PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS IN FIVE PLAYS

BY JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

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PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS IN FIVE PLAYS

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. BEING AND NOTHINGNESS: THE FLIES</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Structure of Being</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Flies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. FREEDOM AND BAD FAITH: THE RESPECTFUL PROSTITUTE</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad Faith and The Structure of Being</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patterns of Bad Faith</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. FREEDOM AND OTHER PEOPLE: NO EXIT</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Structure of Being and the Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Inevitability of Conflict</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Eternal Triangle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. FREEDOM AND ACTION: DIRTY HANDS</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom as the Fundamental Condition of Action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The intellectual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Leader</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Worker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY: THE CONDEMNED OF ALTONA</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situations as Only Human</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Responsibility of Freedom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condemned to Freedom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Jean-Paul Sartre is one of the profound and interesting innovators of modern drama today. To know the drama of Sartre is to know something about the problems that face modern man. To know the drama of Sartre is to know something of one of the most influential philosophies of the century. His dramatic themes and the characters in his drama emerge from the structure of his philosophy. Sartre has said that "existentialism's first move is to make every man aware of what he is and to make the full responsibility of his existence rest on him." He uses the theater to pursue the Existential task. His drama is a tool of his philosophy. Because Sartre is primarily a philosopher, it is necessary to investigate his philosophy in order to thoroughly understand his drama. Insofar as he carries his task into the theater, he is a moralist.

He has a message to convey, and his medium of communication with the ordinary man is the theater. However, it must not be forgotten that this message is a philosophical message and that the serious student of Sartre's drama has an obligation to penetrate beneath the surface of

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the existential framework. The student of Sartre, if he is to understand Sartre's drama, must seek the "essence" of the existential situation. Insular as he pursues the "essence" of the situation, the student will necessarily become entangled in Sartre's philosophy.

The major idea behind each of Sartre's dramas is grounded in his philosophy. Sartre is able to turn to the theater in order to expound his philosophy because the metaphysical question of the nature of Being, for him, is a question of the being of man. Sartre's philosophy is a philosophy of human action and of the human situation. Because his philosophy is subjective, it lends itself particularly well to the theater. Dramatic plots are built around human situations and human action.

Sartre's subjectivism is that he attempts to study man introspectively and as a bundle of complex and often conflicting emotions.

Eric Bentley in *The Playwright As Thinker* has characterized Sartre's drama as "philosophic melodrama." There is a good reason why Sartre's drama appears melodramatic, a reason that Bentley takes into consideration. Because Sartre's philosophy is subjective and sees man in terms of the "inner eye," his dramatic characters seem over-emotional and overdrawn. Each action may seem unnecessarily paramount, but it must be remembered that for Sartre man is defined in terms of his acts. "To be is to act." Action alone changes the world.

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Action alone defines the individual; and, therefore, each act is taken seriously. Each act is serious because the life of the actor depends upon it. Action is dangerous because it changes what already exists into something new. The danger of dramatic and creative language is what the German poet Hölderlin had in mind when he wrote:

But man dwells in huts and wraps himself in the bashful garment; since he is more fervent and more attentive too in watching over the spirit, as the priestess the divine flame; this is his understanding. And therefore he has been given arbitrariness, and to him, godlike, has been given higher power to command and to accomplish, and therefore has language, most dangerous of possessions, been given to man, so that creating, destroying, and perishing and returning to the ever-living, to the mistress and mother, he may affirm what he is—that he has inherited, learned from thee, thy most divine possession, all-preserving love.

Whenever man acts, he is creating himself. If existential drama is historic, it is because creating the meaning of existence is serious. It is dangerous because the future of the world depends on it.

Orestes in The Fies is faced with the problem of creating meaning out of what Sartre calls "the Nothingness of Being." Orestes and all men, must make something from nothing. He must give his life meaning where there is none. A contemporary example of the encounter with Nothingness and the search for Being is the old man in Hemingway’s

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"A Clean, Well-Lighted Place." Hemingway describes the nothingness and loneliness that the old man feels when the lights go out in the only public place in town that is worthy of frequenting. Hemingway asks:

What did he fear? It was not fear or dread. It was a nothing that he knew too well. It was all a nothing and a man was nothing too. It was only that and light was all it needed and a certain cleanliness and order. Some lived in it and never felt it but he knew it all was nada y pues nada y nada y pues nada. Our nada who are in nada, nada be thy name thy kingdom nada thy will be nada in nada as it is in nada. Give us this nada our daily nada and nada us our nada as we nada our nadas and nada us not into nada but deliver us from nada; pues nada. Hail nothing full of nothing, nothing is with thee. He smiled and stood before a bar with a shining steam pressure coffee machine.

Like the old man in the cafe, Orestes is faced with a cold and empty life. He tries to overcome his nothingness by making Argos his home and the people of Argos his responsibility.

The Respectful Prostitute is a study of "bad faith." Bad faith is an attitude that grows out of man's inevitable struggle to overcome the Nothingness of Being. To thoroughly understand The Respectful Prostitute it is necessary to understand Sartre's concept of bad faith. If the phenomenon is not considered in light of the rest of his philosophy, then it will seem out of place and the characters which illustrate patterns of bad faith will seem juxtaposed and unrealistic. A lack of philosophic understanding can lead the drama critic to a misinterpretation of the

role that each character plays. Frederick Lamley in New Trends in Twentieth Century Drama writes:

La Putain respectueuse is an example of the supreme dangers of Sartrian theatre, the dangers of trying to oversimplify by crude melodrama and surface logic a problem which defies simplification. In dramatising the colour bar problem in the Southern States, Sartre stumbles into all the pitfalls that a blatant propagandist in the name of Soviet realism might deliberately choose; the result is so outrageously false that this treatment is only one stage removed from mock-melodrama.⁵

Lumley fails to understand that though Sartre chooses "the colour bar problem in the Southern States" as the particular mode of illustration, the problem under study is universal in nature. Not taking into account Sartre's philosophy has led him to misinterpret the theme of the drama. If Sartre is concerned with explicating "the colour bar problem in the Southern States," his concern is only secondary to that of illustrating patterns of bad faith. Sartre is more concerned with the nature of man than he is with the nature of any particular man or group of men. It would be possible to mistake even Hamlet's famous soliloquy for "crude melodrama" if one did not consider the universal nature of the problem that Hamlet faces. The problem of being or not being confronts all men whether they are kings or not. If the logic that Sartre uses when considering an existential crisis, as in The Respectful Prostitute, appears to be "surface logic," then it is because the only tools

that there are to work with immediately are the existential tools at hand. However, it is not the case that Sartre uses only "surface logic."

A basic understanding of his philosophy is enough to illustrate the depth of the problem he is dealing with. It is of universal impact.

The same need of philosophical interpretation holds true in No Exit. No Exit may appear to be a "boulevard melodrama" in which the characters are thrown together, if it is forgotten that, for Sartre, man is in fact "thrown into the world." It is man's project to overcome his random and unplanned placement.

Man finds stability by committing himself to the world. When he commits himself, he acts "in" the world. Dirty Hands is a study of action. To understand Dirty Hands it is necessary to understand what it means to act in the world and why man must act. The Sartrean concept of the necessity of action leads finally to the idea of freedom and responsibility. Responsibility is the main theme of The Condemned of Alcatraz. If man is free to act in any way he chooses and yet not free not to act, then he is "condemned" to being responsible for his actions.

Freedom is the central theme which unites each drama in this study. Each of the particular ideas emphasized in a particular drama stems from Sartre's idea of the freedom of man. Sartre's idea of the freedom of man stems from his metaphysical consideration of the structure of Being. Because the metaphysical structure of Being
underlies Sartre's idea of freedom and, thus, Sartre's existential drama, it is necessary to first consider the structure of Being in order to proceed to the plays themselves.
CHAPTER II

BEING AND NOTHINGNESS: THE FLIES

The Structure of Being

For a comprehensive explanation of the action of the characters in Sartre's drama The Flies, it is necessary to understand the Sartrean idea of Nothingness. Sartre demands that Nothingness is not a concept, i.e., that it is in itself inconceivable. This contention makes it difficult for the philosophically unsophisticated to understand his philosophy and difficult for the drama critic to evaluate the philosophical aspect of his work in the theatre. To understand Sartre's concept of Nothingness it is necessary to follow his philosophy from the beginning of Being and Nothingness. In this work, Sartre claims that Being gives rise to Nothingness. Therefore, in order to understand the Nothingness that is made manifest in The Flies, it is necessary to first investigate Sartre's concept of Being.

The first question is: What is the nature of Being that is to be found in all men? The second question is: How does Sartre's philosophical concept of the nature of man set the stage for the characters and action to be found in The Flies?
When Sartre investigates Being, he finds that it is dipolar in nature. Being is of one nature with two equal but opposite poles. Sartre first investigates the pole that he later calls "being-in-itself." He writes of this pole that its being is "opaque to itself precisely because it is filled with itself. This can be better expressed by saying that being is what it is." The aspect of Being that presents itself as necessary to any concept of being is static. It is stationary. It "designates a particular region of being, that of being-in-itself." If being-in-itself "is what it is," if it is "filled with itself," then it cannot be aware of its own existence. Because being-in-itself is unconscious being, there must be another region of Being which makes Being aware of itself. The conscious pole of Being, Sartre calls, "being-for-itself." Being-for-itself, unlike being-in-itself, cannot be the simple being of what it is. Sartre tells us that "the being of for-itself is defined, on the contrary, as being what it is not and not being what it is." Being-for-itself is necessarily not "in-itself." As the conscious pole of Being, the for-itself cannot be static. It must go outside itself in order to stand in relation to itself. When it goes beyond itself, it is no longer "what it is." Paradoxically, it must be "what it is

1 Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, translated and with an introduction by Hazel E. Barnes (New York, 1956), p. lxv.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.
not" in order to know "what it is." Being-in-itself and being-for-itself are equally necessary components of the structure of Being.

To obtain a more meaningful perspective of Being it is helpful to compare Sartre's philosophical expression with his literary expression of the same phenomenon. About being-in-itself, Sartre philosophically writes:

Being-in-itself is never either possible or impossible. It is. This is what consciousness expresses in anthropomorphic terms by saying that being is superfluous (de trop)--that is, that consciousness absolutely cannot derive being from anything, either from another being, or from a possibility, or from a necessary law. Uncreated, without reason for being, without any connection with another being, being-in-itself is de trop for eternity. 4

In itself, being-in-itself has no meaning. Being-in-itself has meaning only insofar as it stands in relation to something else, the world known as "for-itself." In more concrete terms, what Sartre says is that it is the conscious mind of man that gives meaning to existence; for it is through his consciousness that man comes into contact with the world. The problem that presents itself is that the world that consciousness becomes when it refuses to be itself is a world of brute facts. Man is faced with the superfluity of his own meaning. In a passage from Sartre's novel, Nausea, we find the hero, Roquentin, faced with the absurd situation of being de trop in a de trop world. He

4 Ibid., p. lxvi.
is faced with the "obscene superfluity" of being for-himself and without meaning. Sartre has Roquentin to say:

We were a heap of living creatures, irritated, embarrassed at ourselves, we hadn't the slightest reason to be there, none of us, each one, confused, vaguely alarmed, felt de trop in relation to the others. De trop: it was the only relationship I could establish between these trees, these gates, these stones. In vain I tried to count the chestnut trees, to locate them by their relationship to the Velleda, to compare their height with the height of the plane trees: each of them escaped the relationship in which I tried to enclose it, isolated itself, and overflowed . . . .

And I—soft, weak, obscene, digesting, juggling with dismal thoughts—I, too, was de trop . . . . Even my death would have been de trop. De trop, my corpse, my blood on these stones, between these plants, at the back of this smiling garden. And the decomposed flesh would have been de trop in the earth which received my bones, at last; cleaned, stripped, peeled, proper and clean as teeth, it would have been de trop: I was de trop for eternity.

Through this long and descriptive passage, Sartre expresses the realization that Roquentin faces of the brute fact of his existence. Roquentin feels like a thing among other things. He expresses Sartre's yet unsophisticated view of Being as brute being. Of course it was Roquentin's very conscious act that allowed him to be aware of his brute being; but it is not until Being and Nothingness, which postdates Nausea by several years, that Sartre clearly distinguishes between the brute being of the being-in-itself and the conscious being of the being-for-itself.

5 Jean-Paul Sartre, Nausea, translated by Lloyd Alexander with some changes by Hazel E. Barnes (Norfolk, 1949), pp. 172-173.
It is in terms of the in-itself that the for-itself is to be understood. Sartre writes, "The For-itself, in fact, is nothing but a pure nihilation of the In-itself; it is like a hole of being at the heart of Being." Sartre gives an example of such a "nihilation." He writes:

One may be reminded here of that convenient fiction by which certain popularizers are accustomed to illustrate the principle of the conservation of energy. If they say, a single one of the atoms which constitute the universe were annihilated, there would result a catastrophe which would extend to the entire universe, and this would be, in particular, the end of the Earth and of the solar system. This metaphor can be of use to us here. The For-itself is like a tiny nihilation which has its origin at the heart of Being; and this nihilation is sufficient to cause a total upheaval to happen to the In-itself. This upheaval is the world. The for-itself has no reality save that of being the nihilation of being. Its sole qualification comes to it from the fact that it is the nihilation of an individual and particular In-itself and not of a being in general. The For-itself is not nothingness in general but a particular privation; it constitutes itself as the privation of this being. Therefore we have no business asking about the way in which the for-itself can be united with the in-itself since the for-itself is in no way an autonomous substance.

For Sartre, the for-itself is continually "nihilating" the in-itself and making it something new. Thus, it can be said that Being is always in a state of "becoming." The in-itself is continually trying to catch up with the for-itself. The point that Sartre stresses in the above passage is that without the in-itself, there would be no for-itself. The in-itself is basic and is the proper starting point for a study of Being. But it

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6 Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 617.
7 Ibid., pp. 617-618.
must also be remembered that without the for-itself there would only be brute being which would be meaningless.

Each time the for-itself "nihilates" the in-itself, it throws the whole structure of Being into question. It makes itself anew. It is the nature of man to question himself, his life, his purpose. Philosophically, Sartre says that it is the nature of Being to question itself. Sartre writes that Being is "such that in its being, its being is in question." This man that I am," writes Sartre, "If I apprehend him such as he is at this moment in the world, I establish that he stands before being in an attitude of interrogation." The questions that we ask ourselves about ourselves are common to all men. They constitute a basic part of the human attitude and the nature of man. Philosophically, they constitute the nature of Being. Sartre explains:

In every question we stand before a being which we are questioning. Every question presupposes a being who questions and a being which is questioned. This is not the original relation of man to being-in-itself, but rather it stands within the limitations of this relation and takes it for granted. On the other hand, this being which we question, we question about something. That about which I question the being participates in the transcendence of being. I question being about its ways of being or about its being.

With each question, Being transcends itself to become something new. Thus, it is the nature of man to question himself and to create

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8 Ibid., p. lxii.
9 Ibid., p. 4.
10 Ibid.
himself. In each question, the possibility of a negative reply always presents itself. If the possibility of a negative reply were not present, then there would be no question. Sartre writes:

There exists then for the questioner the permanent objective possibility of a negative reply. In relation to this possibility the questioner by the very fact that he is questioning, posits himself as in a state of indetermination; he does not know whether the reply will be affirmative or negative.\(^{11}\)

It is the possibility of a negative reply that makes negation a reality. The possibility of negation is crucial to the Sartrean concept of Being. In Sartre's words "In posing a question, a certain negative element is introduced into the world."\(^ {12}\) But it must also be remembered that Nothingness comes into the world by the "nihilating" act of the for-itself. The for-itself brings Nothingness into the world by being what it is not in order to question what it is. Thus, Nothingness is established in its relation to being on two counts. It is brought into the world through the "nihilating" act of questioning, and it continually remains one of the possibilities of the question. In both cases, "man is the being through whom nothingness comes to the world."\(^ {13}\)

The questioner does not know whether the answer will be negative or affirmative, but he supposes that an objective answer is possible. He also supposes that he will gain an answer to his question. Both of

\(^{11}\) Ibid., p. 5.

\(^{12}\) Ibid., p. 23.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., p. 24.
these suppositions attest to the freedom that man asserts through his position. It is the case, however, that man cannot receive an answer. If he did, the freedom which is given him by the existence of the possibility of a negative reply would not be maintained. That "No" always remains a possibility is essential to man's freedom. That the for-itself continually tears itself away from the in-itself assures man that the possibility of a negative reply is maintained. Thus, it is because man continually faces the possibility of negation that he is free. If man were determined, he would have no possibilities. But as Sartre points out, in the final analysis, if everything else is against him, man can always commit suicide and "nihilate" his world. Man is free because suicide always remains one of his possibilities even if it does so in a negative way. Man's ultimate choice is what Albert Camus had in mind when he wrote that "There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide."  

When Hamlet asked whether "to be or not to be," the "not to be" faced him as one of the ever-present possibilities of his existence. "To be, for Sartre and Camus alike, is to be able not to be. The Being of man brings Nothingness into the world and sustains it as possibility. Thus, Being gives rise to Nothingness. Man describes the realm of Being outside of which there would not be "Nothing." Sartre writes:

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We set out upon our pursuit of being, and it seemed to us that the series of our questions had led us to the heart of being. But behold, at the moment when we thought we were arriving at the goal, a glance cast on the question itself has revealed to us suddenly that we are encompassed with nothingness. The permanent possibility of non-being, outside us and within, conditions our questions about being. Furthermore it is non-being which is going to limit the reply. What being will be must of necessity arise on the basis of what it is not. Whatever being is, it will allow this formulation: "Being is that and outside of that, nothing." ¹⁵

In answer to the first question (What is the nature of Being that is to be found in all men?), Sartre's reply is that to be is to be a questioning being. Sartre goes on to show, as has been demonstrated, the ramifications of the questioning act. Being gives rise to Nothingness, for Nothingness is Being "just posited, then denied." ¹⁶ Nothingness "lies coiled in the heart of being" ¹⁷ and remains one of its ever-present possibilities. Being springs Nothingness into reality with every questioning act. Thus, the second question presents itself: How is Nothingness made manifest in the world? Turning finally to Sartre's drama, the question becomes: How does the Nothingness that is found at the heart of the nature of man set the stage for the characters and action to be found in The Flies?

¹⁵ Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 5.


¹⁷ Ibid., p. 21.
The Flies

When Nothingness is made manifest in the world, if it is faced honestly, it assumes the concrete emotion of "anguish." The "hero" of The Flies is Orestes. Through Orestes, Sartre conveys what it means to be faced with Nothingness and to suffer its anguish. Through the people of Argos, Sartre conveys what it means to be faced with Nothingness and to flee its anguish. Zeus and Aegistheus represent powers capable of capitalizing on the fear and dread that the people of Argos have when anguish threatens them.

The situation in The Flies is similar to that of the first two tragedies of the Oresteia by Aeschylus. In The Flies the action centers around the murders that Orestes commits and their consequence. When the play opens, Orestes and his tutor are entering the public square at Argos. The story, as in the Oresteia, is that Orestes has returned after a fifteen-year absence to the town of his birth. When he was three, his mother, Clytemnestra, and her paramour, Aegistheus, had slain his father, Agamemnon. Agamemnon had returned from battle and a long absence in Troy only to meet his death. Aegistheus, as the new king, was afraid that Agamemnon's son, Orestes, would grow to hate his father's murderer and avenge his father's death. He ordered Orestes slain; but instead, Orestes was turned over in secret to another keeper. Thus, Orestes grew up away from his place of birth. His
wealthy adopted parents sent him around the country with a tutor as part of his education. After many years of wandering, he returned to Argos in search of a place and a past.

Orestes was alienated from any roots to bind him when he was torn from his native land. He was "wrenched away" from a concrete place of residence. His years of wandering correspond to the contingency of the for-itself which is "wrenched away" from the in-itself. Orestes longs to become the in-itself in the sense that he longs to have a concrete place, a past, an obligation. As he says, he wants a place to call "mine."18 "I want to be a man," he says, "who belongs somewhere... Even the slave bent beneath the load... can say he's in his town."19 With great remorse he finds that he is "a stranger in his native land."20 Because Orestes has never had a home to tie him down, he is faced with the contingency of his own freedom. He is free to wander but not free not to be free. There is nothing he can do that will give him the place and the past that he missed as a child. He exists in a state of free flow, groping and grasping from town to town but unable to stabilize himself. His anguish is his lack of connection. Philosophically, it is his Nothingness. Orestes is alienated from being a part of any "thing" or of


19 Ibid., p. 91.

20 Ibid., p. 53.
being any "thing" himself. Because Orestes is free, because he is not tied down, he exists in anguish. Sartre says that "anguish as the manifestation of freedom in the face of self means that man is always separated by nothingness from his essence."\(^21\) The Being-for-itself is separated from the Being-in-itself by the Nothingness it gives rise to. The "what it is not" can never become "what it is," by definition. Because man is free, he must choose himself at every moment. But he can not choose to be "what he is," for, even if he tries, the "what he is" will become the "what he is not" in the next moment in time. Essence, the "what it is," is "separated from the future by its very freedom."\(^22\)

Orestes recognizes himself as a stranger. He wants to be a part of Argos. He says: "I want my share of memories, my native soil, my place among the men of Argos."\(^23\) But Electra tells him what he already knows. She says, "Even if you stayed a hundred years among us, you'd still be a stranger here, and lonelier than if you were tramping the highroads of Greece."\(^24\) Orestes is alienated from Argos because he realizes that he is not tied to Argos. The people of Argos do not realize that they are free, for they do not realize that they are free from Argos. They do not want to realize their freedom, for, if

\(^{21}\text{Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 35.}\) \(^{22}\text{Ibid.}\)

\(^{23}\text{Sartre, "The Flies," p. 90.}\) \(^{24}\text{Ibid., p. 91.}\)
they did, they would feel anguish. Sartre says of anguish that it is "the recognition of a possibility as my possibility."25 The people of Argos realize that it is possible to leave Argos, but the possibility does not present itself to them as one of "their" possibilities. From Orestes' point of view, the people of Argos are fortunate.

The philosophical difference between Orestes and the people of Argos is that he is reflective and they are not. Sartre writes that "anguish is precisely my consciousness of being my own future, in the mode of not-being."26 The anguish that Orestes feels is invoked by the realization that because he is free, anything is possible. There is "no right or wrong," he says, "nor anyone to give me orders."27 There is nothing that binds Orestes to Argos and nothing that forces him to go. Sartre says analogously, of the situation in which one is standing at the edge of an abyss, that "if nothing compels me to save my life, nothing prevents me from precipitating myself into the abyss."28 When one stands on a ledge, one is very likely to develop vertigo in self defense. The people of Argos are wedded to a vestige of self-deception. Orestes faces anguish because he cannot deceive himself about himself. The

25 Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 35.

26 Ibid., p. 32.


28 Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 32.
horror that Orestes faces is that he is free at every moment to choose whether or not to cast himself into the "abyss," and that whether he does or not he will be faced with Nothingness.

Orestes' life is empty because he can allow nothing to fill it. Nothing can fill the void of his Nothingness. He admits that his heart is empty. He says it has "no hatred; but no love, either." When Electra loved him, it gave him hope; but even her love died for him. He sadly recalls, "Until now I felt something warm and living round me, like a friendly presence. That something has just died. What emptiness. What endless emptiness, as far as eye can reach!"

Orestes is alone in "exile." He tells Zeus, "You are God and I am free; each of us is alone, and our anguish is akin." "Alone," he says, "Alone until I die."

To the people of Argos, belief in Zeus is a temptation to overcome the forlornness of Orestes. When Agamemnon was killed, a crime was committed. Zeus knew that the people of Argos wanted to feel guilty in order not to feel the anguish of freedom. They did not want to be faced with their own Nothingness. For Nothingness, Zeus and

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30 Ibid., p. 92.
31 Ibid., p. 122.
32 Ibid., p. 125.
Aegistheus substituted guilt. Zeus and Aegistheus both want power over the people, so they continually lead them to believe that they are paying for their sins when they are paying tribute to their god and ruler. Zeus sent the flies that plague the city, a constant reminder to keep the people "paying for their sins." The flies symbolize the omniscience of God. They have a million eyes that stare at the people of Argos and make them guilty. The flies are the workers of Zeus. In reality they are guilt itself and can be overcome when the individual psychologically accepts the responsibility of his freedom.

When a person is filled with guilt, he tries to hide. The people of Argos took to the underground. They became "black beetles."\(^\text{33}\) They were "sick with fear\(^\text{34}\) just as Dostoyevsky's man from the underground was sick. The underground man writes from his "mouschole," "I'm a sick man. . . . But, actually, I don't understand a damn thing about my sickness."\(^\text{35}\) The underground man had a sick soul. He had forgotten what it was like to be a man and to be free. He was sick, but no doctor could help him.

The people of Argos became "black vermin\(^\text{36}\) and buried themselves in shame. They bolted their doors and shuttered their windows.

\(^{33}\)Ibid., p. 51.  
\(^{34}\)Ibid., p. 67.  
in an attempt to stop time. Whereas Quentin in Faulkner's The Sound and The Fury chose to rip the hands from his watch, the people of Argos chose to dress in black and live in the dark. If Quentin had had Zeus, he might not have committed suicide. But, like Orestes, he could not become an unthinking thing. His downfall was that he was conscious of his action and of its responsibility. An unthinking thing cannot be held responsible. Only the sane are guilty, so the modern line of judicial reasoning goes; the possessed have no choice. The people of Argos did not want to change, nor would they let their children change them.

The children brought into the world of Argos, after the death of Agamemnon, were unwanted because they mark time. They were not a part of the original act of murder, but they are made to feel guilty for it. The child of Argos "never plays or laughs, for thinking of his original sin."$^{37}$ He is made to feel guilty from the day of his birth. He is conditioned to deny his freedom because its affirmation would make guilt meaningless. If he did not feel guilty, then he would threaten the security of all those around him. The world would rather kill the rebel than have its security shaken. The people of Argos worshipped their guilt and consequently forced themselves into a state of constant repentance. Zeus knew that as long as he could keep the people feeling like sinners

$^{37}$ Ibid., p. 56.
and keep them repenting he would have their allegiance. He sent the flies as a constant reminder. On a subjective level, Zeus is everyman's consciousness. But on an objective level, Zeus is symbolic of the ability of a few to materialize the guilt and fear of the masses in order to hold them under their thumb. Objectively, Zeus, through Aegistheus, who enforces his fear, is symbolic of the Church.

Orestes is not like the people of Argos. He has not lived in constant fear and guilt. He is free from the plague of Argos. If the people of Argos thought that Orestes threatened their security, they would drive him out "with stones and pikes and pitchforks."\(^{38}\) When the rebellious Electra appears in a white dress rather than the traditional black, the people cry "to the river with her."\(^{39}\) She threatens their security by breaking their traditions. Her act is an act of sacrilege to them. Orestes is not wanted in the same way that Christ was not wanted when he appeared in Dostoyevsky's account of The Grand Inquisitor. When Nietzsche's Zarathustra comes down out of the mountains, he is rejected by the people for whom he has "come too soon." Even as far back as the dialogues of Plato, we find insecurity masking itself as justice or the norm. Socrates was sentenced to death on a false charge because he threatened the security of the people of Athens. In "The Myth of the Cave" from The Republic we find that when

\(^{38}\)Ibid., p. 119.  
\(^{39}\)Ibid., p. 84.
the man of the cave who comes out into the sunlight returns with a new
view of reality, those who remained behind try to kill him. The knowl-
edge that one is ignorant is not usually a welcomed revelation.
Ignorance is a breeding ground for fear. Orestes is not ignorant. He
has been well tutored. He "knows" that all men are free. Zeus
trembles because "Orestes knows that he is free." But freedom,
since it is the very emptiness of being, is something that neither the
people of Argos nor Orestes wants. Zeus says to Orestes:

You cannot share in their repentance, since you did not
share their crime. Your brazen innocence makes a gulf between
you and them. So if you have any care for them, be off! Be off,
or you will work their doom. If you hinder them on their way,
if even for a moment you turn their thoughts from their remorse,
all their sins will harden on them—like cold fat. They have guilty
consciences, they're afraid—and fear and guilty consciences have
a good savor in the nostrils of the gods. . . . Would you oust
them from the favor of the gods? What, moreover, could you
give them in exchange?\textsuperscript{41}

Zeus knows that being free is a state of emptiness and that the
people of Argos would not want to trade what they have even if they could.
Orestes is not noble in the sense that he wants to liberate the people of
Argos for their own good. If he is noble, it is for the sake of truth.

in The Flies Sartre does not make freedom appear very desirable. The
humiliating remorse of the people of Argos is disgusting, but one wonders
if the dreadful freedom of Orestes would be better. One assumes from

\textsuperscript{40}Ibid., p. 104. \textsuperscript{41}Ibid., p. 59.
the drama that it is better to choose freedom honestly than to choose remorse dishonestly, but one can never be sure why the system of value is not reversed. Orestes acts more from selfish motives than from altruistic motives. He thinks that by becoming engaged with the strife of the people of Argos and by becoming involved with the people, he will be able to fill the void that makes him free. He says:

These folks are no concern of mine. ... But mind you, if there were something I could do, something to give me the freedom of the city; if, even by a crime, I could acquire their memories, their hopes and fears, and fill with these the void within me, yes, even if I had to kill my own mother—

Eventually Orestes will kill his own mother and bring the wrath of the town upon him. He will be forced to leave Argos with the flies teeming at his heels. Neither Zeus nor Aegistheus can take away Orestes' freedom, though they will try.

Aegistheus depends upon the suppression of the freedom of others for his own power. He is the stern ruler of a meek town. Each year he makes the people of Argos participate in Dead Man's Day. He makes them feel guilty for their sins against the dead of Argos. As long as they feel guilty, he can maintain their allegiance. He is like Zeus in that he knows how to make people obey by making them afraid. "Had I not played upon their fear," he tells Clytemnestra, "they'd have shaken off their remorse in the twinkling of an eye." He perpetrated Dead

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42 Ibid., p. 63.

43 Ibid., pp. 97-98.
Man's Day as a reminder to the people that they are being judged.

Being judged on Dead Man's Day is his contrived counterpart to the flies of Zeus. The return of the dead to haunt their wrong doers is a sham which exists only in the minds of the people, but they want it and Aegistheus knows that they do. As Aegistheus tells Clytemnestra, who has lived with her husband's sham so long that she believes it, "it fills out the void of your life." Aegistheus is sad that he cannot believe his own lie. "I have no remorse," he says, "and no man in Argos is sadder than I... What am I but an empty shell?" There is one other man in Argos that is as empty as Aegistheus and that is Orestes. Orestes, like Aegistheus, knows that man is free and that because he is free, he alone is responsible for his life. Man, if he realizes that he is free, cannot be guilty to anyone else; for no one else can qualify as his judge. If he is free, he is his own judge. Aegistheus is saying that it is the bane and remorse of the king to judge other men and know that kings themselves cannot be judged. The difference between Aegistheus and Orestes is that Orestes does not judge other men in order to make them subservient. Orestes does not aspire to be God. Zeus, on the other hand, tells Aegistheus, "You have. The same as mine... The bitterness of knowing men are free... But your subjects do not know it, and you do."
Zeus tells Aegischeus that the trouble that faces them is that Orestes knows that he is free. "Once freedom lights its beacon in a man's heart," he says; "the gods are powerless against him."47 Orestes, like Lord Byron's Prometheus, has stolen the fire of the gods and they cannot touch him as long as he insists on bearing it. If Zeus had wanted to dominate man, then he should not have made them free. "The first crime was mine," he says; "I committed it when I made man mortal."48 "So long as there are men on earth," he acknowledges, "I am doomed to go on dancing before them."49

 Clytemnestra is one of the remorse bearers. She does not have "the bane of gods and kings."50 She feels that she "bears the heaviest load of guilt."51 "Spit in my face," she says, "call me murderess and whore. But no one has the right to speak ill of my remorse."52 She believed her husband's lie. She, like Lady Macbeth, cannot wash her sins clean. But Clytemnestra really does not want to wash her sins clean. If you have no remorse, she says, "nothing remains"53 to fill out the void of your life.

47 Ibid., p. 104. 48 Ibid., p. 101. 49 Ibid., p. 104. 50 Ibid., p. 103. 51 Ibid., pp. 70-71. 52 Ibid., p. 71. 53 Ibid., p. 72.
Electra, unlike her mother, is not filled with remorse. She is "sick with hate" for her mother and step-father. She rebels against them and against her town. She dreams of revenge and shows her spite by sacrilegiously wearing a white dress on Dead Man's Day. But after Orestes fulfills her dream and murders her mother, the object of her hate is removed and she is faced with anguish. When the flies of Zeus threaten her, she seeks refuge in Zeus. She learns, with the temptation of Zeus, to hate Orestes. "She lived in peace, dreaming her dreams," Zeus tells Orestes while baiting Electra. Now Electra must face her own Nothingness or find refuge in Zeus. She denies the reality of her dreams when she learns to hate Orestes. "I dreamt the crime," she says to Orestes, "but you carried it out." She uses, with the help of Zeus, her hate for Orestes to fill the gap of her own Nothingness. When Electra focuses her attention on Orestes as an object of hate, she once again becomes an unthinking thing. Because "the consciousness of man in action is non-reflective consciousness," Electra does not have to face herself as long as she can hate. "Anguish," writes Sartre, "is the reflective apprehension of freedom by itself. . . . It appears at the

54 Ibid., p. 67.
55 Ibid., p. 113.
56 Ibid., p. 114.
57 Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 36.
moment that I disengage myself from the world where I had been engaged."\textsuperscript{58} Electra, when she discovered anguish through the absence of hate for her mother and step-father, turned back to the objective world and to hate for Orestes. "I hate you,"\textsuperscript{59} she tells him in desperation and guilt. In her refusal to face herself, she is like the people of Argos.

The people stand as a body engaged in the world in guilt in order to forget itself. They could not stand their own Nothingness, so they invented Zeus in order to become "god-fearing."\textsuperscript{60} They were guilty; but as long as they remained remorseful, they were faced with anguish. If they could be blamed, then they could not be held responsible for their own freedom. As long as they engage in remorse to Zeus, then they are not faced with their own Nothingness. They erect a statue to Zeus in the middle of the town square. It is awesome and fearful. Blood smears its cheeks. The people file by and pay tribute to Zeus's retributive power. The stooped and crawling figures of the women of Argos come to the statue of Zeus bearing libations on Dead Man's Day. For fifteen years the people of Argos sustain the myth instigated by Aegisthus. Dead Man's Day is a special time to them, when the deceased seek vengeance.

\textsuperscript{58}Ibid., p. 39.

\textsuperscript{59}Sartre, "The Flies," p. 115.  
\textsuperscript{60}Ibid., p. 75.
The people of Argos are guilty because they knew what was going to happen to Agamemnon when he returned from battle. They "held their tongues" because "they looked forward to seeing, for once, a violent death." They heard his cries of death. Zeus says, "When the folks of Argos heard their King screaming his life out in the palace, they still kept silence, but they rolled their eyes in a sort of ecstasy, and the whole town was like a woman in heat." They were guilty. It was their sin, and the children born in Argos were born into a world of sin. "Please forgive us," the children of Argos shout on Dead Man's Day. "We didn't want to be born, we're ashamed of growing up."  

Agamemnon had been god for the people of Argos. When they killed him, they were horrified. When their god died, they were alone. Like Electra, they had to replace one object of worship with another, i.e., "turn back to the world." They accepted Aegistheus as their god. Zeus says, the great mistake of Agamemnon was that "he put a ban on public executions." "A good hanging now and then," Zeus surmises, "entertains folk in the provinces and robs death of its glamour. . . ."  

The people of Argos enact their guilt in every motion they make. They become their guilt. When the dead return on Dead Man's Day, the fears of the people are made concrete. As one townsman says, each

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61 Ibid., p. 54.  
62 Ibid., p. 55.  
63 Ibid., p. 80.  
64 Ibid., p. 54.
year the dead get "nastier and nastier." The nastier the dead get, the more concrete they become as objects to fear. The dead remind the people of Argos of their sins, and they fall down in sick repentance. One man says:

I stink! Oh, how I stink! I am a mass of rottenness. See how the flies are teeming round me, like carrion crows. . . . That's right, my harpies; sting and gouge and scavenge me; bore through my flesh to my black heart. I have sinned a thousand times, I am a sink of ordure, and I reek to heaven. 66

The people of Argos want to be chastised for their "great shame." Punishment to them is a kind of justice. It assures them that god, as a god of justice, is stable enough to make them abide by his laws. God's laws make them something already established; thus, they do not have to face the anguish of their own free choice. When the people of Argos are judged, they are relieved of the "emptiness" of freedom, the responsibility of judgement, the bane of gods and kings and mortal men. They are beetles.

65 Ibid., p. 75.
66 Ibid., p. 77.
CHAPTER III

ESCAPE FROM FREEDOM: THE RESPECTFUL PROSTITUTE

Bad Faith and the Structure of Being

The structure of Being is such that it gives rise to Nothingness. As Sartre says, "Nothingness lies coiled in the heart of being--like a worm."\(^1\) Nothingness is neither separate from nor an integral part of Being. Sartre insists that Being does not stand in relation to Nothingness but only gives rise to it. He says, "The notion of Being as full positivity does not contain Nothingness as one of its structures."\(^2\) It is that aspect of Being which does not cling to positivity that gives rise to Nothingness, that makes man self-conscious, and that makes man free. Man is free because he is potentially what he is not, \textit{i.e.}, because the for-itself is not necessarily any "particular" thing. Man always goes beyond himself, projects himself into the world, and becomes what he is not. The very nature of Being "implies a being other than itself."\(^3\)


\(^2\) Ibid., p. 22.

\(^3\) Ibid., p. lxxii.
Because consciousness is always in a state of becoming something in-itself but never obtains its goal, it is continually seeking security. The project of consciousness is to become stable. In other words, man's project is to become God, if God is defined as "a being who is what he is--in that he is all positivity and the foundation of the world--and at the same time a being who is not what he is and who is what he is not--in that he is self-consciousness and the necessary foundation of himself."\(^4\) The idea of God, for Sartre, is by definition a logical contradiction. It is man's plight to try to become something that is impossible, i.e., to be both necessary and contingent, both stable and self-conscious. Sartre's idea of God is opposed to that of Saint Thomas Aquinas, who sees the necessity of a non-contingent God that exists as **causa sui** and as pure thought. But for Sartre, the project of man as the idea of God is defeated before it ever gets started. He says, "Human reality . . . is by nature an unhappy consciousness with no possibility of surpassing its unhappy state."\(^5\)

> The idea of "bad faith" arises as a denial of the dual nature of consciousness and of the futility of man's project. In bad faith "it is from myself that I am hiding the truth."\(^6\) We continually live in bad

\(^4\)Ibid., p. 90.

\(^5\)Ibid.

\(^6\)Ibid., p. 49.
faith. Philosophically, bad faith is not "bad" in a moral sense. Bad faith only becomes "bad" to the degree to which freedom is denied.

To the extent that man can successfully stay immersed in the world, he can deny his contingency. The people of Argos were in bad faith when they immersed themselves in remorse. Electra was in bad faith when she immersed herself in hate. But consciousness by its very nature must reveal its own contingency. Every act of consciousness reveals consciousness as being contingent. Neither the people of Argos nor Electra was completely successful in denying consciousness. They were unsuccessful in "lying" to themselves. For Sartre they could be unaware of the lie but they could not be unconscious of it. It was a part of their consciousness because they created it. The Freudian psychoanalytic substitute for the notion of bad faith would replace the conscious but unaware "liar" with the unconscious lie coming from the "id." For Freud there would be a lie without a liar. However, because there is no non-conscious "id" for Sartre, the condition of a lie without being conscious of the lie does not obtain. Because of the dipolar nature of being, the deceiver and the deceived are contained within a single consciousness.

**Patterns of Bad Faith**

Consciousness can deceive itself in several ways, or what Sartre distinguishes as "patterns of flight." He says that we "flee to
escape anguish." In the drama *The Respectful Prostitute*, he illustrates several patterns. The four basic patterns illustrated are (1) "transcendence-facticity" in Lizzie, (2) "playing at being" in the senator and the Negro, (3) "being-in-guilt" in Lizzie and the Negro, and (4) "being-for-itself and being-for-others" in Fred. Bad faith is the central theme, for all the characters are shown to be "in flight." 

The plot of *The Respectful Prostitute*, like the plot of *The Flies*, is simple. Its complexity is the interaction between characters. Lizzie, a young attractive prostitute, is faced with the problem of conflicting emotions. She is a northern New Yorker living in a southern small town. Unaware of the conflict arising as she enters the town by train, she relates:

The two niggers kept to themselves and didn't even look at me. Then four white men got on the train, and two of them made passes at me. They had just won a football game, and they were drunk. They said that they could smell nigger and wanted to throw them out the window. The blacks fought back as well as they could, and one of the white men got punched in the eye. And that was when he pulled out a gun and fired. That was all. The other nigger jumped off the train as we were coming into the station.

The white was a town-son. Because he did not want to get convicted of murder, he framed the story of the Negro trying to rape

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7 Ibid., p. 40.
Lizzie. Lizzie, as the major witness, is caught between telling the truth and convicting the white of murder, or lying and condemning to death by lynching the Negro who fled. The white is a nephew of one of the state senators. To condemn him would be to ostracize herself from the town. The Negro is a nobody, but to condemn him would be to condemn an innocent person.

When the play opens, Fred, the senator's son, has just spent the night as a customer of Lizzie. He wants to gain her confidence and persuade her to testify against the Negro. Fred is unsuccessful in his appeal; but when his father talks to her, Lizzie is persuaded to lie. The senator forces her into a situation over which she has no control because she cannot overcome her desire to be respected. The play is based on Lizzie's forced lie and on her "flight" from herself. Each of the characters in the play is lying in one way or another. Insofar as they lie to themselves, they are in "bad faith."

The pattern of bad faith that Lizzie portrays is one Sartre calls "transcendence-facticity." In Being and Nothingness he relates an incident about a woman who deceives herself much as Lizzie does. They both want to be respected and fool themselves into believing that they are. About the woman who goes out with a man for the first time:

She knows very well the intentions which the man who is speaking to her cherishes regarding her. She knows also that it will be necessary sooner or later for her to make a decision. But she does not want to realize the urgency;
she concerns herself only with what is respectful and discreet in the attitude of her companion. ... The man who is speaking to her appears to her sincere and respectful as the table is round or square, as the wall coloring is blue or gray.\(^9\)

She is capable, like the people of Argos, of stopping time. She refuses to face her future choice. Sartre says, "She attaches to the conversation and to the behavior of the speaker, the immediate meaning, which she imagines as objective qualities."\(^10\) She makes a non-temporal "fact" of any quality her imagination attributes to a respectful situation.

Lizzie, on the other hand, believes factually that each man that sleeps with her respects her. She refuses to take money from Fred in order to make him want to patronize her. She likes "respectable" men like Fred and wants only "regular" customers. Fred tells her:

> I'll put you in a beautiful house, with a garden, on the hill across the river. You'll walk in the garden, but I forbid you to go out; I am very jealous. I'll come to see you after dark, three times a week—on Tuesday, Thursday, and for the weekend.\(^11\)

Lizzie yields to Fred's desire even though she hates him for forcing her to lie and condemn the Negro. Her desire to be respected overcomes her other emotions. If Fred can stop the temporal flux for her by putting her in a house and making his respect for her a fact not


\(^10\)Ibid.

subject to time or change, then she will do anything he wants. She interprets Fred, who has called her "slut" and "devil" and has tricked her from the beginning, as offering her only love and respect. She convinces herself that there is only love intended in this sexual act and that this love makes her respectable. "You held me tight, so tight," she says to Fred about the night before, "and then you whispered that you loved me. . . . Don't you remember how you wanted to put out the light and how you loved me in the dark? I thought that was nice and respectful."  

With Fred, Lizzie is able to transcend her immediate situation to the lofty pinnacles of intellectual love. In the sex act, she can gain the respectable position of being intellectual. She interprets Fred's actions as intellectually respectful and likes him because he is not "animal." She will not sleep with a Negro. But at the same time, she must not lose the concrete stability of the sex act and the union that is formed. It ties her down and she likes its "facticity." In the sex act, she is both concrete fact and transcended intellect. She knows that Fred desires her, and she wants to be the object of his desire. But like the woman out with the man for the first time, "the desire cruel and naked would humiliate and horrify her."  

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12 Ibid., p. 256.

13 Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 55.
In the sex act Lizzie tries to achieve the union of the for-itself and the in-itself. She becomes in-herself when she is the object of Fred’s desire. She is for-herself when she achieves the lofty heights of intellectual love. She bounces between the two poles like a ping pong ball. She tries to pull them together, but her project is doomed to failure. She cannot both desire and totally be the object of desire. She cannot be "God."

Desire, like guilt, is an important concept for Sartre. In a sense, all lack is characterized by desire. Orestes desired to be a part of Argos in order to fill the void of his Nothingness. When the woman in bad faith wants to be made the object of desire, she wants her body to be concrete and without void. Her lover must address his actions to "her body as object." He must fill her void. But as soon as she becomes the object of his desire, her freedom is threatened and she flees to the region of the intellect. Sartre writes of the woman who is the object of desire, that when her lover takes her hand:

We know what happens next; the young woman leaves her hand there, but she does not notice that she is leaving it. She does not notice because it happens by chance that she is at this moment all intellect. She draws her companion up to the most lofty regions of sentimental speculation; she speaks of Life, of her life, she shows herself in her essential aspect—a personality, a consciousness.14

14 Ibid., pp. 55-56.
The woman desired, like Lizzie, has become both a body and an intellect. Her problem then becomes that of maintaining both poles simultaneously. She is an object only insofar as she is conscious of her objectification. Thus, she can never achieve complete objectification. Nor can she be conscious without the factual world of which her body is a part.

Lizzie continually falls from intellect to body and starts the climb over again. "I can't help it," she says of her actions after the sex act, "the next morning I have to take a bath and run the vacuum cleaner."\(^{15}\) She seeks the rigor of an ordered room. "There we are," she says while cleaning up. "Everything's in place,"\(^{16}\) Order gives Lizzie a sense of stability because, to her as to the people of Argos, things that are in place do not change. They have the quality of being fixed in time. Order gives her the stability of being-in-itself.

Lizzie does not have to think in order to run the vacuum cleaner. She becomes a machine that puts everything in its already decided place. When her house work is done, she starts the transcendental ascent once more. She asks the senator how the mother of the young murderer would feel if she (Lizzie) saved her son. "She will love you,"\(^{17}\) he


\(^{16}\)Ibid., p. 254.

\(^{17}\)Ibid., p. 279.
assures her. Lizzie is inspired by his words. Becoming spiritual, she leaves the facticity of her house work. She will be "lofty" until she becomes insecure on her high perch. Then she will seek the ground again. Sartre says of the ascent to transcendence and descent to facticity that "at the instant when a person apprehends the one, he can find himself abruptly faced with the other." Bad faith seeks to establish the identity of the two moods in a single act.

Bad faith, in all its modes, aims at "establishing that I am not what I am." It is the nature of the for-itself to be continually in bad faith. Lizzie thought that she could wash away the prostitute in her by taking a bath and by being "loved." She wanted to be what she was not and could convince herself that she was not what she was. Her bad faith was the lie that she told herself.

Another pattern of bad faith is one that Sartre calls "playing at being." The play actor wants to put himself into the role of another person in order not to have to face himself. Sartre gives this example, he writes:

Let us consider the waiter in the café. 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. Finally there he returns, trying to imitate in his walk the

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18 Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 56.

19 Ibid., p. 37.
inflexible stiffness of some kind of automaton while carrying his tray with the recklessness of a tight-rope-walker by putting it in a perpetually unstable, perpetually broken equilibrium which he perpetually re-establishes by a light movement of the arm and hand. All his behavior seems to us a game. He applies himself to chaining his movements as if they were mechanisms, the one regulating the other, his gestures and even his voice seem to be mechanisms; he gives himself the quickness and pitiless rapidity of things. He is playing, he is amusing himself. But what is he playing? We need not watch long before we can explain it: he is playing at being a waiter in a cafe.\(^{20}\)

The senator plays at being a senator as the waiter plays at being a waiter. The senator plays the politician. He is everyone's friend and he thinks of everyone. By being The Senator who thinks only of others, he does not have to think of himself. He says of Lizzie, about whom he knows only that she is a prostitute, that "she impresses me as a mighty nice girl."\(^{21}\) He is everyone's friend because, as a senator, he is everyone's representative and no one's judge. As a politician, he is without scruple. He asks Lizzie, "Did the Negro rape you, my child?"\(^{22}\) He does not curse or blame the "nigger." He does not blame Lizzie. He is without principle, and for him the truth can easily be made a sham. He tells Lizzie that there are "various kinds of truths."

There are "common truths" such as that the Negro did try to rape

\(^{20}\) Ibid., p. 59.


\(^{22}\) Ibid.
Lizzie, and there are other kinds of truth such as that the murderer, if he is a town-son, could not be punished for murdering a Negro.

He will go to any means to stress his point. He becomes the most ideal of all senators when he says to Lizzie:

Look: suppose Uncle Sam suddenly stood before you. What would he say...? He would say: "Lizzie, you have reached a point where you must choose between two of my boys. One of them must go. What can you do in a case like this? Well, you keep the better man."\(^2\)

Of course, the senator (Uncle Sam) concludes that his nephew is the better man. He says to Lizzie:

I need him. He is a hundred-percent American, comes from one of our oldest families, has studied at Harvard, is an officer—I need officers—he employs two thousand workers in his factory—two thousand unemployed if he happened to die. He's a leader, a firm bulwark against the Communists, labor unions, and the Jews. His duty is to live, and yours is to preserve his life. That's all. Now, choose.\(^2\)

The senator is an expert at the art of persuasion. He knows how to make other people feel good, and feel important, and feel loved. He convinces Lizzie that to lie is better than not to lie. And in support of his position, he offers her the opinion of all who dictate his role. He asks her, "Do you suppose that a whole town could be mistaken? A whole town, with its ministers and its priests, its doctors, its lawyers, its artists, its mayor and his aides, with all its charities?"\(^2\)

whole town tells the senator what is right and what is wrong, and it is
his job to see that their orders are carried out. No doubt the sympathy
of the town would be with its native son regardless of his crime against
a Negro. Sartre says of all those who "play a role," like the senator,
that "the public demands of them that they realize it as a ceremony . . .
by which they endeavor to persuade their clientell . . . ."26 The
senator's client is Lizzie.

The senator is a good politician because he is able to play the
role well. He is able to suppress the Nothingness that his for-itself
gives rise to. He is good because there is not much "him" to object
to the senator. He is a good speaker. Sartre says, "The good speaker
is one who plays at speaking, because he cannot be speaking."27 He
cannot be speaking because there is no "him." There is only "the
senator" for him. If "the senator" ever became conscious during a
speech of himself as "self," he would not know what to say for himself.
He must play the role.

No matter how convincing the role the play-actor performs may
be, it is still an act of bad faith. The actor denies the freedom of the
for-itself to make itself when he becomes a "set" character in an already
written play. As Sartre says of the role of the café waiter:

> What I attempt to realize is a being-in-itself of the café
> waiter, as if it were not just in my power to confer their

26 Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 59. 27 Ibid., p. 60.
value and their urgency upon my duties and the rights of my position, as if it were not my free choice to get up each morning at five o'clock or to remain in bed, even though it meant getting fired.  

There is another character besides the senator that manifests his bad faith by "playing at being." The Negro plays the role of a southern Negro who has been trained to "merely" exist. He is a thing, an animal, a part of the scenery. He is anything but an individual responsible for himself and his community. As an object, he becomes the object of white abuse. Lizzie tries to get him to defend himself against the lies that "niggers are the Devil" and that a "nigger" is always guilty because "a nigger has always done something." When she gives him a revolver so that he can defend himself, he says, "I can't, ma'am. . . . I can't shoot white folks." She tells him that they will "bleed you like a pig," but he still will not defend himself. His role is that of a non-thinking animal. A "pig" would not dream of murdering his keeper, and the Negro is afraid to exist on his own.

The Negro's bad faith is in accepting the white man's lie that Negroes are inferior. He knows that it is possible for him to kill his white pursuers. But even when it means his life, he will not leave the security of his pattern. He prefers the bad faith of "play acting."

\[28\] Ibid.


\[30\] Ibid., p. 263.

\[31\] Ibid., p. 277.
Sartre characterizes another pattern of bad faith as "being the guilty one." 32 He writes:

Let us take an example: A homosexual frequently has an intolerable feeling of guilt, and his whole existence is determined in relation to this feeling. One will readily foresee that he is in bad faith. In fact it frequently happens that this man, while recognizing his homosexual inclination, while avowing each and every particular misdeed which he has committed, refuses with all his strength to consider himself "a pederast." His case is always "different," peculiar; there enters into it something of a game, of chance, of bad luck; the mistakes are all in the past; they are explained by a certain conception of the beautiful which women can not satisfy; we should see in them the results of a restless search, rather than the manifestations of a deeply rooted tendency, etc., etc. 33

The homosexual is afraid of himself. His personality is split between being one thing and convincing himself that he is another. He is guilty in a way that the senator would not be. The homosexual in most societies exists in a state of guilt. There are basically two modes of bad faith through guilt that manifest themselves. One is that of the people of Argos. They want their guilt because it affirms to them that there is someone to judge them. The other mode is the belief that guilt is inflicted by an unjust cause and that the guilty should not have to suffer the pain of guilt. The person in the second mode of guilt thinks of himself as the victim of an unjust judge. The homosexual sees the society

32 Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 63.
33 Ibid.
that condemns him as cruel and insensitive. He sees himself as the victim of cruel circumstances.

Lizzie is like the homosexual in that she will not face herself. The homosexual will not accept himself as "a pederast." Lizzie will not accept herself as a prostitute. If Lizzie admitted that she was a common prostitute, she would have to face the shame of social judgment. She must think of herself as a "respectful prostitute." She has two escape routes. She holds herself aloof, and she considers herself unlucky. For the second of these, she blames the bracelet that she has been wearing since the day she first became a prostitute. But she is reluctant to give it up. With the Negro in her room and the police knocking at her door, she says: "I knew it had to happen. [She exhibits the bracelet.] It's this thing's fault. [She kisses it and puts it back on her arm.] I guess I'd better keep it on me."34 And when the Negro is finally trapped in her room and the whites are coming after him, she says to her bracelet, "It's all your fault! You pig of a snake!"35 As long as she can convince herself and keep on convincing herself that she is not the cause of her own situation, then she will not have to accept the responsibility or the guilt that accompanies being a prostitute.


Because the forces of the society in which she lives are strongly against her, Lizzie cannot successfully overcome her guilt. She asks the Negro, "You too? You feel guilty?"\(^36\) Lizzie is continually in guilt and continually trying to overcome her guilt. The Negro, of a more passive nature, is also a "being-in-guilt." He is guilty simply because he is a Negro, and a Negro "has always done something wrong" in his society. It is ironic that in the plot that ties them both together, both are innocent by law, and yet both feel guilty. Their degree of bad faith depends on the intensity of their guilt.

Fred, the senator's son, exemplifies yet another mode of bad faith. His pattern is perhaps the most distinct of all the characters in the drama. It is based upon man's temptation to rationalize. Fred, like all those who flee in bad faith, plays a double role. His conscious and rational being seeks to unite the being of his for-itself with the being of his in-itself. On the level of action in the world, the being of his for-itself is replaced by a being-for-others. Sartre writes that "the equal dignity of being, possessed by being-for-others and by being-for-myself permits a perpetually disintegrating synthesis and a perpetual game of escape from the for-itself to the for-others and from the for-others to the for-itself."\(^37\) There are two ways to deny the instability

\(^36\)Ibid., p. 278.

\(^37\)Sartre, \textit{Being and Nothingness}, p. 58.
of the for-itself by acting in the world. One way is to insist that one is what one has been in the world, and the other way is to insist that one is not what one has been in the world. About these two possibilities, Sartre writes that it is at once possible to affirm "that I am what I have been (the man who deliberately arrests himself at one period in his life and refuses to take into consideration the later changes) and that I am not what I have been (the man who in the face of reproaches or rancor dissociates himself from his past by insisting on his freedom and on his perpetual re-creation)."\(^{38}\)

Fred represents the first of these possibilities. He insists that he is what he has been and that he is what his family has been. He denies the possibility that he may be something other than that which his past has shown him to be. He says to Lizzie when she opens the window the morning after they have slept together, "I don't want any sunshine in here. I want it to be like it was last night. Close the window, I said. I'll find the sunshine again when I go out."\(^{39}\) In denying that time has elapsed since he entered the room of a prostitute, Fred does not think of himself as outside the established order of his past. As long as he is with Lizzie, he is outside time. He is for-himself. He holds on to the feeling of power he has in being-for-himself as long as he can. But

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\(^{38}\) Ibid.

\(^{39}\) Sartre, "The respectful Prostitute," p. 255.
finally the thought of the outside world that is beginning to move as the sun comes up closes in on him. When he faces the outside world, then he can justify his actions for-himself only in so far as they are related to his being-for-others. He tells Lizzie that the reason he slept with her was to gain her confidence and was not to enjoy her. At this point he is completely caught up in being-for-others and has forgotten that he was for-himself the night before when he told her he loved her.

Lizzie says:

So that was why. You said to yourself: "There's the babe. I'll go home with her and arrange the whole thing." So that's what you wanted! You tickled my hand, but you were as cold as ice. You were thinking: "How'll I get her to do it?" But tell me this! Tell me this, my boy. If you came up here with me to talk business, did you have to sleep with me? Huh? Why did you sleep with me, you bastard? Why did you sleep with me?

Lizzie does not know it and Fred would never admit it in the daytime, but the reason he slept with her was not "business." He slept with her for-himself. The conflict that arises in him is the for-itself that opposes the for-others. In a business-like manner he turns to helping his cousin. About Thomas he says, "He comes from a good family. That might not mean much to you, but he's from a good family all the same. . . . Thomas is a leading citizen, that's what counts." Fred, as for-others, justifies himself in his social world. He can also

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40 Ibid., p. 263.
41 Ibid., pp. 262-263.
justify the cold-blooded murder of a Negro by a "leading citizen" in the same social world. When he is a part of society, he is bound to be right. As his father said, "Do you suppose that a whole town could be mistaken?" 42

When Lizzie turns against Fred and threatens him with a revolver, he says:

Go ahead! Shoot! You see, you can't. A girl like you can't shoot a man like me. Who are you? What do you do in this world? Do you even know who your grandfather was? I have a right to live; there are things to be done, and I am expected to do them. 43

Fred is holding himself up with his social position. The irony is that Lizzie, like the Negro, believes him and believes that he is better than she. Neither Lizzie nor the Negro can escape the social standard. Lizzie is blind to Fred even when he turns back to being for-himself. "I'll put you in a beautiful house," he tells Lizzie in an appeal to her. "You'll walk in the garden, but I forbid you to go out," 44 he says as a jealous lover. When he visits her there, he will become for-himself. When he is not there, he will be for-others.

The second pattern of bad faith through ambiguity of temporal orientation is not represented in The Respectful Prostitute. Garcin in

42 Ibid., p. 271.
43 Ibid., p. 281.
44 Ibid., p. 281.
No Exit fits this particular pattern. Unlike Fred who insists that he is what he has been, Garcin insists that he is not what he has been. "In the face of rancor" he insists upon his freedom and upon his "perpetual rebirth." "A man is what he wills himself to be," he says. He does not want to admit that "he" is the person who was a coward. "I died too soon," he says. "I wasn't allowed to do my deeds."  

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45 Sartre, No Exit, p. 44.

46 Ibid.
CHAPTER IV

FREEDOM AND OTHER PEOPLE: NO EXIT

The "Other" as Part of the Structure of Being

Sartre writes that "I need the Other in order to realize fully all the structures of my Being." \(^1\) For a complete elucidation of the notion of bad faith it is necessary to consider the structure of Being as participating in being-for-others. Both Fred in The Respectful Prostitute and Garcin in No Exit are in their essential structures, beings in bad faith for-others. When one acts, one acts in a world in which there are other people. The world in which he acts gives him the criteria for the way he judges himself. Therefore, it becomes important to him how others see him. When other people enter the picture, a new relation between the for-itself and in-itself must be considered. Sartre writes, "There is a relation of the for-itself with the in-itself in the presence of the Other." \(^2\) Being-for-others is not a new pole of Being. It is a level that necessarily arises because of the structure of the world in which one lives. \(^3\) If the other people in one's field of consciousness

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\(^1\) Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, translated and with an introduction by Hazel E. Barnes (New York, 1956), p. 262.

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 361.
were not conscious of him or if one did not act in a world in which there were other people, then one would not modify his original pre-reflective mode of existence. Other people make one aware of himself. Other people necessitate "being-for-others." It is the presence of other people that gives Sartre the basis for the important emotions that constitute all concrete relations in his psychoanalysis. Shame, for example, arises only when one encounters the other. "Shame," Sartre writes, "is in its primary structure shame before somebody." He goes on to give this striking illustration:

I have just made an awkward or vulgar gesture. This gesture clings to me; I neither judge it nor blame it. I simply live it. I realize it in the mode of for-itself. But now suddenly I raise my head. Somebody was there and has seen me. Suddenly I realize the vulgarity of my gesture, and I am ashamed."

Lizzie is ashamed of being a prostitute not for herself, but because she is a prostitute in a society that looks down on prostitutes. If she had been one of the "holy" prostitutes of Biblical time, then she would not have felt shame. If the Negro had been a Negro in Africa, where being a Negro is accepted as the norm, then he would not have felt shame for being black. The individual's field of reference necessarily goes beyond himself. In the case of Lizzie and the Negro, it stopped with their immediate society.

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3 Ibid., p. 221. 4 Ibid.
The problem of the content of the individual's field of experience, insofar as it concerns other people, is one of concern to both psychologist and psychiatrist. R. D. Laing in Interpersonal Perception writes:

My field of experience is, however, filled not only by my direct view of myself (ego) and of the other (alter), but of what we shall call metaperspectives—my view of the other's (your, his, her, their) view of me. I may not actually be able to see myself as others see me, but I am constantly supposing them to be seeing me in particular ways, and I am constantly acting in the light of the actual or supposed attitudes, opinions, needs, and so on the other has in respect of me.

From this we see that as my identity is refracted through the media of the different inflections of "the other"—singular and plural, male and female, you, he, she, them—so my identity undergoes myriad metamorphoses or alterations, in terms of the others I become to the others.

Sartre characterizes the act of being intended by another's consciousness as "the look." He says, "My apprehension of the Other in the world as probably being a man refers to my permanent possibility of being-seen-by-him."\(^5\) If my world did not have other people in it, it would be a very different world. It is the possibility that I am a part of other people's worlds, as they are a part of mine that makes me act "for" others. Sartre gives this example of how "the look" of another person can completely reorient my world.

Let us imagine that moved by jealousy, curiosity, or vice I have just glued my car to the door and looked through a keyhole. I am alone and on the level of non-thetic

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\(^6\) Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 257.
self-consciousness. This means first of all that there is no self to inhabit my consciousness; nothing therefore which I can refer my acts in order to qualify their. . . . I am my acts and hence they carry in themselves their whole justification. . . . Thus not only am I unable to know myself, but my very being escapes. . . .

But all of a sudden I hear footsteps in the hall. Someone is looking at me. . . . I am suddenly affected in my being. . . . Essential modifications appear in my structure. . . . I see myself because somebody sees me.

As long as one is alone, there is no one to judge him or to make him guilty. But as soon as another person enters the room, one must face the possibility that he is judging one. One knows that one can and does judge him. Erskine Caldwell, in the short story "We Are Looking at You, Agnes," illustrates the agony that others can cause, particularly if they are relatives. Agnes was a farm girl who went to the big city and became a prostitute. Each year she returned home for Christmas.

Caldwell has Agnes say of her family, "Once a year at Christmas, they sit and look at me, but none of them ever says anything about it. They all sit in the parlor saying to themselves, 'We are looking at you, Agnes.'"

The shame that Agnes feels when she is faced with her relatives is an amplification of the shame everyone feels when he is face to face with another person. One does not feel that people who are strangers

7 Ibid., pp. 259-260.

8 Erskine Caldwell, "We Are Looking at You, Agnes," The Complete Short Stories of Erskine Caldwell (Boston, 1924), p. 601.
judge him as a parent or relative would, but one is nevertheless suspicious and uneasy at their "look." When one is faced with another person, the problem for one becomes proving to the other person that one is "innocent" or that one is "in the right." As soon as the other appears, he presents himself to one as competitive. Alfred Stern in *At Existential Psychoanalysis* writes:

Being seen by the other person means to grasp oneself as an unknown object of unrecognizable judgements... A judgement, according to Sartre, is the transcendental act of a free person. The fact of being seen changes me into a being without defence against a freedom which is not my freedom. Being seen by the other person makes us slaves; looking at the other person, we are masters. The "other" stands as judge and who challenges individual freedom. (The realization that)

As long as there are no other candidates, he remains unthreatened. But as soon as competitors enter the race, his security is shaken. The more opposition that there is for him, the less likely he is to win the race. Since it is man's project to become God and not everyone can be God, everyone is in competition with everyone else. God is never an object, but anyone becomes an object when another "looks" at him. The world, as a world in which there are always other people, presents itself as a constant threat to individual security. It is the "other" who stands as judge and who challenges individual freedom. (The realization that)

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The Inevitability of Conflict

(The literary setting for *No Exit* is Hell) Maurice Cranston in his book on Sartre tells us that it is important to remember that "all the characters are dead." But if "hell is other people," then it is not really important whether all the characters are dead or alive. Sartre believes neither in Heaven nor in Hell. "Hell" exists wherever people are faced with other people. "Hell" exists the moment that one becomes aware that there are other people in the world and that they are aware of him. The major concern of *No Exit* is to express what it means to exist in a world with other people. That *No Exit* is set in "Hell" is a dramatic technique to emphasize the inescapability of the situation. For Sartre, one can never escape "the look" of the other even if he is dying. Sartre cites Faulkner's *Light in August* for an


example of "the look" of another when he is dying. Joe Christmas has just been castrated and is about to die. Faulkner writes:

But the man on the floor had not moved. He just lay there, with his eyes open and empty of everything save consciousness, and with something, a shadow, about his mouth. For a long moment he looked up at them with peaceful and unfathomable and unbearable eyes. Then his face, body, all, seemed to collapse, to fall in upon itself and from out the slashed garments about his hips and loins the pent back blood seemed to rush like a released breath. It seemed to rush out of his pale body like the rush of sparks from a rising rocket; upon that black blast the man seemed to rise soaring into their memories forever and ever. They are not to lose it, in whatever peaceful valleys, beside whatever placid and reassuring streams of old age, in the mirroring face of whatever children they will contemplate old disasters and newer hopes. It will be there, musings, quiet, steadfast, not fading and not particularly threadful, but of itself alone serene, of itself alone triumphant.

Joe had spoiled the joy of the sadistic citizens when he turned and looked at them. The "good citizens" were made to feel guilty. He made them ashamed, and then he died. He stripped them of their righteousness. Sartre says that "I am guilty first when beneath the Other's look I experience my alienation and my nakedness as a fall from grace which I must assume. This is the meaning of the famous line from scripture: 'They knew that they were naked.'"

When Joe looked at the townspeople he made them feel naked and defenseless. After he was dead, they could never again recapture

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their self-righteousness by playing God and judging him. They had been judged and would carry his judgement with them to the end of their days. He had had the last word.

(In No Exit, the people are cast and the judgements they encounter are threatening. Hell is a supreme judgement symbolic of the many smaller judgements encountered in life. Estelle is a vain young society girl who kills her own child. Inez is a sadistic and hardened lesbian who leads her best friend to suicide. Garcia is a pacifist journalist who deserts his job and wife in time of danger. All three are psychological dramas arising out of social situations.

It is society that judges their character. "Other" people comprise their society. When the society is narrowed to three members, the internal conflict becomes obvious. Inez says "each of us will act as torturer of the one others." She expresses Sartre's idea that each member of society is estranged from each other member "to the exact extent to which he demands the alienation of the other." \(^{14}\) Wilfrid Desan in The Tragic Finale writes of Sartre's drama that "all through Sartre's descriptions of the relations with the Other runs the external theme of conflict." \(^{15}\)

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15 Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 376.
When the play opens, Garcin enters a room marked "Hell." It is of Second Empire Style. There are three obtrusive couches of different colors, and there are no chairs. The only door locks behind him, and there are no windows. A huge bronze ornament garnishes the mantelpiece, but there are no mirrors. The buzzer which is supposed to summon the valet is not reliable. There are no beds. The lights are constantly turned on with no way to turn them off. Everything about the room offends good taste. There is no design and no convenience. Garcin is cautious if not taken aback.

When Inez enters, she, like Garcin, is suspicious. The first thought that comes to her is that there must be instruments of torture hidden somewhere in the room. She is suspicious of the ornament.

When convinced that there are no instruments of torture at hand, she concludes that her torture is "torture by separation." She does not want to find her girlfriend, Florence.

Garcin has his face buried in his hands when Estelle, the third and last "guest," enters. Immediately, she supposes that he is her faceless torturer. She pays no attention to Inez.

Garcin, Inez, and Estelle represent three character types, in each there is a definite conflict. Garcin struggles to "face the situation" so that fate will not spring on him "from behind." He tries to be...
brave and to be prepared for whatever may come. But when he finds no one to turn to, he asks, "How shall I endure my own company?"

In the small room, he cannot escape himself. He cannot turn out the lights and his eyelids will not shut. He must constantly be aware of himself and where he is. He tries to assure himself that he is brave by telling Inez, "I can assure you I'm not frightened. Not that I take my position lightly; I realize its gravity only too well. But I'm not afraid." Garcia's internal conflict is that his ideal person is one that does not need other people. He aspires to bravery, but he will never achieve it. When he turns to himself, he finds only emptiness.

His only recourse is to turn to the outside world. But when he turns outside, he does not feel secure within himself. He tries to build up his own ego by asking Estelle, "So I attract you, little girl? It seems you were making eyes at me?" In his attempt at wantoness, the very weak nature of his questions cause Estelle to reject him. When Estelle refuses to treat him as a "real" man, he resorts to bugging her. "Perhaps you're shy..." he tells her. But his attempt is devastated when Inez, in Estelle's defense, tells him, "We know you were a deserter." He is quiet. He tried to build up his ego but was reduced by a woman to the position of a coward. Estelle has failed him and Inez has embarrassed him, but he can never give up his project.

18 Ibid., p. 9.  
19 Ibid., p. 23.  
20 Ibid., p. 24.
When he realizes that Inez is a "strong" person and that Estelle is not, he pleads with Inez for support. "Just a spark of human feeling," he begs her. In asking her for her trust, he is asking her to make him secure in his position. She will never add to his security, for it is the plight of the "strong" person to make others suffer by reducing them to objects. The one person in "Hell" that has the constitution to help Garçon never will. Garçon is trying to establish his existence as "brave" by means of another's security, Sartre explains:

We have observed that the Other's freedom is the foundation of my being. But precisely because I exist by means of the Other's freedom, I have no security; I am in danger in his freedom. It moulds my being and makes me be, it causes values upon me and removes them from me; and my being receives from it a perpetual passive escape from self.

Garçon appeals to Inez and is reduced to the "nothing" that he is afraid he is. He turns again to Estelle. He asks for her love as he had asked Inez for trust. He says:

If you'll make the effort, if you'll only will it hard enough, I dare say we can really love each other. Look at it this way. A thousand of them are proclaiming I am a coward, but what do numbers matter? If there's someone, just one person, to say quite positively I did not run away.

21 Ibid., p. 30.
22 Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 366.
Garcia is assuming that the love of one person can negate for him the opinion of a thousand. He feels that if just one person believed in him, he would be saved. But if one person did believe in him, then he would want another, and another. Estelle says that she is willing to love him. She tells him that she loves him because she loves "all men."

"I'd love you," she says, "just the same, even if you were a coward."

As soon as he gains the "love" of someone that can "love" him, he does not want it, for he realizes that it can never achieve his ends. That she loves him cannot make him brave. His being brave does not matter to her loving him. Once again, he is reduced to his own Nothingness.

Garcia, at this point, realizes that it is hopeless to appeal either to Inez or to Estelle. He then turns to himself. He says that he will run away; but when he finds that the door is open, he shrinks back at what might be on the other side. In desperation, he blames other people for making him the way he is. He "died too soon," he claims. He says that he was not given a chance to "prove himself." But Juan pulls the curtain down on his attempt to convince himself that he is "strong" when she tells him that he "died a coward" even though he "died too soon."

She says:

One always dies too soon—or too late. And yet one's whole life is complete at that moment, with a line drawn neatly under it, ready for the winding up. You are—your life, and nothing else.
Inez is expressing Sartre's doctrine of action. In Being and Nothingness, he writes that "to be is to act." 26 It is in bad faith that Garcin insists that he is "essentially" brave when his actions have shown him to be a coward. Garcin is essentially exactly what his acts are and nothing more. For Sartre, man has no strictly human nature. "Human reality," he says, "informs us that for it being is reduced to doing." 27 Garcin would have been brave only if he had acted bravely. But if he had acted in a brave manner, then he would have been someone different, and thus, not "Garcin." If he had lived even one moment longer or acted the least bit different, he would have been a different person. For Sartre, he would have been the person that had chosen to live longer or act differently. But, of course, he was not. His "essentialism" could not make him what he was not. 28

Garcin's essentialism is being a coward.

At the end of the play, Garcin is exhausted. He has gone back and forth from Inez to Estelle for help and has found that he is alone in his project. When he tries to rely upon himself, he finds nothing to give him strength or support. He knows that Inez is the only one that can give him the security that he needs. She is "strong." He also knows that she will not give it to him. The conflict must go on forever. "I'm at your mercy," he tells Inez, "But you're at mine as well." 28

26 Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 478.
27 ibid.
Inez is at the mercy of Garcin because he is the only one that can gain what she wants: the affection of Estelle. It is in his power to torture Inez by capturing Estelle. When Inez is alone with Garcin, she is passive. But when Estelle enters, she responds. "You're very pretty," she says, "I wish we'd had some flowers to welcome you with." Inez likes Estelle but doesn't "care much for men."[29]

Once Estelle has entered, Inez responds to Garcin in a sadistic manner. Not only does she refuse to trust him, but she refuses to believe any of his excuses. When he tries to tell her that the reason they have all been thrown together is "a pure fluke" and is nothing of his own doing, she says, "I suppose you've got to reassure yourself somehow."[31] She assures him that "nothing was left to chance."[32]

Her abrupt honesty strips him of his protective veneer. If there is anything that he does not want to do it is to face himself honestly, and Inez continually forces him into situations in which he is confronted with his weak and naked self. [30]

(When she uses honesty as a mode of bad faith, it becomes sadism. Sartre explains sadism as a "will to dominate." In dominating the other, the sadist makes an)

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[29] Ibid., p. 11
[30] Ibid., p. 17.
[32] Ibid., p. 15.
[33] Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 403.
object of the other. Like Aegistheus, the sadist is able to play God, and thus, he is able to pursue the project of the for-itself. The sadist proves enslavement of the other by reducing him to the status of a "thing." Aegistheus reduced the people of Argos to "black vermin."

Inez reduces Garcin to a coward. Yet Inez also has the "bane of gods and kings." She tells Estelle, "I'm always conscious of myself—in my mind. Painfully conscious." She would like to forget herself just as Orestes wanted to forget that he was free. But she cannot because she will not let herself be subjected to another person's will. She tells Garcin, "I prefer to look you in the eyes and fight it out face to face." And she tells Estelle, "You can't escape me." She refuses to trust anyone, even for a moment. She must keep an eye on the others for her own security. She must make the others continually dance before her.

She teases Estelle into thinking that she has a pimple on her face. She enjoys seeing Estelle suffer from the lack of a mirror. "Look at me," she tells Estelle. "Am I not nicer than your glass." Inez teases Estelle, but her downfall is that she is not able to remain objective toward her. Because she needs to fulfill her emotional desires, she cannot remain aloof. She longs for her to the extent that she is willing to become the object of her love. But if she does, she cannot remain aloof. The

\[34\text{ibid., p. 19.}\]
\[35\text{ibid., p. 23.}\]
\[36\text{ibid., p. 21.}\]
\[37\text{ibid.}\]
guilt that her sadistic nature imposes upon her is too great for her to
suffer for long. She can never trust anyone more than a moment. Guilt
is involved in both sadism and masochism. In masochism, "I am guilty
due to the very fact that I am an object." In sadism, "I am guilty
toward myself since I consent to my absolute alienation." Inez is
guilty toward herself because by never trusting anyone, she alienates
herself from loving anyone. But her real conflict comes when she tries
to love Estelle. Then she feels guilty for becoming the object of Estelle's
affection. Inez is predominantly sadistic, but her occasional masochistic
desires cannot be suppressed.

To Freud there was no real conflict between masochistic and
sadistic tendencies within the same person. For him, a person was
either masochistic or sadistic but not both. The basic drive lay within
the domain of the libido and was not subject to free projection. For
Sartre, both masochism and sadism are manifestations of the same
project. In each, the ego is trying to escape the Nothingness of con-
sciousness. Inez cannot endure her own emptiness, so she attempts to
stabilize herself by fixing herself in relation to the objects around her.
Because her mode of bad faith is sadism, she makes objects of people.
But her mode of bad faith can become masochism, because in maso-
chism she is trying to accomplish the same project. She tries to fill

38 Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 378.
the void of her own emptiness with another's love. Estelle, on the other hand, is predominantly masochistic but is also subject to sadistic desires. Estelle is Inez's tempter. She is vain and selfish and wants to be continually the object of other people's attention. She wants to be an object in order to escape herself. Sartre characterizes Estelle's masochism when he writes:

I attempt therefore to engage myself wholly in my being as object. I refuse to be anything more than an object. I rest upon the Other, and as I experience this being-as-object in shame, I will and I love my shame as the profound sign of my objectivity. 39

Estelle does not pretend to be ashamed of her past. She glories in it. She is shameful, but she does not flee to remorse as do the people of Argos. She does not have to be ashamed because unlike the people of Argos, she is vain. But Inez becomes Estelle's antagonist when she forces her to be honest. When Estelle says that she is "absent," Inez reminds her that she is "dead." When Estelle says that it is "absurd" for her to be put in with people like Garcin and Inez, Inez reminds her that "They never make mistakes, and people aren't damned for nothing."40

Inez is able to make Estelle ashamed of herself because she is able to make her conscious of her vanity. Estelle's conflict is that

39Ibid., p. 378.

shame and vanity will not rest side by side. Estelle turns to Garcin as a refuge from Inez. She says of herself:

I've six big mirrors in my bedroom. . . . When I talked to people I always made sure there was one near by in which I could see myself. I watched myself talking. And somehow it kept me alert, seeing myself as others saw me. . . .

By fleeing to Garcin and to vanity, Estelle is able to overcome the shame that she faces when she faces Inez. She becomes an object for Garcin as she was an object for herself in her mirror. Marjorie Greene in Dreadful Freedom writes:

There is, it is true, an apparent escape from my objectification by another in the substitution of vanity for shame. In vanity I accept my object-status and try, by the kind of object I am—clever or beautiful or the like—to affect the other person in his very freedom.

Shame is the original emotion that one feels when one discovers oneself in a world with other people. Vanity is a negation of shame. The vain person becomes cold to other people and is capable of being indifferent to them. Estelle destroyed her own baby which was a supreme act of selfishness and vanity. She coolly relates, "There was a balcony overlooking a lake. I brought a big stone." She says that her lover was looking at her. "He could see what I was up to," she says, "and he kept on shouting: 'Estelle, for God's sake, don't!' I hated him.

41 Ibid., p. 30.
42 Marjorie Greene, Dreadful Freedom (Chicago, 1948), p. 82.
43 Sartre, "No Exit," p. 28.
then. He saw it all. Her lover made her ashamed and she hated him for it in the same way that she learned to hate him. Hate, like vanity, is a negation of shame. Estelle would not accept shame, so she replaced it with hate. Estelle hated her lover because she was too vain to hate herself. She blamed him for an act that she had committed and for which she was responsible. When Estelle tells Garcin the incident and feels ashamed before him, she learns to hate him.

Sartre describes hate as a despicable mode of being in the world. In *Anti-Semite and Jew*, about the anti-Semite, he writes:

> He is a man who is afraid. Not of the Jews, to be sure, but of himself, of his own consciousness, of his liberty, of his instincts, of his responsibilities, of solitariness, of change, of society, and of the world—of everything except the Jews. He is a coward who does not want to admit his cowardice to himself. . . . The Jew only serves him as a pretext; elsewhere his counterpart will make use of the Negro or the man of yellow skin. . . . Anti-Semitism, in short, is fear of the human condition. The anti-Semite is a man who wishes to be a pitiless stone, a furious torrent, a devastating thunderbolt—anything except a man.

Estelle does not direct her hate at any one group of people, but she does use hate as a "pretext." But as soon as she hates Garcin, she is no longer happy. In hating Garcin, she reaches the alienated position of being his judge. When she once achieves hate, she does not like it, so

44 Ibid.

she flees to desire. Desire, like vanity, is a negation of the for-itself. In desire, as in vanity, the body becomes object. Sartre says that "Desire is an attempt to strip the body of its movements as of its clothing and to make it exist as pure flesh."\(^{46}\)

When Estelle turns to desire she seeks to become her body. She tells Garcin that she is incapable of trusting him. Trust requires a thinking being and it is consciousness that she is trying to avoid. She does not want to think. She wants to be "pure flesh." "Kiss me, darling,"\(^{47}\) she says to Garcin. She becomes, much to the distress of Inez, the object of Garcin's passion.

Each of the characters has an internal conflict. Garcin is faced with both being a coward and being ashamed of being a coward. Inez is faced with both masochistic and sadistic desires. Estelle is faced with being both vain and ashamed. Not only is there internal conflict, but there is external conflict as well. Garcin needs the trust that only Inez can give him. Yet she can never trust him because she is distrustful by nature. Estelle needs the love that only Garcin can give to satisfy her desire. Yet Garcin rejects Estelle because she is weak and only brings out his weaknesses. Inez, on the other hand, seeks the affection that only Estelle can give. Yet Estelle despises Inez because Inez can

\(^{46}\) Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 389.

\(^{47}\) Sartre, "No Exit," p. 45.
only make her ashamed. Estelle does not like women and Inez does not like men. An external triangle of conflict is established. The conflict that they face when they face the others is their "Hell." They cannot escape. "Hell is--other people." They are eternally doomed to exist in both internal and external conflict.
CHAPTER V

FREEDOM AND ACTION: DIRTY HANDS

Freedom as the Fundamental Condition of Action

In Dirty Hands Sartre dramatizes a doctrine of action. His doctrine of action is necessarily dependent upon his idea of freedom. He writes, "We must recognize that the indispensable and fundamental condition of all action is the freedom of the acting being."

Freedom is related to action as the possibility of moving the checkers on a checker board is related to playing the game. If all the squares are occupied, then there can be no action. As some squares must be empty before one can play checkers, so man's Being must have a hollow space in it that gives him the freedom of movement. Man is capable of action because he is free. He is free because he is "not enough."

It is not only possible for man to act; he must act. "For human reality," Sartre writes, "to be is to act, and to cease to act is to cease to be." Because man is nothing in-himself, he must act in order to become part of the world. No Exit dramatizes the strife arising from

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2 Ibid., p. 476.
the acts of the individual "in-the-world." Strife is a part of the totality of Being. Dirty Hands is a study of action which is the totality of everything that man is. Man is not only known by his acts; he is his acts.

The revolutionary act particularly lends itself to the dramatic study of action. Revolution is built on action. In Dirty Hands the revolution that is taking place is the reorganization of Russia after World War II. "The party" that Sartre refers to is taken to be the Communist Party. It is engaged in a power struggle and the characters in the play are a part of that struggle. Three main kinds of actor are characterized: the intellectual, the leader, and the worker. Hugo is an intellectual that thrives on party ideals. Hoederer is the more practical-minded party leader that is willing to sacrifice some of his ideals in order to achieve a desired end. Olga is a party worker who cares neither for ideals nor for end results. Results are immediate for her. She has a job to do and she is committed to doing it regardless of what her task may be. Hugo alone is not committed to the party. Because he is an intellectual, his hands must remain clean.

**The Intellectual**

Hugo wants to be an active party member, but because he is an intellectual the other party members do not trust him. "He is an
undisciplined anarchistic individualist," one member says of him.

For several years Hugo edits the small party newspaper with great proficiency. However, he is not allowed to participate in any "real" action such as setting a bomb or starting a fire. When the newspaper folds, Hugo becomes secretary for Hoederer, one of the party leaders. However, because of internal friction, Hugo is asked to gain the confidence of Hoederer. The party intends to step in and have him assassinated if he deviates from the "party line." Hugo objects to his assignment. He says, "Give me something real to do." "This is what I propose; no need to contact me and no spying. I'll do the job myself." Hugo is convinced that he must do the job on his own in order to gain a place in the party and in order to gain the trust of the other party members. He assures Olga and Lewis that he will not fail when he says:

Before the end of the week you will be here, both of you, on a night such as this, and you will be waiting to hear from me; you'll be uneasy and you'll speak of me. I'll mean something to you then. You will ask yourselves: "What's he doing?" And then there will be a ring on the phone or someone will knock on the door and you will smile just the way you are smiling now and you will say: "He did it."  

Although Hugo is an idealist, he sees his ideals as being realized through the party. His commitment to the party is a commitment to

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4 Ibid., p. 146.
5 Ibid., p. 151.
6 Ibid., pp. 151-152.
action. He must act in order to be real. The party is necessary to Hugo for his own reality. When he commits the murder that the party orders, he goes to prison. Even while in prison it is important to him to be thought of as an "active" member. When he sees Olga after his release, he asks her "Did you--ever talk of me?" He says that he lay in bed at night and thought, "Maybe tonight they'll talk about me." The party becomes his sole reality. It becomes his life, after he once commits himself to it. Without it he could not be real. Being forgotten would be like being dead to him. "The main advantage over the dead," he tells Olga about his prison stay, was that he could "still imagine that you were thinking of me." "You have to talk to make sure you're alive," Olga says to him.

"The party" filled the void of Hugo's Nothingness. He wanted it to take away the emptiness that made him free. Without the party or something to take its place, he would himself be nothing; being nothing to him would be like being dead. As long as he could think of himself as a party member, then he would be a person with a place and a past. He thought that the concrete act of murder would make him a member of the party, and thus, real. Sartre explains the weight of

7 Ibid., p. 134.  
8 Ibid.  
9 Ibid.  
10 Ibid., p. 135.
the past and how it is felt by constantly bringing its motivation to 

mind. He says, "Yet if the motive is transcendent, if it is only the 

irremediable being which we have to be in the mode of the 'was,' if 

like all our past it is separated from us by a breadth of nothingness, 

then it can act only if it is recovered; in itself it is without force."

As long as Hugo can keep his past act immediately before him, 

he can be real. Therefore, he continually recalls his past action.

Another facet of his personality is that, like Lizzie in The Respectful 

Prostitute, he seeks the stability that order gives. He does not like 

change because he is afraid of losing his past. He does not want to lose 

the concrete "act" of murder. It helps to stabilize him. He tells Olga, 

"I had your room down pat. I was right about every detail. Everything 

is as it was in my memory. Only when I was in jail, I said to myself: 

'This is just a memory.'" At the same time that he makes his 

memories concrete, he realizes that they are not reality. The worst 

is that even the real room seems at times like a dream to him. "I 

went in," he tells Olga, "I looked at your room and it seemed no more 

real than my recollection. The cell, too, was a dream." Hugo's 


11 Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 450.


13 Ibid.
problem is that he has started to think in terms of absolute meaning. The "real" room has no more absolute meaning than the "dream" room. He does not want to be intellectual because he does not want all of his life to seem like a "dream." "I am in the party to forget myself,"¹⁴ he says. "I need discipline."¹⁵ He feels that if he can be disciplined, he will not have to face his own questioning intellect. "We're in a play," he confesses as he tries truly to believe in the party, "nothing seems to me to be entirely real."¹⁶

Hugo tries desperately to find the absolute value he is looking for in the party, but he continually reminds himself of his own contingency. "I am acting out a comedy of despair," he exclaims. "Will it ever end?"¹⁷ "How can you want to live when nobody believes in you?" he asks.¹⁸

Hugo tried to find reality through party action, but he was continually faced with contradiction within the party. He became the victim of party change. He murdered a man that he liked because the man deviated from the "party line." He went to prison for his crime. When he returned from prison, the party had changed "its" line. "The

¹⁴ibid., p. 178.  
¹⁵ibid., p. 177.  
¹⁶ibid., p. 180.  
¹⁷ibid., p. 204.  
¹⁸ibid., p. 211.
line is still the same?"\textsuperscript{19} he asked. When he finds out the truth, he is plunged headlong into the absurdity of having committed an absurd crime. Sartre explains the anguish that is felt with the realization that even "absolutes" can change. He writes: "The anguish which . . . manifests our freedom to our consciousness is witness of the perpetual modifiability of our initial project."\textsuperscript{20}

The murder that Hugo committed did not make him real. He says, "It was an assassination without an assassin."\textsuperscript{21} Because he feels empty, he can never be real. Even the party role proved unreal to him. He says, "An assassin is never really an assassin. They play at it."\textsuperscript{22} He tells Olga, "I often asked myself in prison: what would Olga say if she were here? What would she want me to think?"\textsuperscript{23} Hugo wanted to be told how to live, but he could not let himself participate in the orders. Even the discipline that the party imposed upon him did not make him real.

Hugo ironically says about the man he murdered for the "party line:"

\textsuperscript{19}ibid., p. 134.
\textsuperscript{20}Sartre, \textit{Being and Nothingness}, p. 464.
\textsuperscript{21}Sartre, "Dirty Hands," p. 240.
\textsuperscript{22}ibid., p. 204.
\textsuperscript{23}ibid., p. 240.
He'll have a statue to him at the end of the war, and streets named after him in all our cities, and his name in the history books. That makes me happy for him. And who was his assassin? "Who was he? Some character in the pay of Germany?" 24

Hugo wants to be more than "some character." He wants to be real and to have a real burden of crime. "Crime," he says, "It has no weight. I don't feel that it's there." 25 Hugo feels that he must claim his crime in order to make it honest and in order to honor the man that he needlessly murdered. He says:

A man like Hoederer doesn't die by accident. He died for his ideas, for his political program; he's responsible for his death. If I openly claim my crime and declare myself Raskolnikov and am willing to pay the necessary price, then he will have the death he deserves. 26

Raskolnikov is the underground name that Olga gave Hugo when he first joined the party. She said it "fitted like a glove." 27 Sartre writes of Dostoyevsky's character of the same name that:

One may recall the instant when Raskolnikoff decides to give himself up. These extraordinary and marvelous instants when the prior project collapses into the past in the light of a new project which rises on its ruins and which as yet exists only in outline, in which humiliation, anguish, joy, hope are delicately blended, in which we let go in order to grasp and grasp in order to let go--these have often appeared to furnish the clearest and most moving image of our freedom. 28

24 Ibid., p. 245.  
26 Ibid., p. 247.  
27 Ibid., p. 243.  
28 Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 476.
Hugo, like Raskolnikov, gives himself up. "Unsalvable," he tells his fellow party members, and allows them to shoot him. He changes his project, when the party changes its "line." He would rather die than to become the mere product of chance or to have murdered a man merely by "chance." He says:

Chance fired three shots, just as in cheap detective stories. Chance lets you do a lot of "ifing." "If I had stayed a bit longer by the chestnut trees, If I had walked to the end of the garden, If I had gone back to the summer-house. But me? Me? Where does it put me in the thing?"

Hugo feels that because the crime was a product of chance, it was not a real crime. It did not make him a real person. When he realizes that he is no more real than before the crime, it is of no consequence to him whether or not he changes his project. He does not fear death. If the party wants to shoot him, it is of no consequence to him. The party no longer wants Hugo, since he is an idealist and is "truly" not devoted to party action. Hoederer, who was his only friend, had told him, "How you cling to your purity, young man! How afraid you are to soil your hands!" Hugo wants ideals but not the reality of their realization. "You don't love men," Hoederer had said, "you love only principles." Hugo says of men that "it's not what they are that interests me, but what they can become."

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31 Ibid., p. 225. 32 Ibid.
The party did not want Hugo because they thought that he killed Hoederer out of jealousy rather than out of duty. Hugo had tried to kill Hoederer but was unable to do so until he found his wife in Hoederer's arms. Hugo says, "I can't separate the murder from the motive for it." Sartre distinguishes between motives as rational acts and as acts of passion. He writes:

"The motive . . . is generally considered as a subjective fact. It is the ensemble of the desires, emotions, and passion which urge me to accomplish a certain act. . . . The ideal rational act would therefore be the one for which the motives would be practically nil and which would be uniquely inspired by an objective appreciation of the situation. The irrational and passionate act will be characterized by the reverse proportion."

Hugo knew that he was motivated by passion and that the party was skeptical as to his intent. Sartre writes that the cause of action "appears only in and through the project of action," whereas the motive is behind the action. Behind Hugo's action was passion. Sartre writes:

"I can join the Socialist party because I judge that this party serves the interests of justice and of humanity or because I believe that it will become the principal historical force in the years which will follow my joining: these are causes. And at the same time I can have motives: a feeling of pity or charity for certain classes of the oppressed, a

33 Ibid., p. 241.

34 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 446-447.

35 Ibid., p. 443.
feeling of shame at being on the "good side of the barricade," as Gide says, or again an inferiority complex, a desire to shock my relatives, etc. 36

Hugo joined the party to spite his relatives. "I am not my father's son," 37 he declares. In joining the party and in carrying out its orders, he acted out of passion. His conflict is that he is both "irrational man" and "intellectual man." He is a party member by an irrational "motive," but he pursues the "party line" because he seeks a "cause" to be.

His wife, Jessica, is like him in that she is the product of a "bourgeois" family and education. She is intellectually lost. Life is a "sexual" game to her and one that she cannot take very seriously. She tells Hugo what she would do if "her" husband were assassinated. She says:

I would track down your assassins one by one, then I would make them burn with love for me, and when they began to think that they could console my haughty, despairing grief, I would stick a knife in their hearts. 38

When she asks, "Are we playing or not?" Hugo responds, "Playing." Later she says, "I'll play at being serious." 39 When she teases Hoederer into kissing her, she is "playing" with him and he recognizes

36 Ibid., p. 447.
her tease. When Hugo finds them together, he shoots Hoederer, whom he had come to like. Hugo's situation reaches its climax when he is left without his friend, his wife, or his party. He has murdered a man and it is all a game. He has only his ideals to live for and they no longer seem meaningful to him.

The Leader

Hoederer, unlike Hugo, commits himself to life and makes it meaningful. He is real because he is conscious of his actions as being a type of commitment. He makes the things around him seem real because they serve a purpose. He gives them meaning in terms of his commitment. When Hugo is alone with Jessica in Hoederer's office, he feels the objects around him that belong to Hoederer. He says of Hoederer's coffee pot, "It seems real when he touches it." Hugo is amazed that a coffee pot can have meaning. What he does not realize is that even Hoederer's coffee pot has no meaning outside of a situation in which it is used. In and of itself, it is meaningless.

Hugo describes the pragmatic situation when he says, "He pours the coffee in the cups. I drink. I watch him drinking and I feel that the taste of the coffee in his mouth is real. That it's the real flavor of coffee, real warmth, the real essence that is going to vanish. Only this will be left.

\[40 \text{Ibid., p. 187.}\]
In the action that Hugo describes, Hoederer manipulates the world around him and makes it work for him. Hugo acts "in" the world. His ideals do not commit him "to" the world. The coffee pot that Hugo holds in his hand is meaningless in and of itself. It is meaningful only in relation to some "one." It is neither ideal nor absolute as Hugo would have it to be.

Hoederer says that Hugo "does not love men," but that he loves "ideas." "I live in a set stage," Hugo responds. He does not know that he can change the setting. Life to Hugo is meaningless because, like the coffee pot, he takes it out of context. Hoederer sees man as in a struggling situation. Man, for Hoederer, is engaged "in" the world. He does not fear getting his hands dirty. "How afraid you are to soil your hands," Hoederer tells Hugo.

Hoederer is a realist in that he faces the facts of the world. He knows that politics is dirty, yet he is still a politician. "Revolutionary parties are organized to take power," he says. He wants to make sure that his party comes out on top of the power struggle, and he does not want to sacrifice its chances of success to ideals. Hoederer believes that the party should form an alliance with two other political factions and let the others take the blame for the war. He tells Hugo,

\[\text{Ibid.}\]
\[\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 223.\]
\[\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 220.\]
"The country is ruined; it may even serve as a battlefield. Any government that succeeds the Regent's will have to take terrible measures, which will make it hated." Hoederer does not want his party to have to take the responsibility and the hate that are inevitable due to the strife of the peasants and the insurrection that they will bring.

Hoederer is willing to merge temporarily with other factions and to change the "party line" in order to accomplish the desired result. He feels that merger is ultimately the best thing for the party. He tells Hugo:

We can take power with Karsky's liberals and the Regent's conservatives. No fuss, nobody hurt, a united front. No one can accuse us of having been put in by a foreign power. I demanded half the votes on the resistance committee, but I wouldn't be foolish enough to ask for half the ministries. A minority, that's what we must be. A minority, leaving to the other parties the responsibility for unpopular measures and thus able to win support by opposing these measures inside the government. They're cornered: in two years you'll see the bankruptcy of the liberals, and the whole country will ask us to take a try.

Hugo protests that the party must stick to its ideals or else it will be "done for." He says:

The party has one program: the realization of a socialist economy, and one method of achieving it: the class struggle. You are going to use it to pursue a policy of class collaboration in the framework of a capitalist economy. For years you will have to cheat, trick, and maneuver; we'll go from compromise to compromise.

\[45\text{Ibid.}\]
\[46\text{Ibid., p. 221.}\]
Before your comrades, you will have to defend the reactionary measures taken by the government in which you participate. No one will understand: the hardened ones will leave us, the others will lose whatever political faith they have just acquired. We shall be contaminated, weakened, disoriented; we shall become reformists and nationalists; in the end the bourgeois parties won't even have to go to the trouble of liquidating us. Hoederer! This party is yours, you cannot have forgotten the hardships you endured to forge it, the sacrifices that were required, the discipline you had to impose. I beg you: don't sacrifice it with your own hands.\(^{47}\)

"If you don't want to take chances," Hoederer tells Hugo, "you shouldn't be in politics."\(^{48}\) Hoederer is not afraid to act because he is not afraid of the consequences of action. He feels that the realization of the situation as absurd is only intellectual misfortune. Hugo's malady is that he is rich. Hoederer says:

Purity is an idea for a yogi or a monk. You intellectuals and bourgeois anarchists use it as a pretext for doing nothing. To do nothing, to remain motionless, arms at your sides, wearing kid gloves. Well, I have dirty hands. Right up to the elbows. I've plunged them in filth and blood. But what do you hope? Do you think you can govern innocently?\(^{49}\)

If Hugo remains "pure," he will never act in the "real" world. He has Hamlet's fatal reluctance to act. He is conscious of himself and his own absurdity. His question is "to act or not to act?" But he can only muse. He is too self-conscious to take a stand. Hoederer is

\(^{47}\) ibid.  
\(^{48}\) ibid.  
\(^{49}\) ibid., pp. 223-224.
conscious of history, but he is not immersed "in" history. He has both insight and utility and can see both the long and the short of political ideas. Sartre writes:

In so far as man is immersed in the historical situation, he does not even succeed in conceiving of the failures and lacks in a political organization or determined economy: this is not, as is stupidly said, because he "is accustomed to it," but because he apprehends it in its plenitude of being and because he cannot even imagine that he can exist in it otherwise. For it is necessary here to reverse common opinion and on the basis of what it is not, to acknowledge the harshness of a situation or the sufferings which it imposes, both of which are motives for conceiving of another state of affairs in which things would be better for everybody. It is on the day that we can conceive of a different state of affairs that a new light falls on our troubles and our suffering and that we decide that these are unbearable.  

The Worker

The ordinary members of the party, unlike either Hoederer or Hugo, are "immersed" in their situation. They are caught up in a cause to the degree that they are not aware of their situation as being a bad one or an unbearable one. Sartre says that the worker does not "act"; he revolts. Sartre writes:

A worker in 1830 is capable of revolting if his salary is lowered, for he easily conceives of a situation in which his wretched standard of living would be not as low as the one which is about to be imposed on him. But he does not represent his sufferings to himself as unbearable; he adapts himself to them not through resignation, but because he lacks

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50 Sartre, Being and Nothingness, pp. 434-435.
the education and reflection necessary for him to conceive of a social state in which these sufferings would not exist. Consequently he does not act. 51

Hoederer "acts." He is real because he is conscious of his acts and yet can commit himself to action. He is capable of seeing his situation in perspective with the rest of history. Hoederer's situation, for him, has meaning in the context of history and of man's struggle for existence. To Hoederer, the situation at hand is not absurd because it stands in relation to other historical situations. To Hugo, because all historical situations are absurd, his situation is only one absurdity among others. Hugo is looking for an absolute. He cannot find value in his relative situation. The worker, on the other hand, looks neither for absolutes nor for relative values. The worker is not aware that his value system is relative to his situation. For him, it is absolute because it is the only situation he knows.

Olga believes in the party and makes it her absolute. She is willing to sacrifice all emotion for the party. "Love doesn't bother women of resolution," she says. "We don't live by it." 52 She is the true party worker for whom action is everything. She stays active in order to avoid consciousness. She makes action an end in itself. She is not discriminate. "I will do as I am told," 53 she tells Hugo. "Have

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51 Ibid., p. 435.
you ever known me to put my feelings first?" She is pledged to the cause and cares nothing for motives. Sartre writes that "causes and motives are correlative, exactly as the non-thetic self-consciousness is the ontological correlate of the thetic consciousness of the object." Motives are acts of self-consciousness, whereas causes are acts of consciousness of the world. Olga is conscious of the world, but she is not self-conscious.

The reason that Olga makes a good party member is because she lives for her cause. She is an actionist. "The cause," writes Sartre, "appears only in and through the project of an action." Olga acts as her party dictates. She will not be deterred by anything that stands in her way. She "receives instructions" and carries them out. She can be ruthless because she is not conscious of herself. She has no conscience because the party relieves her of its responsibility. She does not question herself or consider herself in relation to other people or other party ideals. She is committed to action, but she does not "act."

Hoederer's body guards, Slick and George, are also workers. They do not like Hugo because he is an intellectual and is from a wealthy family. George says of Hugo's background, "We don't hold that against

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54 Ibid., p. 139.
55 Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 449.
56 Ibid., p. 448.
him. Only there's a big difference between us: him, he's just playing around. He joined up just because it was the thing to do. We did it because we couldn't do anything else." Slick and George did not "act" when they joined the party because they "couldn't do anything else."

The intellectual, the leader, and the worker are three distinct examples of the way man becomes engaged in the world. Of the three, the worker is the most dangerous. He is capable of committing crimes in the name of party ideals. But Hugo, who is an idealist, is not capable of calculated crime because he must face its consequences.
CHAPTER VI

FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY:

THE CONDEMNED OF ALTONA

The situation in The Condemned of Altona, like the situation in No Exit, is built around conflict. The basis of the conflict is the guilt and suppression of post-World War II Germany. The guilt of Germany is symbolized in Franz, the son of Hitler's former chief shipbuilder. Franz, a self-exiled ex-Nazi soldier, has kept himself locked in his room for thirteen years since Germany's downfall. He has been punishing himself for the war crimes of the German people. Franz makes Altona his refuge as the people of Argos make Argos theirs.

Werner, Franz's younger brother, was too young to participate in the Nazi regime. He became a lawyer and established a successful practice in Hamburg. The reason Werner left Altona was to escape his father's domination. In Hamburg he married Johanna. She, a confident and successful actress, never wanted to see Altona. She was quite content with their life in Hamburg, where her husband held a position of respect and dignity.
When Werner's father, old man Von Gerlach, finds that he has throat cancer and only a short time to live, he summons Werner and his wife to come and stay at Altona. When Werner, Johanna, and Franz come together a triangle of conflict is established. Johanna falls in love with Franz. She wants Werner to take her away from Altona, but he will not or cannot leave. Johanna is left in despair. "We shall go through Hell," she tells Franz.  

Sartre writes that "I am always equal to what happens to me qua man, for what happens to man through other men and through himself can be only human." No matter how terrible the situation may be, one is still responsible for it insofar as it is a part of the world that one chooses and in which one participates. Franz feels anguish and guilt for the horrible war crimes that the German people have committed. He

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2Ibid., p. 129.

3Ibid., p. 135.

secludes himself in his room and tries to justify the Nazi death camps as acts of animal survival, but he is not successful. Sartre explains his inevitable failure when he writes: "The most terrible situations of war, the worst tortures do not create a non-human state of things; there is no non-human situation."  

Because man did not choose to be free, Sartre says that he is "condemned to freedom." Sartre goes on to say that "I am condemned to exist forever beyond my essence, beyond the causes and motives of my act. I am condemned to be free." If one had an essence, if one were necessarily some "thing," then there would be hope for escaping freedom. But it is the nature of man to be "not enough," or never quite "made." Man is always becoming; he never "is." Sartre explains:

Human reality is free because it is not enough. It is free because it is perpetually wrenched away from itself and because it has been separated by a nothingness from what it is and from what it will be. . . . The being which is what it is can not be free. Freedom is precisely the Nothingness which is made-to-be at the heart of man and which forces human-reality to make itself instead of to be.

If God had created man and given him an "essence," then man would not be doomed to the task of being responsible for the world. But because it is the nature of man to "make" himself, he can only "make up" gods to take away his responsibility.) As Aegistheus was

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5 Ibid.
6 Ibid., p. 439.
7 Ibid., p. 440.
god for the people of Argos. Von Gerlach is the god of Altona. He has ruled his children and his empire for years with "military precision."

Werner in particular is ruled by his father's will. He returns to Altona to receive instructions from his father, though he does not like him. The old man tells Werner, "The estate is to remain intact. You are strictly forbidden to sell or hand over your share to anyone whatsoever. You are forbidden to sell this house. You are forbidden to leave it. You will live in it until you die."¹⁸

Werner does not want to live in Altona. He hates the house. He does not want to take over his father's business, because he hates the responsibility of leadership. He only wants to return to Hamburg and resume his law practice, but he does not know how to refuse his father.

"You will be master of this house and head of the firm," the old man says. He does not understand that Werner does not want to be a leader.

The old man tells Johanna, "I am making him one of the kings of the world," but Werner does not want the "bane" of kings. "To decide! To be responsible for everything," says Werner. "Alone. On behalf of a hundred thousand men."¹⁰ He is horrified at the thought of assuming his father's responsibility. He would much rather go on letting his father be god, but he is faced with a dilemma. His god is

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¹⁰ Ibid., p. 9.
dying and there is no one to take his place. He will be "alone." He will have no one to appeal to for his justification.

Franz, on the other hand, has been alone since the end of the war. For thirteen futile years he has sought his justification. He, like Werner, had worshipped his father; but when the war came, Hitler became his god and his justice. When Hitler was defeated, Franz was forced to rebuke his god; thus, he was left without justification. He could not live with himself or with society, so he recluded to his room on the third floor of Altona. Franz had said, "There are two ways of destroying a people. Either condemn them en bloc or force them to repudiate the leaders they adopted. The second is the worse." When the war was lost, Franz was forced to repudiate Hitler. When his leader was made a war criminal, then there was no justification for the death camps, needless killing, and other horrible atrocities that Hitler had instituted. Franz felt that he should have been condemned along with Hitler. The worst of it, Franz says, was that "he was wrong." In desperation he asks, "There isn't a God, is there?""

"Do you know who made me a king?" Franz asks his father.

"Hitler." Hitler made Franz a king when he taught him that he could kill other men. "I'll go right through with it," he said. "Right to the

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\[11\] Ibid., p. 29.
\[12\] Ibid., p. 165.
\[13\] Ibid., p. 163.
limits of my power. Only his power was taken away when his justification died, and he did not know how to be his own justification.

Johanna makes a sharp contrast to Franz and Werner. She is not a Von Gerlach and needs no god to give her life justification. She can look the old man Von Gerlach in the eye and never flinch. She is like Orestes in that she has nothing binding her to a past or to a place. Yet, unlike Orestes, she does not seek stability through commitment. The world outside Altona is no more or no less absurd to her than the world in Franz's room. The Von Gerlach material world is no more or no less capable of giving her life justification than Franz's mock jury of crabs that perpetually hold him on trial. Neither can justify the war for her because she knows that she is free to choose it or not choose it. "Ships?" she says to old man Von Gerlach, "Does that justify it?"

The Responsibility of Freedom

Because there is no god for Franz, he must assume the responsibility for everything he does. Sartre writes that "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." Franz's awakening came when he discovered that he was

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14 Ibid.
15 Ibid., p. 55.
16 Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 553.
alone in the world and without god. He was crushed by the fall of his leader but had vowed to take "full responsibility." "I'll take responsibility for the war as though I were carrying it," he had said. When he could no longer look to Hitler for his justification, he turned to himself. He took upon himself the responsibility of justifying the war for himself, for Germany, and for all of mankind. "After my death," he had said, "If the centuries lose trace of me, I'll be devoured. And who'll save mankind?" 18

For Franz the responsibility of the world was the responsibility of justifying the ways of man. Franz's tragedy was that in a godless world, there is no judge. But precisely because there is no god, Franz must account for everything that man does. "I am mankind," he says. "I am every man and all mankind. I am the century." 19 Franz felt that because he participated in his century he was responsible for it. He had freely chosen it and now he was faced with the burden of its consequences. He had chosen himself and in so doing had chosen a pattern for all mankind to follow. He had chosen the way he thought mankind "should" be. Sartre writes that "existentialism's first move is to make every man aware of what he is and to make the full responsibility of his existence rest on him. And when we say that a man is

18 Ibid., p. 61.
19 Ibid., p. 133.
responsible for himself, we do not only mean that he is responsible for his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men."^{20}

As Sartre views each man as the supporter of all other men, Franz saw himself as the savior of mankind. "I am Sampson," he said. "I'm carrying the centuries on my back, and if I straighten up they will crash."^{21} When Franz can no longer face society and the burden of a guilty conscience, he isolates himself in his room at Altona. He imagines that a jury of crabs (decapods) are constantly trying him for the sins of mankind and that he must speak so as to defend man against charges of treason and decadence. He puts himself on trial for the crimes of all mankind and all of Germany. "Men, women, hunted executioners, relentless victims," he says. "I am your martyr."^{22} He refers to himself as "the corpse of murdered Germany." "I shall stink like a bad conscience,"^{23} he says.

His own conscience continually tries him. He thinks that he is guilty and must bear the guilt of his crimes, but worse than that is the guilt that he must bear for everyone that suffers under the judgment of the allied war courts. In a flash-back of the post-war news, we hear,

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^{22} Ibid., p. 65.

^{23} Ibid., p. 62.
"Here is the news. In Nuremberg the International Court sentences Marshal Goering. . . ." Because Franz freely chose the war, he must suffer the responsibility of the crime for which each person is convicted. That he hated Marshal Goering even during the war can make no difference. He had not agreed with him, but he had not tried to stop him either.

He appeals to his mock jury of crabs when he says:

Masked inhabitants of the ceilings, your attention please! Masked inhabitants of the ceilings, your attention, please! They are lying to you. Two thousand million false witnesses! Two thousand million lies a second! Listen to the plea of mankind: "We were betrayed by our deeds. By our words. by our lousy lives!" Decapods, I bear witness that they didn't think what they were saying and that they didn't do what they wished. We plead not guilty. And, above all, don't condemn on the basis of statements, even signed statements. They said at the time: "The accused has made a statement, therefore he is innocent." Dear listeners, my century was a rummage sale in which the liquidation of the human species was decided upon in high places. They began with Germany, and struck right to the bone. (He pours himself a drink.) One alone speaks the truth: the shattered Titan, the eyewitness, ageless, regular, secular, in saeculorum. Me. Man is dead, and I am his witness. Centuries, I shall tell you how my century tasted, and you will acquit the accused. To hell with the facts; I leave them to the false witnesses. I leave to them the relevant causes and the fundamental reasons. This was how it tasted. Our mouths were full of it. (He drinks.) And we drank to get rid of it. (Dreamily) It was a queer taste, wasn't it? (He stands up quickly in a kind of horror.) I'll come back to it later.25

24 Ibid., p. 28.
25 Ibid., p. 58.
Franz appeals for Goering and for everyone that participated in the war. He appeals for mankind. He becomes a Christ figure pleading for the salvation of man. He is the savior of man from himself. He takes the responsibility of everything that has happened. "One alone speaks the truth," he says. "I am Goering. If they hang him, they hang me."  

Franz is forever condemned to try to justify his actions and the actions of mankind. But for Sartre he is doomed to failure because man has no ultimate justification. There can be no justification because there is no god to justify man. The irony of Franz's speech is the double meaning of "one alone speaks the truth." He is the one who speaks the truth for all mankind, but he represents mankind to himself "alone." Sartre explains the ultimate failure any attempted justification will have when he says, "unjustifiability is not only the subjective recognition of the absolute contingency of our being but also that of the interiorization and recovery of this contingency on our own account."  

Man's very nature makes him aware of his contingency and of the impossibility of any ultimate justification. Yet it is still his nature to seek justice. As Ivan Karamazov said, "I must have justice, or I will destroy myself."  

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26 Ibid., p. 59.  
27 Ibid., p. 29.  
28 Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 464.  
Man seeks stability and yet must forever remain contingent if he is to remain man. Ivan's tragedy was that for him also "God is dead." It is the possibility of all things and justification of none that both condemns man and makes him free.

Condemned to Freedom

Because there are no "non-human" situations and because every man is responsible for every other man, Franz cannot say that the war was an accident. Neither can he say that it was an accident that he should live in time of war, in a warring country, or in a country that would lose a war. For him the war was "his" war and its horrible crimes were "his" crimes. As he says, "War was my lot--to what point should I have loved it?" He was born in a country that would go to war; in so far as he was a citizen of Germany, he contributed to creating a situation in which there would be war. On a broader level, in so far as he lived in a world in which there would be war, it would be "his" war. It would be "his" world. "When our fathers got our mothers pregnant, they made soldiers," he says. "I don't know why." It makes no difference why he was born to be a soldier. He chose to be a soldier when he chose to live in a country that "made" war and to be of parents who "made" soldiers. He did not choose to be born, but he did choose

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31 Ibid., p. 142.
to live in the situation with which the facts of his birth presented him.

Thus, he chose his birth and chose to be a soldier. Wilfred Desan in The Tragic Finale explains what Sartre calls the "facticity" of birth when he writes:

I am in a place; consequently my freedom must realize itself by going away from this place which it is free either to make an obstacle or not. I have my surroundings or tools: they again are means to free performance according to my own free decision. Emerging into the world, I meet the so-called techniques, such as language and nationality. These cannot be avoided: I have to assume them. But once more, in choosing myself as an existent being, they are logical consequences. Being born in New York, and choosing to exist, I must assume the fact that I am an American. There is strictly speaking no obligation, but there is a free acceptance. Death itself does not concern me...for as Epicurus puts it, and Sartre follows him on this point, "It is the moment of life which I never have to live." 32

The "givens" of one's life are obstacles but not limitations to one's freedom. Most psychologists would not hold man responsible for the facts of his environment or his heredity. For Sartre, however, "I find an absolute responsibility for the fact of my facticity." 33

If Franz had had an "essence" or an already given project, he would not have had to choose what he would be. But because man first exists and only subsequently creates his "essence," he is responsible for whatever he does or whatever he becomes. Sartre writes:

32 Wilfrid Desan, The Tragic Finale (New York, 1960), p. 120.

33 Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 556.
If existence really does precede essence, there is no explaining things away by reference to a fixed and given human nature. In other words, there is no determinism, man is free, man is freedom. On the other hand, if God does not exist, we find no values or commands to turn to which legitimize our conduct. So, in the bright realm of values, we have no excuse behind us, nor justification before us. We are alone, with no excuses.

That is the idea I shall try to convey when I say that man is condemned to be free. Condemned, because he did not create himself, yet, in other respects is free; because, once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does.³⁴

For Franz there is no excuse. He is without appeal and his jury of crabs can never justify his action. It is the realization that he alone is responsible and there is no way around his responsibility that causes him to commit suicide.) Franz realizes that he obeyed Hitler simply by allowing the war. "We hated Hitler," he says to his father, "others loved him. What's the difference? You supplied him with warships, and I with corpses. Tell me could we have done more if we had worshipped him?"³⁵

For Franz, when he realizes the meaning of a godless world and that even if there were a god, he could not take away man's freedom, there is no way out. Even in suicide Franz affirms the existence of a horrible world by choosing to negate it. Whether he chooses to negate it or to live in it, he is responsible for the way it is. Because there is

³⁴Sartre, Existentialism, p. 27.
only one world, we are all responsible for the way it is. Sartre writes that "to make myself passive in the world, to refuse to act upon things and upon Others is still to choose myself, and suicide is still one mode among others of being-in-the-world." Even in choosing not to choose, I am still making a choice and one that has implications for the whole world. There is no way that Franz could escape his freedom and the "dreadful" responsibility that it incurred. There is no exit, no way out. It is the tremendous responsibility of freedom that causes forlornness, anguish, and despair and that makes freedom "dreadful."

Werner is faced with "dreadful" freedom when he learns that "old Hindenberg is going to die." He knows that since his brother will not come out of his room he will be expected to take over his father's business. Not only will he lose his "god" but he must become "boss" and become the judge of a hundred thousand other people. He is condemned to a situation in which he is forced to be responsible and there is nothing that he can do to change it. He must obey his father's last command and yet the irony is that it is his last. He will leave Werner alone and responsible. When he contemplates his father's death, Werner is forlorn. Of forlornness Sartre says that it means "that God

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36 Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 556.
37 Sartre, The Condemned of Altona, p. 5.
does not exist and that we have to face all the consequences of this.  

The consequences of the death of his father for Werner estrange him from everyone that he might have considered an equal. He would much rather have returned to being a lawyer and have been able to appeal to the people on their own level. He never aspired to become a judge. As the "boss" he will have to face the consequences of always judging and the absurd position of being above judgement himself. The "bane of gods and kings" is being alone and without appeal.

Franz faces the "bane" of mortal men. Without Hitler he is left to justify himself, his country, and his world. "Anguish" is the emotion that Franz feels, and it is constituted out of a tremendous sense of responsibility. Anguish is the emotion that Abraham felt when he was faced with deciding whether or not to sacrifice his son. His choice obviously involved more than his own life. It is because he could not bear the responsibility of the life of his son that he felt anguish. Anguish is the emotion that comes when the magnitude and intensity of human responsibility is realized. Sartre writes:

The man who involves himself and who realizes that he is not only the person he chooses to be, but also the lawmaker who is, at the same time, choosing all mankind as well as himself, cannot help escape the feeling of his total

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and deep responsibility. Of course, there are many people who are not anxious; but we claim that they are hiding their anxiety, that they are fleeing from it.  

Anguish is the realization that "all things are possible" and that we must nevertheless make a choice. Similar to anguish is "despair." Like anguish, despair grows out of the responsibility and consequences of freedom. Sartre writes of despair that "it means that we shall confine ourselves to reckoning only with what depends upon our will, or on the ensemble of probabilities which make our action possible." \(^{39}\) Werner felt despair when he faced the responsibility of deciding for other people. Of all the possibilities present to him, he did not know which one to choose. No one possibility was any more secure or any more certain to him than another. Werner faced despair when he realized that he must choose how to rule over other men and that there could be no guarantee that he would make the right choice.

\(^{39}\)Ibid., p. 22. \(^{40}\)Ibid., p. 34.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The drama of Jean-Paul Sartre is primarily an investigation into the meaning of the human condition. The question of primary concern is: What does it mean to be a human being? Through his drama, Sartre reveals the nature of the existential situation.

To be human is to be faced with the Nothingness that Being brings into the world. The emotion that Nothingness evokes is anguish. To be human is to flee Nothingness in bad faith. The emotion that characterizes bad faith is fear. Man is afraid to be human because the human condition is not a stable one. To be human is to seek the meaning of Being by standing in relation to and in conflict with other people. Because man is afraid to stand alone, he seeks others. Man needs other people in order to know himself. Yet he finds it difficult to live with others because they threaten his own existence. They make him ashamed of himself and of his actions. To be is to act. Man must act in order to affirm his existence. When he acts, he necessarily acts in and on a world in which there are other people. To be is to be free. To be free is to be condemned to the responsibility that being
free creates. Man must be responsible for the world in which he
acts. He must be responsible for the people in his world.

Characteristics such as anguish, fear, shame, conflict, action,
and responsibility make Sartre's philosophy of man particularly well
suited for dramatic explication. Orestes is torn with anguish and
seeks desperately to overcome his dreadful situation. He is willing
to sacrifice his own life in order to escape anguish. Lizzie is faced
with the shame of being a prostitute. She is willing to go to any means
in order to obtain the respect society requires of her. She is willing
to lie to herself in order to escape shame. She is afraid to admit to
herself that she is an "ordinary" prostitute. García, Inez, and
Estelle are afraid of other people. They exist in a situation of constant
conflict. They need other people. Yet they cannot submit for long to
the emotions of others. They alternate between love and hate, sadism
and masochism, anguish and desire, and other "concrete" human
emotions. Hugo is motivated by the desire to be real and to commit
a "real" act. He is the absurd man who lives in a meaningless world.

In his de trop world, he is faced with the frustration of never being
able to give value to his own life. His life ends in suicide because he
can never find the absolute values he seeks. As long as he is conscious,
his body is his own contingency. Franz, on the other hand, commits himself to action. He finds that it is his
responsibility to bear the burden of that action. Unlike Hugo, Franz is not afraid to act. Yet he cannot escape his own guilt, and he ends his life the same way that Hugo ended his. The burden of the responsibility of his country was too heavy for him. It is ironic that Orestes had said that he would give his life for such a burden.

If one weighs the lives of the characters of Sartre's drama honestly, one is forced to admit that they are not "happy" lives. The prostitutes, Lesbians, reactionaries, power seekers, and war criminals are not presented as happy people. But regardless of however strange and unordinary one may consider them, they nevertheless are real people with real problems. Their problems, for the most part, are insurmountable. They are the problems to some extent of every man.

But there is some resolution. If man can learn to accept being human, then he can achieve some degree of happiness. He must learn to live with his human condition. He must learn to accept his own freedom and to respect the freedom of others. And, most of all, he must learn to be responsible for his freedom.

Because man is free, he is free to make of his life what he will. He is free to accept the responsibility of being human as Orestes did or to crawl into a hole like a "black vermin" as did the people of Argos. There are many ways to hide from freedom and from responsibility. All of them are ways of denying the human condition. It is this condition
that Sartre, through his drama, refuses to let man forget. Sartre causes his reader to face the human situation and the meaning of being human. It is Sartre's mission to make man aware. He seeks to make man responsible. Man has always been free.
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