recourse to an unconscious part of the mind as an excuse for one's particular actions or behavior. However, a type of bad faith involves the person who consciously adopts the illusion of excuse so as to avoid confrontation with freedom. This can be done in the following way:

> In bad faith, we attempt to see ourselves both as the product of our environment and heredity, and as "cursed" by not being able to be what we would wish to be. We then choose this failure and attempt to rest and enjoy it.[76]

By blaming one's environment and heredity for one's own limitations, one has an excuse for not being able to change in the future. One sees the future as predetermined instead of free. Sartre claims that this kind of pretending is bad faith, because it prevents a person from

reaching his potential. One must always be aware that he is more than his environment and his past, and thus struggle to realize the being that he is.

> Sartre has continually argued the case for man's psychological freedom, against Behaviorists, Freudians...who attempt to reduce man to the status of a passive reactor to hereditary and environmental pressures...[77]

Sartre, therefore, is not a determinist, but what has been already referred to as a hard indeterminist. 'Hard' indeterminism posits that no actions are necessary effects of natural causes. Therefore, it is wrong for people to think that they cannot help doing what they do because they may have inherited something from their grandparents, or because they were psychologically conditioned by their unknowing parents, or because society forced them to submit to its pressures. Sartre calls people who hide behind such excuses self-deceivers.[78]

> Since we have defined the situation of man as one of free choice, without excuse and without help, any man who takes refuge behind the excuse of his passions, or by inventing some deterministic doctrine, is a self-deceiver.[79]

If actions are determined, it is by one's projected goals rather than by habitual reactions originating in childhood experiences.

Regarding "justification," it has already been shown that Sartrean ethics rejects any objective moral absolutes as justification for any action or behavior. However, another type of bad faith is characterized by a person's "unthinking acceptance of an externally imposed code of morals..."[80] Besides moral codes, bad faith is inherent in the blind adherence to convention, political or religious authorities, or any other

external influence. Terrified of dealing with the anguish that comes from justifying actions and behavior from within one's own being, the person will rely on some "...impersonal standard from outside himself which can guarantee certain absolute rights and wrongs."[81] It is no doubt easier and more comfortable to conform to the established norms of society than to follow one's inner convictions and beliefs. To do the latter is to risk being labeled a non-conformist, or even worse, being ostracized by one's own community. However, authentic existence demands that an individual courageously reject the pressures of society, and choose instead to uphold the values which derive from his own freedom. Instead of coming to situations armed with lists or sets of principles, one of which must be implemented, a person must think of each new situation as different from any previous to it. If one is faced with a situation in which a decision must be made, one must decide for himself what should be done, rather than seeking to evade responsibility by sheltering under the rules or principles of what one must do in such a case. While it is possible that the decision reached may be the same as what would have been decided with the help of pre-established rules or principles, such will not always be the case. Whichever way it is, the decision will have the merit of having been a personal act, and not simply the mindless putting into practice of a pre-defined rule. This is the ideal which is possible through the avoidance of bad faith.

It is now time to turn to what is perhaps the most important question of all, namely, how one should relate to other people in the

world. It goes without saying that ethics must be concerned with the way in which one person treats another. So far Sartre's theory of human reality has elucidated the distinction between non-reflective and reflective awareness (the pre-reflective cogito and the Cartesian cogito), as well as the distinction between objects in the world and human consciousness (being-in-itself and being-for-itself). Being and Nothingness, however, is not completely taken up with the discussion of these categories alone. No matter how much Sartre seems to focus on the individual, he is aware of the social context in which all human existence is a part of. Therefore, a good deal of attention is given to the relations between a person and other people in the world.

As a person gazes out into the world around him, he notices both objects and other individuals. How the person relates to objects has already been discussed. Through negation, the person is able to separate himself from the object. Implicit in this separation is the opportunity to define what the object is. Through the discovery that beings-in-themselves have fixed essences and are subject to scientific laws, the human person proceeds to their categorization in order to make his own world manageable and predictable. Every object has certain characteristics that can be defined. Inasmuch as the human person desires to make the world as organized and predictable as possible, there is the tendency to also look upon other people as objects with fixed essences.

> ...everything was so easy: the world was my own. Objects were there on display, organized and classified. I was in my universe. In the public park, for instance, I saw the lawn, the bench, the trees... They were what I chose to make them. Even that human form over there, slumped down on a bench, is but an object among other objects.[82]

One's first effort, therefore, in dealing with others, is to treat them as objects, as beings-in-themselves. Yet this perception cannot last for very long, for eventually the other will be revealed to the person as a subject. This happens through what Sartre calls the "look."[83] As soon as one is aware that he is being looked at by another person, one realizes that the person is not just an object, but a subject who is a free, conscious being with the ability to escape one's attempt to predict or control him. "Thus through the look I experience the Other as a free, conscious subject who causes there to be a world by temporalizing himself toward his own possibilities."[84] Along with this experience comes a more startling realization, however. Suddenly the person is aware that he is an object in the world of the other person. "If someone looks at me, I am conscious of being an object."[85] The awareness of one's own objectivity in the eyes of another leads to what Sartre calls "being-for-others."[86] The third split in Sartre's ontology is thus between a person who sees himself as a subject and is seen by others in the world as an object (being-for-itself and being-for-others).

Being-for-others is a new dimension of one's existence, insofar as one becomes conscious of his own behavior as being seen by others. The knowledge that one is 'being watched,' so to speak, can be an

uncomfortable situation, often leading to a feeling of embarrassment or even bashfullness. Just as the awareness that one is a being-for-itself, or freedom, brings on anguish, Sartre claims that the realization that one is a being-for-others brings on shame. By the word 'shame,' Sartre not only means the embarrassment one might feel in being observed in an awkward or clumsy moment. Shame refers to the recognition that one is for the other person an object with a fixed essence and predictable qualities. "Shame is by nature recognition. I recognize that I am as the other sees me."[87] Human reality includes not only our subjectivity but also ourselves as objective beings for other subjects.

From the point of view of a person, the objectification of his self by another person is degrading, for the reason that he is robbed of his status as a free being who has the ability to transcend himself.

> Now, for a subject to be seen as an object is for it to be seen as thinglike, as definable and describable simply in terms of its specific characteristics--5'10" tall, black haired, sullen, serious, female, etc. It is not to apprehend the subject as a free conscious being continually transcending its facticity--even its freedom would be seen as simply one characteristic among the others.[88]

Thus, the existence of others impinges upon one's own consciousness of oneself as a free being. To remedy this stressful situation, one attempts to recover the part of him that has been stolen by the other person. He responds to the look of another by returning the look, which leads to a form of confrontation.

The concrete relations between one person and another which follow from these basic facts about human existence are the subject of an entire

chapter in Being and Nothingness.[89] Due to the mutual confrontation that takes place between two individuals as each attempts to recover his freedom, Sartre describes human relations as taking place within an atmosphere of conflict.

> Everything which may be said of me in my relations with the Other applies to him as well. While I attempt to free myself from the hold of the Other, the Other is trying to free himself from mine; while I seek to enslave the Other, the Other seeks to enslave me... The following descriptions of concrete behavior must therefore be envisaged within the perspective of conflict. Conflict is the original meaning of being-for-others.[90]

Thus, just as a person is objectified in the presence of another, so too is the other person objectified in the presence of the person. No one can escape the degradation of being considered an object by some other person. So, conflict is unavoidable because a person desires to capture the other person's freedom, and at the same time wishes to recapture his own freedom.

However, to possess a being that is free is a contradiction. If one is truly free, then that person always has the capability of escaping the other individual who is trying to possess him. One cannot control what another thinks or does. A free, conscious being cannot be possessed. Sartre examines love as the paradigm of a relationship that can occur between two individuals. But even in love there can be no relationship that is devoid of conflict. Although one would like to turn the person he loves into a thing that can be controlled, at the same time he desires to be freely loved by this person. Yet it is just that person's ability to

choose which is a threat to him, and which must be destroyed. Sartre thinks that in love there are but two fundamental attitudes which are possible. A person may turn to masochism, which is the aim to become an object, to be used and controlled by the other person.[91] Or else, one may become a sadist, which means trying to possess the other by violence.[92] Of course, in the end, both projects will fail, and conflict is the inevitable basis of the relationship. Sartre considers these kinds of everyday relations between people to be unauthentic, because they are rooted in bad faith. Conflict in interpersonal relations is bad faith in the sense that it involves a desire to surrender one's freedom to another, or to possess another's freedom. Either case involves the refusal to accept one another's freedom, and is therefore bad faith on an interpersonal level. Sartre finds conflict to be the inescapable condition of human existence.

> Sartre...does not deny that we often engage in cooperative enterprises, but he sees our efforts at cooperation both as based upon the more basic attitudes of conflict and as unable to eliminate conflict totally.[93]

It seems from all of this that Sartre's philosophy of social existence offers a most depressing prognosis. The human person must face his freedom in solitude,[94] recognizing that there are other individuals in the world whose desire is to deprive him of freedom and make him into an object. This casts the human drama of interpersonal relations in a very negative light. There seems to be no way to escape the endless hostility that is characteristic of all relationships, even those bonded

in love. In Being and Nothingness, other people are the enemy. "In Sartre's thought... man is understood as the enemy of man..."[95] For a statement that is even more disconcerting, one need only turn to Sartre's play, No Exit. "Everyone is familiar with the famous (or infamous) line from his play No Exit: 'Hell is other people.'"[96]

Before considering the possibilities of such a negative philosophy for ethics, it should be pointed out that Sartre proposed an altogether different conception of concrete human relations in "Existentialism Is A Humanism," which was written in 1946, three years after the publication of Being and Nothingness. The position taken in this short essay regarding a person's relations with other people is inconsistent with the ontology of the previous work, making it difficult to firmly resolve where Sartre actually stood on this issue. This problem will be taken up subsequently. For now, what is important is to understand that a different perspective of human relations is employed in "Existentialism Is A Humanism," which serves to temper the negative tone that is inherent in Being and Nothingness.

The main purpose of the essay is to show that existentialism is basically an optimistic philosophy. Sartre wishes to convey that there is no despair in a theory according to which one has to decide for himself how to live. By making choices, one can create his own being. So far this is not inconsistent with the theory of human reality in Being and Nothingness. However, this is where the similarity ends. For Sartre argues that in saying that the human person is totally responsible

for his own life, this implies that he has a responsibility for other people too. "And, when we say that man is responsible for himself, we do not mean that he is responsible only for his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men."[97] The logic behind this argument is as follows: If a person chooses anything, it becomes good simply because it was chosen. Nothing can be good for one person without being good for everyone. Therefore, what one chooses, he chooses for everyone. Sartre "...maintains that we cannot choose anything as better 'unless it is better for all.'"[98] Another form of the same argument is that in choosing one's life one is choosing a certain image of the human person, such as he thinks the human person ought to be.

> ...when a man acts in order to make himself the kind of person he wills to be, all his acts directed toward this goal create at the same time an image of man, an image of the way he believes man ought to be. In effect whatever a man chooses, Sartre claims, he proclaims it as a good, a value, not just for himself but for all men.[99]

Exactly why nothing can be good for one person without being good for everyone is not readily apparent, indicating that Sartre's reasoning is unclear. But however he explains this position, it is most certainly inconsistent with the ontology in Being and Nothingness, which holds that the good is whatever the individual chooses for himself, period. Moreover, there is no notion in that work which suggests that in choosing for himself one chooses for everyone else as well.

Sartre, in "Existentialism Is A Humanism," goes on to discuss the concepts of bad faith and anguish. While these phenomenon do not differ

greatly from their presentations in Being and Nothingness, they do undergo a slight reinterpretation which allows them to be seen in terms of the proposition that in choosing for oneself, one chooses for all humankind. Bad faith is, of course, an attempt to escape from freedom. The 'serious' mentality refers to two particular kinds of bad faith, namely, the use of a fake determination as an excuse, and the taking of refuge behind supposedly objective moral absolutes in order to justify one's actions. The authentic individual would avoid these, as well as all other pretenses that serve to deny his freedom. There is, however, another kind of bad faith that should be avoided. When an individual chooses anything, Sartre argues that it is always appropriate to raise the question, "...'What would happen if everyone did so?'"[100] If anyone answers this by saying "...'Everyone does not do so,'"[101] then he is guilty of bad faith, for in fact he knows that in choosing for himself he is choosing for everyone. If one's choices commit not only oneself, but all humankind, then the recognition of this responsibility, Sartre maintains, leads to anguish. "This anguished responsibility is brought on by the question of whether the concept of man which I choose for myself is one that I can choose for all."[102] Sartre gives an example of a military leader who feels anguish over the responsibility he has for the lives of his soldiers. His choices will directly affect their lives. It is clear that these concepts are not presented exactly as they are in Being and Nothingness. Bad faith becomes not simply the denial of one's own freedom, but the denial that one's choices legislate for all humanity.

Anguish is not just the awe at realizing that one is responsible for his own life in the world, but the awe at realizing that one's choices directly affect the lives of others.

Towards the end of the essay, Sartre seeks to show that what one chooses, both for himself and others, must necessarily be freedom.

> Obviously, freedom as the definition of a man does not depend on others, but as soon as there is a commitment, I am obliged to will the freedom of others at the same time as my own. I cannot make freedom my aim unless I make that of others equally my aim.[103]

Thus, in choosing freedom for oneself, one must choose it for others. This means that a person must be committed to the freedom of others. While this may be a worthwhile proposition to be involved in, it must be evaluated in terms of the evidence Sartre produces to support it. Unfortunately, in the essay we are considering, there is a lack of such evidence. Even Thomas C. Anderson, who claims that the central value for Sartre is freedom for all people, admits this.[104]

> From the start, it must be conceded that neither in his essay "Existentialism and Humanism" nor elsewhere does Sartre advance much to support his claim that a man is obliged to will the freedom of others.[105]

Moreover, Hazel Barnes, who also supports this claim, says the following: "This is a fine assertion, but I wish Sartre had spelled out the inevitable progression from my choice of my own freedom to that of others."[106] The fact is that Sartre did not spell it out at all. He merely says that in choosing freedom for himself one is choosing it for others, but then does nothing to show how to avoid one's freedom

clashing with that of others, or how to reconcile conflicting free choices. The fact is that neither in "Existentialism Is A Humanism," nor elsewhere, does Sartre give any convincing argument to show how it comes about that a choice of freedom for one entails a choice of freedom for all.

Even if Sartre were able to offer a convincing argument, such a doctrine would be incompatible with the rest of his philosophy in two important respects. The first concerns the notion that the choosing of freedom for others implies a commitment to their freedom. Freedom in this context means freedom from any kind of oppression. What is 'good' is any action that helps to break an oppressive relationship and which restores a sense of independence to the victims. Thus, the social, political, or religious emancipation of other people becomes an objective moral absolute. However, it has already been shown that the belief in any sort of objective moral absolute, even if it is other people's emancipation from oppression, is an example of the 'serious' mentality, and is therefore bad faith. In this sense, a commitment to the freedom of others is incompatible with the ontology in Being and Nothingness. In that system, one's choice to be a ruthless egoist or a fascist, for example, would be considered 'good,' as long as it was chosen by the person in freedom. The second respect in which there is an incompatibility concerns the notion that the choosing of freedom for others implies that one is obliged to value the other's freedom, and respect it. Freedom in this context does not mean freedom from oppression, but refers instead to one's acceptance of the basic

ontological status of every human person as a free being. "Since I recognize that freedom is my essence, both as myself and as a human being, I cannot truthfully deny that the same is true for all other persons."[107] To suppose that one can take this altruistic view of other people is completely in contradiction with the views expressed in Being and Nothingness concerning a person's inevitable relations with other people. Instead of accepting another's freedom, one will try to overcome it by pretending it does not exist, either by submitting oneself to it, or by possessing it. Therefore, in practice, one's choice of freedom for himself may result in a lessening of freedom for others, as opposed to the accepting or promoting of their freedom.

Exactly why there is such a wide discrepancy between the views expressed in Being and Nothingness and "Existentialism Is A Humanism" is perplexing, to say the least. To reconcile them seems impossible. If Sartre had claimed in the essay that he changed his mind, or that he underwent a "radical conversion" in his thinking, then the issue would be resolved. But he made no such claims. On the contrary, he professed to be defending existentialism against criticisms that had been made against it. "My purpose here is to offer a defense of existentialism against several reproaches that have been laid against it."[108] From this, it is safe to assume that Sartre wrote the essay for the purpose of explaining his previous writings to the general public. Unfortunately, the essay cannot be considered an explanation of the ontology in Being and Nothingness.

> ...this lecture was not intended as a formulation of Sartre's philosophy as such, but rather as a description of existentialism in general...If one desires to discover the nature of Sartre's philosophy, the only reliable means is to go directly to the book in which he presents its detailed development, Being and Nothingness.[109]

Therefore, the attempt to derive Sartre's ethical philosophy from "Existentialism Is A Humanism" would be doomed to failure from the start. Only Being and Nothingness can provide the framework from which to extract the structure of Sartrean ethics.

C. Critics and Supporters of Sartrean Ethics

Now that the essential features of Sartre's ontology have been presented, along with their ethical implications, the original question of whether Sartre presents a position of nihilism, or whether he offers a more positive approach to ethics can now be examined. It will be recalled that the debate surrounding this issue continues on. In a very general way, opinions can be broken down into two major camps. In one camp are those commentators, or critics of Sartre, who believe that since he refuses to admit to any a priori, objective moral absolutes, that he presents a nihilistic, or antinomian conception of ethics. Some even maintain that Sartre said next to nothing about moral theory. In the other camp are those commentators, or supporters of Sartre, who believe that Sartrean ethics presents a positive doctrine of morality, one which even "...possesses definite similarities to traditional moral theories."[110] After a presentation of the positions of four commentators, two from each camp, some personal observations will be made in the

hope of formulating my own position as to what Sartrean ethics can offer the human person.

The first critic of Sartre's ethics who will be considered is Alvin Plantinga, who wrote an article entitled "An Existentialist's Ethics." His aim "...is to show that Sartre's analysis of the 'universal human condition' is quite inconsistent with morality in anything like the ordinary sense."[111] After a brief presentation of Sartre's ontology in Being and Nothingness, which is essentially correct, Plantinga arrives at the crux of his ethical doctrine. "Human reality...is not bound by any system of pre-established values; it has absolute freedom with respect to values."[112] From there, Plantinga points out the responsibility and anguish that the human person feels in the face of discovering his own freedom. He mentions the responsibility an individual feels not only for himself, but for others as well, thus drawing both from Being and Nothingness and "Existentialism Is A Humanism." So far so good. But then, Plantinga reveals his bias against Sartre with a startling comment:

> Such is Sartre's doctrine of the responsibility and anguish following from our absolute freedom. This doctrine seems to take crucial moral notions very seriously. But in the last analysis the doctrine of absolute freedom undercuts the very possibility of morality. Sartre's responsibility and anguish are a delusion.[113]

Plantinga reasons that Sartre's notion of choice defining value leads to the assumption that one can never be wrong in choosing anything. An act is right simply because it was freely chosen. Without the possibility

of any action being wrong, the concept of morality disappears, for every action lies outside the realm of negative moral judgement. A thief is as right as a philanthropist. Under these conditions, responsibility and anguish lose their point, for without objective values in the world which one decides to uphold or reject, one can choose anything and be right. Since nothing can be rejected from a moral perspective, then there is no purpose in feeling either responsibility for actions, or anguish.

> The conclusion seems to be that Sartre's theory of freedom is quite inconsistent with morality. Any choice is as good as any other; there is no possibility of making a moral mistake and that is fatal to morality.[114]

While this is Plantinga's main point, he does not go so far as to call Sartre's theory antinomian. As a matter of fact, he considers it to be "...through-and-through ethical."[115] The reason is because he is well aware that Sartre does in fact make negative moral judgements against those who deny their freedom in bad faith. If Sartre were antinomian, he would find the choice to live in bad faith as good as any other. Therefore, in adopting the making of free choices as an absolute moral value, Sartre cannot rightly be called antinomian. Plantinga accepts this, but he nevertheless criticizes Sartre for not bringing any positive moral content to the world through his ethical ideas. Morality for Plantinga means the possibility that some acts will be wrong, even if they are chosen in freedom. For Sartre this is impossible. While he cannot be counted among the most severe critics of Sartre's ethics, Plantinga is certainly closer to them than to those who claim that Sartre offers a

positive moral doctrine which is similar to traditional moral theories.

The second critic of Sartre's ethics is Risieri Frondizi, who wrote a chapter entitled "Sartre's Early Ethics: A Critique," in The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre, edited by Paul A. Schilpp. While his primary criticisms of Sartre are similar to those of Plantinga's, Frondizi is more forceful in analyzing the negative consequences of an ethic of personal freedom. He begins by affirming the notion that if the human person must make himself through his choices, then he cannot have recourse to any objective moral absolutes. Frondizi maintains, like Plantinga, that without objective moral absolutes serving as criteria, one can never be accused of committing a wrong action.

> If I have freely chosen "in all sincerity and lucidity," there is no possibility of an axiological or moral mistake. Yet if I can never be wrong, I can never be right, since these notions are interrelated...I am not defending any particular interpretation of right or wrong. I am only maintaining that if I can make anything right by the mere act of freely choosing it, I am destroying the very notion of "right" and "wrong."[116]

Frondizi offers a logical proof to aid in the understanding of this idea. Faced with diametrically opposed alternatives, an individual freely chooses one of them. According to Sartre, he is right in his choice. Suppose, however, that through a radical conversion this person gives up the original choice and opts for the alternative. He is right again, in Sartre's eyes. Yet it is clear that the two contradictory alternatives cannot both be right.

Like Plantinga, morality for Frondizi means the possibility that some acts will be wrong, even if they are chosen in freedom. He offers

a poignant example:

> A man who beats his young children to make them work hard from sunrise to sunset so he can lend their earnings to the poor at high rates of interest, presents a clear case of immorality. Could the man's behavior be seen as good if we could irrefutably prove that he has freely chosen such a course of action? An immoral action might be freely chosen and still be immoral.[117]

In general, any cruel or selfish act chosen in freedom is right, according to Sartre. Frondizi holds that the consequences of this will lead to an 'ethics of indifference,' where anything will do. While he does not directly refer to Sartrean ethics as being antinomian or nihilistic, it seems that this is what he has in mind here. Moreover, it seems implied in certain other of his remarks, particularly those that concern freedom.

> Of course, there is the well-known Kantian case whereby freedom becomes the basis of ethics and at the same time implies a moral law, albeit an autonomous one. Sartre, however, seems to believe that freedom and law are incompatible...[118]

If freedom is incompatible with law, then it must be a lawless approach to ethics. Joseph Fletcher, in his book, Situation Ethics, has equated this with antinomianism.

> There are at bottom only three alternative routes or approaches in making moral decisions. They are: (1) the legalistic; (2) the antinomian, the opposite extreme--i.e., a lawless or unprincipled approach; and (3) the situational.[119]

For Sartre, the adoption of any law or a priori values would be a limitation to one's freedom. However, Frondizi asserts that without antecedent moral values which one can choose to uphold or reject, freedom

loses all its content, and the notion of a free choice becomes meaningless.

> If man creates values by a free choice and "my freedom is the only [unique] foundation of values and...nothing, absolutely nothing justifies me in adopting this or that particular value...," the meaning of choice disappears, since all possibilities become equivalent.[120]

Once again like Plantinga, Frondizi finds that the notion of unrestricted freedom rules out the notion of responsibility. However, he goes beyond Plantinga in stating the negative consequences of this situation. When everyone is exercising autonomy of choice, how can a society avoid chaos? The clashing of individual choices will necessarily end in conflicts. "I do not see any way in Sartre's theory to solve such conflicts but, unfortunately, the conflicts are there. A theory that does nothing to solve them can hardly be satisfactory."[121] For Frondizi, a satisfactory moral theory must be able to offer guidelines which can help a person make decisions. To avoid an ethics of indifference, freedom needs a content in terms of values that are freely chosen because of what they are, and not that they are what they are simply because one has chosen them. Only with established guidelines serving as criteria can one make moral decisions in a responsible manner. Without any criteria ethics will become a matter of chance, "...where the exercise of freedom is equivalent to tossing a coin."[122] Since Sartre does not provide criteria or even general guidance, it seems reasonable to say that Frondizi finds Sartrean ethics to be wholly inadequate as a viable moral theory, coming very close to, if not on

the same plane with, antinomianism and nihilism.

From this brief consideration of two critics of Sartrean ethics, we turn to a presentation of the positions of two commentators who believe that Sartrean ethics presents a positive doctrine of morality. The first supporter who will be considered is Hazel Barnes, who in addition to translating Being and Nothingness into English, wrote An Existentialist Ethics. Barnes is aware of the difficulties with an ethical system that permits a person to choose anything, as long as the choice is free. Under such conditions, a person who freely chooses to scoff at all concern and simply live for the moment is still ethical. Barnes feels that such a choice leaves no positive meaning to the word "ethical," and does violence to language.

Up to this point, one might think that Barnes is a critic of Sartrean ethics, which indeed allows one to freely choose anything. However, she is not, and argues that only an imbecile would choose the arbitrary, capricious lifestyle that is implied by an ethics of chance or indifference.

> Such a person would have to be one for whom there was no appeal whatsoever in harmonious continuity of judgements and conduct, one who felt no interest or even connection with his own past and future, and one who was without any inclination to experience more rather than less of positive value. This theoretical man cannot exist.[123]

In reality, Barnes feels that people have a need to justify their lives within a consistent pattern of behavior. The fulfillment of this need is accomplished through the choice to be "ethical." Thus, for the purpose of her argument, Barnes has placed the word "ethical" within the

specific context of the choice for continuity in one's life.

> ...there is the value which we may call ethical in the strict sense. This is the experience of satisfaction...which stems from the conviction that one can rationally defend his life and justify it as a coherent structure.[124]

While Barnes recognizes that an individual cannot be persuaded to choose to be ethical if he refuses to see justifying his life as a worthwhile goal, she maintains that the choice to be non-ethical, that is, to live in an arbitrary, capricious manner, is impossible for anyone to continue for very long.

> The wholly arbitrary excludes any consistent motivation. The purely nonethical life is as impossible to sustain practically as the perfectly ethical one. Insofar as it can be lived, it takes the form of rejecting all rational calculation, all responsibility for others and for one's own past and future--at least in the sense of feeling that one's acts should be governed by such considerations.[125]

Barnes argues that the basic desire to justify one's life commits the human person to choosing the ethical. This is in direct contradistinction with critics of Sartrean ethics, who maintain that without any objective moral values, the human person is committed to choosing the non-ethical. Certainly Frondizi would take this position. Barnes takes issue with Sartre's critics: "I am convinced that those who hold that the arbitrary caprice of the Underground Man is the natural corollary of existentialist freedom are wrong."[126] Before attempting to prove that they are wrong, however, she does admit that their positions are understandable, and mentions three features of Sartre's ontology which would seem to support their position. The three features are:

> First, there is the idea that values are "created" by the individual who chooses them; they are not discovered... Second, there is no ultimate independent and impersonal reference point by which to judge human conduct... Third, the Sartrean view of human relations excludes the possibility of a communion between persons which would dissolve the subject-object relationship.[127]

In short, free choice, no objective moral absolutes, and conflict in human relations are the three conditions which would seem to preclude any positive content to Sartrean ethics. While Barnes accepts this view of human reality, she denies that it precludes a positive content to Sartrean ethics. Existentialist freedom of choice does not mean that a person can do whatever he chooses. This is most evident in relation to others.

While critics maintain that Sartre's ontology is descriptive of a situation in which an individual need not be concerned for others, Barnes disagrees, and asserts that the authentic choice in good faith must include respect and concern for other freedoms. To support this she quotes the passage from "Existentialism Is A Humanism" which says that one is obliged to will the freedom of others.

> Therefore, if I declare that the development of my own free projects is the goal and good of my life, I must--if I am in good faith--allow simultaneously that my freedom holds no privileged place over this assertion when it is made by someone else... If the ethical choice is a resolve to justify one's life, my relations with others cannot be ignored.[128]

One who considers his own freedom as being more important than another's freedom is therefore in bad faith.[129] Moreover, one who views another as being confined within his social situation, unable to

transcend himself in order to realize a new future, is also in bad faith. Barnes finds this kind of bad faith inherent in certain types of social injustice.

> Obviously any hereditary caste system, any discrimination based on race, religion, national origin, or sex, any exploitation of primitive peoples are condemned at the start. All are founded upon the myth that men and women are determined by some accident of birth or that (in the case of religious prejudice) the whole person is adequately expressed in a single aspect.[130]

This is a most interesting statement, for Barnes mentions specific situations that she feels Satrean ethics would condemn as wrong and evil. The result of this is that no longer, from her point of view, can critics claim that Sartre's notion of freedom is 1) devoid of all content; 2) postulates an ethics of chance or indifference that commits one to a choice of the non-ethical; and 3) is inconsistent with morality. There are indeed objective moral absolutes and regulative principles in Sartrean ethics which offer a positive moral content to the person who has chosen the ethical. This is the view of Hazel Barnes.

The most optimistic view, however, comes from Thomas C. Anderson in his book, The Foundation and Structure of Sartrean Ethics. His analysis reveals that Sartrean ethics possesses definite similarities to traditional moral theories. By including the works of Sartre's close associates, Simone de Beauvoir and Francis Jeanson, in addition to Sartre's own works since 1943, Anderson claims to offer the true spirit of Sartrean ethics, which cannot be understood by referring only to Being and Nothingness. While he concedes that the ethical position taken

in that work could possibly lead to chaos and anarchy, where the human person is concerned only for himself, Anderson does not consider it to be the epitome, or tour de force of Sartrean ethics.

> ...the writings and efforts of Sartre and de Beauvoir since 1943 do not show that they believe that just any act done for the sake of a person's own freedom is justified, nor that each man in his search for freedom can disregard others.[131]

Anderson is aware of the objection of many critics who claim that Sartre's ontology in Being and Nothingness makes conflict so pervasive in human relations that moral obligations to others become irrelevant. Yet he holds that the context in which Sartre says that conflict between people is inevitable must be examined. Specifically, conflict occurs only because each individual attempts to be God. "...the subjects involved are attempting to overcome their status as contingent, free beings and to achieve the state of a necessary being that would be its own foundation, God."[132] Thus, conflict is the necessary result when a person tries to use others to become God. The only way positive human relations can take place is if the human person relinquishes the desire to become God, and chooses freedom instead. Anderson attempts to prove that Sartre presented the possibility of this very idea in Being and Nothingness.

> That harmonious relations between men are possible is affirmed by Sartre in a most significant footnote occurring at the end of his discussion of concrete human relations. This footnote states bluntly, "These considerations do not exclude the possibility of an ethics of deliverance and salvation." And it adds, "But this can be achieved only after a radical conversion which we cannot discuss here."[133]

By interpreting 'radical conversion' as the choice in which one gives up the pursuit of being God, Anderson claims that Sartre laid the groundwork for the possibility of positive human relations.

> The implication of all this as far as the ethics is concerned is, of course, that Sartre would deny that his ontology has rendered positive human relations impossible and moral obligations to undertake such relations meaningless.[134]

Granting that the ontology in Being and Nothingness does not in and of itself provide a framework for positive human relations, Anderson would hold that it points in that direction. He finds the fulfillment of the ideal set forth there in Sartre's later works, as well as those of his colleagues.

Anderson begins with a look at the statement in "Existentialism Is A Humanism" concerning one's obligation to will the freedom of others. While he concedes that Sartre does not advance much to support his claim, he certainly does not find it inconsistent with anything in Being and Nothingness. On the contrary, he sees it as a logical extension of the possibilities for positive human relations set forth therein. Moreover, it shows that Sartre indeed supports positive commitment between the individual and others. However, since Anderson can find no sufficient proof for Sartre's statement in any of his early works, he probes his later works, as well as those of Simone de Beauvoir, in order to provide evidence that one is morally obligated to choose the freedom of others.

Anderson refers to Anti-Semite and Jew, written by Sartre in 1946,

and De Beauvoir's Ethics of Ambiguity. Both works stress the value of human equality. In the former, Sartre seems to indicate that the only way one can hope to avoid being oppressed oneself is to fight for the freedom of all people. "For if any man is oppressed, I, who am no better (or worse) than he, may also be oppressed."[135] Implied in this statement is that the freedom of an individual is not intrinsically more important than the freedom of anyone else. Once this is realized, an individual should choose the freedom of others as much as he would choose his own. This is similar to the position taken by Barnes. While this position has its strengths, Anderson points to De Beauvoir as offering the most solid argument that one is obliged to will the freedom of all people. It is based not only on the notion of human equality, but on the necessity of human interdependence, for "Man can find a justification of his own existence only in the existence of other men."[136] The reasoning behind this statement is since there is no God, and no objective values, the human person is completely dependent on others if he is to attain meaning for his own existence. Since only others can give one's life meaning, it follows that a person wants all people to value his existence. One knows that his existence is valued by others, and therefore justified, when two conditions have been met. First, that the other is making a free choice to value the person's existence. There can be no satisfaction from coercing another to value one's existence, just as one would not be fulfilled if the person he loved had to love him, as if love were the result of a magic potion. Second, that the other is truly

in a position to value the person's existence, meaning that the two individuals are more or less equals. Obviously, if one's freedom is consumed in overcoming severe poverty, where the primary concern is obtaining food in order to survive, that person will be unable to value the existence of anyone else. "Consistency demands, therefore, that man both value the freedom of all men and aid them in becoming his equals."[137] Despite the fact that Anderson does find a flaw in De Beauvoir's argument, he still considers it to offer strong support to the notion that one is obliged to will the freedom of all people. He mentions that since almost no other commentators have referred to it, they must be unaware of its existence.

In one final step, Anderson claims that the Sartrean ethical ideal, freedom for all people, finds its concrete realization in Marx's idea of the classless society as explained in The Critique of Dialectical Reason, one of Sartre's later works. The rationale is that in a classless society all would be equal, which would prevent the domination of one individual by another. Seen in this light, Sartre's adoption of Marxism is but a logical extension of his existentialist view of freedom for all people. This is a critical point for Anderson. He recalls that even in Being and Nothingness Sartre laid the groundwork for the possibility of positive human relations.

> Never forget that Sartre himself has said that in that work he was basically analyzing men of bad faith--those individuals who had not made a radical conversion, which would have meant choosing freedom rather than being God as their primary value.[138]

Sartre, in Being and Nothingness, analyzed what he saw as unauthentic relations between people. Yet he did not mean to suggest that authentic relations were impossible. Rather, authentic relations will occur as soon as people make the radical conversion to choosing freedom for others.

Given that freedom for all people can best be realized in a classless society, it follows that anything which hastens the coming of the classless society is morally good, and anything which impedes it is morally bad. Acts such as torture, the killing of innocent people, or slavery, all of which fail to support freedom, would be condemned from the start. Clearly, the absolute value of freedom for all must preclude the individual from doing whatever he freely chooses, for some choose to destroy or enslave others. Anderson claims that the presence of an absolute moral value, or goal, makes Sartrean ethics similar to traditional moral theories such as utilitarianism, hedonism, or Aristotelianism. But whatever Sartrean ethics may be similar to, Anderson makes it very clear that it is not at all comparable to nihilism.

> It is, perhaps, a severe and difficult ethics, for it demands that man accept responsibility for being the only creator of meaning in a sterile universe. Yet it is not nihilistic, for it does not claim that human existence must forever remain without value; nor pessimistic, since it says that life will be as meaningful as man himself makes it.[139]

This is the view of Thomas Anderson.

D. Personal Observations

The four positions that have just been explained offer very different conceptions of the nature of Sartrean ethics. Clearly, they cannot all be correct. Possibly none of them are correct. While there are elements in each that I find acceptable, I do not side with any one of these positions in particular. In order to avoid confusion, I have restated them here.

Plantinga's position is that Sartre's ethics are inconsistent with morality in anything like the ordinary sense, for without objective moral absolutes, one can choose anything and still be right.[140] Frondizi holds that with no objective moral absolutes to guide one in the making of decisions, ethics becomes a matter of chance or indifference, similar to nihilism. In order for ethics to have significance, some acts must be wrong, even if they are freely chosen. Barnes maintains that Sartre's theory of freedom does not permit one to choose everything. Any action that limits the freedom of others is wrong. Therefore, Sartrean ethics does not commit one to a choice of the non-ethical, or arbitrary life, but offers a positive moral structure. Finally, Anderson states that the inevitability of conflict in human relations is Sartre's description of unauthentic human relations. Through a radical conversion, however, people can pursue authentic relations. Therefore, the classless society explained in Sartre's Critique of Dialectical Reason is but the realization of Sartre's theory of freedom for all and is not inconsistent with Being and Nothingness. Any action which impedes the coming of the classless society, in which all persons are equal, is wrong. Thus, Sartrean

ethics indeed contains objective moral absolutes and is far from nihilistic.

My own opinion with regard to these positions is that I am not as pessimistic as Plantinga and Frondizi, but neither am I as optimistic as Barnes and Anderson. First of all, in regard to Plantinga, his claim that Sartre's ethics is inconsistent with morality (he drops the qualification about the 'ordinary sense' of morality) seems to be based on a confusion between morality and absolute morality.[141] Morality, according to Gary J. Foulk, who responded to Plantinga's criticisms of Sartre, can be either the moral beliefs held by people or the moral value of the actions performed by people, that is, their rightness or wrongness. Absolute morality, then, is either the belief that moral values are absolute or the absolute moral value of actions. In this sense, absolute morality is only one type of morality, and therefore morality is not dependent on the presence of an absolute morality.

> It is not at all a necessary condition for an action to be <u>believed</u> to be right or wrong that its rightness or wrongness be believed to be absolute, and it is not a necessary condition for an action to <u>be</u> right or wrong that its rightness or wrongness be absolute.[142]

In connection with Sartre, Foulk's point is that just because he has rejected objective moral absolutes, this does not mean that Sartrean ethics has no relation to morality.[143] To see how this can come about, it is necessary to give a concrete example. If a person chooses to work for the preservation of wildlife, then within Sartre's ethical theory it is a right action because it was freely chosen. If some time later the

same person decides that he will promote the extinction of endangered species, then within Sartre's theory this too is a right action. The fact that one can never be wrong is the very thing Plantinga is so critical of regarding Sartre.[144] However, while it is true that one can never make a wrong choice, "...it most definitely does not follow from this that every choice is necessarily right, that wrong actions are analytically impossible, and that any choice is as good as any other."[145] The person who wishes to preserve wildlife does not have to admit that one who hunts for pleasure is right. Rather, he judges any killing of animals to be wrong. Thus it can be seen that the absence of objective moral absolutes does not preclude the possibility of morality. From the subjective point of view of a given individual, certain actions of others will be judged wrong, regardless of whether there are objective moral absolutes to compare them with or not.

Sartre's theory of human freedom challenges the human person to determine his own morality through the personal choosing of what he considers valuable. While this is a subjective morality, it is morality all the same. To know that whatever one chooses is right does not take away the difficult decision of what to choose, of what to make right. Certainly there is something morally at stake when one faces such a decision. While it is true that Sartrean ethics does not provide any notion of an objective morality, this does not mean that it is incompatible with morality in general. This is where Plantinga is mistaken, for he has confused morality with absolute morality.

To a considerable extent, this argument can be applied to the criticisms of Frondizi, who maintains, similar to Plantinga, that some actions must be wrong, even if they are freely chosen. What he fails to realize, however, is that some actions are indeed wrong, only not in an objective sense. Rather, they are wrong from the subjective viewpoint of those individuals who have made different choices. Therefore, Frondizi also confuses morality with absolute morality, which carries over to his severe criticism of Sartrean ethics as being an ethics of chance or indifference similar to nihilism. My response to this is that Sartre's ethics are certainly very different from most traditional ethical theories, in that it does not refer to objective moral absolutes in the general sense of the term. However, to conclude from this that Sartrean ethics is nihilistic or antinomian is to ignore the fact Sartre adopts certain 'absolute' values which he incorporates into his ethics, namely freedom, the authentic choice made in good faith, and the unauthentic choice made in bad faith. Moreover, freedom for Sartre is not license, whose realization is in the irrational, capricious, and arbitrary lifestyle of the individual who values the non-ethical. While one could conceivably make this choice, it does not seem that most people would find it desirable in any way. I agree with Barnes that the human person has an inner need to justify his existence with the knowledge that he is pursuing some kind of coherent plan, whatever that may be. Freedom becomes, then, the opportunity to decide how one will justify his life. Given these considerations, it seems

reasonable to conclude that Sartrean ethics cannot be equated with either nihilism or antinomianism.

While I agree with Barnes concerning the need to justify one's life, I find her support of Sartre's statement that one is obliged to will the freedom of others going too far. As has already been shown, that particular statement from "Existentialism Is A Humanism" is inconsistent with the description of human relations that Sartre gave in Being and Nothingness. To simply quote it, as Barnes does, without indicating how Sartre arrived at this position from the negative statements in Being and Nothingness, is inconclusive evidence as to its validity. While I agree with her that anyone who considers his own freedom as being more important than another's freedom is in bad faith, I find no hard evidence from Sartre that would indicate that bad faith is not inevitable in human relations. In addition, I consider her setting forth of specific moral evils, such as any hereditary caste system, to be nothing more than a free interpretation of what she considers to be inimical to the willing of freedom for others. In point of fact, Sartre has avoided specific moral rules to guide conduct that would apply in all situations.

> Sartre simply does not subscribe to the view that there are acts or classes of acts that are always and everywhere morally good or morally evil. This is not to say that general moral judgements may not be made about classes of acts, judgements which hold for the most part. But certainly no absolutely universal statements about the morality of acts are possible.[146]

Therefore, the positive content regarding relations with others that Barnes ascribes to Sartre's theory of human freedom is something that

I do not think is part of Sartrean existentialist ethics. In my comments regarding the position of Thomas Anderson I will offer a more reasoned explanation for this.

Anderson's primary assertion is that the central value for Sartre is freedom for all people. While he recognizes that the statement in "Existentialism Is A Humanism" concerning one's obligation to will the freedom of others is insufficient proof on its own, he considers the early works of De Beauvoir, primarily The Ethics of Ambiguity, as providing solid evidence that this is indeed the fundamental value of Sartrean ethics. Moreover, by claiming that Marx's classless society described in Sartre's Critique of Dialectical Reason is but a logical extension of the possibilities for authentic human relations set forth in Being and Nothingness, Anderson attempts to show that Sartrean ethics has been guided all along by the fundamental value of freedom for all people. From this, Anderson further argues that Sartrean ethics is similar to traditional ethical theories. I shall now indicate why I believe Anderson to be mistaken in his conclusions.

First of all, with regard to his astonishment over the fact that so few commentators have referred to the works of De Beauvoir and Jeanson in explicating the foundation and structure of Sartrean ethics, it seems that there must be a good reason why this is so. Although Anderson thinks that other commentators are simply unaware of the arguments of Sartre's colleagues, there is evidence which suggests that this is not the case. In a book review of The Foundation and

Structure of Sartrean Ethics, written by one of Anderson's contemporaries, there is the following comment:

> The fact that Anderson lays so much stress on de Beauvoir's and Jeanson's early works and imagines that other commentators have simply ignored them reveals part of the trouble with this book. The neglect is rather because their works appeared to involve oversimplifications of Sartre's own position.[147]

If the works of De Beauvoir and Jeanson cannot serve as adequate guides to understanding Sartrean ethics, then we encounter the same difficulty as before, which is that the comments in "Existentialism Is A Humanism" are not in and of themselves sufficient to prove that the central value for Sartre is freedom for all people. The dismissal of De Beauvoir's and Jeanson's works as being reliable explanations of Sartrean ethics is only a first step, however. Anderson's position cannot really be refuted until it can be shown that the classless society which Sartre discusses in the Critique of Dialectical Reason is not a logical extension of Sartre's views concerning human relations in Being and Nothingness, but is actually inconsistent with it.

It has been said that the goal of the existentialist is to help free people from their illusions. One of the illusions that Sartre discusses is bad faith. Within the individual, bad faith occurs when a person pretends that he is not free when of course, he is. In interpersonal relations, bad faith occurs when one pretends that another is not free, or that one's own freedom is more important than the other's. All human relations that stem from this condition are unauthentic. Sartre's

description of human relations in Being and Nothingness is of people in bad faith, pursuing unauthentic relations. Since all human relations lead either to the objectification of the other person and a denial of his freedom, which is sadism, or the objectification of oneself in order to be used by the other, which is masochism, it is inevitable that all people will be in bad faith.

Inasmuch as Sartre would like to free people from their illusions, authentic human relations are clearly preferable to him than unauthentic human relations, which is bad faith. In authentic human relations, people will accept one anothers' freedom, as well as promote the freedom of the oppressed. This is the goal expressed in "Existentialism Is A Humanism" concerning one's obligation to will the freedom of others. However, it has already been shown on numerous occasions that this is no more than a flat assertion by Sartre, and is not consistent with the negative conception of human relations in Being and Nothingness. Therefore, while Sartre the man might wish to see people respecting one anothers' freedom, Sartre the philosopher is unable to derive any specific measures that would change the inevitability of conflict in human relations. Stated more simply, Sartre doesn't tell us how to achieve authentic relations, because he sees bad faith as the inescapable human condition. However much the human person is said to be free to choose, what is chosen, in so far as it affects others, will always be sadism or masochism. This is a basic inconsistency within Being and Nothingness itself which Sartre does not pay enough attention to.

Needless to say, authentic human relations are not possible within his ontology of human reality, and therefore Sartrean ethics cannot be founded upon the fundamental value of freedom for all people.

If this is so, then what is the meaning of the qualifying footnote that Sartre places at the end of his discussion of concrete relations with others, which Anderson relies so heavily upon to support his claim that Sartre opens up the possibility of positive human relations in Being and Nothingness?[148]

Does the 'radical conversion' mentioned there refer to the human person relinquishing the desire to become God, and choosing freedom instead? I think not, for God is a name that designates fulfillment which the human person seeks. As we have seen, every human person forms the project of becoming solid and complete like the in-itself. However, if one were ever to become an in-itself, one would lose the characteristic of being a for-itself, that is, of being empty and without essence. Therefore, God is the name given to that impossible union of two types of being which all people desire; that is, to become a being-in-itself-for-itself.[149] Sartre expresses this in a rather unique way:

> Every human reality is a passion in that it projects losing itself so as to find being and by the same stroke to constitute the In-itself which escapes contingency by being its own foundation, the Ens causa sui, which religions call God... But the idea of God is contradictory and we lose ourselves in vain. Man is a useless passion.[150]

If 'man is a useless passion,' hopelessly struggling to become God, it hardly seems likely that Anderson's interpretation of 'radical conversion'

as being the relinquishing of one's desire to be God would be accurate. Inasmuch as it is pure conjecture, it must be dismissed.

What then, does Sartre mean by saying that an ethics of deliverance and salvation is possible, but only after a radical conversion? It seems that the radical conversion must be a change of plan, giving the human person a new vision of his possible life with other people, and one which does not necessarily end in conflict. It has been shown that the possibilities for human relations in Being and Nothingness offer nothing positive, and therefore the radical conversion must be to some kind of societal structure that will allow one to break out of the unauthentic relations that have characterized his existence previously. Sartre, in the Critique of Dialectical Reason, offered Marx's notion of the classless society as the best possible societal structure to achieve the goal of authentic human relations. However, it is not all related to anything that he described or hinted at in Being and Nothingness, and remains inconsistent with it. Anderson has failed to see that Sartre's radical conversion to Marxism is far from his ontological description of human reality in that early work. Moreover, Anderson should realize that the adoption of freedom for all people as the fundamental value of Sartrean ethics is contrary to its very spirit, for the assertion that anything is absolutely valuable is bad faith. The particular kind of bad faith involved here is the 'serious' mentality, which is the belief that there are objective moral absolutes which are good in and of themselves, and which must be conformed to by all.

> Anderson rightly points out that some of the depressing analyses of human relations given in Being and Nothingness are the result of the "spirit of seriousness" and bad faith; what he does not seem to realize is that any set of moral rules which could be advocated by a philosopher must, by that analysis, inevitably give rise to bad faith in those who try to follow them. If the ontology is taken seriously, then a morality in the traditional sense is impossible; there cannot be a Sartrean morality.[151]

I must qualify the last remark by saying that there cannot be an objective Sartrean morality. There is, however, implicit in Sartrean ethics, a subjective morality. In choosing for oneself, as has been shown, one is making values, since one chooses what he thinks is worth choosing. Unlike other traditional moral theories, which are built upon objective moral absolutes that contain a casuistry, that is, specific rules or norms which one must conform to, Sartrean ethics contains no casuistry. It allows one to freely choose whatever one finds valuable. The important point, however, is that for all its emphasis on the freedom of the individual, the subjective morality of Sartrean ethics is not nihilistic or antinomian. There are two reasons for this. First, in choosing what is valuable, one is able, albeit from a subjective point of view, to make moral judgements on those who have chosen different values. Antinomianism opposes moral judgement of any kind, be it from an established authority or from an individual. Second, Sartre makes a negative moral judgement on those who choose bad faith.[152] While supporters of Sartre could argue that this proves that Sartrean ethics contains at least one objective moral absolute, it is not an objective moral absolute in the generally accepted sense of the term. Sartre's

advice seems to be simply to avoid bad faith, and not evade one's freedom. Such advice is too open-ended to be considered an objective moral absolute in the real sense. Yet clearly some choices are wrong in Sartrean ethics, such as one's choice to unquestioningly accept all laws in society. Therefore, such a system cannot rightly be called nihilistic or antinomian. Furthermore, as has been shown, Sartrean ethics does not advocate total relativism or license, for it proposes a common value for all people to follow--freedom of choice regarding the way in which one justifies his life. It is, perhaps, a severe and difficult ethics, for it demands that the human person accept responsibility for being the only creator of meaning in a world without God. This responsibility is often agonizing, for it is more demanding than the simple observance of values already made. However, this is not necessarily an unattractive situation. An ethical theory which says that anything is better than making excuses or trying to avoid responsibility for one's actions, contains a spirit which is important in today's world, where the 'cop out' seems to have become the only moral norm. It is the existentialist spirit in Sartrean ethics that attempts to convince one that he is not totally passive and powerless in relation to 'the system,' or in relation to the direction that his own life can take. Despite its lack of clarity as to how one should conduct his life, I find that Sartrean ethics allows the opportunity for maximization of human integrity and personal self-worth. While it may lack in specific content, it is the spirit contained within it that has much to offer the human person.

III. THE EXISTENTIALIST ETHICS OF MARTIN BUBER

A. Basic Elements of Buber's Existentialism

Martin Buber was born in Vienna in 1878 and died in Jerusalem in 1965. He is considered by many as the outstanding Jewish thinker of his time. Through his famous "philosophy of dialogue," Buber constructed a unique framework with which to approach the area of concrete human relations, as well as the relation between God and the human person. This contribution to modern religion and philosophy has impacted scholars far beyond the limits of the Jewish community. "Buber's influence...has not by any means been confined to Jewish believers, but has on the contrary shaped the thought of many outstanding Protestants..."[1]

While Buber broke new ground with the 'philosophy of dialogue,' his thought as a whole shares a number of common characteristics with existentialism. First, he is against all philosophic systems which attempt to provide certain and unambiguous answers to the fundamental questions which concern the human person. Like Sartre, Buber feels that a system cannot provide answers to the concrete problems of existence. "...the question about man's being faces us as never before in all its grandeur and terror--no longer in philosophical attire, but in the nakedness of existence."[2] Thus, Buber is not directed toward philosophical problems as such, but is more interested in the everyday experiences of the human person. Issues must engage the

total person and not the intellect alone, for things are encountered in everyday life which are beyond rational explanation. Buber also reveals his existentialist orientation with his concern for the uniqueness and specialness of each person.

> Every person born into this world represents something new, something that never existed before, something original and unique... Every man's foremost task is the actualization of his unique, unprecedented and never-recurring potentialities, and not the repetition of something that another, and it be even the greatest, has already achieved...[3]

Such a statement is similar to Sartre's contention that the human person creates his own essence through the choices that he makes. Thus, comparable to Sartre both in terms of his disdain for all systems, concepts, and abstractions that attempt to explain the reality of human existence, as well as his preoccupation with the uniqueness of each individual, Buber very much was an existentialist. However, Buber's similarity with Sartre cannot go much beyond these basic notions, for while Sartre completely rejected the existence of God, lived experience for Buber includes God in a most significant way. It is at this point that Buber's thought makes a radical departure from Sartrean existentialism.

Buber is often categorized not as an existentialist, but as a religious existentialist. "Martin Buber's thinking...falls in with the general movement of religious existentialism--indeed, he is one of the main contemporary sources of the movement."[4] Religious existentialists differ from existentialists in that the former embrace the life

of faith, and see the human person as essentially oriented to God, whereas the latter, in most cases, do not believe in the existence of God at all.

> Religious existentialism...postulates a higher Being or Truth which is beyond reason as we know it. Although not to be identified with ordinary emotions, it is grasped by means of them much more surely than through intellectual concepts. Kierkegaard contends that a rationally comprehensible God would be no greater than the constructs of the human mind. [5]

Kierkegaard's outlook influenced Buber's thought in its early stages. While Buber had a high regard for reason, he did not see it as the unconditional reality of life. He felt that there was a higher realm of religion that existed beyond the rational. Kierkegaard opposed philosophical rationalism from the standpoint of religious faith, and this is what was appealing to Buber. "Only through a faith in that which transcends him can man find fulfillment, and that transcendant focus of faith is not reached through reason alone."[6] This is the main focus of religious existentialism.

Buber found life in its depths to be a religious experience. Yet he rejected Kierkegaard's insistence that detachment from other human beings is the only way to reach God. Kierkegaard saw the fundamental relation between the human person and God as attainable only through one's rejection of the world around him. Kierkegaard's notion of the 'Single One' forced Buber to question whether one relates to God by turning away from the other or by turning toward the other. Buber addresses this dilemma in the essay "The Question to the Single

One." He argues that Kierkegaard was convinced that in order to love God, one has to remove all "objects." To this, Buber answers as follows:

> That is sublimely to misunderstand God. Creation is not a hurdle on the road to God, it is the road itself. We are created along with one another and directed to a life with one another. Creatures are placed in my way so that I, their fellow-creature, by means of them and with them find the way to God.[7]

Contrary to Kierkegaard, Buber insists that the fundamental relation between the human person and God must include relations to other people and the world. "Real relationship with God cannot be achieved on earth if real relationships to the world and mankind are lacking..."[8]

Buber's affirmation of such relationships provided a new direction for religious existentialism. While this development most certainly reflected the profound originality of his thought, it was also indicative of Buber's attachment to specifically Jewish sources. "In fact, the fusion of existential thinking with the world-affirming spirit of Judaism is Buber's great contribution to contemporary intellectual life."[9] By developing the link between Buber's philosophy and his interpretation of Judaism, it is possible to shed light on his great contributions to modern life and thought.

Growing up in the home of his grandfather, Salomon Buber, an outstanding scholar of the Haskalah, the young Buber was exposed to Jewish life and learning. As a university student Buber was deeply influenced by secular German philosophy, being particularly attracted

to the thought of Nietzsche and Kant. Despite the secular influences, however, he remained intensely Jewish. "He was and ever remained very much a Jew."[10] Buber reacted to the combined influences of Nietzsche and religion by turning to mysticism.

> ... Buber's early writings, written while he was still under the influence of Nietzsche, express the mystical passion for unity... Ultimately the mystic seeks to unite with the absolute--that true reality whose being and power is the ground of the world of everyday experience, which the mystics depreciate as illusory.[11]

Yet, despite his initial passion for the mystical, Buber eventually rejected mysticism for two specific reasons. First, he could not accept the mystic's retreat into pure subjective experience as the basis for discovering true reality. Life cannot be reduced to subjectivity, rather it must take into account everyday experience. "... Buber rejected his mystical security for a greater concern with real men facing their real situation."[12] Second, a total uniting with God meant for Buber the sacrificing of one's own identity as an existing individual. This was too high a price to pay.

> It [mysticism] too lets the man be alone before God but not as the Single One. The relation to God which it thinks of is the absorbtion of the I, and the Single One ceases to exist if he cannot--even in devoting himself--say I.[13]

Using Sartre's terminology, Buber made a 'radical conversion' from the mystical to the existential. The union with the absolute is an illusion. Reality does not begin with God, rather it begins with the everyday life of the existing human person. This radical change in Buber's thought did not, however, take place in a vacuum. It was the

teachings of Hasidism that forged the nexus between Buber's shift from the mystical to the existential. Hasidism, in other words, was a primary catalyst in the transition from the former to the latter.

> One might say that among many of the existentialists, elements from their religion or cultural heritages coalesced with their existentialism or even supplied the impulse toward it in the first place... Martin Buber's philosophy is intertwined with the Hassidic [sic] tradition of Judaism.[14]

Buber's passionate encounter with Hasidism was based on its social-communal dimension, which emphasized joyful worship of God within the reality of everyday life. Religious experience was no longer confined to the rare moments of ecstasy provided by the altered states of private mystical contemplation. On the contrary, all of life held the potential for holiness and communion with God. Seen in this light, authentic religion for Buber must include more than one's involvement with the common forms of spiritual expression, such as prayer, which occurs only in specific settings; it must include the human person's response to the whole of reality. By the word "dialogical," Buber points to what occurs when two people really meet each other.

> Its essence lies in the fact that "each of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation between himself and them."[15]

Whereas Kierkegaard rejected relations with others, and while Sartre held a dismal view of the human person's potential to enter into authentic relations with others, Buber clearly indicated that the fundamental fact of human existence centers around genuine "dialogue,"

where two individuals can achieve positive human relations. "Buber's view of reality is designated by one great symbol--Dialogue."[16] The essential element of genuine dialogue is the mutual affirmation of one another's subjectivity.

> For the inmost growth of the self is not accomplished...in man's relation to himself, but in the relation between the one and the other...together with the mutuality of acceptance, of affirmation and confirmation...[17]

Recognizing the subjectivity of another human being is a general theme in Buber's writings, and appears, in one form or another, on numerous occasions.

> This person is other, essentially other than myself, and this otherness of his is what I mean, because I mean him; I confirm it; I wish his otherness to exist, because I wish his particular being to exist.[18]

While Buber spoke of the dialogical character of human existence, he was not blind to the reality that the capacity for people to affirm one another's subjectivity and enter into authentic human relations was significantly underdeveloped. "That this capacity lies so immeasurably fallow constitutes the real weakness and questionableness of the human race: actual humanity exists only where this capacity unfolds."[19] Despite this admission, Buber felt that the human person was capable of overcoming his natural self-preoccupation, and reaching the depths of the life of dialogue.

Buber's notion of authentic human existence is intimately bound up with the relational life, where genuine dialogue can occur between two individuals who affirm each other's subjectivity. In order to gain

a true understanding of what this entails, however, it is necessary to understand Buber's ontological description of human existence itself. The most important work in which Buber set forth his fundamental statement about the nature of human existence is his brief classic, I and Thou, published in 1922. "I and Thou was the watershed in Buber's religio-philosophical life."[20] Moreover, the book represented Buber's full emergence as an existential thinker, and he never altered the fundamental position set forth therein.

Buber alludes to two separate realms of human existence, termed "I-It" and "I-Thou." While a full explanation of the meaning of these two terms must be deferred to the next section, the general distinction between them is that they are two different ways in which the human person comes to know the world around him.

> The more obvious one, which men use all the time and on which their everyday lives are built, may be called the knowledge of objects, or what Buber terms the "I-It" relation. Typically, men relate to things by looking at them, examining them, testing them. Things are measured, taken apart, and put back together again and thus comprehended.[21]

In the realm of I-It, all things in the world, be they inanimate objects or other people, are filtered through the mental categories of the human person for purposes of knowledge or use.

For Buber, the whole of reality cannot be reduced to the objectifiable world of I-It. Life yields a transcendant dimension which cannot be apprehended by any preconceived category of human thought. Buber calls this dimension the realm of the I-Thou. The fact that this

realm of human existence is beyond objective description and categorization makes it very difficult to identify on a rational level. "It is not so easy to say what Buber means by the I-Thou relationship. Buber's descriptions of it are often epigrammatic and excessively cryptic."[22] When Buber seeks to direct the human person to the realm of I-Thou, he does not write in standard philosophical prose. The reason for this is that it would be a fundamental error to attempt to encapsule that which is beyond rational definition, and is essentially unspeakable, in a concise and systematic philosophical description. Yet, on the other hand, to say nothing at all about the realm of the I-Thou would be equivalent to denying its existence. Therefore, while it cannot be described in detail, it can be pointed to in very general statements. First of all, the realm of I-Thou is the one in which the deeper meaning of existence is disclosed. "A life of I-Thou relations is the life lived at its true, genuine depths."[23] Second, the realm of I-Thou is relational and dialogical, which for Buber means authentic human existence. "To Buber one becomes a self, a person, in entering into the relation with the Thou."[24] Third, an I-Thou relation, which is dialogical, involves the human person's affirmation of the other's subjectivity. In this "...are included all those things which we see in their uniqueness and for their own selves..."[25]

It has been necessary to begin with a general description of Buber's existentialism, for, like Sartre, he does not offer a systematically developed philosophical ethics. The reason for this is that Buber is

against the formulation of a "system" of ethics which would claim universal validity. "No, I do not, indeed, offer a system of ethics; also I know none universally valid that I need only adduce."[26] This does not mean, however, that Buber's thought is not carried by a basic ethical conception. While ethics for Buber cannot be a fully objective determination of right from wrong, it is a way of attending to the world, and is implicit within his basic philosophy. "To understand Buber's ethics one must see, feel, and experience the existential depths of his religious philosophy--the immediacy of the I-Thou relation."[27] The distinction between the I-Thou and I-It realms is basic to Buber's ethics. Thus, his ethics are done an injustice if considered abstractly and in isolation from his unique approach to life.

> Buber's vision of concrete life as normatively I-Thou in character...is the focus of Buber's ethics rather than any abstract calculus on decision-making, duties, and obligations.[28]

If this is the case, what sort of ethics does the I-Thou realm imply? Thus far, it has been shown that relation, dialogue, and affirmation of the other's subjectivity characterize the I-Thou relation. Inasmuch as Buber finds these characteristics to allow one to exist authentically, it would seem logical to conclude that they are the moral principles of Buber's ethics (i.e. what is meant by 'good'). In terms of casuistry, any action that enhances the possibility of relation, dialogue, or the affirmation of the other's subjectivity would be considered good, while any action that lessens their possibility would be considered bad.

Although this seems a plausible approach, the entire matter of the ethical implications of Buber's philosophy is not that simple. It cannot be denied that Buber's ethics takes the I-Thou relation as its fundamental value, or "intrinsic" good (summum bonum). However, there are those critics of Buber who claim that the I-Thou relation implies a purely subjective or situational ethic, in which no action is wrong. Charles W. Kegley, one of Buber's critics, says:

> ...what emerges is, on the surface, a clearly situational ethics rather than an ethics of principles. On this issue Buber would appear to have made his position entirely clear: "I know no system," "I oppose 'situations' to 'principles,' the 'unclear' reality to the 'pure abstraction.'" Astonishingly he wrote, "...there is not the slightest assurance that our decision is right except in a personal way."[29]

Since Buber, within the totality of his writings, does mention what he considers to be certain undeniable objective moral absolutes, few of these critics claim that Buber is nihilistic or antinomian. However, what nearly all of Buber's critics hold in common is that the objective moral absolutes that he sets forth in various places in his writings is inconsistent with the subjective ethic implied in the I-Thou relation. As will be shown, the basis for their finding the I-Thou relation to be purely subjective and situational lies within their interpretation of Buber's view of revelation, that is, the encounter between God and the human person. It is true that Buber refuted the view that the laws which came from the Revelation between God and Moses at Mt. Sinai were meant to be binding on all subsequent generations. It is also

true that he considers revelation to be a personal encounter between God and the human person. Does this mean that there are no criteria by which to distinguish one person's particular revelation from that of another, and thus that no objective moral absolutes can be extracted from personal revelation? Buber's critics seem to think so. Marvin Fox states the dilemma between subjective revelation and Buber's affirmation of certain objective moral absolutes.

> How does Professor Buber reconcile such universal moral judgements with his view that even in revelation there are no set moral principles, and that men can only come to moral decisions in the light of the uniqueness of their particular circumstances?[30]

Are these criticisms valid, or does the I-Thou relation indeed imply certain objective moral absolutes which all people must follow? This is the critical question, which, when answered, will shed light on the nature of Buber's ethics, and what it implies for the human person. The answer can be found, however, only with an analysis of Buber's ontological description of human reality as found in I and Thou, in addition to several other of Buber's works. As with Sartre, for purposes of clarity, only those particular ontological positions that underly the ethical structure will be analyzed. To all this, we now turn.

B. Buber's Ontological Description of Human Reality and its Ethical Implications

Buber points out in the beginning of I and Thou that human reality is composed of two distinct parts.

> To man the world is twofold, in accordance with his twofold attitude. The attitude of man is twofold, in accordance with the twofold nature of the primary words which he speaks.[31]

The one primary word is I-Thou, and the other is I-It.[32] These basic word pairs, which are mutually exclusive, can be seen as two distinct ways that the human person communicates with the world around him. Each person is composed of both I's, and is therefore capable of both types of relations, although never simultaneously. To emphasize this, Buber maintains that there can be no separation of an I from a Thou nor an I from an It.

> There is no I taken in itself, but only the I of the primary word I-Thou and the I of the primary word I-It. When a man says I he refers to one or other of these.[33]

The primary word I-It belongs to the world of experiencing and using. "Man travels over the surface of things and experiences them. He extracts knowledge about their constitution from them: he wins an experience from them."[34] There is nothing inherently wrong with one who experiences the world and amasses a great wealth of knowledge in the process. Yet, Buber finds that this kind of existence does not enable the human person to live life to the fullest. He considers the orderable realm of experiencing and using to cause part of one's full personhood to be held back. Such an individual approaches other things and other people as sources of data and objects which are to be controlled. In short, the realm of I-It describes the subject-object relationship.

While Buber does not refer to specific gradations of the I-It

relationship, it appears that not all such relationships are of the same type. One type of subject-object relationship involves the one who uses others primarily out of self-interest.

> Another person is an "It" to me if I regard him or her simply as a means to the achievement of one or other of my goals. If I take a taxi in order to get to a certain place, the cab driver is an It to me--...and the same is true of all people with whom my relations are purely commercial or pragmatic.[35]

Of course, this type of relation is not restricted solely to individuals with whom one deals in a purely commercial or pragmatic manner. Whenever one treats people as objects or tools, using them to achieve one's own selfish ends or to attain ego-gratification, be they strangers, acquaintances, or even intimate family and friends, then that person is functioning in the world of I-It. However, it must be pointed out that not all I-It relationships are guided primarily by self-interest. For example, the relationships between professionals and those whom they serve, while still subject-object in nature, are often not motivated by self-interest. An example is a surgeon who operates on a patient. While this is still a subject-object relationship in which the professional is detached from the individual, the cause of the relationship is not necessarily any narrow selfish motive on the part of the professional. On the contrary, such I-It relationships are often beneficial for all those concerned.

It can be seen that the I-It relationship is not necessarily negative in value. While Buber finds those types of I-It relationships that are based on self-interest to be evil, he is at least morally neutral on

those that do not involve selfish motives, and which benefit those who experience them. Thus, the I-It is not an evil category in and of itself. Moreover, the entire world of scientific knowledge gained through the senses of the human person is something that Buber considers a necessary part of human existence. This consideration leads him to say that "...human life neither can nor ought to overcome the connection with It..."[36] According to Maurice Friedman, the principle translator and expositor of Buber's works in English, I-It affords the human person, through knowledge and logic, a reliable perspective on the world. "It is only the reliability of its ordered and surveyable world which sustains man in life."[37] Yet, however inescapable, the I-It relation must never become the sole preoccupation of the human person. "You cannot hold on to life without it, its reliability sustains you; but should you die in it, your grave would be in nothingness."[38] Thus, it is the predominance, and not the mere existence, of the I-It that is the source of evil. When the human person claims the I-It to be the all-encompassing truth, it becomes an evil force because it shuts out the possibility of one's attainment of full personhood. As Buber states, "...without It man cannot live. But he who lives with It alone is not a man."[39] Buber is implying that the achievement of full personhood necessitates transcending the I-It realm. He believes that life experience itself yields a transcendant dimension. This dimension is the realm of I-Thou.

In order to begin to get an understanding of the I-Thou realm, it is first necessary to indicate to what extent Buber's thinking was influenced by his philosophical predecessors, most notably Kant. "It was from Kant that Buber received a fundamental orientation in the formal framing of his philosophical categories."[40] Kant showed that all the human person can ever know of reality is reality as it appears, not reality as it is in itself. To the former he gave the name "phenomenal," and the latter he called "noumenal."[41] The main anthropological implication of this dichotomy is that one can never really know another person, except through one's own perceptions of that person. As a result, two people are cut off from the possibility of real intimacy and communication with each other.

While Kant saw the noumenal realm as beyond reason, and therefore unknowable, Buber transformed it into an ever-present reality that lay within the grasp of every person. Buber, unlike Kant, did not see reason as the unconditional reality of life. He envisioned a sphere beyond rational, objective knowledge that is alive and waiting to be met. This is the sphere of the I-Thou. "...Buber grasped the noumenal world and developed it as the place where man truly becomes his genuine self--in the realm of I-Thou relationships."[42] While the realm of I-It is close to Kant's notion of the "phenomenal" (i. e. the apprehensible world), the realm of I-Thou is markedly different from Kant's notion of the "noumenal." The difference is that Buber wishes to call attention to the possibility of real intimacy and communication

that can occur in a relationship, something which Kant saw as being beyond human reach.

Having briefly mentioned the most important influence on Buber's development of his philosophical categories, especially as it pertains to the realm of I-Thou, it is now possible to begin a more lengthy consideration of the I-Thou relationship itself. The difficulty in determining exactly what Buber means by this realm of human existence has already been alluded to. Essentially, the difficulty is that the I-Thou relation cannot be explained by abstract, intellectual concepts. In fact, it cannot be conceptually represented at all.

> It can neither be interpreted nor translated, I can have it neither explained nor displayed; it is not a what at all, it is said into my very life...[43]

The view that the I-Thou relation cannot be conceptually represented is a logical consequence of Buber's contention that the Thou is not a being with aspects or qualities and that it is therefore not something which can be described. Any objective viewing of a person pushes a potential I-Thou relation back into the realm of I-It, for it is a characteristic of the latter realm to view persons in such a manner. The I-Thou relation, however, precludes any objective viewing of the other person, establishing instead what Buber calls "essential immediacy."[44] Only the I-Thou relation which "...establishes essential immediacy between me and an existing being, brings me just thereby not to an aspect of it but to that being itself."[45]

I-Thou relations inhabit a sphere all their own. Buber calls this

area the sphere of "between." "I call this sphere, which is established with the existence of man as man but which is conceptually still uncomprehended, the sphere of 'between.'"[46] The "between" is neither subjective nor objective, but sits on what Buber calls the "narrow ridge." "On the far side of the subjective, on this side of the objective, on the narrow ridge, where I and Thou meet, there is the realm of 'between.'"[47] The point here is that the I-Thou relation is beyond explanation, because human categories of knowledge cannot describe the ineffable. It can best be illustrated from concrete life.

> The I-Thou relationship is simply ineffable. All this description and Buber's own writing is not a substitute for it, but a gesture pointing to something you must find in your own life. Only in terms of your own experience can it make sense.[48]

Buber's emphasis is clearly on the personal experiencing of what is concrete in life, and not on some introspective search for truth in which the human person isolates himself from the rest of the world, as is the case in mysticism. One does not lay aside the world of sense as though it were an illusion.

> There is no illusory world, there is only the world--which appears to us as twofold in accordance with our twofold attitude. Only the barrier of separation has to be destroyed.[49]

When the barrier breaks down, and the human person in the fullness of his being encounters the other in concreteness, the other ceases to be It and becomes Thou. This signifies the change from an isolated individual who experiences and uses the other, to an authentic person

entering into relation with the other. Just as all beings may be regarded as objects by a self in the I-It realm, so too, may they become a partner to that self in the I-Thou relation.

The supra-rational encounter of the human person with the other is the essence of Buber's ontology and is the root of his I-Thou philosophy. The encounter can take place between a person and any one of three separate spheres of existence. "The spheres in which the world of relation arises are three. First, our life with nature... Second, our life with men... Third, our life with spiritual beings."[50] The encounter with nature takes place below the realm of speech; the human encounter within the realm of speech; and the encounter with spiritual beings beyond the realm of speech. Malcolm Diamond saw this point clearly when he wrote that "...the fundamental mark of the I-Thou relation is not the full blown mutuality of speech and answering speech, but the intuition on the part of man, of the full ontological dimension of the other."[51] Yet, Buber's description of such a relation with a tree has raised doubts in the minds of many as to the possibility of such an encounter. "Emil Fackenheim...acknowledges that it may not be easy to be persuaded of the reality of I-Thou encounters when the alleged partner is something non-human."[52] While Buber describes I-Thou relations with nature or spiritual beings, these relations are not of equal value to human relations.

> He values the I-Thou encounters between man and man more highly than those that take place between man and the beings in the other two spheres. His criterion is the greater degree of mutuality possible in human encounters.[53]

The unfolding of the I-Thou encounter between two individuals is what Buber calls the "dialogical." "The basic movement of the life of dialogue is the turning towards the other."[54] Turning towards the other implies one's intention to establish a relation with another based on total involvement and openness. Total involvement implies entering into relation with one's whole being, and openness suggests the reduction or hopefully elimination of one's defenses and inhibitions which so often stand in the way of true relationship. Some human beings are so ruled by defenses and inhibitions that they are virtually incapable of truly relating to another person. Genuine relation requires that one expose himself to the risk of disappointment or rejection.

Another critical element of the dialogical relation is the mutual affirmation of one another's subjectivity. This involves the mutual recognition that the other person is an equal, in the sense of having his own unique value as a human person, and as existing in his own right. Should one of the partners fail to do this, either by seeing the other person as an object to be controlled or by calculating the utility of that person for one's own selfish purposes, then the possibility for an I-Thou relation is destroyed. The mutual affirmation of one another's subjectivity in its fullest sense is what Buber calls "making present."[55] Going far beyond empathy, "making present" is to concretely imagine the wishes, feelings, and needs of the other to such an extent that one comes to a full recognition of the other as a unique self.

> It means "imagining the real"--a "bold swinging" into the life of "the particular real person who confronts me, whom I can attempt to make present to myself just in this way, and not otherwise, in his wholeness, unity, and uniqueness."[56]

Authentic human relations based on the notion of "making present" requires that one avoid preoccupation with the meaning of one's own existence. Paradoxically, Buber claims that the meaning of one's own life can be found only through another person.

> For the inmost growth of the self is not accomplished, as people like to suppose today, in man's relation to himself, but...in the making present of another self and in the knowledge that one is made present in his own self by the other.[57]

Buber indicates a similar idea to the "making present" of another self with his use of the word "inclusion."[58]

> Its elements are, first, a relation...between two persons, second, an event experienced by them in common, in which at least one of them actively participates, and, third, the fact that this one person, without forfeiting anything of the felt reality of his activity, at the same time lives through the common event from the standpoint of the other.[59]

It is doubtful whether one could know another more intimately than to be able to actually experience an event from the other's point of view. The old adage "Do not judge another until you have stood in his shoes" does not even approach the kind of knowing that Buber speaks of here. It is intimacy at its most supreme level.

Although the I-Thou relation requires that one affirm the subjectivity of the other with one's whole being, encountering the Thou as exclusively present, it is necessary for that person to maintain his own identity. There is no mystical union of the self with the Thou. The Thou

"...teaches you to meet others and to hold your ground when you meet them."[60] The human person must hold his own ground in order to deal justly with the other.

An additional feature of the I-Thou relation that is of importance is its ephemeral nature. No I-Thou relation can last forever, because as soon as one is aware of being in the midst of an encounter, it becomes objectified, and ceases to exist. Every Thou must eventually become an It. "This is the exalted melancholy of our fate, that every Thou in our world must become an It."[61] The length of time that an I-Thou relation will last can never be predicted, because it is beyond spatial and temporal categorization. "The world of It is set in the context of space and time. The world of Thou is not set in the context of either of these."[62] In very general terms, however, which aid the human person's understanding of the I-Thou relation, it can be as short as a fleeting moment, such as a penetrating glance exchanged between lovers. The moment can be of much longer duration, depending on the ability of the partners to remain engrossed in relation. Moreover, an I-Thou encounter can never be planned in advance. It often comes on its own, even when least expected. "The Thou meets me through grace--it is not found by seeking."[63]

The major characteristics that constitute the I-Thou relation have just been delineated, enabling one to get a general picture of how such a relation differs from an I-It experience. In addition, two criteria that are essential for the life of genuine dialogue have been discussed:

"turning towards the other," and "making present." On the basis of these criteria, it is clear that the I-Thou relation in its most fully realized form is a most intimate relationship, perhaps very difficult to attain, even if only for a fleeting moment. A great deal of maturity on the part of the human person is required in order for both criteria to be met. How often do two people achieve intimacy to the degree that one is able to actually live through an event from the standpoint of the other? Can one ever hope to know another to such great depths? Is such knowing humanly possible? While this is clearly an ideal to be strived for, Buber feels that the intimacy of the I-Thou relation he describes is attainable, particularly through the bond of marriage.

> The I-Thou relation is most fully realized in love between man and wife. Here arises what Buber calls the exemplary bond, two people revealing the Thou to each other. Love involves the recognition and confirmation of the other in his or her uniqueness, and to this end, marriage affords the greatest length of time and the greatest degree of intimacy.[64]

Thus, marriage is the paradigmatic example of the I-Thou relation. Of course, it would be a mistake to assume that a married couple ought every moment to be in an I-Thou relationship. Such an ideal is impossible to attain, for it has already been stated that every Thou must eventually become an It. "Two lovers must...experience ever and again how the I-Thou is succeeded by an I-He or I-She."[65] Instead, what is meant here is that marriage, in which there exist many opportunities for "turning towards the other" and the "making present" of the other, provides the best environment for I-Thou

relations to take place. In general, any relationship that meets these two criteria must be considered a true I-Thou relation.

While it has been necessary to discuss the essential characteristics and criteria of the I-Thou relation, it now becomes necessary to raise the question of how to distinguish encounters which do not possess all those characteristics and criteria, but which are also clearly not I-It relations. A relation with another that cannot be considered I-It does not automatically make it an I-Thou relation in its true sense. There are gradations of the I-Thou relation which differ fundamentally from a true I-Thou relation, either because a person does not turn to the other in total involvement and openness, or because there does not occur the kind of mutual affirmation of one another's subjectivity that is required in "making present," or both. In the "Postscript" to I and Thou which appeared in 1958, some thirty-five years after the first German edition, Buber admits that an I-Thou relation without full mutuality may take place between two individuals. "...there are some I-Thou relationships which in their nature may not unfold to full mutuality if they are to persist in that nature."[66] The relationship between teacher and pupil, psychotherapist and patient, and pastor and congregant are examples Buber gives in order to illustrate this point. "In these relations full mutuality is impossible because of the very nature of the relationship..."[67]

Though it is commendable that Buber admits in his "Postscript" the existence of gradations in I-Thou encounters, he does not pay

enough attention to the matter in his basic ontology in the body of I and Thou. Buber gives one the impression that every concrete human relation is simply either I-It or I-Thou in nature, and he offers no guidelines as to how one can recognize qualitative differences within each realm, especially in the I-Thou. His lack of distinctive terminology to indicate different types of I-Thou encounters results in an oversimplified view of concrete human relations. Among many students of Buber's philosophy of dialogue, such oversimplification has resulted in a watering down of what constitutes a true I-Thou relation. These individuals talk of treating as a Thou each person one meets, including neighbors, business associates, friends and acquaintances, etc. They claim that one can have an I-Thou encounter with anyone by treating that person in a kind, respectful, and loving manner. However, it has already been shown that a true I-Thou relation cannot be summoned at will, and often occurs when one least expects it. Moreover, any given encounter between people must meet two specific criteria in order to be considered a true I-Thou relation, that is, it must be infused with genuine dialogue and the "making present" of the other self. It is clear from this that one cannot have an I-Thou relation with someone simply by treating that person in a friendly, kind manner, and by attempting to address him as a Thou. An incident in Buber's own life involving a meeting with an unknown young man, which he relates in Between Man and Man, clarifies this.

> I certainly did not fail to let the meeting be friendly... I conversed attentively and openly with him--only I omitted to guess the questions which he did not put. Later, not long after, I learned from one of his friends--he himself was no longer alive--the essential content of those questions; I learned that he had come to me not casually, but borne by destiny...[68]

Although Buber treated the young man in a friendly, humane way, and not as an It, he failed to establish genuine dialogue with him.

Addressing this problem, Buber goes on in Between Man and Man to indicate three different types of dialogue, two of which can occur within the realm of the I-Thou.[69] The first is "genuine dialogue," which of course is necessary for all I-Thou relations. The second is what Buber calls "technical dialogue," which has the potential for fleeting moments of real dialogue, but which nevertheless is not equivalent to an I-Thou relation because of its objective character.

> There is technical dialogue, which is prompted solely by the need of objective understanding... [it] belongs to the inalienable sterling quality of "modern existence." But real dialogue is here continually hidden in all kinds of odd corners and, occasionally in an unseemly way, breaks surface surprisingly and inopportunely...as in the tone of a railway guard's voice, in the glance of an old newspaper vendor, in the smile of the chimney sweeper.[70]

Technical dialogue is clearly a hybrid between genuine dialogue and monologue disguised as dialogue. There are countless incidents in everyday life in which a fleeting moment of "real dialogue" may break the surface, but none of them constitute a true I-Thou relation. Treating a stranger kindly and lovingly, having a personable conversation with a taxi driver, exchanging a meaningful glance with a waiter,

the musician who stirs his audience with a magnificent performance; although none of these is an I-It relation, neither are any of them I-Thou encounters. While each situation may contain moments of "real dialogue" which may lead to a true I-Thou relation, in every one of them at least one of the two criteria essential for an I-Thou relation is missing. Certain scholars of Buber's philosophy of dialogue have indicated the importance of distinguishing between these different kinds of relations by inventing their own terminology. Paul Edwards talks of "I-Thou-like" relations:

> As I understand him, Buber does not contend that we have full-fledged I-Thou relationships in all these cases, but all of them are sufficiently different from the I-It to be classified as "real dialogue." Perhaps it would be helpful, . . . to distinguish between I-Thou relationships and I-Thou-like relationships.[71]

Harvey Cox talks of "I-You" relations:

> An "I-You" relation is one that respects the personality and humanity of the other but does not seek to establish with him the depth and intimacy that are customarily associated with the notion of the "I-Thou."[72]

Alvin Reines has suggested the term "quasi-I-Thou" relations. Inasmuch as the word "quasi" has more precision of meaning than the words "like" or "You," henceforth any relation that is discussed which is neither I-It nor I-Thou, but which may lead to an I-Thou relation, shall be referred to as such.

Buber's ontology is based on the notion that the human person is not an isolated being, but a relational being. Authentic human existence is therefore realized in the realm of I-Thou, which is both

relational and dialogical. Inasmuch as the I-Thou relation is the key to the human person achieving authentic existence, it becomes the intrinsic good, or "summum bonum," of Buber's ethics. It enables the human person to find soteria, which is "...the state of ultimate meaningful existence..."[73] "I-Thou is not only a direction, it is the direction; for it is itself the ultimate meaning and intrinsic value..."[74] Given this consideration, what, if any, are the specific ethical actions that create favorable conditions in which the I-Thou relation can occur? Since it has already been shown that "turning towards the other" and the "making present" of the other are the conditions necessary for an I-Thou relation, any action that creates these favorable conditions Buber will find 'good.' Such actions are termed "instrumental goods," in that they lead to the occurrance of the summum bonum, the I-Thou relation. Buber clearly draws a contrast between what he sees as good actions and evil actions. Within the totality of his writings he advocates certain norms which presuppose general if not universal validity.

> One is led to believe from more than isolated writings that paradoxically Buber himself may not be far from Immanuel Kant's position on the inadmissibility of any exception to certain laws--e.g., the prohibition against deceit or lying.[75]

Besides deceit and lying, Buber also considers violence to be evil, as can be seen from the following statement:

> What is accomplished through lies can assume the work of truth; what is accomplished through violence, can go in the guise of justice, and for a while the hoax may be successful. But soon people will realize that lies are lies at bottom, that

> in the final analysis, violence is violence, and both lies and violence suffer the destiny history has in store for all that is false.[76]

Buber is a strong believer in the necessity of laws in society which all must follow. He suggests that murder is evil because it threatens the well-being of society. Using this argument as a basis, Buber condemns stealing and adultery, while he supports the command to honor one's parents. "...I have never doubted the absolute validity of the command, 'Honor thy father and thy mother'..."[77] Moreover, most of the traditional ethical values are implied by the I-Thou relation. Buber goes as far as saying that any suspension of the Ten Commandments would seriously jeopardize the future of society. "Speaking of the Ten Commandments as the basis for a civil law, Buber concludes by saying 'it is as a matter of fact impossible to imagine how society could exist without them.'"[78] One of Buber's most severe moral judgements is his condemnation of Hitler and the German people for having committed the atrocities of the Holocaust.

> Of these Germans Buber says, "They have so radically removed themselves from the human sphere, so transposed themselves into a sphere of monstrous inhumanity inaccessible to my conception, that not even hatred, much less an overcoming of hatred, was able to arise in me."[79]

In terms of specific instrumental goods which create conditions conducive to the realization of the summum bonum, Buber advocates a basic equality of persons, the love of one's fellow human beings, freedom, and the seeking of peace. In regard to the last of these he writes: "Our purpose is the great upbuilding of peace... The world of

humanity is meant to become a single body."[80]

Buber's rationale for advocating all these objective moral absolutes is that the possibility of an I-Thou encounter to be realized for some depends on an overall positive environment in the society in which one lives. A society caught in political turmoil and economic upheaval will be unable to create a situation in which persons can enter into I-Thou relations with each other. Therefore, the fulfillment of the instrumental goods that Buber supports greatly enhance the possibilities for I-Thou encounters. Moreover, what is important to understand is that one who performs an instrumental good is always in a quasi-I-Thou relation. The connection is that quasi-I-Thou relations, as will be recalled, may lead to the occurrence of a true I-Thou relation, which corresponds to the instrumental good that may lead to the intrinsic good. Since the intrinsic good in Buber's ethics is the I-Thou relation, quasi-I-Thou relations and instrumental goods are equivalent by the principle of substitution.

At this point, it is possible to address the question of the ethic implied by the I-Thou relation itself. Phrased more colloquially, how will individuals in an I-Thou relation behave towards one another? Since the full-fledged I-Thou relation must involve "turning towards the other" and "making present," these two criteria become the key to the most important ethical implications of Buber's philosophy of dialogue.

> The responsible quality of one's decision will be determined by the degree to which one really "sees the other" and makes him present to one. It is here, in experiencing the relationship from the side of the other, that we find the most important key to the ethical implications of Buber's dialogue... Only through "seeing the other" can the I-Thou relationship become fully real...[81]

"Seeing the other" and "making present" are similar ideas in that they both involve affirming the other person as a unique individual, confirming the value of that person's being, and viewing him as a really 'other' person. This implies a certain amount of positive feelings toward the other that must be present in the I-Thou relation. One could not, in most cases, respond to a Thou by killing him. In fact, it can be said that the realm of I-Thou leads to actions which are almost always bounded by considerations of the well-being of the other. In a single statement, it is the concern for the other as an end in himself that is the primary ethical stance that flows from the I-Thou relation. One is reminded of Kant's second formulation of the categorical imperative: "Never treat one's fellow as a means only but always as an end of value in himself."[82]

Thus far it has been shown that Buber's philosophy of dialogue, as it pertains to the I-Thou relation between human persons, implies certain objective moral absolutes, most notably, concern for the other as an end in himself. However, Buber is a religious existentialist, and is concerned with the human person's relation to God as well. Therefore, the dialogical relation between human persons, henceforth referred to as Buber's "philosophical anthropology,"[83] is only part of

the foundation underlying Buber's ethics. The vital importance of the religious context of Buber's ethics is evident from his observation that "...always it is the religious which bestows, the ethical which receives."[84] Underlying this statement is the indissoluable connection between religion and ethics in Buber's view of reality. While distinguishable in form, the two are inseparable, as will be shown, in concrete life.

The basis for the connection between religion and ethics is Buber's panentheistic view of God. "In panentheism, God includes the world in his being, but his being extends beyond the universe as well."[85] In this sense, God is both immanent, that is, within the universe, yet transcendant, which indicates a surpassing of the limits of the universe. Holding the panentheistic view of God, which implies that one can never fully know God, is what motivates Buber to denounce the god of the philosophers and theologians, who attempt to reduce God to an idea or objectifiable concept.

> Theologians adopt the I-It posture in their effort to incorporate God into objective systems of thought... They can succeed in this effort, but only at the price of imposing the limitations of human concepts upon One who is limitless.[86]

Buber considers an idea of God to be an image at best, a vain attempt to capture that which is imageless. "For the idea of God, that masterpiece of man's construction, is only the image of images, the most lofty of all the images by which man imagines the imageless God."[87] God is, instead, a paradoxical combination of transcendance and

immanence, that which is "wholly Other," yet "wholly Present."

> Of course God is the "wholly Other"; but He is also the wholly Same, the wholly Present. Of course He is the Mysterium Tremendum that appears and overthrows; but He is also the mystery of the self-evident, nearer to me than my I.[88]

While God is wholly Other, and thus is beyond human understanding, the part of God which is wholly Present can be encountered by the human person in a direct way. To indicate this, Buber, in the "Postscript" to I and Thou describes God as a Person, who "...enters into a direct relation with us men in creative, revealing and redeeming acts, and thus makes it possible for us to enter into a direct relation with him."[89] Buber claims that the attribute of personhood is what distinguishes his view of God from that of Spinoza. Spinoza's God has an infinite number of attributes, of which humans know two: thought and extension. To these, Buber adds a third attribute: personal being.[90] It must be stated that by saying God is a Person, Buber does not intend to limit God in any way. God's "...absolute character... prohibits any such statement."[91] Therefore, Buber employs the term "absolute Person,"[92] indicating that whatever else God is, God is also a Person.

> It is indeed legitimate to speak of the person of God within the religious relation and its language; but in doing so we are making no statement about the absolute which reduces it to the personal.[93]

Buber's view of God as the absolute Person is the basis for his contention that God and the human person are able to enter into direct

relationship with each other. "In the reality of the religious relation the Absolute becomes in most cases personal..."[94] Buber contends that God differs from humans in one significant respect: the fact that God, whose full being cannot be known in an objective way, never becomes an It.

> ...it is also only the relation I-Thou in which we can meet God at all, because of Him, in absolute contrast to all existing beings, no objective aspect can be attained. Even a vision yields no objective viewing, and he who strains to hold fast an after-image after the cessation of the full I-Thou relation has already lost the vision.[95]

In order to emphasize the non-objective character of the encounter between God and the human person, Buber uses the term "eternal Thou" to designate the One who never becomes an It.

The eternal Thou is encountered indirectly through the world, that is, through nature, other human persons, and spiritual beings. In any such encounter, Buber claims that one glimpses the eternal Thou. "Every particular Thou is a glimpse through to the eternal Thou."[96] Thus, through one's direct encounter with the world, one indirectly encounters the eternal Thou. "He who truly goes out to meet the world goes out also to meet God."[97] While this idea might seem peculiar to some, especially in terms of actual life experiences, it must be understood in light of Buber's panentheistic view of God. Since all things in the world are a part of God's being, one encounters God, albeit indirectly, by turning towards the world, not away from it, as is the case with mysticism. The encounter with the eternal Thou is

therefore one that takes place in everyday life. Buber's views are a flat rejection of mysticism; and an affirmation of the central teachings of Hasidism, which emphasize worship of God through one's love of the world. Yet, Buber's emphasis on meeting the eternal Thou through the world does not diminish the importance of establishing a direct, personal relationship with God himself.

> Men do not find God if they stay in the world. They do not find Him if they leave the world. He who goes out with his whole being to meet his Thou and carries to it all being that is in the world, finds Him who cannot be sought.[98]

The eternal Thou is not merely the sum of all separate, finite I-Thou encounters, but is the Ineffable who is the source of all such encounters.

> As the sun is at once the most visible of objects and the source of light that enables all other objects to become visible, so God, the eternal Thou, is at once the supreme partner of the dialogue and the power underlying all other I-Thou encounters.[99]

Therefore, in addition to the indirect relation to the eternal Thou through the world, the human person desires to establish a direct relation with the eternal Thou. "I-Thou finds its highest intensity and transfiguration in religious reality, in which unlimited Being becomes, as absolute person, my partner."[100] What are the dynamics of this direct relation? For Buber, the human person's relation to the eternal Thou derives primarily from what is known as "revelation."

> The encounters with the eternal Thou constitute the root experiences of the phenomenon theologians call "revelation"...

> Revelation does not involve the cultivation of a capacity which is latent in man, but God's self-disclosure in the midst of personal relation with men.[101]

From such a meeting with God the human person cannot return unchanged, for revelation bestows upon the individual new dimensions of insight. "The man who emerges from the act of pure relation [revelation] that so involves his being has now in his being, something more that has grown in him, of which he did not know before..."[102]

The very fact that the individual person is capable of receiving revelation from the eternal Thou reflects a critical notion in Buber's philosophy of religion, which is that revelation is an ongoing process, not limited to any one particular event in history, such as that which occurred at Mount Sinai.

> Revelation is not restricted to a few isolated and spectacular moments in history... Man encounters God not only in the events of the Bible or in the ecstatic moments of mystical union. Each moment of human existence, the quiet as well as the dramatic, is a possible moment of revelation.[103]

For Buber, the Revelation described in the Biblical books of Exodus and Deuteronomy is not a literal event, but is figurative language used to describe an I-eternal Thou encounter that occurred between God and Moses. Moses did not literally hear God when he ascended Mt. Sinai, as the Torah says, however, he did encounter the eternal Thou. When he descended the mountain and returned unto the Israelites, he gave to them a subjective interpretation of what he felt was morally implied by the encounter.[104] This interpretation he embodied into laws or objective norms which became known as the Decalogue, or

the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments become, for Buber, Moses' personal description of his encounter with God which served as the moral absolutes which could create the societal conditions necessary to lead to the occurrence of both quasi-I-Thou and actual I-Thou encounters. In the words of Dr. Alvin J. Reines:

> There is a residual effect upon Moses' political-ethical-social thinking from his I-eternal Thou encounter which influences him to produce laws or norms of human behavior that will point humans to either quasi-I-Thou or actual I-Thou encounters depending on whether grace is present.[105]

Just as Moses encountered the eternal Thou, so too can the human person of today do the same. If one is open to the possibility of the meeting, and if grace is present, then an I-eternal Thou encounter of equal significance to that of Moses will occur. Thus, the Revelation at Sinai carries no greater status than the revelations that have occurred continuously throughout history, up until, and including the present.

> "The mighty revelations at the base of the great religions are the same in being as the quiet ones that happen at all times," writes Buber in I and Thou. And this view is carried forward: "What is given to an individual in this present moment leads to the understanding of the great revelations, but the vital fact is one's own personal receiving and not what was received in former times."[106]

Given this attitude, it is understandable why Buber does not consider the legislation of the Pentateuch to be binding on anyone who is not personally addressed by it in the uniqueness of the present moment. He clearly indicates that his ethics does not depend a priori on the Revelation at Sinai, but depends instead on one's own particular

encounter with the eternal Thou, or Absolute.[107]

> Even when the individual calls an absolute criterion handed down by religious tradition his own, it must be reforged in the fire of the truth of his personal essential relation to the Absolute if it is to win true validity.[108]

Thus, revelation yields no objective moral absolutes that are universally valid in all situations. Only out of the personal relation with the Absolute, that is, only out of the religious, can one derive a scale of values upon which he bases all the significant moral decisions of life.

In defining the religious relation in this manner Buber presupposes the existence of the Absolute in whatever form it may confront the individual. From an existentially religious point of view this focus on personal encounters is of tremendous importance. However, when one probes this perspective for moral guidance in terms of how to conduct oneself in the everyday world, one may be disappointed if he is seeking ethical norms or laws.

> Certainly the relation of faith is no book of rules which can be looked up to discover what is to be done now, in this very hour. I experience what God desires for me in this hour--so far as I do experience it--not earlier than in the hour.[109]

Thus, there is no external, absolutely valid ethical code which the human person must apply to each new situation. With this view of ethics what emerges is, on the surface, a situational ethics rather than an ethics of objective principles. Responding with one's whole being to the address of the unique situation which confronts one, as

opposed to blindly adhering to established norms or rules in all cases, is what Buber considers to be authentic human existence. This fact alone, if nothing else, is the moral principle of his ethics. The 'good' for Buber is the making of a decision with one's whole being. The only real evil is to fail to come to any decision. "...in Buber's early philosophy of Judaism good is identified with decision of the whole being, evil with the directionlessness that results from failure to decide."[110] Moreover, there is a clear link between making a decision and entering into the dialogical relation, for the former presupposes the latter. "Only he who knows relation and knows about the presence of the Thou is capable of decision."[111] Thus, unauthentic human existence is characterized by the individual who, because he fails to both enter into relation and turn towards God, is incapable of making a decision with the whole being.

Authentic existence requires that each decision must be made in terms of the concrete situation which is immediately present before one's whole being, and must not be based on long established rules of behavior. However, this particular ethical stance seems to be in direct contradiction with Buber's affirmation of certain objective moral absolutes discussed earlier, such as the commandment to honor one's parents, as well as the prohibition against such evils as lying, deceit, and murder. Can the two seemingly contradictory ethical positions be reconciled? In a statement that may obfuscate rather than clarify this dilemma, Buber states his own position.

> All this does not mean that the great character is beyond the acceptance of norms. No responsible person remains a stranger to norms. But the command inherent in a genuine norm never becomes a maxim and the fulfillment of it never a habit.[112]

This apparent contradiction, as will be shown, is the essence of Buber's ethics, and is in the final analysis, resolvable. One need only understand that Buber's ethics comprise neither self-created, or subjective morality, nor externally imposed, or objective morality. In fact, his ethics transcends both, walking the "narrow ridge" between them. Yet there are those critics of Buber who find that his ethics is hopelessly subjective and personalistic, yielding no objective content whatsoever. They insist that the tension between the objective norms that Buber affirms throughout his writings and his focus on the necessity for decision in the immediacy of concrete situations is unresolvable. What follows is a summary of the basic viewpoints of three of Buber's critics, followed by a refutation of those positions.

C. Critics of Buber's Ethics

Buber's ethics is often criticized as being too subjective, ignoring the essential need for some kind of objective criteria. His critics "...do not see how his ethical thinking can escape subjectivism unless he provides objective criteria determining which acts are right in terms of content."[113] Charles W. Kegley, in an article entitled "Martin Buber's Ethics and the Problem of Norms," attempts to demonstrate the subjectivity of Buber's ethics. He begins by mentioning

what seems to be an obvious tension between Buber's support of objective moral absolutes and his rejection of universally valid revelation.

> On the one hand, he argues for the absoluteness or universal validity which religious ethics offers to a particular moral claim. On the other hand, he is not clear what "universally valid" means as applied to ethical values nor exactly how the religious claim affords such validity... Indeed, there is evidence that Buber does not even consistently maintain his "absoluteness" claim. Not only does he say, at one point, that the law has no universal validity, but he also says that revelation offers no simple, clear, and explicit directives.[114]

For this reason, Kegley claims that Buber has overemphasized the importance of the unique character of each situation.

> What it comes to is this: in their commendable zeal to eradicate the dangers and defects of legalism, absolutism, casuistry and formalism in ethics, many situationalists fall into the opposite error of exaggerating the uniqueness of each ethical decision.[115]

By avoiding objective moral absolutes which can serve as criteria in determining if a decision is right or wrong, Kegley considers Buber to be an ethical subjectivist. In each particular situation, one makes a decision based on the subjective interpretation of his own encounter with the eternal-Thou. Of course, the problem arises that without any criteria by which to determine right from wrong, anyone can perpetrate the most heinous crime and claim that he is fulfilling the will of God, which was bestowed upon him through grace in I-eternal Thou encounter. Given such a scenario, Kegley asks:

> ...what tests serve to separate the utterances of the fanatic, the charlatan, the mystic, and the pure intuitionist from those of the authoritarian, the "saint," or, to use Buber's

> more pungent expression, the reports of the ape from those of the sage?[116]

While Kegley mentions that Buber would respond to this question by saying that the will of God is intrinsically good, and therefore that anyone who committed an evil act in the name of God would be immediately recognized as a liar, Kegley harbors a great deal of doubt as to the validity of such an assertion. He writes:

> The problem of meaning is immediately seen in Buber's argument that the will and commands of God are good because this is <u>what</u> the will of God is and means. Not only does this resort to sheer assertion, but it is open to objection.[117]

Moreover, even if the goodness of God could be proven, Kegley has trouble with how one would know what specific goods are implied in the will of God.

> Even if one asserts that God is good and that to do the good is to obey the will of God, one is left with the problem of <u>what</u> God's will or commands are and <u>how</u> one is to know that he is doing God's will.[118]

With no way to determine what is meant by the will of God, Kegley claims that Buber's ethics is hopelessly subjective, and raises more problems than it solves.

A similar critique of Buber's ethics is given by Marvin Fox, who wrote an article entitled "Some Problems in Buber's Moral Philosophy." Fox discusses Buber's concept of revelation, particularly as it relates to the I-eternal Thou encounter, and also describes several of the objective moral absolutes to which Buber appeals. Like Kegley, Fox sees the two as essentially irreconcilable.

> How does Professor Buber reconcile such universal moral judgements with his view that even in revelation there are no set moral principles, and that men can only come to moral decisions in the light of the uniqueness of their particular circumstances? Does this not make impossible judgements and the proclamation of principles of the kind that Buber has so frequently offered us in his writings and in his speeches?[119]

For Fox, the main problem that stems from this apparent contradiction in Buber's ethics is that without 'set moral principles,' one cannot be sure if he has really encountered true revelation with the eternal Thou. If such is the case, then it becomes impossible to question the validity of anyone's claim to revelation.

> If we admit that individuals can be mistaken when they believe that they have been addressed by God, must we not have some reliable criterion for distinguishing between the false and the true address? But what criterion can there be? So long as man judges revelation by his inner light, is not every claim to revelation equally valid?[120]

Without criteria to distinguish false revelation from true revelation, a person who chooses to act in opposition to the norms of society cannot be condemned as evil, for he may be following what he is sure is the voice of God. Under these circumstances could not murder or stealing be justified, two of the very things that Buber has decried as immoral in various places in his writings?

> Does he not violate his own doctrine of the absoluteness of the moral demand by making each individual man the sole, but uncertain judge of what he ought to do? Does he not substitute the privacy of the individual decision for the absolute value?[121]

Fox's repeated use of the rhetorical question is clearly meant to direct one to the conclusion that Buber's ethics, for all its talk of objective

moral absolutes, is ultimately situational and purely subjective. While Fox does not actually label Buber as an ethical subjectivist, this is most likely what he has in mind. In summarizing Buber's ethical philosophy he offers the following indictment:

> If I understand him correctly he takes the position that there can be no general moral rules or codes which are binding, that each moral situation is unique and requires its own unique solution, that this solution is made responsibly only when the individual man responds to the divine voice with his own act of decision, and that, therefore, there is in the last analysis a kind of complete privacy to each moral decision. Moreover, it would follow from this that we can make no moral judgements of men or societies, and perhaps, not even of ourselves.[122]

Thus, Fox is of the opinion that the human person in dialogical relation receives no ethical guidance whatsoever, and is condemned to moral subjectivity regarding decisions in his own life.

Some of the most severe critics of Buber's ethics are Orthodox Jews who find Buber's rejection of the Divine authority of the Pentateuch, and of talmudic halachah, to be sufficient evidence that his ethics is not only subjective, but antinomian. Arthur A. Cohen, in an article entitled "Revelation and Law, Reflections on Martin Buber's View of Halakah," claims that by restricting the content of revelation to the individual's own subjective interpretation of the meaning of the I-eternal Thou encounter, Buber overemphasizes the human element at the expense of the "Law of God." He writes:

> Inwardness without the Law of God, sanctification without the benediction, is the forsaking of eternity for the vulnerable fortress of time. The crisis of Halakah is met in the tension of time and eternity, of history and messianic redemption.

> Since all man knows of God is what God has spoken and what man believes, it is only too easy to draw God out of eternity and into time, to make of God the Thou before the struggling I, to abolish the objective word in the attempt to appropriate it as one's own.[123]

Since for Cohen the halachah is the objective norms and rules that were revealed by God, no human encounter with the eternal Thou can supersede it. Cohen wishes to protect the 'Law of God' from being drawn 'out of eternity' by Buber's dialogic view of revelation. He considers Buber's ethics to be subjective, if not antinomian. Malcolm Diamond, in his doctoral dissertation on Buber's philosophy of religion and ethics, lends credence to Cohen's viewpoint.

> Mr. Cohen may indeed have presented the "I-Thou" encounter in excessively subjective terms, but we have seen in our discussion of Buber's dialogic epistemology that there are sound reasons for this... Therefore, critics may justifiably raise the question of whether Buber's dialogic attitude towards the law does not really imply an antinomian position despite his explicit disavowal of it.[124]

Buber's critics approach the problems inherent in his ethics from different perspectives. However, they are all in agreement that the moral consequences of Buber's ethics are detrimental to the well-being of society. While the I-Thou relation seems to be intrinsically moral, there are no objective moral absolutes that are universally valid which would guarantee moral stability and order.

> One critic notes that since Hitler apparently experienced some form of an I-Thou encounter with the German people Buber has no criterion by which he can discriminate between this and any other instance of an I-Thou relation.[125]

Many critics fault Buber's insistence on the non-objective character

of revelation, which precludes both moral imperatives and moral norms of any kind. By placing so much emphasis on the establishing of the I-Thou relation, they feel that Buber's sporadic affirmation of certain objective moral absolutes does not alter the essential message of his ethics, which is that the human person must approach each situation in life in the presentness of that moment, armed with no preconceived notions of the right response. Buber is thus seen as a supreme situational ethicist, wholly subjectivistic and personalistic. Marvin Fox best echoes the cry of all of Buber's critics who most likely feel a certain amount of frustration with this tension between Buber's affirmation of moral norms and his deep-rooted support of a situation ethic.

> It would be illuminating, indeed, if Professor Buber would help us to see how he reconciles his setting down of such moral norms with his insistence on the uniqueness of each moral situation and the exclusive prerogative of the individual who is called upon to choose a way of acting.[126]

In the final analysis, that this challenge to Buber can be met is a credit to the overall consistency of his ethics. To this, we now turn.

D. Response to Buber's Critics

It must be stated from the outset that Buber clearly rejects law in the name of the spontaneity he regards as necessary to true moral decision. He writes that "...for me, though man is a law-receiver, God is not a law-giver, and therefore the Law has no universal validity for me, but only a personal one."[127] Since law has only a personal

validity, the human person has no guarantee as to the absolute correctness of his decision. "And if one still asks if one may be certain of finding what is right on this steep path, once again the answer is No; there is no certainty."[128] Given these statements, Buber's critics may be justified in charging that his ethics are purely subjective. However, as will now be shown, they have not done full justice to Buber's intention to avoid subjectivism.

As was already indicated, Buber makes the apparently contradictory statement that although no responsible person should reject norms, one should never apply them in an unthinking, or habitual manner.[129] However, upon closer examination, this statement is not an unresolvable contradiction at all, but is really the essence of Buber's ethics, for it points to both objective and subjective elements. Ethics, like so many things in modern life, is seen as an either-or situation. If one is not an ethical absolutist, then one must be an ethical relativist. Little attempt is made to see the gray area of the in-between. Buber's ethics falls somewhere in this gray area, for his philosophy of dialogue finds a middle position between the subjective and the objective. Malcolm Diamond writes:

> Our study has amply demonstrated the fact that Buber regards the dialogic encounter between God and man as one which stands in an ontological dimension beyond subjectivity and objectivity.[130]

Maurice Friedman concurs. "Buber, through his dialogical philosophy, avoids not only the 'objectivism' of the moral absolutists but also the

'subjectivism' of the cultural relativists."[131]

Buber's ethics comprise neither self-created morality nor morality imposed from without (i.e. authoritarian-legalistic ethical systems). In fact, his ethics as well as his thought in general occupy what is called the 'narrow ridge' between the two. Thus, while Buber criticizes the validity of authoritarian-legalistic ethical systems, he also has a disdain for what he considers to be purely subjective ethics. He criticizes Sartre's notion of individual freedom of choice as destroying all conception of morality.

> One can believe in and accept a meaning or value, one can set it as a guiding light over one's life if one has discovered it, not if one has invented it. It can be for me an illuminating meaning, a direction-giving value only if it has been revealed to me in my meeting with Being, not if I have freely chosen it for myself from among the existing possibilities and perhaps have in addition decided with some fellow-creatures: This shall be valid from now on.[132]

Thus, what one discovers exists in a sphere beyond the self. It exists in the realm of the religious, where one meets the Absolute. It is at this point that the distinction between the ethical and the religious breaks down. Diamond states that:

> The ethical drives beyond itself to the religious because man cannot derive absoluteness from within his self or his society for the scale of values upon which he bases all the significant moral decisions of life.[133]

It is the personal relation to God out of which one can discover absolute values. In this sense, revelation takes place not in the human person's own subjectivity, but between God and himself. The individual does not invent his own values, nor does God reveal universal values which

the human person must apply in all situations. Therefore, any value that is discovered in relation with God will be subject to variation in its concrete ethical application, depending on the unique situation which confronts one.

> "Of the dialogue of God with man, however," says Buber, "it must be said that even the most universal commands attain, in the dialogue of God with the individual persons, unforeseen interpretations: the situation furnishes the interpretation."[134]

Moreover, Buber indicates that values which one discovers in the dialogue with the eternal Thou must be reforged in the depths of one's own being.

> We find the ethical in its purity only there where the human person confronts himself with his own potentiality and distinguishes and decides in this confrontation without asking anything other than what is right and what is wrong in this his own situation. The criterion by which this distinction and decision is made may be a traditional one, or it may be one perceived by or revealed to the individual himself. What is important is that the critical flame shoot up ever again out of the depths, first illuminating, then burning and purifying.[135]

In the heat of the immediate situation no law can replace the demand for an existential decision by the individual. But this does not mean that any decision is acceptable. This is the critical point that Buber's critics have failed to see, all of whom maintain that his idea of revelation precludes moral norms of any kind. They consider the few norms that Buber has affirmed to be wholly inconsistent with the purely non-objective character of revelation. What needs to be examined at this point is exactly how the two are reconciled. If Buber's

view of the dialogical relation between God and the human person indeed does set boundaries for ethical action, what are these boundaries, and how are they discovered?

The basis for Buber's ontological description of the human person, his philosophical anthropology, is his view of the social self, the person in relation. Although no universally valid laws that are applicable in all situations develop from this relation, this does not mean that the human person is not inherently ethical in nature.

> This point is particularly underscored in his conviction that "one cannot be evil with the whole soul, i.e., one can only do it through holding down forcibly the forces striving against it--they are not to be stifled."[136]

Based on this notion that there is within the human person an innate condition which will not allow one to act unethically with the whole soul, Buber responds to Marvin Fox's accusation that a criminal may be acting in accordance with what he is sure is the voice of God.

> Must I explicitly state that this hypothetical instance is absurd, for then it would be a madman that one was talking of, who indeed might hold himself to be God? A man who is not mad can only believe that he is following the voice of God if he acts with his whole soul, i.e., if out of its corners no demonic whisper penetrates to his open ears.[137]

Since one can encounter the eternal Thou only with the whole soul, what is implied here is that true revelation is distinguishable from false revelation by certain criteria inherent in the I-eternal Thou relation. It is at this point that Buber's subjective religious ethic and objective ethical norms meet. Malcolm Diamond quotes Buber in Eclipse of God:

> It would be a fundamental misunderstanding of what I am saying if one assumed that I am unholding so-called moral heteronomy or external moral laws in opposition to so-called moral autonomy or self-imposed moral laws. Where the Absolute speaks in the reciprocal relationship, there are no longer such alternatives... In theonomy the divine law seeks for your own, and true revelation reveals to you yourself.[138]

In this way, the ethical merges with the religious in Buber's ethics.

The essential relation with the Absolute forms the basis for and implies certain moral values. These values are not invented, but are rooted in and discovered in one's encounter with the eternal Thou. In this way, the one who encounters the eternal Thou does not remain ultimately undefined as to what will be demanded of him by the Absolute. Love is commanded. "Love is then the transcendant principle upon which the relation between God and man is grounded, and the love of God cannot be separated from the love of man..."[139] The love of the other person drives beyond itself to the love of God because every particular Thou, as Buber has said, is a glimpse through to the eternal Thou.[140] This is reflective of Buber's panentheism, in that the entire world is part of the being of God. Thus, through the love of one's neighbor, one discovers love for God. This is an important dimension of the Hasidic life, which had a great impact on Buber's thought. Much of Hasidic folklore focuses on this theme. "He [Buber] claims that the second love commandment [love of one's neighbor] teaches us that in the act of love man discovers his own true nature, his proper relation to the neighbor, and to God."[141] Thus, as was mentioned earlier, revelation is not something that is restricted to

the direct relation to the eternal Thou, but also occurs in the I-Thou relation with the world and humanity, which point to the eternal Thou.

The concrete ethical implications of the commandment to love one's neighbor are contained in the totality of the norms which Buber affirms throughout his writings. These norms are the instrumental goods which, if one follows, will allow that person to enter into quasi-I-Thou relations. If grace happens to be present, then that person will have an I-Thou encounter, the intrinsic good of Buber's ethics. The totality of Buber's norms includes most of the traditional ethical values necessary to guarantee stability within society. While they are considered objective moral absolutes, this does not mean that they are to be unequivocably applied in all situations. It will be recalled that the essence of Buber's ethics is that while no responsible person should reject norms, one should never fulfill them as a matter of habit. Thus, every objective moral absolute in Buber's ethics allows for a range of behavior, depending on one's own interpretation of that norm in the unique situation. Buber does not require conformity to any objective norm in all situations. Such would be contrary to what he considers to be genuine moral decision, which involves one's own unique response to a particular concrete situation. However, he is by no means a pure subjectivist, as his critics claim. In response to Fox's assertion that Buber's ethics cannot ultimately support any absolute moral demands because of its purely situational character, where each individual is the sole judge of what is right, Buber replies

with the following remark:

> I may assure my critic that I have never doubted the absolute validity of the command, "Honor thy father and thy mother," but he who says to me that one, in fact, knows always and under all circumstances, what "to honor" means and what it does not, of him I say that he does not know what he is talking about. Man must expound the eternal values, and, to be sure, with his own life.[142]

The eternal values, or norms, provide the boundaries, but one may not proceed from them to the situation. Rather, one must proceed from the concrete situation to the decision as to how to interpret the eternal value in that particular instance. How it will be interpreted in each person's situation will vary within the boundaries of the norm in question.

Buber's regard for law is characterized by a certain ambivalence. He admits that society does require moral norms, but that their role is inevitably perverted. That is, the human person mistakes moral norms for ends in themselves, instead of understanding them as the symbolic expression of what occurs when people stand in true dialogical relation to each other. While Buber regarded antinomianism as an aberration of the true Jewish spirit, he could not, for most of his life, accept the frozen, unalterable legal and moral laws of Pentateuchal and Talmudic Judaism. He proposed instead, a genuine third alternative, found on the "narrow ridge" between the either-or. Neither a subjectivist nor an objectivist, Buber has created an ethics which reflects his concern for the basic need of a minimal ethic in society, but which also upholds the importance of individual decision in the

concrete situation. His vision, while far removed from traditional concerns, is a uniquely optimistic view of life which challenges each individual to recognize his true self. Whether this vision will become a reality for most people remains questionable. But regardless, Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue has greatly expanded the potential for positive human relations in the modern world.

CONCLUSION

In sum, existentialist ethics turns away from any kind of legalism. Laws and rules are considered to be external impositions, forcing the human person into a predetermined pattern and so preventing him from realizing his unique authentic self. The existentialist has a hard time understanding the words of the psalmist:

> I will always obey Your teaching, forever and ever. I will walk about at ease, for I have turned to your precepts. I will speak of Your decrees, and not be ashamed in the presence of kings. I will delight in Your commandments, which I love. I reach out for Your commandments, which I love; I study Your laws. [1]

The message of the psalmist tears at the heart of existentialist ethics, which has as its only general law the necessity to avoid general laws. For any existentialist, morality ceases to be morality the moment it is incapsuled in established principles of conduct. Genuine moral decision requires individual human freedom. That the human person is a free agent is the fundamental value of existentialist ethics. This means that one is free to choose what to do in any given situation. Of course, after a study of the existentialist ethics of Jean-Paul Sartre and Martin Buber, one may reasonably conclude that the human person is not in fact free to choose absolutely anything. While Buber placed human freedom within certain boundaries to a greater extent than did Sartre, the latter thinker excluded certain choices as well. Therefore, neither Buber nor Sartre can be legitimately accused of establishing an

ethics that is antinomian or nihilistic.

Despite this common feature, however, there are significant differences between the two thinkers that must be noted, the most profound of which is their differing conceptions of the essential nature of human existence. Whereas Buber, as a panentheist, sees human existence as transcending toward God, Sartre, as a non-theist, sees human existence transcending into nothing, because there is no God. Without God, the human person must invent his own values, with nowhere to turn except inward. For Sartre, therefore, each individual is necessarily self-preoccupied. Buber, however, considers the human person to be primarily a social self, who discovers values through the I-Thou relation with the world and with God. The fact that the human person does not have to invent values alone but discovers them in relation reflects the central difference between the ethics of Buber and Sartre. Buber, in Eclipse of God, quotes from Sartre's "Existentialism Is A Humanism" the following:

> "If I have done away with God the father," Sartre says literally, "someone is needed to invent values... Life has no meaning a priori... it is up to you to give it a meaning, and value is nothing else than this meaning which you choose."[2]

Thus, for Sartre, the human person finds soteria in himself, creating his own meaning. For Buber, soteria is found in the I-Thou encounter, which points to the eternal Thou.

Sartre considers the authentic self to emerge when a person invents his own values through the making of a free choice. Since all choices

are permissible except the choice not to be free, one who freely decides to murder another person in cold blood would be considered 'good.' Although Sartre the man would certainly have found this kind of behavior to be reprehensible, the ethical implications of his ontology ultimately would condone the act. While Buber emphasizes the reality of the human person facing each decision in the freedom and immediacy of each moment, his ethics does not provide such latitude regarding what is permissible. Indicative of a concern he has for a style of life which is conducive to genuine community, Buber affirms various objective norms. These norms uphold many traditional ethical values, such as the prohibition against stealing, lying, or murdering, as well as the positive ideals of the equality of persons, the love of one's fellow human beings, and the seeking of peace. Yet, these norms are not meant to be objective moral absolutes that are to be applied in every unique situation. Instead, one must interpret a particular norm in light of the immediate demands of the specific situation, thereby creating a certain amount of flexibility in how one can respond. There is content, but in the concreteness of the situation it is not codifiable. Buber's great insight is that the true meaning of the Torah as a vital I-eternal Thou encounter transcends the meaning of Torah as legalistic law.

Inasmuch as Buber claims that the human person discovers universal values or norms in the I-Thou relation with the world and with God, the authentic self can emerge only through this genuine

dialogue between the partners. Here we find Sartre and Buber diametrically opposed to each other. Whereas Sartre finds authentic human existence to be realized in the absolute affirmation of oneself and the denial of God, Buber considers it to be attained only in the genuine dialogue with others, which ultimately points to God. Thus, for Buber ethics is grounded on the religious while for Sartre ethics is grounded on itself, since there is no realm of the religious to speak of.

The difference between Buber and Sartre in their conceptions of authentic human existence is revealed most clearly through a comparison of their views of concrete human relations. In Sartre's ontology, the human person is in constant struggle with the other in order to control him, like he would an object. Since the other attempts to do the same, all human relations must inevitably be in conflict, unable to break out of the subject-object relationship. Sartre thus offers a most depressing scenario of the potential for positive human relations. However, he sees such relations as attainable, but only with a 'radical conversion' to a different kind of society, most likely one built on Marxist ideals. Given current societal conditions, there is no direct relation with the other which has as its basis the mutual affirmation of one another's subjectivity, nor can there be.

Positive human relations are much more of a possibility in Buber's ontology because of one's ability to enter into the type of relation with another that emphasizes the very affirmation of another's subjectivity that Sartre finds impossible. Since authentic existence must not lack

a social dimension, as opposed to Sartre's individualism, positive human relations is not only a possibility in Buber's ethics, but a necessity. One who constantly treats others as objects is functioning in the realm of I-It. It was shown that Buber considers the predominance of I-It, or subject-object relations, to be evil. One can realize their own true self only by transcending the world of experience and entering into the world of relation, where subject-subject relationships can occur and one can live in full consciousness of God, the eternal Thou.

All told, Sartrean ethics implies a subjective morality, since there are no objective criteria by which to judge any action as good or bad. It is a potentially dangerous ethic, for it encourages individualism and prizes the intensity of choice above the building up of moral virtue. In a society of irresponsible individuals, Sartrean ethics could indeed breed moral anarchy. For all its emphasis on the freedom of choice, however, Sartrean ethics is not antinomian, particularly since Sartre absolutizes the value that one must not live in bad faith. While this is not an objective moral absolute in the generally accepted sense of the term, it nevertheless renders some choices as morally wrong. Different from Sartrean ethics, Buber's ethics implies a subjective-objective morality. The essential relation with God and the world forms the basis for certain moral values which are universal, comprising the objective element. The subjective element is that every universal moral value which is revealed in the dialogue between God and the human person receives "unforeseen interpretations," depending on the

situation. While it was stated at the end of Chapter 3 that Buber is neither a subjectivist nor an objectivist, but has created an ethics found on the narrow ridge between the two, in point of fact his ethics is comprised of both subjective and objective elements. Therefore, in the final analysis, it seems reasonable to classify Buber's ethics as subjective-objective in nature. While emphasizing the freedom of the individual in each situation, Buber's ethics is more oriented towards the establishing of genuine community and moral stability in society than is Sartrean ethics.

Perhaps the most important contribution that Buber and Sartre have to offer in the area of ethics is the notion that the individual matters. In a society which seems to reward conformity to established practice, be it in moral, political, or even social settings, it is indeed refreshing, even reassuring, to discover a way of thinking which places a value on individual creativity. Many individuals are concerned with doing what is accepted, often to such an extent that they stifle their own innate creative potential. But the improvement of the quality of life in society depends not only on technological advance, but on the unique contributions of individuals who are able to break away from tradition, custom, and the way things have always been done. Existentialist ethics looks to the new and is oriented to the future. Today the conditions of life are changing so fast that situations have to be met that are new and for which no rules or precedents seem available. There is little doubt that existentialist ethics will be helpful in meeting this challenge.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter I

[1] The Random House College Dictionary, Revised Ed., Ed.-in-Chief Jess Stein (New York: Random House, Inc., 1979), p. 997.

[2] John Macquarrie, Existentialism (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1972), p. 106.

[3] Wesley Barnes, The Philosophy and Literature of Existentialism (New York: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1968), p. 20.

[4] Ibid., p. 23.

[5] Macquarrie, Existentialism, p. 42.

[6] Paul Roubiczek, Existentialism: For and Against (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), p. 55.

[7] John L. Mothershood, Ethics: Modern Conceptions of the Principles of Right (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1955), p. 303.

[8] Jean-Paul Sartre, "Existentialism Is A Humanism," in Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre, ed. by Walter Kaufman (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1956), p. 289.

[9] Macquarrie, Existentialism, p. 7.

[10] Joseph S. Catalano, A Commentary on Sartre's Being and Nothingness (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 203.

[11] Mothershead, Ethics, p. 3.

[12] Ibid., p. 11.

[13] Joseph Fletcher, Situation Ethics; The New Morality (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966), p. 18.

[14] Ibid., p. 25.

[15] Marquarrie, Existentialism, p. 32.

[16]Norman N. Greene, Jean-Paul Sartre; The Existentialist Ethic (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1960), p. 9.

[17]This does not mean to say that there are not coercive conditions under which a person is compelled. Still, no matter how much coercive force is exercised against a person, that person will still have choices that he can make, even if it is limited to the thoughts and feelings of that person.

[18]Otto Bollnow, "Existentialism's Basic Ethical Position," in Contemporary European Ethics, ed. by Joseph J. Kockelmans (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday and Company, 1972), p. 377.

[19]Alvin J. Reines, "The Word Religion," Polydoxy, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1979), p. 7.

[20]Mothershead, Ethics, p. 305.

[21]Generally this is not the case for theistic existentialists.

[22]Mothershead, Ethics, p. 307.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Ibid., p. 312.

[25]Bollnow, "Existentialism's Basic Ethical Position," p. 369.

[26]Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Ed.-in-Chief Philip Babcock Gove (Springfield, Mass.: G. and C. Merriam Company, 1976), p. 1528.

[27]Macquarrie, Existentialism, p. 162.

Chapter II

[1]Sartre was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1964, which he declined, saying he thought acceptance might affect the public attitude toward his work. Taken from The World Almanac for 1965, ed. by Harry Hansen (New York: New York World-Telegram Corp., 1965), p. 105.

[2]Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, trans. from the French by Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1956), p. 625.

[3]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, pp. 625-26.

[4]Hazel E. Barnes, An Existentialist Ethics (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 40.

[5]Thomas C. Anderson, The Foundation and Structure of Sartrean Ethics (Lawrence: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1979), pp. 8-9.

[6]Ibid., p. 10.

[7]Barnes, Existentialist Ethics, p. 31.

[8]Ibid., p. 43.

[9]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 615.

[10]Sartre, "Existentialism Is A Humanism," pp. 290-91.

[11]Ibid., p. 291.

[12]Ibid., p. 295.

[13]Alvin Plantinga, "An Existentialist's Ethics," Review of Metaphysics, 12, no. 2 (Dec. 1958), p. 248.

[14]Anderson, Sartrean Ethics, p. 3.

[15]Sartre, "Existentialism Is A Humanism," p. 307.

[16]Webster's Third New International Dictionary, p. 1577.

[17]Hazel E. Barnes, "Key to Special Terminology," in Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1956), p. 633.

[18]Webster's Third New International Dictionary, p. 1696.

[19]Barnes, "Key to Special Terminology," p. 633.

[20]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. lii.

[21]Ibid., p. lv.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Barnes, Existentialist Ethics, p. 12.

[24]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. lxiv.

[25]Ibid., p. lxv.

[26]Ibid., p. lxviii.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Ibid., p. 74.

[29]Catalano, Commentary on Being and Nothingness, p. 98.

[30]Greene, Sartre; The Existentialist Ethic, p. 17.

[31]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 78.

[32]Rene Lafarge, Jean-Paul Sartre: His Philosophy, trans. from the French by Marina Smyth-Kok (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970), p. 46.

[33]Ibid., p. 51.

[34]Greene, Sartre; The Existentialist Ethic, p. 28.

[35]Macquarrie, Existentialism, p. 48.

[36]Ibid., p. 145.

[37]Sartre, "Existentialism Is A Humanism," p. 300.

[38]Plantinga, "An Existentialist's Ethics," p. 241.

[39]Barnes, Existentialist Ethics, p. 58.

[40]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 483.

[41]Barnes, "Key to Special Terminology," p. 632.

[42]Greene, Sartre; The Existentialist Ethic, p. 33.

[43]Ibid., p. 32.

[44]Barnes, Existentialist Ethics, pp. 56-7.

[45]Ibid., p. 13.

[46]Raziel Abelson, Ethics and Metaethics (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1963), p. 492.

[47]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 58. (Italics and hyphens mine.)

[48]Barnes, Existentialist Ethics, p. 55.

[49]Catalano, Commentary on Being and Nothingness, p. 107.

[50]Sartre, Being and Nothingness (New York: Washington Square Press, 1969; 4th printing), p. 566. Taken from: Risieri Frondizi, "Sartre's Early Ethics: A Critique" in The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre, ed. by Paul Arthur Schilpp (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1981), p. 383.

[51]Sartre, "Existentialism Is A Humanism," p. 295.

[52]Greene, Sartre; The Existentialist Ethic, p. 46.

[53]Macquarrie, Existentialism, p. 53.

[54]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, pp. 553-54.

[55]Ibid., p. 39.

[56]Sartre, "Existentialism Is A Humanism," p. 293.

[57]Macquarrie, Existentialism, p. 142.

[58]Peter Caws, Sartre (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1979), p. 114.

[59]Bollnow, "Existentialism's Basic Ethical Position," p. 371.

[60]Sartre, "Existentialism Is A Humanism," p. 302.

[61]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 47.

[62]Catalano, Commentary on Being and Nothingness, p. 89.

[63]Ibid., p. 78.

[64]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 47.

[65]Ibid., p. 48.

[66]Ibid., p. 50.

[67]Ibid.

[68]Ibid., p. 51.

[69]Catalano, Commentary on Being and Nothingness, p. 81.

[70]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 59.

[71]Catalano, Commentary on Being and Nothingness, pp. 84-5.

[72]Ibid., p. 85.

[73]As will be shown, bad faith also occurs in interpersonal relations. When an individual pretends that another person is not free, or that his own freedom is more important than the freedom of the other, he is in bad faith.

[74]These terms have been introduced previously and will now be explained in more detail.

[75]Greene, Sartre; The Existentialist Ethic, p. 46.

[76]Catalano, Commentary on Being and Nothingness, p. 90.

[77]Barnes, Existentialist Ethics, p. 57.

[78]He also calls such people cowards.

[79]Sartre, "Existentialism Is A Humanism," p. 307.

[80]Macquarrie, Existentialism, p. 53.

[81]Barnes, Existentialist Ethics, p. 18.

[82]Lafarge, Sartre: His Philosophy, p. 117.

[83]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 252.

[84]Ibid., p. 271.

[85]Ibid.

[86]Barnes, "Key to Special Terminology," p. 630.

[87]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 222.

[88]Anderson, Sartrean Ethics, p. 72.

[89]Part 3, Chapter 3.

[90]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 364.

[91]Lafarge, Sartre: His Philosophy, p. 123.

[92]Ibid., p. 125.

[93]Catalano, Commentary on Being and Nothingness, p. 180.

[94]Excluding those who pursue bad faith.

[95]George J. Stack, Sartre's Philosophy of Social Existence (St. Louis: Warren H. Green, Inc., 1977), p. 113.

[96]Macquarrie, Existentialism, p. 84.

[97]Sartre, "Existentialism Is A Humanism," p. 291.

[98]Macquarrie, Existentialism, p. 53.

[99]Anderson, Sartrean Ethics, p. 79.

[100]Sartre, "Existentialism Is A Humanism," p. 292.

[101]Ibid.

[102]Macquarrie, Existentialism, p. 163.

[103]Sartre, "Existentialism Is A Humanism," pp. 307-8.

[104]Anderson's The Foundation and Structure of Sartrean Ethics is the only book in print devoted exclusively to the ethics of Sartre.

[105]Anderson, p. 78. How Anderson supports his claim in light of this admission will be taken up subsequently.

[106]Barnes, Existentialist Ethics, p. 61.

[107]Ibid.

[108]Sartre, "Existentialism Is A Humanism," p. 287.

[109]Greene, Sartre; The Existentialist Ethic, p. 13.

[110]Anderson, Sartrean Ethics, p. 5.

[111]Plantinga, "An Existentialist's Ethics," p. 235.

[112]Ibid., p. 242.

[113]Ibid., p. 248.

[114]Ibid., p. 250.

[115]Ibid., p. 235.

[116]Risieri Frondizi, "Sartre's Early Ethics: A Critique" in The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre, ed. by Paul Arthur Schilpp (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1981), p. 375.

[117]Ibid., p. 380.

[118]Ibid., p. 381.

[119]Fletcher, Situation Ethics, p. 17.

[120]Frondizi, "Sartre's Early Ethics: A Critique," p. 389.

[121]Ibid.

[122]Ibid., p. 390.

[123]Barnes, Existentialist Ethics, p. 22.

[124]Ibid., p. 15.

[125]Ibid., p. 25.

[126]Ibid., p. 50. The Underground Man is the main character of Dostoevsky's novella, Notes From Underground, whom Barnes sets up as the paradigm of the individual who chooses the non-ethical (arbitrary) way of life.

[127]Ibid., pp. 50-1.

[128]Ibid., pp. 61-2.

[129]This is true, inasmuch as it was shown above that bad faith exists in interpersonal relations as well as within the individual (see p. 54).

[130]Barnes, Existentialist Ethics, pp. 85-6.

[131]Anderson, Sartrean Ethics, p. 65.

[132]Ibid., p. 74.

[133]Ibid., p. 76.

[134]Ibid., p. 78.

[135]Ibid., p. 85.

[136]Simone DeBeauvoir, The Ethics of Ambiguity, trans. from the French by Bernard Frechtman (New York: Philosophical Library, Publishers, 1967), p. 72.

[137]Anderson, Sartrean Ethics, p. 89.

[138]Ibid., p. 121.

[139]Ibid., p. 139.

[140]Later in his essay Plantinga drops the qualification about the 'ordinary sense' of morality. This is where, as will be shown, he runs into problems.

[141]Gary J. Foulk, "Plantinga's Criticisms of Sartre's Ethics," Ethics, 82, no. 4 (July 1972), p. 331.

[142]Ibid.

[143]As has already been stated, Sartre accepts the objective moral absolutes of authenticity and good faith, and passes moral judgement upon those who live in 'bad faith.' However, Sartrean ethics does not contain objective moral absolutes in the generally accepted sense of the term, which is to say, a specific set of moral principles to which everyone must conform. That is the sense which is being employed here, and in the rest of Foulk's argument.

[144]The same can be said for Frondizi.

[145]Foulk, "Plantinga's Criticisms of Sartre's Ethics," p. 332.

[146]Anderson, Sartrean Ethics, p. 133.

[147]Anthony Manser, rev. of The Foundation and Structure of Sartrean Ethics by Thomas C. Anderson, Ethics, 91, no. 3 (April 1981), p. 524.

[148]See above, quote no. 119.

[149] Barnes, Existentialist Ethics, p. 53.

[150] Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 615.

[151] Manser, rev. of Sartrean Ethics, p. 524.

[152] Another way of saying the same thing is that he makes a positive moral judgement on those who exercise their freedom in good faith.

Chapter III

[1] Paul Edwards, Buber and Buberism: A Critical Evaluation, The Lindley Lecture, delivered 3 Nov. 1969 (Kansas: Dept. of Philosophy, Univ. of Kansas, 1970), p. 3.

[2] Martin Buber, Between Man and Man, trans. from the German by Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1965), p. 145.

[3] Martin Buber, Hasidism and Modern Man, taken from The Worlds of Existentialism, ed. by Maurice Friedman (New York: Random House, 1964), p. 167.

[4] The Writings of Martin Buber, ed. with an Introduction by Will Herberg (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1956), p. 14.

[5] Barnes, Existentialist Ethics, p. 64.

[6] Eugene B. Borowitz, A Layman's Introduction to Religious Existentialism (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965), p. 160.

[7] Buber, Between Man and Man, p. 52.

[8] Martin Buber, At the Turning: Three Addresses on Judaism, quoted by Herberg, The Writings of Martin Buber, p. 16.

[9] Malcolm Diamond, Martin Buber: Jewish Existentialist (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 20.

[10] James William Walters, The Ethics of Martin Buber: a theological and philosophical analysis; Thesis, Claremont Graduate School, 1979, p. 40.

[11] Diamond, Buber: Jewish Existentialist, p. 7.

[12]Borowitz, Religious Existentialism, p. 163.

[13]Buber, Between Man and Man, p. 43.

[14]Macquarrie, Existentialism, p. 7.

[15]Maurice Friedman, "The Bases of Buber's Ethics," in The Philosophy of Martin Buber, pp. 171-200, eds. Paul Arthur Schilpp and Maurice Friedman (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1967), p. 175.

[16]Walters, The Ethics of Martin Buber, p. 101.

[17]Martin Buber, "Distance and Relation," Chapter 2 of The Knowledge of Man, taken from Friedman, The Worlds of Existentialism, p. 229.

[18]Buber, Between Man and Man, p. 61.

[19]Quoted in Friedman, "The Bases of Buber's Ethics," p. 174.

[20]Walters, The Ethics of Martin Buber, p. 21.

[21]Borowitz, Religious Existentialism, p. 167.

[22]Edwards, Buber and Buberism, pp. 4-5.

[23]Walters, The Ethics of Martin Buber, p. 26.

[24]Friedman, "The Bases of Buber's Ethics," p. 173.

[25]Maurice S. Friedman, Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue (New York: Harper and Row, 1955), p. 170.

[26]Martin Buber, "Replies to My Critics," in The Philosophy of Martin Buber, pp. 689-744, eds. Paul Arthur Schilpp and Maurice Friedman (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1967), p. 718.

[27]Walters, The Ethics of Martin Buber, p. 17.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Charles W. Kegley, "Martin Buber's Ethics and the Problem of Norms," Religious Studies, 5, no. 2 (Dec. 1969), p. 185.

[30]Marvin Fox, "Some Problems in Buber's Moral Philosophy," in The Philosophy of Martin Buber, pp. 151-170, eds. Paul Arthur Schilpp and Maurice Friedman (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1967), p. 167.

[31]Martin Buber, I and Thou, trans. from the German by Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 3.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Ibid., p. 4.

[34]Ibid., p. 5.

[35]Edwards, Buber and Buberism, p. 4.

[36]Buber, I and Thou, pp. 114-15.

[37]Friedman, Life of Dialogue, p. 60.

[38]Buber, I and Thou, p. 32.

[39]Ibid., p. 34.

[40]Walters, The Ethics of Martin Buber, p. 6.

[41]Ibid., p. 2.

[42]Ibid., p. 3.

[43]Buber, Between Man and Man, p. 12.

[44]Edwards, Buber and Buberism, p. 19.

[45]Ibid.

[46]Buber, Between Man and Man, p. 203.

[47]Ibid., p. 204.

[48]Borowitz, Religious Existentialism, p. 171.

[49]Buber, I and Thou, p. 77.

[50]Ibid., p. 6.

[51]Malcolm L. Diamond, "Dialogue and Theology," in The Philosophy of Martin Buber, pp. 235-247, eds. Paul Arthur Schilpp and Maurice Friedman (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1967), p. 237.

[52]Edwards, Buber and Buberism, p. 11.

[53]Diamond, Buber: Jewish Existentialist, p. 33.

[54]Buber, Between Man and Man, p. 22.

[55]Friedman, "The Bases of Buber's Ethics," p. 174.

[56]Ibid., p. 175.

[57]Martin Buber, The Knowledge of Man, quoted by Friedman, "The Bases of Buber's Ethics," p. 174.

[58]Buber, Between Man and Man, p. 97.

[59]Ibid.

[60]Buber, I and Thou, p. 33.

[61]Ibid., p. 16.

[62]Ibid., p. 33.

[63]Ibid., p. 11.

[64]Diamond, Buber: Jewish Existentialist, p. 27.

[65]Buber, "Replies to My Critics," p. 705, quoted in Edwards, Buber and Buberism, p. 21.

[66]Buber, I and Thou, p. 131. By the term "full mutuality" Buber means the same thing as suggested by the terms "making present" and "inclusion."

[67]Diamond, Buber: Jewish Existentialist, p. 31.

[68]Buber, Between Man and Man, pp. 13-14.

[69]The third type is "monologue disguised as dialogue." Instead of turning towards the other, which dialogue presupposes, the life of monologue is really a turning to oneself. Monologue lets the other exist only as one's own experience, only as a part of oneself, and is therefore in the realm of I-It.

[70]Buber, Between Man and Man, p. 19.

[71]Edwards, Buber and Buberism, p. 5.

[72]Macquarrie, Existentialism, p. 81.

[73]Alvin J. Reines, "The Word Religion," Polydoxy, 4, no. 2 (1979), p. 6.

[74]Friedman, Life of Dialogue, p. 64.

[75]Walters, The Ethics of Martin Buber, p. 125.

[76]Martin Buber, Israel and the World, quoted by Marvin Fox, "Problems in Buber's Moral Philosophy," p. 165.

[77]Buber, "Replies to My Critics," p. 720.

[78]Buber, Israel and the World, quoted by Walters, The Ethics of Martin Buber, pp. 127-28.

[79]Martin Buber, Pointing the Way, quoted by Fox, "Problems in Buber's Moral Philosophy," p. 164.

[80]Buber, Israel and the World, quoted by Fox, "Problems in Buber's Moral Philosophy," p. 166.

[81]Friedman, Life of Dialogue, pp. 204-5.

[82]Ibid., p. 200.

[83]Friedman, "The Bases of Buber's Ethics," p. 171.

[84]Martin Buber, Eclipse of God (New York: Harper and Row, 1952), p. 98.

[85]Alvin J. Reines, "The Word God," Polydoxy, 4, no. 1 (1979), p. 6.

[86]Diamond, Buber: Jewish Existentialist, p. 42.

[87]Buber, Eclipse of God, p. 62.

[88]Buber, I and Thou, p. 79.

[89]Ibid., p. 135.

[90]Ibid.

[91]Buber, Eclipse of God, p. 60.

[92]Buber, I and Thou, p. 136.

[93]Buber, Eclipse of God, p. 96.

[94]Ibid.

[95]Ibid., p. 128.

[96]Buber, I and Thou, p. 75.

[97]Ibid., p. 95.

[98]Buber, I and Thou, p. 79 taken from Friedman, Worlds of Existentialism, p. 306.

[99]Diamond, Buber: Jewish Existentialist, p. 39.

[100]Buber, Eclipse of God, p. 44-5.

[101]Diamond, Buber: Jewish Existentialist, p. 57.

[102]Buber, I and Thou, p. 109.

[103]Fox, "Problems in Buber's Moral Philosophy," p. 154.

[104]The encounter itself, however, as is the case with all I-Thou encounters, remains in a category of its own, indescribable and ineffable.

[105]Telephone interview with Alvin J. Reines, Professor of Jewish Philosophy, Hebrew Union College, 8 March 1983.

[106]Friedman, "The Bases of Buber's Ethics," p. 181.

[107]Of course, one also encounters the Absolute through the I-Thou relation with nature, humanity, or spiritual beings, inasmuch as each relation with the world affords a glimpse through to the eternal Thou (see quote 96). Thus, the dialogue between human persons and the world is at the same time a dialogue with God.

[108]Buber, Eclipse of God, p. 98.

[109]Buber, Between Man and Man, p. 68.

[110]Friedman, Life of Dialogue, p. 33.

[111]Buber, I and Thou, p. 51.

[112]Buber, Between Man and Man, p. 114.

[113]Malcolm L. Diamond, Paradox without Anguish; a critical study of Martin Buber's existential philosophy of religion and ethics; Thesis, Columbia Univ., 1956, p. 234.

[114]Kegley, "Buber's Ethics and the Problem of Norms," pp. 188-89.

[115]Ibid., p. 191.

[116]Ibid., pp. 192-93.

[117]Ibid., p. 187.

[118]Ibid., p. 188.

[119]Fox, "Problems in Buber's Moral Philosophy," p. 167.

[120]Ibid., p. 155.

[121]Ibid., p. 160.

[122]Ibid., p. 161.

[123]Arthur A. Cohen, "Revelation and Law, Reflections on Martin Buber's View of Halakah," Judaism, I (July 1952), pp. 250-256, quoted in Diamond, Paradox without Anguish, p. 235 (Diamond's underlining).

[124]Diamond, Paradox without Anguish, p. 238.

[125]Diamond, Buber: Jewish Existentialist, p. 33.

[126]Fox, "Problems in Buber's Moral Philosophy," p. 162.

[127]Martin Buber, "Revelation and Law," trans. William Wolf, Appendix to Rosenzweig, On Jewish Learning, p. 111, quoted in Diamond, Paradox without Anguish, p. 240.

[128]Buber, Between Man and Man, p. 71.

[129]See quote no. 112 above.

[130]Diamond, Paradox without Anguish, p. 237.

[131]Friedman, Life of Dialogue, p. 202.

[132]Buber, Eclipse of God, p. 70.

[133]Diamond, Paradox without Anguish, p. 248.

[134]Buber, "Replies to My Critics," p. 697, quoted by Walters, The Ethics of Martin Buber, p. 113.

[135]Buber, Eclipse of God, p. 95 (my underlining).

[136]Quoted by Walters, The Ethics of Martin Buber, p. 134.

[137]Buber, "Replies to My Critics," p. 720.

[138]Buber, Eclipse of God, pp. 129f., quoted by Diamond, Paradox without Anguish, p. 250.

[139]Diamond, Paradox without Anguish, p. 252.

[140]See quote no. 96.

[141]Diamond, Paradox without Anguish, p. 254.

[142]Buber, "Replies to My Critics," p. 720.

Conclusion

[1]The Writings (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1982), pp. 161-62 (Psalm 119:44-48).

[2]Buber, Eclipse of God, pp. 69-70.

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