NOTHINGNESS AND SARTRE'S FUNDAMENTAL PROJECT

Steven Barbone

Regarding existential psychoanalysis, Sartre writes, "This psychoanalysis has not yet found its Freud."[1] Perhaps not in 1943, when Sartre wrote *Being and Nothingness*, but today there are many psychotherapists and more than a few psychotherapies that may legitimately claim to be forms of existential psychoanalysis.[2] Despite the fact that the number of successful existential psychoanalysts may be great, and though the success of existential psychoanalysis has been documented, I believe that Sartre's observation may yet be correct: existential psychoanalysis has still to claim its Freud. The reason, I suggest, why no one has been able to accomplish this goal, why indeed Sartre himself did not do it, is that despite the achievements and advancements of existential psychoanalysis, it is absolutely impossible to found it on the existential ontology that Sartre has constructed in *Being and Nothingness*.[3] The above claim may appear a bit bold, but a careful analysis of the fundamental project and its place in existential psychoanalysis in light of existential ontology should bear it out. Furthermore, there are indications in Sartre's later writings that he himself was willing to overlook occasionally the radical metaphysics of freedom to give his theory of psychoanalysis more cogency, or at least, practicality.[4] No attempt is made here to discredit either existential metaphysics or psychoanalysis; indeed, both deserve serious research and development. Instead, I want to argue that the latter cannot be based on the former as Sartre hoped.

Because the notion of the project is so central to existential psychoanalysis as "the very being of the subject" (BN 721; EN 651),[5] it must be with this notion that any investigation of the relationship between existential psychology and metaphysics begins. What I shall try to show is that the project, center and base for existential psychoanalysis, is sensible only outside an existential metaphysics and may find its most powerful application within a traditional psychoanalytic framework.[6]

The Project Out of Nothing

Above and beyond anything else, the fundamental project, according to Sartre, is that which lies at the core of any person. When all is said and done, what accounts for anyone, what is the most irreducible essence of a subject, is his fundamental project (BN 717; EN 647).[7] Sartre, in rejecting the claim that a person is shaped by his environment "like malleable clay" or impelled by a "bundle of drives," makes a counterclaim: "we will discover the individual person in the initial project which constitutes him. It is for this reason that the irreducibility of the result attained will be revealed as self-evident, not because it is the poorest and the most abstract, but because it is the richest" (BN 720; EN 650). If one were to discover this initial project, one could explain or understand the subject's actions and values. "Man's innermost truth cannot help but be present in his most minute manifestations" (Tymieniecka 175)[8] is one commentator's way to say that every action reveals the subject and the sub-

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ject's fundamental project. This, then, is the goal of existential psychoanalysis: to reveal the subject's original and fundamental project as a way to comprehend his behavior. "In other words there is not a taste, a mannerism, or a human act which is not *revealing*. The *goal* [*but*] of psychoanalysis is to *decipher* [*déchiffrer*] the empirical behavior patterns of man" (BN 726; EN 656). What Sartre assumes in positing such a fundamental project which can explain all actions and behaviors is that there must be one and only one project for each individual which somehow unifies and unites all his actions toward a single goal (BN 717,726; EN 647, 656). "The Fundamental Project is the one basic end which is manifested directly or indirectly in all our more specific ends" (McInerney [1976] 667).[9] If the project is the "being of the subject," then that which unifies the person's actions may be conflated with the project: "This unity, which is the being of man under consideration, is a *free unification*, and this unification can not come *after* a diversity [of behaviors] which it unifies" (BN 717; EN 648). It seems to me that Sartre is right to insist that the fundamental project should act as a unifying factor within a subject's life if the project is to be taken as the irreducible core of personality. Thus, "if we attempt to find out what Flaubert (the Other) is, we look for a 'real irreducible'" (Tymieniecka 171). This unification, however, is not imposed on the subject; Sartre continually insists upon this. The project is the "original upsurge of human freedom" (BN 727; EN 657). One freely chooses one's project, and as noted above, it is only in light of the project that one can comprehend any empirical behavior. That "freedom is existence, and in it existence precedes essence" (BN 725; EN 655) is Sartre's way of stressing the central point that a free subject chooses its project which in turn creates, unifies, and colors all its actions and goals. Here it is important to note, however, that Sartre does not believe that the fundamental project is so much a project to do or to achieve some particular goal or action, e. g., to conquer Gaul or to row on this lake. Instead, the project is a fundamental attitude or manner of participating in life which is *prior* to logic and to reason:

> Empirical psychoanalysis and existential psychoanalysis both search within an existing situtation for a fundamental attitude which can not be expressed by simple, logical definitions because it is prior [*antérieure*] to all logic.... Existential psychoanalysis seeks to determine the *original choice* [*déterminer* le choix originel]. (BN 728; EN 657)

I do not believe that Sartre means a temporally prior decision, but rather one that is logically prior. The fundamental project is not a first beginning in any mechanical sense (SM 151; CRD 114), but rather the fundamental attitude, much like Kant's categories, which unites all the subject's behavior and actions into a unified, comprehensible whole. In this way, the project is continuous and ever acting—it is not to conquer Gaul once and for all, but an irreducible trait of ambition which includes the subjugation of that territory, and it is not the fondness of rowing or outdoor exercises, but an attitude of play which explains and is prior to the rowing. Thus, the fundamental project is continually and constantly revealed in all of life's minutiae, as the "day to day minute decisions which breathe life into the fundamental project. Nay, they are [*sic*] the fundamental project itself" (Gordon and Gordon 70).[10]

Furthermore, the evidence that the fundamental project must be freely chosen is derived from a metaphysical framework. Since consciousness *is* the desire to be what it is not,[11] i.e., something other than itself, Sartre claims that it forms the intention toward a

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present lack of being. All actions, therefore, are intentional (BN 559; EN 508). What he means, for example, is that if I want chocolate, it is not a present (to me) candy bar which forms my intention of going to the corner store for some chocolate, but the lack of a Hershey's (with almonds) which I experience that causes me to make that trek.[12] On this Sartre is very clear: every act must have an experienced cause [*cause*] or motive [*motif*] which aims toward a present non-being (cf. BN 564; EN 512). Indeed:

> This constitution of a cause [*motif*] as such can not refer to another real and positive existence; that is, to a prior cause [*motif antérieur*]. For otherwise the very nature of the act as engaged intentionally in non-being would disappear. (BN 564; EN 512)[13]

Thus, it is non-being that Sartre claims lies at the root of all my intentions. Additionally, of all the lacks which are present to me now—lack of tomatoes, lack of rattlesnakes, lack of the Statue of Liberty, lack of Pierre—it is only the one lack of chocolate that can explain my empirical behavior of walking around the corner and spending money. Of the possibly infinite number of non-beings present to me now, only one has been given any value by me for self-motivation, and Sartre takes this as proof of my freedom—*nothing* could have caused to me to value the non-being of chocolate over the non-being of snakes. Consequently, what motivates our behavior is a lack of being, which Sartre equates with "nothing," and since "nothing" causes our actions, our actions must be spontaneous and free. Thus the fundamental project, that which affects all else we do, must be freely chosen by consciousness.[14]

Thus choice is spontaneous, and Sartre argues that it is not affected by any present being or state, but always moves toward non-being:

> No factual state whatever it may be (the political and economic structure of society, the psychological "state," etc.) is capable by itself of motivating any act whatsoever. For an act is a projection of the for-itself toward what is not, and what is can in no way determine by itself what is not. (BN 562; EN 510-11)

Instead, each act, which reveals and uncovers the subject's fundamental project, surges forth without any necessary ties to the past or present circumstances:

> But I can also find myself engaged in acts which reveal my possibilities to me at the very instant when they are realized. In lighting this cigarette I learn my concrete possibility, or if you prefer, my desire for smoking. It is by the very act of drawing toward me this paper and this pen that I give to myself as my most immediate possibility the act of working at this book; there I am engaged, and I discover it at the very moment when I am already throwing myself into it. At that instant, to be sure, it remains my possibility, since I can at each instant turn myself away from my work, push away the notebook, put the cap on my fountain pen. (BN 7374; EN 73)

Thus, we see, it is the spontaneous action in which we discover ourselves engaged that gives us the opportunity to discover and to affirm our fundamental project. The root of our spontaneity may be thought of as consciousness, but not consciousness as it attempts to be conscious of itself, but rather as what has been called the "pre-reflective" or "non-reflective consciousness" as it almost discovers itself "unaware" through its actions (BN 13; EN 20).[15] Thus, my desire for a candy bar is not deliberated; I suddenly find myself wanting chocolate and reveal through that desiring part of my fundamental project.

Those more familiar with Sartre's writings may wonder about his analysis of the

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project to be God. Several objections can be raised against this notion, and it may be that Sartre is able to reply to all of them, but it is just at this point that Sartrean metaphysics comes into play. At the base of his ontology lies consciousness or being-for-itself, which Sartre defines as "a being such that in its being, its being is in question in so far as this being implies a being other than itself" (BN 24, 86; EN 29, 85).[16] By means of this definition, Sartre emphasizes that consciousness always points to *something* other than itself, yet we also know that "consciousness is consciousness of something" (BN 11, 21, 23; EN 17, 27, 28). For this reason, as well as others,[17] Sartre takes consciousness to be something óther than a "something," and this "not something" he then takes to be "nothing." Because consciousness is denied the status of a "something" or an object, it can never quite be conscious of itself as its own object, except insofar as it can achieve a "quasi-knowing" of itself (BN 730; EN 659). The project to be God, nevertheless, arises from the desire of consciousness to regard itself as just such a "something," or in Sartrean terminology, to be in-itself-for-itself:

> The fundamental value which presides over this project is exactly the in-itself-for-itself; that is, the ideal of a consciousness which would be the foundation of its own being-in-itself by the pure consciousness which it would have of itself. It is this ideal which can be called God. (BN 723–24; EN 653)

The project to be God, however, is not unproblematic. If "the best way to conceive of the fundamental project of human reality is to say that man is the being whose project is to be God" (BN 724; EN 653; cf. BN 796; EN 720), one may ask, "If man on coming into the world is borne toward God as toward his limit, if he can choose only to be God, what becomes of his freedom?" (BN 724; EN 653).[18] Sartre does concede that this claim comes close to implying some sort of essence or human nature,[19] but he reminds the reader that what is at stake here is that value which the subject *puts* on this project and the unique manner which the subject *selects* in pursuing it (BN 724; EN 653). In an earlier section he had further explained, "The given in-itself as *resistance* or as *aid* is revealed only in the light of the projecting freedom" (BN 627; EN 568). The brute given of our desire to be God has only the value we freely give to it;[20] we are free to pursue any possible project, at least as possible as is allowed by the brute givens of our environment (BN 627; EN 568: cf. Anderson 123).

The fundamental project, one must remember, is an attitude. "To be God" is not an attitude, but to be godlike could be one. The project is always spontaneous and always striving toward what it is not, and so by definition, if consciousness ever were to achieve its project to be something, it would actually cease to be at all, since "*consciousness is not what it is*" (BN 105; EN 102) and is what it is not (cf. BN 723; EN 653). What is meant is that no legitimate fundamental project could be that of being X, where "X" is a noun. This is also implied by Sartre's claim that this project must be continuous, that is, that the unifying structure of the for-itself must be an overarching principle which can and does color each and every action.[21] If the fundamental project were not continuous, then it might happen that there would be more than one originating project at any one time (which is not logically possible), and this possibility would not allow for the irreducibility to which Sartre claims his existential psychoanalysis leads.

I believe, accordingly, that Sartre is able to answer most of the possible criticisms regarding the project to be God. Despite the fact that this project is the "built-in," "fundamental" fundamental project, Sartre can ex-

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plain how each person can still freely choose an individual and unique fundamental project and why this project is continuing and ongoing. There remain, however, other objections and questions which he must answer. Though it is clear that there cannot be more than one fundamental project at a time, is it possible that there may be more than one fundamental project over a period of time? Can a subject simply renounce a chosen project in favor of a new one; is "radical conversion" possible? If the fundamental project is spontaneous, free, and in need of constant affirmation, then it seems that any number of radical conversions are possible. Sartre himself agrees with this position: "No law of being can assign an *a priori* number to the different projects which I am" (BN 618; EN 560), and "These extraordinary and marvelous instants when the prior project collapses into the past in the light of the new project which rises on its ruins. . . . These have often appeared to furnish the clearest and most moving image of our freedom" (BN 612; EN 555). Clearly, then, freedom, or the for-itself, precedes the original project: "The existence of the for-itself in fact conditions [*conditionne*] its essence [the project]" (BN 618; EN 560).

Beyond these problems, however, lie other concerns to be confronted regarding the existence of the project as it springs from consciousness. I shall argue that the insistence on a single unifying project (at a time) that cannot know itself and yet is freely chosen and rechosen at each opportunity and which stems from nothing and toward nothing is fraught with problems, and it is to these that I now turn.

Some Problems with Nothingness

One point on which Sartre can be immediately challenged is his argument that consciousness must be nothing and must tend toward nothing. The problem lies with Sartre's ambiguity in his use of "consciousness," and this he shares with ordinary linguistic usage, in that the phrase "conscious of x" is referentially opaque in some contexts and not in others. In seeing the sun, I can say that "I am conscious of it," meaning that there *exists* a sun of which I am (presently) aware. I can also say, sitting at home in bed at night, "I am conscious of the sun" in the referentially opaque sense that I am conscious of the *proposition* that there is a sun. Some philosophers have wanted to claim that referentially opaque contexts for "conscious of x" are all propositional in form, but this is not entirely persuasive. In opaque contexts consciousness works like "hunting"—I can hunt a lion without there being any lion of which it can be said that I am hunting *that* lion (indeed, I can go lion-hunting in downtown Milwaukee in the total absence of lions), but this usage does not obviously reduce to a propositional one. Similarly, I can desire a candy bar in the sense that what I am conscious of is the existence of candy bars (not their non-existence), even though in this opaque context it does not follow that there is any candy bar of whose existence (and current absence from my room) I am aware. To my knowledge, Sartre does not address directly this issue of opacity in any of his writings. There are many clear instances of passages where 'conscious of' (e.g., being conscious of the *en-soi*) is taken in a non-opaque sense.

Thus, in the chocolate example given above, Sartre would say that it is the non-being of the candy bar that forms my intentions for action. One may counter that this simply is not correct, for my actually walking around the corner and paying $.65 is based on my desire for a Hershey's bar that *does* exist, though not present to me in my apartment. Even if the corner store were out of candy bars or were closed, it still would not be the non-being of chocolate that motivates me, but an actually existing chocolate bar.[22]

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The project, it may be argued, does not tend toward non-being, but toward something. However, Sartre might claim that consciousness is aware of a present (to me) non-being (no chocolate in my apartment), and despite my awareness of chocolate elsewhere, it is that I should notice the present non-being of a Hershey's that forms my "mini-project" of going out to purchase one, and not the awareness that somewhere there is (or may be) the candy bar I desire. He may be correct on this point, but then he certainly could never claim with consistency that consciousness is consciousness of *something*, for, it may be claimed, all consciousness of *anything whatever* is propositional in this sense.

Furthermore, if Sartre's insistence that "consciousness be consciousness of something" leads to the consequence that consciousness is nothing, then this, too, constitutes a threat to the psychoanalytic project as he conceives it. Sartre does not allow that consciousness ever directly know itself as an object; it is always subject. Since it cannot be conceived as something, Sartre understands it to be nothing, but this viewpoint is extremely solipsistic from a psychological perspective. Though self-consciousness, in the sense of total consciousness of one's own inner states, may not be possible,[23] surely consciousness of other consciousnesses must be possible, or else there could be no point at all to the psychoanalytic project.[24] Similarly, if consciousness can be conscious of another consciousness, then that other consciousness must be something. Now if other consciousnesses are something, how may I conclude that the consciousness which I am should be nothing; it is something, but something from which I cannot altogether step away to experience in its totality. For psychoanalysis to be at all coherent, consciousness must be taken as an object (and thus be something, not nothing).[25] Indeed, Sartre himself supports just this thesis by postulating that:

> the projects revealed by existential psychoanalysis, will be apprehended *from the point of view of the Other*. Consequently, the *object* [the project] thus brought into the light will be articulated according to the structures of the transcended-transcendence; that is, its being will be the being-for-others even if the psychoanalyst and subject of the psychoanalysis are actually the same person. (BN 729-730; EN 659, Sartre's emphases)

The irreducibility of the fundamental project is no less questionable if the original project is said to arise from nothing. "Irreducibility" is a relative term, implying irreducibility to something. This objection, it may be claimed, can be countered by noting that what is irreducible is the first project rather than its source. But, if consciousness is non-being, then what comes from consciousness must also be non-being, since only non-being can come from non-being (BN 136; EN 130; cf. BN 59; EN 60–61). The fundamental project, then, since it is a free choice to be that which is not, must also have the status of non-being, and so it too, must be said to be nothing. We could say that the project is irreducible to the original nothing which it is (not), but then, in all senses of the phrase, we stop at nothing—once we have arrived at non-being, it is senseless to continue.[26] In defense of Sartre's point, we could say that the project is that point at which we stop since nothing lies further than it. This reply, however, still will not suffice because, notwithstanding the metaphysical framework proposed for the project, consciousness, and nothing, what psychoanalysis aims to explain is this or that empirical behavior and these or those observable traits in someone (BN 726; EN 656). Irreducibility, if it is to have any cogency, must involve

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being irreducible to an overarching attitude that can account for all behaviors.[27] This attitude is what may be freely chosen continuously by the subject, but new questions then arise which recall issues relating to the spontaneity of the project: when does the subject choose this project since it must precede any action whatsoever, and how is it that Sartre can maintain that nothing influences the subject in choosing a project, and yet it seems that the subject must be influenced by the past to the extent that the project is indeed continually chosen?

The temporal question of when a subject actually makes the choice to pursue this or that particular project is not the most interesting question here, though a problem does remain. If the project really is a fundamental attitude which shapes all actions, when might it be chosen? At birth, before birth, at some exact "age of reason"? In later writings, Sartre indicates that early childhood is when the fundamental project is chosen (SM 59, ff.; CRD 55, ff.)[28] In *Being and Nothingness*, however, this chronological matter does not bother Sartre since he claims that our chosen project affects our pasts; indeed, we are responsible for our own births and even chose to have been born:

> Yet I find an absolute responsibility for the fact that my facticity (here the fact of my birth) is directly inapprehensible and even inconceivable, for this fact of my birth never appears as a brute fact but always across a projective reconstruction of my for-itself. . . . Thus in a certain sense I *choose* being born. (BN 710; EN 641)

More interesting, instead, is the analysis of the choice which makes this particular project one's own. If we were to grant that the project is spontaneous and free and that it arises from nothing in a response to a perceived nothing, then all there would be could be likened to a spontaneously expressed drive or desire. Although Sartre may be criticized for making freedom equivalent to random spontaneity,[29] this criticism is not necessarily fatal (McInerney [1976] 664), especially if we can show that there is a rift between his metaphysics and his psychoanalysis.

To use our example, I suddenly find myself, without any perceivable exterior influences, wanting chocolate, and it is in this sudden desiring that I discover myself as one who wants chocolate. Sartre would say that it is the spontaneous action in which I discover myself that gives me the opportunity to affirm my fundamental project. It is, however, not a choice to want chocolate, nor could my project be said to be that of wanting chocolate. Instead, the project, if it is a choice, must be understood via the manner in which I respond through the attitude I take toward this desire for chocolate. Only in this sense could there be any cogency to thinking that the project is freely *chosen* rather than merely thrown upon me without choice. But this manner of understanding gives the project a stature secondary to my actions: instead of the project coloring all that I do, some (or much?) of what I do conditions the project. Of course, Sartre may reply that the spontaneous desires I have (for chocolate, for example), are the result of one more basic or already decided fundamental project—since desire is the noticing of a lack (non-being), this implies that for Sartre the project cannot come from anything. Such a reply, however, only invites an infinite regression insofar as eventually we will have to come to a disposition that logically precedes all the others, but any such basic disposition cannot be a choice unless behind it there were another disposition, etc. Any choice to maintain this particular attitude is only a choice which can be made in light of some other pre-existing attitude.

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The second problem with thinking that the project is an overarching irreducible is now manifest. If the project is chosen freely, Sartre insists that it can only be future directed;[30] that is, that it cannot in any way be influenced by the present or the past (though it can influence the past and present, as for example, my having been born). At the same time, we are told that the project must always and continually be reconfirmed by the subject, and that the subject maintains one project at a time. Even if each subject rarely were to decide on his project instead of revealing his project with each action and inaction, it seems a tremendous stroke of serendipity that the identical project, not influenced at all by past decisions, should continue to be confirmed. It would be more plausible, I think, to posit that the subject, influenced by a past decision toward a particular project, chooses to continue with that project once chosen. Indeed, Fell claims that this is the position Sartre does hold: "In *Being and Nothingness* Sartre could also say that we repeat ourselves—but in consequence of a project or 'choice' freely reaffirmed" (Fell 432).[31]

The above consideration leads to the conclusion that though the project may be freely chosen, it cannot be as free a matter as Sartre imagines. What I mean exactly is that once the project is chosen, one is *not* free to reject it or to change it, despite the fact that Sartre clearly writes otherwise. Peterson[32] makes this point best:

> The thrust of the argument is that conversions do not take place in the complete absence of reasons and motives, yet there could be neither reason nor motive for abandoning one fundamental project and adopting another. In the first place, this total change of fundamental project could not be based upon a person's *deliberation* because deliberation can take place only within and upon the ground of an existing fundamental project. (Peterson 195)

What Peterson argues is that though conversions may take place from one project to another, these conversions only may occur for smaller, non-fundamental projects. "The fundamental project of a life is *fundamental* to that life" (Peterson 196), and any deliberation or action can come about only in light of that project. The project already influences and colors one's motivations, and so to maintain that the project may be changed is to believe that one's life is ruled by a series of unrelated quirks and passions. At the bottom of all these projects, there should be one fundamental project which is chosen by the subject and which does affect all other considerations. Sartre himself later writes that "conversions take place *in a situation*" (N 471; C 487), but there cannot be a situation unless a prior fundamental project is already in place. Any later conversions must be understood in relation to this more fundamental project.[33] Furthermore, if we understand that there may be one fundamental overarching projectional attitude, we have to think that it shapes all the smaller non-fundamental projects of the subject. (For example, my project to have a Hershey's bar can be intergrated into my overarching project toward hedonism). But on just this point, strangely, Sartre seems to disagree: "Our particular projects, aimed at the realization in the world of a particular end, are united in the global project which we are. But precisely because we are wholly choice and act, these partial projects are not determined by the global project" (BN 618; EN 560). On one hand, he must make this claim if he is to assert that any project always arises from freedom or is never conditioned or has any cause.[34] Yet, if this is true, except granting an extraordinary degree of chance, I do not see how to reconcile it with the claim that every action is revealing of the project: "Consequently, he [the subject] expresses himself as a whole in even his most insignificant and his most su-

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perficial behavior. In other words there is not a taste, a mannerism, or a human act which is not *revealing*" (BN 726; EN 656).[35] Sartre does admit that "mini-projects" (perhaps not the fundamental project) are conditioned,[36] but if he insists on calling them "choices," one has already asked, is "'choice' now for Sartre just a euphemism for determinism by character?" (Fell 433).[37]

A final minor point: if "the *goal* of psychoanalysis is to *decipher* the empirical behavior of man" (BN 726; EN 656), then one must think there is one and only one project. "The criterion of success [for existential psychoanalysis] will be the number of facts which its hypothesis permits it to explain [*expliquer*] and to unify as well as the self-evident intuition of the irreducibility of the end attained" (BN 735; EN 663). Except that there should be one originating project underlying the entire life of a subject, then the criterion of success for psychoanalysis only guarantees its failure, since otherwise it would not be possible to find any unity in the subject's actions.[38] And the only way, it seems, to bring any amount of cogent unity to the project is to divorce it from its supposed roots in radical freedom.

Final Comments

If existential psychoanalysis is separated from existential metaphysics, what then remains? It seems that at the center of psychoanalysis, there would still be a fundamental project to uncover, which would give a unifying and irreducibly cogent value to all of a subject's actions, and it would be seen to have had a continuous effect on the subject. The fundamental project, however, could not be nothing, nor tend (or intend) nothing, nor would there be much sense to call it "spontaneous." This original project, though, would be the base of all smaller "mini-projects," and would be perceived not so much as an end (to become this person), but would form a basic attitude or outlook (to become this kind of person). There is no reason to deny that the "mini-projects" are freely chosen, except that these are not radically free but are each conditioned by the fundamental project. Each person is already conditioned by his relations (SM 66; CRD 59), and these relations, of course, exist only in light of the fundamental project itself. Likewise, this project, if we might consider it freely chosen, is limited by the spontaneous desires which affect us; if instead we do not grant that the fundamental project is chosen, then it must be regarded as a given which is "built-in" equipment on our parts.

These last remarks on the origin of the fundamental project bring to mind the more traditional notion of the unconscious. Though this understanding is unreservedly rejected by Sartre (BN 728; EN 658), it is difficult to delineate the unconscious from Sartre's "pre-reflective" or "non-reflective" consciousness.[39] Both are "parts" of consciousness (if consciousness may be said to have parts); in both systems, the fundamental project (or drives, in traditional pyschoanalysis) spontaneously erupt or are presented from this source; neither, unless it be reflected on by consciousness, is present to consciousness. Except that Sartre insists that we come to "know" the unconscious and come to "be" the non-reflective consciousness (BN 729; EN 658), there seems to be no practical difference. Actually, in his interview for the Schilpp volume, Sartre remarks that he does explain what would otherwise be called the "unconscious" by his notion of "pre-reflective consciousness" (Schilpp 34).[40]

More than one writer believes that Sartre, in his later years, did abandon his ontology in favor of a more workable system for psychoanalysis,[41] and the evidence is in his writings: "It is wrong to think man is free in all situations" (CDR 331; CRD 437); "If we

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were [*étions*] in a world of freedom. . . " (N 329; C 342); and:

> Individuals find an existence already sketched out for them at birth; they "have their position in life and their personal development assigned to them by their class."[42] What is "assigned" to them is a type of work, and a material condition as well as a standard of living tied to this activity; it is a fundamental *attitude*, as well as a determinate provision of material and intellectual tools; it is a strictly limited field of possibilities. (CDR 232; CRD 341).[43]

And certainly Sartre's own autobiography becomes more intelligible when we read that his destiny was shaped by his grandfather (W 163; M 135) or that he was a writer by birth (W 171; M 142) if we can momentarily "forget"[44] about the radical freedom which underpins his metaphysics of nothingness. Instead, a different Sartre seems to have emerged—one which acknowledges that the fundamental choice is conditioned by forces altogether outside the control of the subject.

Not only are these factors totally environmental, but in closing I would like to suggest that they may be unconscious, for:

> fondamentalement, le psychique rest coextensif avec la conscience, pour Sartre, et si l'on tient à parler de conscient et inconscient, il ne pourra s'agir que de modes d'intentionnalité entre lesquels il ne saurait y avoir une barre, mais, ultimement, une continuité. (Knee 238)[45]

When we finally do get to the fundamental project, to the irreducible which unites our entire lives, we must ask, whence or how does this first choice come? It seems to me that the answer can be found not really (or at least not fully) in our environment, since the attitude we take toward it is prior to the environment, but from the unconscious (which is not other than us, but is us), which presents us with many choices until, at last, there is one to which we consent. In other words, "Tout ce chemin de révolte passionnée contre Sigmund Freud pour arriver là" (Clément 57).[46] This, then, becomes our fundamental project—one which we have chosen. Such an understanding, I believe, better accommodates Sartre's later writings and at the same time does nothing to diminish his account of existential psychoanalysis. Thus, the principle ("that man is a totality and not a collection"), the goal ("to *decipher* the empirical patterns of man"), the point of departure ("experience") and its method ("comparative") (BN 72627; EN 657) remain the same. Indeed, if the purpose of Sartre's psychoanalysis is more that of a moral conversion of all men rather than merely that of treatment for those with psycho-pathologies,[47] then there is even a greater urgency in our embracing existentialist psychoanalysis. For once we grasp our fundamental project and the manner by which it has been conditioned by the environment and the upsurge of our unconsciousness, we are well on our way to a more realistic notion of freedom and to the task of freeing oursleves from being "useless passions."

ENDNOTES

1. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), p. 734. English citations will be from this text and will be cited in the body of the paper as BN. Corresponding references to the French will be made using EN as a notation and will refer to *L'Etre et le néant* (Paris: Gallimard, 1950); here to p. 663.

2. Leading names categorized as contemporary existential psychoanalysts include J. F. T. Bugental, Victor Frankl, Abraham Maslow, Rollo May, and Carl Rogers. The list could easily be extended. See Gerald Corey, *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy* (Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing, 1977). Some may argue that these names represent those in the "humanist" movement

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of psychology, but then "l'existentialisme est un humanisme." Thomas Anderson argues that despite the opinion that this speech may not well represent Sartre's deepest thought, it does not present any "fundamental inconsistencies." See Thomas Anderson, "Is a Sartrean Ethics Possible?" *Philosophy Today* 14 (1970), 116–40; here p. 136, n. 26.

3. Indeed, while existential psychoanalysis can claim its victories, a strict following of the existential metaphysics presented in *Being and Nothingness* appears to have disastrous effects on those who attempt to undertake it. While Sartre's own Roquentin, hardly the paradigm of mental health, is a fictional character, there is documented in the psychological literature case studies of "real life" Roquentins, people whose experience of Sartrean radical freedom paradoxically seems to force them to suicide or madness. A noteworthy example is that of Renée. A brief case history and comparison of Renée's writings to those of Sartre is found in Alfred Stern, *Sartre: His Philosophy and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1953), especially pp. 187–205. Stern harshly poses the question: "Is it not strange that many of his [Sartre's] philosophical positions should appear to have been anticipated by a schizophrenic girl?" (ibid., p. 196).

4. Later works that will be cited within the text follow with their respective abbreviations: *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, trans. Alan Sheridan-Smith, ed. Jonathan Ree (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1976), CDR; *Critique de la raison dialectique—précedé de Questions de méthode* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), CRD; "Existentialism is a Humanism," in *Existentialism and Human Emotions* (New York: First Carol Publishing, 1990), EH; (*L'existentialisme est un humanisme* (Paris: Les Editions Nagel, 1970), Eh; *Notebooks for an Ethics*, trans. David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), N; *Cahiers pour une moral* (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), C; *Search for a Method*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), SM; *The Words*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), W; and *Les mots* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), M.

5. Cf. "this project itself . . . is the totality of my being" (BN 720; EN 651).

6. See Gerald T. Campbell, "Sartre's Absolute Freedom," *Laval Théologique et Philosophique* 33 (1977): 61–91. "It is somewhat ironical that 'the project,' perhaps the most practical and valuable aspect of Sartre's philosophy, does not have any dependence on Sartre's own first principles" (ibid., p. 89).

7. Cf. "Man is nothing else than his plan [*projet*]" (EH 32; Eh 55) and "Man defines himself by his project" (SM 150; CRD 113).

8. See Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, *Phenomenology and Science in Contemporary European Thought* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Cudahy, 1962).

9. Peter K. McInerney, "Self-Determination and the Project," *Journal of Philosophy* 79 (1976): 663–77.

10. Rivca Gordon and Haim Gordon, "Sartre's Autobiography and his Early Philosophy," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 23 (1992): 66–75.

11. Or what is not now the case (cf. McInerney [1976] 665).

12. There is more of a difficulty in explaining my desire for a chocolate bar which is immediately before me. I believe Sartre's resolution of this circumstance would be that what I desire is that state (not yet existing) of my actually having just had the candy bar.

13. Despite the fact that Sartre speaks of a cause *or* motive immediately preceding this passage, it strikes me as misleading to translate, as Barnes does, *motif* as "cause." I shall further deal with the question of the semantic differentiation between "motive" and "cause" in the next section, though the entire issue is a thorny one which lies beyond the scope of this essay.

14. Hyppolite raises an obvious objection to this use of "choice" in describing the fundamental project: "La thèse de Sartre qui pose l'absolu de la liberté par-delà tous les motifs et tous les mobiles ne saurait situer la liberté au niveau du volontaire. Cette distinction du volontaire et de l'involontaire est seconde par rapport au choix fondamental." See "La liberté chez Jean-Paul Sartre," in Jean Hyppolite, *Ecrits*, vol. 2 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971), pp. 770–71.

15. For example, see the passage in which Sartre recounts his discovering his counting and adding: "it is the non-reflective consciousness which renders the reflection possible; there is a pre-reflective cogito which is the condition of the Cartesian cogito. At the same time it is the non-thetic consciousness of counting which is the very act of adding. If it were otherwise, how would the addition be the unifying theme of my consciousness?" (BN 13; EN 20).

16. Cf. "the for-itself is a being such that in its being, its being is in question in the form of a project of being" (BN 722; EN 652).

17. One argument runs as follows. "Consciousness is consciousness of something." Imagine that consciousness has removed from it, one by one, all of its awarenesses. What

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is left at the end of the process is nothing or consciousness itself.

18. Hyppolite raises a similar question. See Jean Hyppolite, "La psychanalyse existentielle chez Jean-Paul Sartre," in *Ecrits*, vol. 2 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971), pp. 780–806; esp. p. 782.

19. Sartre consistently rejects the notion of any kind of "human nature." Cf. SM 169–70; CRD 125: EH 30; Eh 52. See, however, Hyppolite: "Cependant, si chaque personne humaine est ainsi un noeud singulier, une façon originale de surgir au monde, qui se fonde dans une liberté, n'y a-t-il pas *une structure universelle* commune à toutes les singularités, structure qui remplace dans l'ontologie sartrienne la sexualité où la volonté de puissance des psychanalystes?" (Hyppolite, p. 774).

20. Anderson, however, explains that only those who remain in bad faith maintain the futile project to be God (Anderson, p. 119). Those who accept this project as a vain and useless value are more freely able to choose more attainable values (ibid., p. 120).

21. See Charles D. Tenney, "Aesthetics in the Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre," in *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, ed. Paul A. Schilpp (La Salle: Open Court, 1981), p. 212: "The formation and carrying out of such a project involves (or rather *is*) the total man; it is never really finished. Sartre's own activities as a writer illustrate this point."

22. Motives are not necessarily causes, as Sartre himself emphasizes in his critique of Freud. The motivation here is propositional as well: I can be motivated by an actually existent chocolate bar without there being some *particular* (that one, there) actually existent chocolate bar which motivates me.

23. J. Michael Russell argues cogently that reflection is not possible in Sartre. See J. Michael Russell, "Saying, Feeling, and Self-Deception," *Behaviorism* 6 (1978): 27–43; esp. pp. 39–41.

24. Certainly, if consciousness of other consciousnesses were not possible, Sartre's problem of 'the Other' could not even begin to make sense.

25. Once again the referential opacity can provide a possible answer. It is not, one may claim, consciousness as a something of which one is aware in psychoanalysis, but *certain facts* (propositional, and opaque) about consciousness. This claim also makes sense of Sartre's exposition of existential psychoanalysis in psychoanalytic biographies; since of course neither he nor anyone else can be conscious of Flaubert's consciousness in a non-opaque context (since it no longer exists). Though Sartre begins to address this very issue in a 1975 interview, the issue is left somewhat vague by him (Schilpp, pp. 22–23). Further exploration of his possible answer lies beyond the scope of this study. I suspect, however, that, if the answer were universalized as a truth about existential psychoanalysis, it would leave Sartre open to Descartes' problem of other minds. It is difficult to claim that one can be conscious of (opaque) other consciousnesses if there never has been another consciousness of which one has been conscious (non-opaque). The same claim, of course, holds for the candy bar mentioned earlier. My consciousness (opaque) of its absence depends intimately upon there having been some candy bar at some time of whose presence I was conscious (non-opaque).

26. Indeed, one is reminded of the dialogue at the Mad Hatter's tea party:

> "Take some more tea," the March Hare said to Alice, very earnestly. "I've had nothing yet," Alice replied in an offended tone, "so I can't take more." "You mean you can't take *less*," said the Hatter: "It's very easy to take *more* than nothing."

Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (New York: Penguin Books, 1980), pp. 99–100.

27. The phrase "account for" need not mean (as it does mean in Freud) "provide a causal explanation of." The weaker sense of "finding (or giving) intelligibility in (or to)" is perfectly consistent with Sartre's claims for existential psychoanalysis, and with general practice as well. See Simon J. Evnine, "Freud's Ambiguous Concepts," *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 3 (1989): 86–99. "We want to know how something about an agent fits into our picture of him as an essentially rational, motivated entity. Let us call explanations of this kind 'existentially lucid'" (ibid., p. 88).

28. *The Words* also suggest this as Gordon and Gordon note, "Even in a first reading one discerns that *The Words* is the story of Sartre's original choice *between the age of seven and ten*, to be a writer" (Gordon and Gordon, p. 68; my emphasis).

29. This is Evnine's criticism (Evnine, p. 90).

30. Cf. Sartre's description in *The Words*: "I was often told that the past drives us forward, but I was convinced that I was being drawn by the future" (W 237; M 197).

31. Joseph P. Fell, "Sartre's *Words*: An Existential Self-Analysis," *Psychoanalytic Review* 55 (1968): 426–41.

32. Joel Peterson, "Problems in the Sartrean Paradigm of Life as a Project," *Philosophical Forum* 7 (197576): 188–202.

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33. Peterson gives the example of St. Paul (Peterson, p. 196). What the original project of that Apostle may be cannot have been either the persecuting of Christians nor later proselytizing for them. Instead there must have been a deeper, more fundamental project which encompasses both. If we think of the project as attitude, perhaps Paul's project may have simply been zealousness.

34. A point made by McInerney. See Peter McInerney, "Sartre's Nihilations," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 20 (1986): 97–110; esp. p. 103.

35. Interestingly enough, this seems to contradict one of Sartre's earlier observations concerning his ontology. "But no action indicates anything which is *behind itself*; it indicates only itself and the total series" (BN 4; EN 11).

36. Cf. the example of the slave owner, who though he possesses the slaves, is actually limited and conditioned by his owning them (CDR 331; CRD 437).

37. Lee Brown and Alan Hausman make a similar point: "In the final analysis, then, the problem comes to whether choices either can be causes or are themselves caused. And as we have pointed out, it would indeed be odd to criticize Freud for failing to adopt a libertarian metaphysical stance before attempting a causal explanation." See "Mechanism, Intentionality, and the Unconscious: A Comparison of Sartre and Freud," in *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, p. 569.

38. As previously noted, Peterson makes an even stronger claim: "Furthermore, I would like to maintain that the notion that a life can have more than one fundamental project is a contradiction in terms. The fundamental project of a life is *fundamental* to that life" (Peterson, p. 196).

39. For a detailed discussion of this point, see Ivan Soll, "Sartre's Rejection of the Freudian Unconscious," in *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, pp. 582–604. One must note, however, that Sartre vehemently rejects this point in the interview preceding this collection of articles (ibid., pp. 33–36).

40. Even this difference could be eliminated; after all, we do come to know the libido, but we come to know it as *our* libido, that is, as ourselves. This is no different than being (and the awareness of this being) the non-reflective consciousness.

41. Catherine Clément even suggests that Sartre himself may have resorted to Freudian psychoanalysis! "En 1979, alors que nous rendions de concert au Martin de Paris, Sartre me dit à mi-voix, comme s'il n'y croyait pas lui-même, qu'il avait été sur le divan d'un psychanalyste; vrai ou faux, je ne sais." Catherine Clément, "Contre, tout contre la psychanalyse," *Magazine littéraire: Sartre dans tous ses écrits* 282 (1990): 55–57; quoting p. 57.

42. This reference is to Karl Marx, *The German Ideology* (Moscow, 1964), pp. 69–70.

43. Hyppolite questions the very applicability of "freedom" to the situation, while granting that there remains room for the concept of "contingency." "En quel sens, cependant, peut-on parler de liberté ou de choix, puisque ce choix n'est pas un choix volontaire, mais est mon propre surgissement au monde, ce qui fait ma situation?, puisque je ne suis pas avant de choisir, mais suis, pour ainsi dire, ce choix même? Il y a là comme une pure gratuité, une contingence radicale" (Hyppolite, p. 796).

44. Indeed, under Sartre's analysis, and by his own admittance, his ontology cannot explain how it is that one could forget. For a brief discussion, see his 1975 interview (Schilpp, p. 23).

45. Philip Knee, "La psychanalyse sans l'inconscient? Remarques autour de *Scénario Freud* de Sartre," *Laval théologique et philosophique* 41 (1985): 225–38.

46. Clément goes further in insisting that "*la psychanalyse existentielle n'est autre que la psychanalyse* [of Freud] *dans son histoire au vingtième siècle*" (Clément, p. 56).

47. "Sartre's Existentialist psychoanalysis belongs rather to that of *moral* hygiene, which, as we have seen, sometimes lives at the expense of mental health" (Stern, p. 207). Stern sees a similitude among Sartre, Freud, and Spinoza on this point.

Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI 53233

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