# A Critique of the Anti-Social Elements in Jean-Paul Sartre's Humanistic Existentialism and Its Implications for Inter-Personal Relationship

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## Abstract

This work is a critical review of the aspect of Jean-Paul Sartre's Humanistic Existentialism that deals with man's being-with-others. In Sartre's view as presented in this work man's relationship with others is that of conflict, marked with fear, shame, pride and alienation. The work started with a brief look at Sartre's background and what influenced his anti-social stance. It also made a brief elucidation of his humanistic existentialism before presenting his anti-social position. The work then questioned these views of Sartre which stand against reason and experience arguing that man's relationship with others also displays genuine love, friendship, co-operation, communion and solidarity. Reacting further to Sartre's views, the work exposed some unhealthy implications of his anti-social philosophy which includes the abolition of genuine community life, friendship, trust and co-operation. In conclusion the work rejected Sartre's anti-social theory which summarized man's life with others as hell manifested in conflict of transcendence. The work affirms that in spite of the apparent presence of tensions among men; man's life with others is also that of co-operation, filial love, genuine friendship, togetherness, harmony, mutual trust and communion.

**Keywords:** Sartre's Humanistic Existentialism, Being-for-others, Inter-personal Relationship, Anti-social elements.

## 1. Introduction

Western philosophy from the time of the Sophists changed its principal focus from investigation into the underlying substance of the universe as well as other cosmological and metaphysical preoccupations to man in the society. Through the philosophies of the Sophists, Plato, Aristotle to the Medieval, Modern and Contemporary philosophers the question of man as a social being has been central and undisputed. Even the pessimistic view of Hobbes about man in the State of Nature recognized the need for community and man's peaceful and friendly co-existence with his fellow man.

At the height of the Enlightenment period metaphysical disputations almost overshadowed the centrality of the concrete individual and his life in the society. Existentialism as a school of thought rejected this and refocused the attention of philosophy to the concrete individual and the nitty-gritty of his daily life in the society as well as his relation with other concrete existents.

A chronicle of the principal actors in this philosophical school of thought called existentialism will be incomplete without a special mention of one of its chief proponents, the self acclaimed atheistic existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre. With other existentialists Sartre's philosophy was out to rescue the A Critique of the Anti-Social Elements in Jean-Paul Sartre's Humanistic Existentialism and Its Implications for Inter-Personal Relationship 12 battered dignity of the concrete individual whose image was left

dehumanized and alienated by the abstract systems and disputations of earlier philosophies. Acknowledging the fact that man's being-in-the-world cannot totally be understood without the being of the other as well as his relationship with the other, Sartre devoted over two hundred pages of his phenomenological analysis of human existence in his major work Being And Nothingness to a detailed analysis and description of Being-for- others. In this widely read part of Sartre's work, he presented a very pessimistic view of man's life with others. For Sartre, my personal world begins to slip away, suffers dissolution and crumbles when I become aware of the presence of the other person. Sartre therefore concluded that "Hell is the other person", that inter-human relations are based on conflict of transcendence, and that man's fellow man is his natural enemy. Jean-Paul Sartre is undisputedly one of the foremost existentialist philosophers who even went some length to argue for the absolute freedom of the individual in forging his future. This makes it somewhat shocking to observe his anti-social stance in his humanistic existentialism. Sartre's position is like a reframing of Hobbes' description of man's fate in the State of Nature where, according to Hobbes, man is "in that condition which is called war and such a war as is of every man, against every man." In this state of nature, Hobbes continues, "every man is enemy to every man." And there is worse of all "continued fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short" (1965: 34). Sartre's analysis of Being-for-others which x-rays man's existence with others in the universe and his relationship with them portrays man as the natural enemy of his fellow man just as Hobbes had described earlier. This view of Sartre has many adverse consequences which this paper intends to highlight. This paper will critically review Sartre's analysis of the being of others as well as man's relationship with the other person. It will then present the anti-social implications of Sartre's position with regard to inter-personal relationship. It will assert that inter-personal relationship is not only that of conflict but also of real love, solidarity and joy.

## 2. The French Existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre and what Influenced his Thoughts.

Jean-Paul Sartre, who stirred up a continental sensation in the 1940s and 1950s when he advertised Existentialism as a new form of Humanism which is more progressive than Marxism, was born in Paris on the 21st of June 1905. His father Jean-Baptist Sartre, a marine engineer, died prematurely barely a year after his marriage to Sartre's mother Anne-Maria Schweitzer in 1904 and shortly after the birth of his first child Jean-Paul.

In a revelation of Sartre's childhood and upbringing especially its moral, religious, social and psychological climate in the extraordinary autobiography of his first ten years which he called The Words (Les Mots), he presents a marvelous and malicious account of his strange upbringing in his grandfather's house. In this work (1966: 6) he counts the gains of his father's premature death. For him, bastardy represents liberation from paternal authority which for him is the source of all other forms of authoritarianism. Of his father's death and its gains Sartre (1966:6) says: "If he had lived my father would have lain full length upon me and crushed me. Fortunately he died young. Among the Aeneases, each carrying his own Enchases on his shoulders, I cross the sea alone, detesting those invisible fathers riding piggy-back upon their sons throughout their lives."

If bastardy, in Sartre's understanding of it, is important in shaping Sartre's philosophical direction, so also is the idea of solitude and enclosure. The enclosed and solitary life which Sartre led in his grandfather's house obviously marked his soul, for the theme of sequestration or enclosure appears and reappears in all his works and is very much responsible for his atomistic view of human relationship in his major work Being and Nothingness. Influenced by his childhood solitary existence he felt that it is impossible for one to enter into true communion with others. It is in the light of this influence that one can explain his philosophy of extreme individualism, his aversion for social life and his war against social norms and standards.

Like Mozart who began composing music at the age of six, Sartre started writing as a child of seven. When he was sixteen, he clearly showed a philosophical bent. In 1923 much before his university education

He titled his first book L' Ange Morbide (The Angel of Morbidity). He was admitted into Ecole Normale Superieure for his university education in 1925, got his bachelors in philosophy in 1927 and qualified as a philosophy professor in 1929. In 1936 he published L'Imagination (Imagination: A Psychological Critique) which was followed in 1938 by Nausea in which he, above all, outlined the essential elements of his philosophy, the type of existentialism which he elaborated in Being and Nothingness – Humanistic Existentialism.

At the outbreak of the World War II, Sartre was recalled into the military service but was spared active role following his poor eyesight. He was merely employed as a meteorological observer. Following the disaster of May 1940 he was taken prisoner of war by the Nazis for almost one year. His experience during his incarceration greatly enriched his human experience and was very influential in his future social and political thought. He wrote his greatest work Being and Nothingness in 1943 while the war was still on. After its publication, which brought him great popularity, Sartre finally gave up his teaching career to allow himself full time for writing.

Sartre's version of existentialism is a medley of a number of notions appropriated from the writings of contemporary thinkers like Marx, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Husserl. What influenced Sartre mostly in the philosophies of Marx, Husserl and Heidegger was their concern about man's active role in forging his own destiny. Sartre's private and social life was riddled by lots of tensions, anxieties and controversies. His involvement in a lot of quarrels and controversies has always been interpreted as an expression of a subconscious anxiety, tension and conflict in himself. He never stopped complaining against his contemporaries who did not agree with his own views. Bergson, Baudelaire, Merleau-Ponty, Marcel, Albert Camus, the Marxists, etc. were all victims of his obstinate polemics. He confirmed this inner conflict in himself saying: "I have always thought against myself which means against everybody" (1966: 164). This inner conflict is responsible for Sartre's anarchistic temperament. As an anarchist, Sartre was suspicious of anything that can bind him.

He departed from this life on April 15, 1980 at the age of' Seventy- four. Sartre's philosophical thoughts run through both his philosophical and literary works. Some of his philosophical publications include: Emotions: Outline of a Theory (1939), Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology (1943), Roads to Freedom I and 11 (1945), III (1949), Existentialism Is a Humanism (1946), Situations 1, II - VI (1948 - 1964), the Condemned of Altoona (1960), Critique of Dialectical Reason (1960), and his autobiography, The Words (1964). As a child, Sartre had two ambitions: to create a work of art and to be famous, he achieved both but he never enjoyed the fame that he got because, as he confessed, "it consisted of so many insults and even slander" and it put him at the centre of controversy both in life and in death. One of this his controversial thoughts will be exposed in this work as we make a critique of his Being-for-others.

## 3. Sartre's Humanistic Existentialism

Humanistic Existentialism as a philosophical attitude stands for the dignity, the rights and the freedom of man. It spurns any philosophy or theology which squeezes man into categories or systems that rob him of his humanity. In its defense of human dignity, Humanistic Existentialism takes the following extreme positions: firstly, it vehemently opposes any form of determinism, theistic or naturalistic. It holds that man cannot be completely subject to the physical laws.

Humanistic Existentialism also holds that man is not subject to any moral imperatives except those he prescribes for himself. Any other law, whether from above or below which he has not made by him self, enslaves him and robs him of his human dignity. It is on this ground that Humanistic

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Existentialism rejects all forms of the natural-law theory or the divine law theory and recognizes only the concept of law advocated by social utilitarianism. Thirdly, Humanistic Existentialism asserts that man's future is to some extent undetermined and open inspite of the natural and historical forces beyond man's control. Thus the humanists believe that man is not merely a helpless victim of history but a maker of history. Man's future is dependent on his everyday choices. Man becomes what he makes himself not what God or nature may have programmed him to become.

Humanistic Existentialism, as we have seen above, both implicitly and explicitly dismisses the idea of a creator God. It argues that if man is a creature of God, he cannot but be subject to God's will as a pot is subject to the will of the potter. It then holds that if man must exist and be free, the idea of God must be rejected. Thus Humanistic Existentialism concludes that theistic authoritarianism is destructive of man's humanity and dignity; it deprives man of his freedom of choice, limits his possibilities and imposes an alien law on him.

Humanistic Existentialism also rejects Naturalism because of its unacceptable materialism and determinism. Man's freedom cannot be compromised with the law-like regularity with which natural processes seem to occur. Man is free. He can make a difference in the course of events. Man has an open future; he is not determined by natural laws and forces. He has within him the power to change the course of history. In his work Existentialism Is a Humanism, Jean-Paul Sartre argued that "existence precedes essence" and consequently there is no human nature, no God. Man is what he makes himself, man is how he acts. Man's humanity consists in self-determination.

With Humanistic Existentialism, especially as put forward by Heidegger, Sartre, Camus and Simone de Beauvour, the question of man's destiny becomes for the first time all-important, for nothing is settled and everything matters. What one will make of himself is left open. God has not defined it for man; it is man who defines it for himself. Humanistic Existentialism makes everybody responsible for everything. Man's dignity stems not from his having been given a favored place in the universe but for the fact that while his existence is contingent, his life and future is his own creation.

 In proclaiming Existentialism as Humanism, Sartre distinguishes two meanings of humanism. He rejected the first one which, as a theory, "upholds man as the end-in-itself and as the supreme value"; he regarded this form of humanism as absurd because, according to him, man cannot be an end since he is still to be determined. With regard to the other meaning of humanism in which sense Existentialism is Humanism Sartre has this to say: "...the fundamental meaning is this: Man is all the time outside of himself: it is in projecting and losing himself beyond himself that he makes man to exist; and on the other hand it is in pursuing transcendent aims that he himself is able to exist.... There is no other universe except, the human universe, the universe of human subjectivity. This relation of transcendence as constitutive of man (...in the sense of self-surpassing) with subjectivity... it is this that we call existential humanism...This is humanism because we remind man that there is no legislator but himself; that he himself, thus abandoned, must decide for himself; also because we show that it is not by turning back upon himself, but always by seeking, beyond himself,... that man can realize himself as truly human" (1968: 310).

This new Humanism of Sartre is what we have chosen to call Humanistic Existentialism in this work and its anti-social elements are the subject of our critique. The part of Sartre's Humanistic Existentialism that deals with man's being-in-the-world with others will be critically surveyed in this work and its implications exposed.

## 4. Sartre's Analysis of Inter-Personal Relationship (Being-for-others)

The problem of the existence of the other person and his possible relationship with other existents is one that Sartre's phenomenological analysis of human existence could not overlook. It can be said that the most notorious aspect of Sartre's Humanistic Existentialism, which occupied over two hundred pages of detailed

Analysis and description and which has attracted a large reading audience and criticisms, is that of being-for-others.

Sartre's view of man as a solitary and creative individual inevitably led him to an extremely pessimistic view of social relations. In discussing Being-for-others (l'etre pour-autrui), Sartre enters a new dimension of human existence. He started by arguing against solipsism and seeks to show how we know for certain that the other person exists. In his view, every philosophic idealism suffers shipwreck at the apprehension of the actual existence of "the Other". Sartre believes that the world of idealism is one empty of human beings.

The presence of the other person confronts me with a new and different set of experience and shatters the solipsism of any idealistic dream world (1993: 223- 229). As a result of my awareness of the presence of the other person, those things that constitute my personal world begin to slip away; my world suffers dissolution and eventually crumbles. In spite of the other being a threat to my existence and freedom, Sartre holds that the other is an absolutely essential condition for my very existence. He says (1968: 303) "...when we say 'I think', we are attaining to ourselves in the presence of the Other, and we are just as certain of the other as we are of ourselves .... The other is indispensable to my existence, and equally so to any Knowledge I can have of myself."

In dealing with Sartre's discussion of Being- for-others especially as put forth is his Being and Nothingness we must keep one fact in mind as Barnes affirms; he seems to be putting the whole realm of human relations in bad faith, which cannot be true (1959: 113). Right from the beginning, Sartre announced that the whole affair of inter- human relations is based on conflict of transcendence (1993: 361). In our discussion of Sartre's Being-for-others we will briefly see how he proved or rather described the existence of the Other, his criticism of his predecessors, his view of man's normal reaction in the presence of the Other, the concrete relations with others and then make an appraisal of these positions of Sartre.

## 5. How Sartre Proved the Existence of the other Person

Sartre's method of proving the existence of others is very typical of his version of Existentialism. Before offering his own proof Sartre made a lengthy discussion of earlier treatments of the problem of the existence of the other. He criticized what he called the "ambiguous character of the other" in Kant (1993: 226) and examines the attempt of his predecessors Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger (1993: 233-252). He blamed these attempts of succumbing to the "reef of solipsism" and of isolating the human being in an inescapable subjectivism.

In spite of his objections to his predecessors, Sartre was greatly influenced by them in elaborating his own explanation. What characterized these positions is that they all tried to find out whether the structure of human reality did not necessarily involve the presence of the other. According to Sartre, for Hegel the other is necessary if I am to build up the structure of my own consciousness. "I am I" is only possible if the other is there and emerges with "me".

The Ego assumes its value through the other; it is to the heart of the Ego that the other penetrates (1993: 237). Husserl, in his view, holds that the Ego implies the existence of the other. The other is everywhere and my doubt of the existence of the other is my doubting my own existence. According to Sartre (1993:233), Husserl claimed that "my empirical Ego and the empirical Ego of the other emerge in the world at the same time." Like the Kantian position, Sartre sees this position as incomplete. He said it is altogether impossible to prove that something exists beyond representation.

Heidegger's intuition of community is seen in his idea of "team". "Team" comprises you and me, and all of us, linked together, not through knowledge but through some feeling of dumb existence. After objecting to the incompleteness of the above positions of his predecessors, Sartre insisted that deriving the existence of the other from my own is not a reality I must prove. The other's existence is simultaneously

given with my own and it is never an object of knowledge. For Sartre, the other is an indubitable subject, another I who is not me, he is never an object.

A Critique of the Anti-Social Elements in Jean-Paul Sartre's Humanistic Existentialism and Its Implications for Inter-Personal Relationship 16 What I remember in the depths of my own being are not 'reasons' for believing in his existence, but the other himself. For Sartre the existence of the other is primarily given in the glance or the look (le regard).

Although the other has to be basically understood as subject, he first appears to me as an object, by his look he differentiates himself from other objects of my attention, he irrupts suddenly into my world and threatens its stability. He makes me aware of the fact that my world is a world that is also seen by another person, a world to be shared with another. Sartre cites two examples of the proof of the existence of the other. The first is that of the man reading newspaper in a public park where I am sitting. He was initially completely absorbed in his reading that he was unaware of my existence as a subject but suddenly looked at me and our eyes met. I become conscious of him as a subject as he became of me. His look poses a great threat to my existence and security (1993: 254).

The second example is that of a man peeping and eavesdropping through a keyhole, suddenly he hears the footsteps of someone behind him who looks at him as he is engaged in this act. According to Sartre, the other, as another consciousness has invaded my world. He accounts for the regrouping of objects which previously peopled my world. Thus Sartre goes on: "The appearance of the other in the world corresponds to a fixed sliding of the whole universe, to a decentralization of the world which undermines the centralization of which I am simultaneously effecting" (1993: 255). The other's presence builds up a personal and subjective world which is a disintegration of my own world. Thus it is this falling to pieces to my monopolized world that undoubtedly shows the presence of the other in the universe (1993: 256). When the other looks at me, he constitutes himself as a subject against me, he annihilates me as a subject and reduces me to the rank of an object.

Thus for Sartre, to be looked at is to be lowered from myself as a subject to myself as an object (1993: 257). We have to observe that Sartre, unlike his predecessors, consistently refused to prove the existence of the other in the manner in which Descartes did. He rather describes what happens and what appears and this phenomenological description of a look and its attendant consequences is supposed to replace all rational arguments to prove the existence of the other.

## 6. Sartre's Description of Man's Reaction to the Existence of the other

Sartre, as we have seen above, regards the look of the other as a threat to my existence as a subject. The look of the other disturbs my universe, makes me an object and alienates me of my possibilities in relation to the world of my being. His look solidifies and petrifies me and turns me into one of the objects in the world. Thus Sartre concludes that the existence and presence of the other is of itself alienating and murderous. Every human reality is in permanent danger in the world.

According to Sartre, in the face of this "conflict of transcendence", of this invasion of my universe by the other and his threat to my subjectivity, the spontaneous reaction is expressed in fear, shame, pride and alienation. Sartre described these original reactions in the two examples we have given above - that of the Park and the Keyhole. According to Sartre, fear expresses that I am under threat from the other. He says: "Fear in fact implies that I appear to myself as threatened by virtue of my being present in the world.... Fear is therefore the discovery of my being as object in my perspective field. It refers to the origin of all fear, which is the fearful discovery of my pure and simple object-state in so far as it is surpassed and transcended by possibles which are not my possible" (1993: 288).

Being seen by the other as an object and completely alienated of my subjectivity I become ashamed of myself in the presence of the other. This is very well described in the keyhole experience. According to Sartre, in shame I admit that I have fallen into the degrading condition of being an object to another's

consciousness. I feel humiliated, fixed and completely dependent not only on my freedom, but on the freedom of the other (1993: 222).

Aware of the imminent danger to my subjectivity which has caused me fear, alienation and shame, I try to fight back to re-conquer my transcendence. Though fear and shame reduce me to the mere status of objectivity. I try to annihilate fear and vanquish shame by looking back at the other in order to reassert my subjectivity as a being-for-itself (1993: 290). I also employ pride, which is a manifestation of my freedom by which I try as a special object of beauty and intelligence to impress the other. I try to act upon him. Thus we may conclude by saying that for Sartre the attitudes of fear, shame, alienation and pride express the original reaction of man to the existence of other conscious beings in his universe. These reactions lead us to a conflict of transcendence between one person and the other.

Grimsley (1960: 121) beautifully summarizes the consequences of these reactions in this observation: "I am thus compelled to oscillate between the "transfiguration" and "degradation" of myself as subject and object. It is, moreover, a process that can only be ended in death, because it is only the dead who can become permanent objects; but as objects they are forever removed from the possibility of being revealed as subjects for another."

## 7. Sartre's Conception of Man's Concrete Relations with the other

Sartre basically defined man's relations with the other in terms of conflict and not co-operation. As we have noted above, each man is a subject who is a potential threat to every other subject. Since every human being is determined at all cost to make an object of the other, he is a natural and a priori enemy of the other. According to Sartre (1993:364) "Everything which may be said of me in relation 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... descriptions of concrete behavior must therefore be envisaged within the perspective of conflict.

Conflict is the meaning of being-for-others." We must out rightly observe that Sartre's theory of my relationship with the other is a direct contradiction of the 1-Thou relationship characteristic of other existentialists like Marcel, Buber and Berdyaev. We agree with Lescoe (1974:303) that for other Existentialists, "intersubjectivity, disponibility, fidelity, fraternity, love and spiritual availability and community is the basis of every interpersonal relationship."

In Sartre's case each man is the inevitable and natural enemy of his fellow man. In his existentialism everyman is plotting the downfall of each other, trying to entrap and appropriate the freedom of the Other. According to Sartre, since it is not possible for a conscious subject to be an object at the same time, it means that the aim of the conflict, the domination of the other as freedom, is a contradictory and futile enterprise.

In the face of this endless, self-contradictory, mutual entrapment which summarizes interpersonal relations in Sartre's world, man may adopt two principal attitudes: firstly I may seek to escape from myself and my problems by making others take over responsibility for my existence. Secondly I may seek in some way to destroy the Other's subjectivity because they threaten me. This first attitude is expressed in love, language and masochism while the second attitude expresses itself in desire, sadism, hatred and indifference.

## 7.1 Futile Attempts to Escape Subjectivity and Responsibility through Love, Language and Masochism

Sartre sees human love as the clearest and most striking example of mutual conflict between two persons. In love the lovers aim at possessing the subjectivity and freedom of each other. Since this is impossible, Sartre says that all human love is an endless engagement in mutual frustration. In love one aims at preserving his subjectivity, but in such a way that the other, as the beloved, still thinks of him as an object. He tries to seduce the other into loving him by concealing his subjectivity.

He hides his subjectivity so that the other person's subjectivity which he is trying grasp may not disappear and be transformed into A Critique of the Anti-Social Elements in Jean-Paul Sartre's Humanistic Existentialism and Its Implications for Inter-Personal Relationship 18 objectivity.

By putting on the guise of objectivity and allowing oneself to be seen as such, one hopes to capture the Other's transcendence. Sartre (1993:376) says: "I demand that the other love me and I do everything possible to realize my project... I demanded of him that he should found my being as a privileged object by maintaining himself as pure subjectivity confronting me; and as soon as he loves me he experiences me as subject and is swallowed up in his objectivity confronting subjectivity." For Sartre a major instrument of seduction is language.

The lover makes use of fascinating language through which he externalizes himself into an object for the other person. The whole enterprise of love, according to Sartre, is an endless effort in mutual frustration. This is because we cannot confront each other as absolute subjects because subjectivity can only be established on the basis of another's objectivity. Masochism rests upon the same contradiction as love. It differs from love in that, as a masochist one hopes to get rid of the burden of his subjectivity by planning to get himself absorbed by the other in the other's subjectivity. It is a deliberate attempt to transform oneself into an object even to oneself.

Masochism begets both shame and guilt. One suffers shame for consenting to his objectivity and complete alienation. He also feels guilty for giving the other the opportunity to be guilty. Masochism, according to Sartre, "is an attempt, to cause myself to be fascinated by my objectivity-for-others; that is to cause myself to be constituted as an object by the other in such a way that I non-thetically apprehend my subjectivity as a nothing, in the presence of the In-Itself which I represent in the other's eyes" (1993: 378). Masochism is doomed to failure and frustration because the more the masochist tries to taste his objectivity the more aware he is of his subjectivity - hence his inescapable anguish.

### 7.2 Futile Attempt to Destroy the other's Subjectivity through Indifference, Desire, Sadism and Hatred

In Sartre's world, man's second basic attitude in his concrete relation with the other is expressed in indifference, desire, sadism and hatred. This attitude is the reverse of the first. Here instead of making myself an object, I transform myself into the one who looks at the Other, I deliberately try to objectify the Other's freedom by confronting it with my own. In possessing the Other, I destroy his freedom and make it impossible for him to apprehend me as a subject.

This second attitude starts with indifference whereby we simply pretend that the other has only that quality of being-in-itself (an object). Despite all evidence to the contrary, we act as if he is not a conscious being, as if he is a mere material object. Indifference, according to Sartre, is both dishonest and dangerous because I cannot annihilate the conscious existence of' the other by it. The other may suddenly stare at me catching me defenseless. In desire my look transforms the other into an object which I try to gain possession of, whose freedom I try to appropriate. On this Sartre says: "Desire is an attitude aiming at enchantment.

Since I can grasp the other only in his objective facticity, the problem is to ensnare his freedom within this facticity. It is necessary that he be "caught" in it as the cream is caught up by a person skimming milk" (1993: 394). The original purpose of desire, according to Sartre, is to seize the Other's consciousness through his body. It is a primitive form of relating to the other which constitutes him as a desirable flesh in the world. Although it is a tremendous effort to reduce and seize the Other, it is doomed to end in failure because the very satisfaction of' desire - pleasure, is its death. Pleasure is its fulfillment, limit and end. With pleasure as its death, desire loses its goal and one suffers frustration. Sadism, according to Sartre (1993: 403), is an effort to "incarnate" the other person by force and violently to take possession of his facticity.

The sadist uses force and infliction of pain to imprison the Other's consciousness within his body. He tries to make the other identify his freedom with his body. Nevertheless, Sadism ends in failure and

frustration because the Other's subjectivity and freedom cannot possibly be appropriated. The Other's freedom completely escapes the sadist in all his violent efforts. He becomes aware of the hopelessness of his effort when his victim looks at him momentarily thereby telling him that his freedom has escaped him. With this look the meaning an end of sadism crumbles (1993: 406). In the face of these frustrations encountered by man in these his efforts, he ends up in hatred.

Faced with the impossibility of any satisfactory relationship with the Other, man sees the other as an enemy; he hates him and wishes him death. Wishing him death is to get rid of any limitation to ones freedom caused by the existence and presence of the other. Writing on hatred Sartre (1993: 411-412) says: "Hate knows the Other-as-object and attaches itself to this object. It wishes to destroy this subject in order, by the same stroke, to overcome the transcendence which hates it... It leaves in me the feeling that there is something to be destroyed, if I am to free myself...." Thus hatred is the desire to liberate oneself from the Other's presence in order to prevent perpetually all forms of alienation. It is a wish to re-conquer one's entire freedom as being-for-itself, to prevent any kind of restriction by other existents. Like every other effort hatred ends in failure and frustration.

This is because the death or suppression of the other does not prevent him from having been in existence. With the failure of hatred man is once more thrown back to anguish and despair. An analysis of the second attitude expressed in indifference, desire, sadism and hatred confirms our earlier observation that in Sartre's view, we human beings are condemned constantly to oscillate backward and forward between subjectivity and objectivity.

Since both attitudes (denying my subjectivity and making myself an object before the Other, or guaranteeing my subjectivity and making the other wholly an object before me) bear within them the seed of their failures and collapses into each other, Sartre concludes that in human relations, we are engaged in a frustrating circle, and it does not really matter where we begin - from love to hate or from hate to love.

## 8. A Critique of Sartre's Position on Inter-human Relationship

What we have seen above is a distorted, dogmatic, myopic and postulatory view which Jean-Paul Sartre has of inter-human relationship. In Sartre's world, hatred, manipulation and degradation are the order of the day. For Sartre, the permanent state of man's social relations is conflict and not cooperation. In his phenomenological analysis of being-for-others, Sartre has been accused of mingling "half-truths with fully grown falsehoods" by Reinhardt (1960: 167).

Sartre built his entire philosophy of Being-for-others on a very faulty premise that for man the existence and presence of the other is a threat. For him, though the other is an essential condition for my existence, his very presence destabilizes my world, alienates me of my possibilities and engenders a conflict of transcendence between me and him. The dark, pessimistic, murky and menacing world of Sartre's absurdity is completely blind to the possibility of genuine friendship, devotion, and filial love in human relationship. Sartre is of the opinion that the existence of the other is given in "the look" which threatens my subjectivity and engenders in me the reactions of fear and shame. This look, according to Sartre, decentralizes my world and makes me feel unsafe.

Here Sartre's view of 'the look' is very myopic. He does not take into consideration friendly looks where one looks at me and smiles offering me a beautiful present because of my achievement or a sympathetic look or the look of admiration of my role model. These kinds of look do not engender conflict or fear nor do they decentralize my world. Thus objecting to Sartre's position that "the look' is the basis of inter-human conflict Olson (1962:187) says: "Clearly Sartre's `the look' is not a basic ontological fact from which all conflict is derived and in terms of which conflict must be defined.

A reflection will reveal that we do not enter into conflict with one another because we look at one another.... There is nothing particularly upsetting in say, the look of an adoring mother or the look of an admiring crowd." If it can be established, as we have done above, that there is a "look" which does not pose

any threat to me, then Sartre's assertions about fear and shame as an inevitable reaction of man in the presence of the other becomes false. Sartre's view of fear as an expression of man's reaction before the other can only apply to a solitary, selfish and greedy person who feels ill at ease in a world he will

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 share with the other person. There is no need to fear in the presence of a good friend. The same objection also applies to the expression of shame.

The sense of guilt can make one feel shame, like in the keyhole experience, but one who is not engaged in any improper behavior need not be ashamed in the presence of the other. Thus, since Sartre has conceived wrongly what is basic in inter-human relations, his views of man's reaction in his awareness of the other summarized in fear, shame, pride and alienation cannot hold water. He fails to reckon with the sense of community and of solidarity with others. It is in this light that we see Nathan Scott's (1969:141-143) evaluation of Sartre's pessimistic analysis of the human condition when he says: "Despite its sensationalistic profundity, it is of course a very narrow kind of vision-astonishing, indeed, in its narrowness. For so committed is Sartre to a view of the other as enemy that whole ranges of experience are brushed aside, the affectionate tenderness in the relation between parents and children, the bonds of love and fidelity between husband and wife, the attachments of fondness and devotion that make up the myriad phenomena of friendship."

Sartre is wrong in supposing that any truly inter-subjective relationships between two people are strictly impossible. According to him, we can never know each other in our subjectivities. He finds the solution in the "conflict of transcendence" - I either transcend the other by objectifying him or I objectify myself and he transcends me.

He is wrong in supposing that two subjectivities cannot co-exist in the same world; that one must be reduced to objectivity to be apprehended by the other. This view of Sartre is very ambivalent. He sees the `We' as an illusion, the `I' is the only reality for him. Reinhardt (1960: 167) criticized Sartre on this serious flaw saying: "It is truly amazing that in a philosophy which calls itself not only existential but "humanistic, no mention is ever made of the phenomenon of friendship, conjugal and filial love, moral obligation, mutual understanding'? There is only the alternative of either the annihilation of "the Other" by me, or my own annihilation by "the Other". There is never a question of both mine and "the Other's" participation in a "we" that is ontologically superior to either of us individually." Since Sartre built his edifice on a faulty premise, his two possible attitudes open to man in his relationship with the other cannot hold. Tolerance, humility, submission in love as well as the use of fascinating language should not be seen as making oneself an object before the other. We should also observe that if, as Sartre says, the other is a threat to us there is no way we can feel indifferent before his presence. The attitudes of admiration and curiosity are also possible at the first sight of the Other.

Sartre is also very limited in thinking that we only desire the other as flesh. We can also desire the other as a conscious being when we desire his thoughts, his wisdom or aspirations. Commenting on Sartre's two fundamental attitudes, Lafarge (1970:127) said that in this world of Sartre, man tossed from subjectivity to objectivity in the two attitudes never escapes the threat of the other on his freedom. He concludes: "We are caught in an infernal circle from which there is no escape." Jolivet (1967: 84) also rejected Sartre's position on inter-human relations because, according to him, Sartre's existential philosophy is a strange one in which "love, friendship, sympathy, goodwill, generosity - all appear as Sadistic conflicts and inevitably end in failure." Faced with this strange thought of Sartre, Jolivet searches for an explanation of the existence of a society of souls or of persons if every person is rigorously alone, if there is no universal order as Sartre conceives it, Jolivet concludes: "Then we are forced to retreat into solipsism" (1967: 85). Sartre's world as we can see is a strange, absurd and impossible world, populated by contingent and isolated beings.

Christian Existentialists Gabriel Marcel and Martin Buber have tried to solve the problem caused by Sartre's overestimation of individual consciousness by insisting on a personal I and Thou relationship. According to Marcel, it is precisely through my relationship with others, I - thou, that I become aware of

myself as a person and for Jaspers what I am, I can become only with the other. The Christian Existentialist, Marcel who frequently criticized Sartre's failure to understand the true nature of man and of an inter-personal relationship writes of Sartre's view: "Its whole tendency is to assert that human communication is doomed to failure; that the sense of community- the sense of forming part of a we-subject is only experienced on such occasions as when a regiment is marching in step.... But when it comes to genuine community of love or friendship, Sartre's analysis of love... reveal the fundamental agnosticism and even nihilism of his view.... It is clear that the whole of this dialectic, with its undeniable power, rests upon the complete denial of we as subject that is to say upon the denial of communion" (1965: 74, 76).

In Being and Nothingness, Sartre speaks as if the impossibility of love between persons is a strictly metaphysical impossibility. For him it is not just that loving another person is a very difficult thing; rather, it is absolutely impossible. However, in his enigmatic footnote he says: "These considerations do not exclude the possibility of an ethics of deliverance and salvation but this can be achieved only after a radical conversion which we cannot discuss here" (1993: 412).

Inspite of Sartre's conversion to Marxism and his opinions in his later philosophical work Critique of Dialectical Reason (1960), as well as his criticism of his earlier work in an interview (1978) where he sharply criticized it for its lack of any social dimension, as though the individual subject could be viewed apart from society, Sartre still remained very close to his view on inter-human relations as put forth in his Being and Nothingness. His so-called "conversion" has changed very little in his basic themes. Maurice Cranston (1973: 106) confirms this when he says: "Sartre's conclusion in Being and Nothingness is that the only possible relations between people are those which tend towards the sadistic and those which tend towards the masochistic.

Togetherness, harmony, love, mitsein being impossible, all relationships between men are relationships of conflict. In the Critique, Sartre gives a new reason for this conflict, but the conclusion is the same. He still maintains that each individual is at war with all the others...just as love, togetherness, friendship is rejected in Being and Nothingness, so here (in the Critique) is any Aristotelian notion of man being social by nature."

Thus as we can see, the so-called conversion of Sartre that has divided his philosophy into early and later Sartre changes very little in his basic ideas of inter-human relations. We will conclude by identifying Sartre's universe as a solitary, dangerous and miserable world in which life is absurd and a burden.

### 9. **The Implications of Sartre's Anti-social Stance for Inter-personal Relationship**

It is an indisputable stand of traditional philosophy that man is a social being (ens socialis) This position is commonly justified by experience. The human being needs the presence of others to make his world a better place and to live a fulfilled life. In the light of this undisputable truth, it becomes very embarrassing to see Jean-Paul Sartre's philosophy which regards itself both as "existential" and "humanistic" denying this social dimension of human existence. Sartre's Humanistic Existentialism is a philosophy on a rescue mission - out to liberate man from the clutches of abstract philosophizing that had swallowed him up along the centuries. One can rightly affirm without fear of falling into any error that the extreme pessimistic view of Sartre's social theory has made his philosophy an enemy of man's life in the world.

He summarized inter-human relations as marked by conflict and not co-operation. Man beholds the presence of the other as alienating and murderous and this creates in him fear, shame and hatred. Sartre's Humanistic Existentialism sociologically is enslaving and not liberating. It sets the philosophical hand of the clock too backward. One striking feature of this social theory is that it moves from the twentieth century philosophy not forward to the twenty-first century but back to the seventeenth century. Sartre's theory very much resembles that of the seventeenth century English philosopher Thomas Hobbes. For Hobbes, in his

social contract theory, man is a wolf to man. All men are enemies in "the state of Nature" and therefore some kind of "contract" is needed to bring men together in the society by a sovereign who institutionalizes all force.

This resembles the view of Sartre. It is right, therefore, to say that Sartre's social theory is Hobbesian. In the Critique of Dialectical Reason where Sartre outlines his sociological position there is an apparent repetition of Hobbes' position and a reaffirmation of Sartre's pessimistic view of human relations present in Being and Nothingness. Namely: the view that there is no real community between men. Men's relations are either "sadistic" or "masochistic" and every man is somehow the enemy of everyone else. Sartre's sociological theory is too far behind that of Marx, the only new thing he introduced in the Critique is the notion of social contract upheld by force and this is nothing but a repetition of what Hobbes was saying in the seventeenth century.

The extreme individualism of Sartre runs quite against our daily experience of man's social life where man co-operates with others fraternally to achieve some specific goals. We witness the indispensable co-operation in various areas of human endeavors - in industry, in civil service, in sports, in family life and so on. Sartre's social theory will have the consequence of that of Hobbes in which human life is solitary, brutish and short. Sartre's introduction of the social contract upheld by force to prevent the security risk consequent upon such state of nature will have the implication of dealing a deadly blow to his theory of unlimited freedom. With the social contract man is no longer absolutely free (a position Sartre holds tenaciously to), his freedom is restricted so as to prevent him from being a threat to the existence of others. If, as we saw earlier Sartre's social theory excludes the possibility of community life, of love and friendship and of good language and desire, it then means that his Humanistic Existentialism is also anti-African. It will have no place in African social milieu where communalism, solidarity and brotherhood are the basis of man's life with others. In the African context it is asserted that a tree cannot make a forest, the individual is because there is the community.

His existentialism is also anti-Christian since it will have no place in Christianity where the acceptable social life is that built on selfless love which for Sartre is impossible and is an effort geared towards futility.

Sartre's Humanistic Existentialism also dealt a blow to man's social life by asserting that human existence is lived in bad faith. Man's public life is, for Sartre, marked by self deception whereby he is constantly denying his boundless freedom and responsibility. This again implies that man's social life is fake, it is never his real life. This goes on to corroborate his firm stand that human existence is absurd (de trop), it is not worth living, it is a miserable state. This cannot be true of the life we are all enjoying and are doing everything to prolong. If man's life in the society is as Sartre portrays it then there will only be unhealthy rivalry among men, never co-operation and solidarity.

Human beings will be avoiding each other both in shame and in fear and community life will really be impossible. To conceive of a world like Sartre's where indifference, hatred and sadism prevails is to conceive of hell on earth. These anti-social vices will annihilate solidarity, love and sympathy and make living with each other a heavy cross. One can also assert that if inter-personal relation is as Sartre conceives it, mutual trust and confidence in others which is the basis of human interactions will be completely erased. There will be no common grounds to believe in the goodwill of others who may only be trying to objectify me or seduce me as Sartre will hold.

All modes of expression such as language, smiles, the look, sympathy etc. will become suspect. Social institutions will have no grounds to stand. The family, the cities, the state organizations will be battle grounds and genuine inter-personal relations, inter-state and international relations will be a mirage since "hell is the other person" as Sartre holds.

## 10. Conclusion

From the foregoing it is certain that the being portrayed in Sartre's humanistic existentialism is antisocial. For Sartre man is not meant for community life. In Sartre's world for man to be safe he has to avoid the presence of others since they are his natural enemies. This view of Sartre must be rejected because if it is upheld then there will be no community life, no real love among men and no mutual trust in people's dealing with each other.

Sartre's conception of man's inevitable reaction in the presence of the other person is half-truth which will be harmful when accepted. If we are to have a truly human society it must be refuted and rejected or else we will have a world worse than the animal world. It is very wrong to summarize man's concrete relationship with others with concepts like hatred, masochism, indifference, oppressive love, seductive language, sadism and objectifying desire which are instruments of conflict and not of the co-operation we daily witness in human society.

Sartre's pessimistic inter-human relationship contained in his analysis of being-for-others is also very regrettable. His position is a return to the Hobbesian "state of nature" where each individual is the natural enemy of every other and the state of insecurity is at its height. It is untrue to say that the contemporary man spend his entire existence in fear because of the existence of the other. It is also unfair to the modern man to deny his society of the presence of friendship, devotion, filial love and fraternal cooperation in achievement of common goals. Sartre's inter-human theory is extremely negative, myopic and grossly inadequate.

There are also unresolved contradictions in Sartre's position that the individual is committed to a ceaseless struggle with his fellow man, and at the same time, that he has absolute freedom to choose whatever life he wants. Surely it is not possible to have a viable ethics in a climate where domination of the other person and subordination of his freedom to ours is the overriding factor. If ethics, as Mary Warnock says (1970: 47) "is concerned with the fitting together of the interest and choices of one person with those of another" then the two positions are irreconcilable. Finally we can say that Sartre's social theory is quite unrealistic of the human existence we all partake. It is a deceptive social theory that presents a chaotic society where everyone is trying to objectify the other, a society where there is no love and friendship. Sartre's view stands against reason and experience and must be rejected. We affirm that man's relation with his fellow man in spite of its imperfections is that of love, friendship, solidarity, co-operation and community.

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