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## Jean-Paul Sartre on Oppression and Violence

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### Introduction

Jean-Paul Sartre is known for his rebellious life, his affiliation with communism and Maoism and his quote that “Hell is other people.”<sup>1</sup> The desire for revolution is the driving force of Sartre’s whole philosophy. He sees human life as a struggle against alienation and oppression in favor of man’s freedom.

Sartre was involved in the debate on the French occupation of Algeria around 1956. He openly supported the Algerians in their struggle for freedom and their active resistance, which resulted in the Algerian war from 1954 until 1962. During the French occupation of Algeria in the 1850s, Algerians came to live in poverty and were subjected to inhuman treatment. Resistance to colonial oppression was answered by more oppression. Sartre saw French colonialism as a severe case of disregard of human rights.<sup>2</sup>

The necessity for absolute freedom is paramount throughout Sartre’s whole philosophy. It is therefore not surprising that Sartre supported the Algerian struggle for independence in order to regain their freedom. Sartre believed that it was his moral duty as an intellectual to speak against the French occupation and to become politically involved.<sup>3</sup> He argued that the French had to take responsibility for the occupation, because it infected the French with racism and obliged innocent men to fight despite themselves.<sup>4</sup>

Sartre provided an introduction to Frantz Fanon's controversial book *Les Damnés de la Terre*. In this introduction, he argues that the Algerian people need to use violence in order to overcome the oppression. Sartre admits that terrorism is a horrible weapon, but claims that the Algerians have no other option:

Il faut tuer: abattre un Européen, c'est faire d'une pierre deux coups, supprimer en même temps un oppresseur et un opprimé : restent un homme mort et un homme libre le survivant, pour la première fois, sent un sol national sous la plante de ses pieds. [5]

Sartre seems to argue that in case of severe oppression, one should kill another freedom in order to regain freedom.

In this chapter, I will discuss Sartre's remark in the light of his phenomenological ontology. I will concentrate on the relation to the other and how Sartre sees this relation as paradoxical and oppressive. Sartre's phenomenological ontology that he sets forth in *L'Être et le Néant* is an account of man's struggle for absolute freedom. For Sartre, consciousness is nothingness that directs itself to the phenomena. Consciousness is an activity rather than a thing. The main characteristic of human consciousness is its intentionality: consciousness is always conscious of something without coinciding with it. Because consciousness experiences that which it is conscious of always as something which it is not, it is absolutely free. Man never is, but is always a "becoming-to-be."

Man is, however, ontologically inclined to mask his absolute freedom. Consciousness experiences its power to negate the phenomena as a lack of being. Sartre argues that the fundamental project of consciousness is the desire to be, which leads to acts of bad faith (*la mauvaise foi*). Bad faith is a denial of the transcendence of consciousness and a refusal to take

responsibility for its facticity. Man's facticity is discovered by the gaze of the other. The gaze of the other confronts man with his embodied existence.

Sartre argues that the gaze of the other confronts one with his own objectivity. Man gets a sense of this when he sees himself revealed in the gaze of the other and discovers that the other is another consciousness. The gaze of the other results in concrete relations of love, language, masochism, indifference, desire, hate and sadism. These relations are all characterized by conflict and oppression.

In Sartre's phenomenological account of human consciousness, it is impossible for man to maintain a relation with another consciousness without denial of his or the other's freedom. In ontology, the gaze of the other keeps hostage and alienates.

In this chapter, I will reconstruct the way Sartre argues that the concrete relations to the "other" are paradoxical and oppressive. I will relate these findings to terrorism and colonialism and the understanding of an oppressor. For Sartre, an oppressor is someone who denies the subjectivity of the other by treating him as a mere object. I will conclude that oppression for Sartre is paradoxical because it is essentially an act of bad faith. An oppressor masks the fact that he needs to take up his own facticity as part of his situation.

I will show that the concrete relations that Sartre distinguishes in *L'Être et le Néant* have their origin in consciousness' fundamental desire to be. The desire to be causes man to fall into acts of bad faith. Ontology is the sphere of being in which consciousness tries to get hold of being and tries to be something it is not. The gaze of the other is seen as hostile not because the other is hostile, but because man's ontological attitude leads to interpreting the gaze as such.

From Sartre's ontological account, it necessarily follows that severe oppression can only be put to an end by killing the oppressor. This however does not mean that Sartre argues that killing

is morally justified. In strictly Sartrean terms, killing is also an act of bad faith because it is a refusal to take up one's facticity as part of the situation.

For Sartre, oppression only stops when the oppressor himself gives up the desire to be and deals with the fact that he is a transcendence that needs to deal with his facticity. Oppression, terrorism, conflict and violence all stem from man's anxiety for either his freedom or his responsibility for the situation in which he finds himself. Only the shift from ontology to morality will prevent man from falling into acts of bad faith. In the moral conversion, man accepts the situation as his own and sees the other as another consciousness that has his own projects to realize. I will argue that Sartre's analysis does not only give us insight in the motivation of terrorists and oppressors, but also gives us insight in the way all humans are prone to use oppression as a way to mask our absolute freedom.

### Absolute Freedom and Bad Faith

Sartre argues that ontology deals with the difference between consciousness and a mere thing. Consciousness is different than a thing, because of its intentionality; consciousness directs itself at phenomena and becomes conscious of its being.

Sartre argues that consciousness is the activity of directing itself at something, which is different than it. Consciousness is essentially a negating activity because it experiences that which it is conscious of as something-which-it-is-not. Even when consciousness is conscious of itself, it experiences itself as something that it is not, which proves that consciousness is essentially nothingness. The main difference between consciousness as for-itself (*pour-soi*) and a thing as in-itself (*en-soi*) is that consciousness never coincides with what it is conscious of, while a thing coincides totally with itself.

Consciousness' existence is dependent on the being of the phenomena that it is conscious of. Consciousness can however transcend the phenomena by negating them (*néantiser*). Consciousness as negating activity that is nothingness is synonymous with absolute freedom; it is never determined because it never is, but is always a becoming-to-be.

Sartre presents man in *L'Être et le Néant*, but also in his novels, as the creature who is doomed to be free. Doomed because he cannot escape from the endless task of giving himself significance and direction. Man is absolute freedom and is responsible for every choice he makes and everything he was or becomes. Sartre even argues that man needs to take up his own thrownness in the world (*facticity*) as his own choice. This means accepting one's body, gender and situation in which one finds himself as part of his project. What Sartre argues is that man is on his own in giving himself significance and direction. In this sense; man is doomed to be free; he cannot rely on anything outside himself for giving him guidance.

Man's absolute freedom and his responsibility for the situation in which he finds himself is something that he will try to mask. Man will often pretend that he is not able to transcend the situation (and thus denies that he is absolutely free) or he pretends that he does not have to deal with his facticity. Sartre argues that man is ontologically inclined to fall into acts of bad faith (*la mauvaise foi*).

Bad faith appears when I for example pretend that the situation in which I find myself makes it impossible for me to make a free choice. The "*homme sérieux*", as Sartre calls him, acts like he is a determined thing that cannot give itself direction.

Man also acts out of bad faith when he pretends that his facticity doesn't affect him. In *L'Être et le Néant*, Sartre gives the example of the young woman who has a romantic dinner with a man. The man lies his hand on the woman's hand, but the woman refuses to respond to this

gesture. She pretends that the man's hand touching her hand doesn't affect her. The woman acts out of bad faith because she refuses to take responsibility for her own facticity.

The man who acts out of bad faith acts from an impossibility to choose or to take responsibility for the situation. Man masks in his bad faith his existence as a free individual who has to take up his facticity as his own choice. Bad faith not only affects the way man sees himself, but also affects the way he encounters another consciousness. Sartre argues that it is the other who reveals my objectivity and confronts me with my facticity.

### **The Gaze of the Other**

Sartre's phenomenology presents consciousness as an activity that never coincides with that of which it is conscious. Consciousness always experiences that which it is conscious of as something different than itself.

When man encounters another human being, he experiences this other as a consciousness that is not *his* consciousness. Sartre argues that the relation to the other is defined by the ability to be seen by the other (the gaze, le regard). The other can reflect on his being and reveals his embodied existence. For Sartre, it is the other who confronts him with his facticity.

Through the gaze of the other, one not only becomes aware of the subjectivity of the other, but is also confronted with the fact that his consciousness is not only a perspective, but also an object within the world. The gaze of the other alienates him from his absolute freedom, because it forces him to take responsibility for the being that the other reveals of him. One must accept that the being that the other sees is *his* being.

The confrontation with one's embodied existence is hard for man, because he must take up that which he cannot change, such as gender or body appearance, as part of his situation. Sartre

argues that man has to take up his facticity *as if* it was his own choice. If he fails to do this, he will fall into acts of bad faith.

Sartre distinguishes two ways in which man reacts to the gaze. In the concrete relations of love, language and masochism, man tries to appropriate the being that the other reveals of him. Man tries to become what the other sees in him. Man can also deny the gaze of the other and pretend that the other does not reveal his embodied existence. This reaction leads to the relations of indifference, desire, hate and sadism.

Although these concrete relations differ slightly from each other, they are all doomed to fail. These relations are characterized by conflict and oppression and destroy man's absolute freedom.

### **Oppression, Conflict and the Other**

Sartre's main concern in the encounter with the other is not the experience of the other's subjectivity, but the role the other plays in revealing his objectivity. The gaze reveals his being-for-the-other.

Sartre distinguishes different attitudes to respond to this being-for-the-other. The concrete ontological relations to the other are love, language, masochism, indifference, desire, hate and sadism. Love, language and masochism are attitudes that have their origin in the desire to that which the other reveals of man. Indifference, desire, hate and sadism are attitudes that deny the subjectivity of the other by denying that the other reveals man's facticity. I pretend that the other is a mere object that does not reflect on one's being. Sartre argues that the concrete relations all result in violence and oppression.

In love for example, we try to be that which the other reveals of us. We try to live up to our lover's expectations in order to gain their love. The assumption that we can be what the other sees in us is, however, an illusion. As absolute freedom, we never *are*, but are always a *becoming-to-be*. We can never possess the quality that the other ascribes to us. In love, we are not only fooling ourselves by pretending that we can possess fixed qualities, but we also treat the other as an object by forcing him to love us:

Ainsi l'amant demande le serment et s'irrite du serment. Il veut être aimé par une liberté et réclame que cette liberté comme liberté ne soit plus libre. Il veut à la fois que la liberté de l'autre se détermine elle-même à devenir amour – et cela, non point seulement au commencement de l'aventure mais à chaque instant – et, à la fois, que cette liberté soit captivée *par elle-même*, qu'elle se retourne sur elle-même, comme dans la folie, comme dans le rêve, pour vouloir sa captivité.<sup>6</sup>

In love, man has made himself dependent on the other and masks the fact that he needs to give himself significance and direction. The loving relationship Sartre depicts here is essentially an act of bad faith; man tries to be something he is not. Man needs to give himself significance and cannot rely on the other in order to escape from this task.

Sartre argues that "language" is the attitude in which I appropriate the other ones point of view. In this attitude, man has turned himself to "the language of objectivity."<sup>7</sup> In this attitude, one tries to adopt the significance the other gives to phenomena in order to gain his love.

Language, just as love, is doomed to fail; the more one tries to adopt the significance the other gives to phenomena in order to make him love, the more one will lose himself and the more the other will slip away.



Masochism is the torturing effort to be against all odds. In masochism, one gives up his freedom in order to gain the other ones love and make himself — in every aspect of his existence — dependent on the other.

Love, language and masochism are attitudes that result from the desire to appropriate the being the other reveals of him. In these relations, we trying to assume the other's subjectivity by making ourselves dependent on him. These relations result in a total alienation of our consciousness as *for-itself*. For Sartre, man is of bad faith when he pretends that he can escape his task of giving himself significance by relying on something outside of him. The gaze of the other alienates him from his freedom and keeps him hostage.

Indifference, desire, hate and sadism result from the second reaction to the gaze, which Sartre distinguishes. These attitudes refuse to acknowledge that the other is another consciousness that reveals one's facticity. Sartre argues that these attitudes are essentially the refusal to take responsibility for man's facticity.

Indifference is the denial that the other has the capability of revealing one's objectivity. For example, I treat the other as a thing that cannot reflect on my being.. In relation to terrorism, indifference can be related to the colonist who occupies a certain territory and denies the special way of living of the natives who have their own tradition and history.

The second attitude that characterizes the denial of the other ones subjectivity is desire. Desire has a sexual connotation; it is an attempt to possess the other's body in order to ignore his subjectivity. Sartre argues that desire is the "original attempt to possess the free subjectivity of the other by using his objectivity-for-me."<sup>8</sup> Desire is directed at using the other one's facticity, but at the same time emphasizes man's own embodied existence. In desire, one tries to possess the other ones' body by using his own body. An example of desire is war rape. War rapes and

rape by soldiers are attitudes of desire; they have a sexual connotation and are directed at gaining power of the other one's subjectivity. The other one's subjectivity is mastered by using one's own body.

Desire is frequently combined with hate. Hate is despising the way the other is. Despising the other for what he is or for what he looks like is denying the fact that the other is not a thing with determined qualities but absolute freedom. Sartre argues that hate — which is for example the underlying feeling of racism — is fundamentally a masking of one's own failure. Hate is directed at the way the other one is, but is driven by the failing attempt to incorporate the other in one's own projects. An example of hate is the religious terrorist who kills people because the world does not seem to acknowledge the truth of his religious conviction. Hate is masking the fact that one must take responsibility for the whole situation, including the acknowledgement that his projects are not being realized.

Sadism is the last attitude Sartre distinguishes. It is the effort to annihilate the other's subjectivity by inflicting pain on his body. The sadist is exhilarated by controlling the subject as an object. The torture at Guantanamo Bay is an example of sadism. Torture is inflicting bodily pain in order to master the other's freedom. Just like hate, sadism has its origin in the confrontation with the fact that life is permeated with failure and that one's projects are sometimes frustrated. Sadism is masking one responsibility for this fact of human life.

The concrete relations of love, language, masochism, indifference, desire, hate and sadism are all paradoxical in their nature. In love, language and masochism one tries to gain the love of a free consciousness by forcing him to love and by forcing dependence on the other. For example, I give up my freedom and keep the other hostage by tricking him into loving me. Indifference, desire, hate and sadism are directed at denying the other's subjectivity by using his body. In

these attitudes man treats the other as nothing more than a body by using his own body. These attitudes have their origin in the refusal to take responsibility for one's own facticity.

The concrete relations to the other result in conflict and oppression. The concrete relations are either directed at giving up one's own freedom in order to gain the love of the other as freedom, or are directed at destroying the other's freedom by abusing one's own freedom. Both reactions result in undermining one's own nature as consciousness that must take up its facticity as its own choice. Sartre argues that there is no other way of approaching the other in the ontological sphere; they all result in objectification and alienation.

In Sartre's analysis, the concrete attitudes are all acts of bad faith. In the concrete attitudes towards the other, man masks the nature of consciousness as *for-itself* that has to take responsibility for his embodied existence. The reactions to the gaze of the other are fundamentally perverted because they are all grounded in either denying the transcendental nature of consciousness or a refusal to take responsibility for man's facticity.

Based on Sartre's analysis of the gaze and the concrete relations to the other, we can define what Sartre means by oppression. Oppression is objectifying the other by not taking into account that the other is another consciousness that can reflect on one's own being. Oppression can also be the result of denying one's absolute freedom by making one dependent on the other. For example, I pretend in this latter case that the other can give me guidance and significance. Oppression has its origin in the anxiety for man's infinite task to give himself direction and significance and taking up his facticity as his own choice.

For Sartre, an oppressor acts always out of bad faith. An oppressor tries to mask the fundamental nature of human existence. Because oppression has its origin in masking the nature

of human existence, it is destructive. Sartre argues in *Situations V* that oppression such as colonialism, is always doomed to fail:

We, the people of mainland France, have only one lesson to draw from these facts: colonialism is in the process of destroying itself. But it still fouls the atmosphere. It is our shame; it mocks our laws or caricatures them. It infects us with its racism; as the Montpellier episode proved the other day, it obliges our young men to fight *despite themselves* and die for the Nazi principles that we fought against ten years ago; it attempts to defend itself by arousing fascism even here in France. Our role is to help it to die. Not only in Algeria but wherever it exists.<sup>9</sup>

In the introduction to Frantz Fanon's book, Sartre argues that the only choice an Algerian has left to overcome the French oppression is to kill the Europeans. This statement can be understood from the ontological relation to the other.

An oppressor denies that the other has the power to reveal one's own objectivity and treats the other as a thing. In order to fight oppression, the other sees only two options: either he may adopt the *being-for-the-other* and become the oppressor's slave, or he may deny the subjectivity of the oppressor by reducing him to a mere thing. These two options however do not result in regaining one's own freedom; as long as the oppressor denies seeing one as another consciousness, he can never be truly free. I believe that it is in this sense that Sartre argues that killing is the only option available to the Algerians.

Sartre argues that it is our role as the oppressors to overcome this act of bad faith. We must give up trying to objectify the other and must take up our own facticity in an authentic way. The question is how we can escape from acts of bad faith if Sartre does not give us any alternative in

approaching the other. It seems to be impossible to respect the other as free consciousness without alienating ourselves or objectifying the other.

### **The Moral Conversion**

In Sartre's ontology it is impossible not to fall into acts of bad faith when we are confronted with the gaze of the other. The relation to the other is characterized by conflict and oppression and never leads to a situation in which absolute freedom is possible for both. It is from this pessimistic ontological account of human relations that Sartre argues that the only option the Algerians have is to kill their oppressors.

Yet, Sartre does not claim that killing is morally justified. Although it might be the only option left in order to regain freedom, it is not subsequently a morally justified option. From the analysis of the concrete relations to the other and man's acts of bad faith, killing another freedom can be classified as hate or indifference. Killing is not only an attempt to regain my freedom, but is at the same time a denial of the subjectivity of the other. By killing the other, I treat him as a mere object and prevent him of revealing my embodied existence. Killing as such is a failing attempt to regain one's freedom and needs to be classified as an act of bad faith.

Sartre's whole ontology, which he describes in *L'Être et le Néant*, needs to be seen as an ontology of bad faith. Ontology is the domain of being and for Sartre, consciousness as nothingness has difficulties giving itself a place in the ontological sphere. Sartre argues that consciousness is ontologically inclined to experience its nothingness as lack. Consciousness tries to appropriate that which it is conscious of and tries to give itself a foundation. The fundamental project of consciousness is the desire to be; it always tries to escape its nothingness. Trying to escape its nothingness is trying to escape from its own nature, which is why all the efforts of

consciousness results in acts of bad faith. Already from the beginning consciousness masks its very own nature as *for-itself*.

The fundamental desire to be prevents consciousness from encountering the other as freedom without restraining its own freedom. Although it seems that Sartre's ontology provides no exit from bad faith, he does already point to the possibility of an authentic attitude in which consciousness does not fall into acts of bad faith:

Ces considerations n'excluent pas la possibilité d'une morale de la délivrance et du salut. Mais celle-ci doit être atteinte au terme d'une conversion radicale dont nous ne pouvons parler ici.<sup>10</sup>

Sartre never wrote any books on this radical conversion. He did however leave notes in which he describes the moral conversion and the turn to authenticity. These notes are collected in *Cahiers pour une Morale* (1983). These notes give an insight in how Sartre sees a possibility for consciousness to overcome bad faith and to express its absolute freedom.

Sartre argues that authenticity is reached in despair. Despair (*désespoir*) is the experience that one's fundamental project - which is the effort to give myself a foundation - is doomed to fail. Human life is permeated with failure, which has its origin in consciousness' negating activity. Accepting failure is accepting consciousness as nothingness that always negates the phenomena and never can get hold of being.

Man needs to accept that he differs fundamentally from being; man never is, but is always a *becoming-to-be*. In the radical conversion, man accepts that he cannot be reduced to a set of qualities but that he can only be interpreted as a collection of activities. Sartre argues that the

“recognition of myself as *for-itself ecstatic* leads to the recognition of consciousness as de-totalised totality.”<sup>11</sup>

Giving up our fundamental desire to be is moving from the ontological sphere to the moral sphere. The moral sphere is the sphere in which man acts in accordance with his existence as absolute freedom. The conversion to morality opens a new way of approaching the other, because man is no longer motivated by the desire to be.

The relation to the other does not result in oppression because the gaze of the other confronts one with his objectivity, but fails because he has already taken an inauthentic stand to his consciousness. It is our fundamental desire to be which prevents us from engaging in an authentic relation to the other. Sartre argues that the turn to morality is the recognition that the other is another free consciousness who has his own projects to realize.

In ontology, we either try to appropriate the being that the other reveals of us and ourselves make the other the foundation of my consciousness, or we treat the other as a thing by denying his subjectivity. At a deeper level, these attitudes have their origin in man's anxiety of himself as embodied freedom. Man finds it hard to accept that he will always transcend being and that he will always have to take responsibility for his own facticity. In the moral conversion, man accepts that failure is part of human existence and assumes responsibility for the situation in which he finds himself.

The turn to morality opens a third possibility of approaching the other and changes the reaction to the gaze of the other. When man gives up the desire to be and sees himself as a collection of activities, he will interpret that which the other reveals of him as part of the project the other has to realize. Furthermore, man will take up that which the other reveals of him as part of the situation in which he finds himself. The authentic attitude is to approach the other as

another consciousness who has the ability to reflect on one's being and assume responsibility for being in this particular situation. Since situations change, the gaze will fade away and will no longer be part of one's consciousness.

#### Conclusion: Overcoming Oppression, Violence and Terrorism

In this chapter, I have analyzed Sartre's ontological account of consciousness, which is prone to fall into acts of bad faith. I have related this to Sartre's claim in the introduction to Frantz Fanon's book *Les Damnés de la Terre* in which Sartre argues that the Algerians have no other option left than to kill their oppressors. For Sartre, oppression results from the desire to be which leads man to acts of bad faith. In the ontological sphere, man encounters the other as the other who reveals one's objectivity and reacts to the gaze in an authentic way. Not only do acts of hate, indifference, desire and sadism such as war rape and torture have their origin in man's inauthentic stand to his own consciousness as *for-itself*; also love in the ontological sphere is essentially an act of bad faith.

Sartre argues that man needs to free himself of ontology and make a turn to morality. In the moral conversion, man acknowledges that he is a collection of activities rather than a set of qualities and accepts the fundamental structure of consciousness as negating activity. The moral conversion changes our attitude to the other and subsequently alters our reaction to the gaze. The other is no longer seen as an obstacle in realizing our goal, but as another consciousness that has his projects to realize.

When Sartre argues that the Algerians have no other option left than to kill the oppressors, he refers to the pessimistic perspective of human relations in the ontological sphere. When man



denies his specific way of existence, he will not only be an oppressor to himself, but he will also approach the other in a violent and oppressive way. Sartre's account is realistic in the sense that Sartre argues that in order to be truly free, the oppressor needs to refrain from his acts of bad faith. When the oppressor does not make the turn to morality, absolute freedom will never be realized. In this sense, severe oppression such as colonialism can only be stopped by killing the oppressors. This however does not imply that Sartre sees killing as morally justified. Killing is an act that belongs to the sphere of ontology in which consciousness reacts to the gaze by denying the other one's subjectivity and destroying it. Killing is therefore an act of bad faith in reaction to another one's act of bad faith. The fundamental paradox that Sartre points out is that the ontological sphere will lead to a spiral of acts of bad faith. Oppression will be answered by more violent oppression. For example, the more I try to be free by denying the other's freedom, the more I will fail to realize this goal.

Ontology is for Sartre not only the sphere of being, but also the sphere in which human existence will be characterized by oppression, violence and terrorism — a sphere in which man can never act authentically, but will always fall into acts of bad faith. For Sartre, ontology, as the domain of being, is a sphere in which human consciousness does not feel at place. Consciousness as nothingness that never is, has an ambiguous relation to being; it needs being in order to exercise its activity, but at the same time it is fundamentally different than being because it will always transcend being and negate it.

Morality is the sphere in which human existence finds itself at home. In the moral conversion, man assumes full responsibility of the situation in which he finds himself and the fact that he is a set of activities and never can be a thing with fixed qualities. Sartre argues that

every man has his own project to realize and that he cannot force the other to engage in his projects.

This does not mean that Sartre argues that two individuals cannot work on the same project. Two individuals can cooperate when they adopt the same project. The cooperation will be successful as long as both individuals refrain from seeing the other as an obstacle or reducing the other to his embodied existence. Cooperation is possible if I accept that human life is situated and as such falls always back into nothingness.

Terrorism, violence and oppression are all forms of human acts of covering up the fundamental structure of human existence and have their origin in the anxiety of man's absolute freedom. It is in this sense that Sartre argues that humans are doomed to be free; absolute freedom is not something which is easily taken up because it implies that man can never rely on anything else than himself.

Although acts of terrorism and severe oppression can be seen as excessive, Sartre gives us insight in the motivation behind these acts and the observation that all human beings will fall back into the ontological domain of bad faith. Accepting human existence in its true nature is for all humans at times difficult to bear.

In my view, Sartre does not argue that humans do not have the capability to refrain from using terrorism or violence; he does give us an opening to escape bad faith in the moral conversion. It is in despair that we sometimes realize that life is different than we envisage it and that man's is ultimate on its own in unfolding his life.

For Sartre, it is only possible to explain human life by showing that all of the free actions comprising it are all manifestations of one fundamental choice. Consciousness' fundamental choice will shift from the desire to be to the authentic stand to its nature as free, embodied

existence. It is from this perspective that we need to analyze terrorism and oppression and to gain a deeper understanding in their motivations and tendencies.

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Notes

<sup>1</sup> Sartre, Jean-Paul. *No Exit*. In: *No Exit and Three Other Plays*. Edited and translated by S. Gilbert, (New York: Vintage International, 1989), 22.

<sup>2</sup> Sartre, Jean-Paul, *Situations V: Colonialisme et Neo-Colonialisme*, (Paris : Gallimard, 1964), 157.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>5</sup> Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1961. Foreword to *Damnés de la Terre*, (Paris : La Découverte/Poche, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> Sartre, Jean-Paul, *L'Être et le Néant. Essai d'Ontologie phénoménologique*, (Paris : Gallimard, 2006), 407.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 413.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 422.

<sup>9</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Situations V, Colonialism and Neocolonialism*. Translated by Azzedine Haddour, Steve Brewer and Terry McWilliams, (New York & London: Routledge, 2001).19.

<sup>10</sup> L'Être et le Néant, p. 463.

<sup>11</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Cahier pour une Morale*, (Paris : Gallimard, 1983), 15.