SELF-KNOWLEDGE

A Study of Sartre and Hampshire



A Thesis Submitted for the Degree
of Doctor of Philosophy at the
University of Oxford

David A. Jopling
Christ Church
Oxford
May, 1988

Abstract

Self-Knowledge: A Study of Sartre and Hampshire

David A. Jopling
Christ Church
Oxford
Trinity Term, 1988

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
at the University of Oxford

This work examines some of the epistemological and ontological conditions of the deep self-knowledge that is demanded by the Delphic motto gnothi seauton (know thyself!). The guiding questions are: what is the 'self' that deep self-knowledge is of? What are we such that we can ask deep and puzzling questions about our life-plans, our self-conceptions and the meaning of our lives? Can we know ourselves as we really are, or only under a certain description which conceals as much as it reveals? What is the nature of the relation between self-knowledge and (personal or inner) reality?

The central thesis that is defended is that a person is to a certain extent a self-defining and self-forming being by virtue of his self-knowledge; fundamental changes in how he knows himself, and conceives his way of life, his life-history, emotions, final ends, death etc. -- particularly in light of fundamental practical questions ('Who am I?' 'What should I do with my life?') -- necessarily occasion changes in what he is. What he is at any one moment in his life is in part constituted by his self-knowledge.

To account for the complex 'inter-relation' between self-knowledge and its object, and the possibility of self-formation, a

broadly Kantian theory of constituting activity is developed, as well as a theory of the empirical 'under-determination' of self-knowledge. The peculiarity of self-knowledge is that the knower is the known, and that he is active (meaning-giving, or sinn-gebung) with respect to the object known (himself); the object of knowledge and the knowing subject change and extend their range together. This complicates some of the claims of realism and the correspondence theory of truth: self-knowledge is not a matter of the strict conformity of beliefs or conceptions to an independent, determinate and unchanging reality. In Kantian terms, the object of self-knowledge conforms to the conditions of knowledge.

This broadly Kantian approach is brought to the analysis of Hampshire and Sartre's theories, which are studied as illustrations of the general ontological and epistemological conditions of self-knowledge. Hampshire's Spinozist theory of reflexive knowledge, which emphasizes the importance of rationality and the understanding of the causes of one's mental states, is contrasted with Sartre's existentialist theory, which emphasizes the importance of choice, and the non-theoretical understanding of one's way of being. Sartre, who is critical of the foundational status generally given to rationality and knowledge, rejects deliberation, detachment, self-observation, reasoned self-criticism and the other rational activities that Hampshire and Spinoza consider essential for self-knowledge.

Other issues that are discussed include the problem of truth conditions in deep self-knowledge, the agent-observer dualism in self-inquiry, the relational model of the self, and Iris Murdoch's critique of Hampshire and Sartre.

CONTENTS

Preface 1

I Man's Knowledge of the World 17

1. Introduction 17
2. Realism and the Correspondence Theory of Truth 19
3. Kant's Copernican Revolution 25
4. Versions of the Concept of Constituting Activity 30
5. The Myth of the Given: A Cursory Survey 35
6. The Empirical Under-Determination of Knowledge 38

II Self-Knowledge 42

1. The Issues 42
2. Character Ascriptions and Simple Autobiographical Reports 51
3. The Depth of Self-Knowledge 54
4. Truth-Conditions in Deep Self-Knowledge 59
5. The Incompleteness of Self-Inquiry 64
6. The Break with Cartesian Ideals 69
7. Empirical and Phenomenological Characteristics of Self-Inquiry 72

III Two Perspectives in Self-Examination 80

1. Introduction 80
2. Finitude 82
3. The Epistemological Problem 87
4. The Observer's Perspective 92
5. The Argument Against the Observer's Perspective 97
6. Self-Inquiry and Proximity 107
7. Kierkegaard on Self-Examination 113
8. Summary 119

IV The Relational Model of the Self 121

1. Ontological Questions 121
2. Traditional Models of the Self 123
3. The Substance Model of the Self 124
4. The Empiricist Model of the Self 127
5. Kant's Concept of the Self 131

6. The Relational Model 141
7. The Self's Relation to Itself 143
8. Self-Responsibility 146

V Hampshire's Theory of Self-Knowledge 150

1. Introduction 150
2. Epistemology 152
3. Hampshire's Theory of Classification 155
4. Hampshire's Model of Man 159
5. Self-Responsibility 160
6. Two Kinds of Description 166
7. Intentionality 168
8. The Problem of Error in Self-Description 173
9. Stepping Back 179
10. Regret 183
11. Freedom, Determinism and Reflexive Knowledge 185
12. The Problem of Truth in Self-Knowledge 192
13. Heteronomy, Insight and Liberation 200
14. Criticism 208

VI Sartre's Theory of Self-Knowledge and Self-Definition 218

1. Introduction 218
2. Sartre's Relational Model of Man 228
3. Human Temporality and Self-Definition 234
4. Meaning and Under-Determination 237
5. The Depth of Radical Choice 243
6. The Transcendental Status of Radical Choice 246
7. The Elusiveness of Radical Choice 261
8. Radical Choice and Deliberation 268
9. The Elusiveness of Ordinary Experience 273
10. Pre-Reflective Experience 276
11. Non-Positional Self-Consciousness 281
12. The Unrealizable Ascriptions of Others 287
13. Self-Reflection and the Bounds of Experience 292
14. The Ego as Synthetic Construct 294
15. Criticism 297

VII Concluding Remarks 313

Notes 322

Bibliography 354

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following people for their help and support in this project: Prof. John Macquarrie (University of Oxford), Prof. Henry Pietersma (University of Toronto), Prof. Dr. Theo de Boer (Universiteit van Amsterdam), Dr.Christina Howells (University of Oxford), Prof. Dr. Jan Bos (Universiteit van Amsterdam), and Prof. Donald Evans (University of Toronto).

I would also like to thank Ben Yap, Ann Devitt, Steve Czar, Sallyann Rozée, Simon Payling, Moira McIver, and my late grandfather, Victor Jopling.

Thanks are also due to several institutions: to Christ Church, Oxford, for the Marion Buck Senior Scholarship (1982-85); to Victoria College, University of Toronto, for several graduate scholarships (1982); to the Netherlands Ministry of Education, for the Netherlands Government Scholarship (1986-87); and to the Husserl Archives, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium.

Parts of this work have already been published. I would like to thank the editor of Man and World for permission to use parts of my article 'Kant and Sartre on Self-Knowledge'; the editor of the Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology for permission to use parts of my article 'Sartre's Anti-Psychiatry and Philosophical Anthropology'; and the editor of the Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry for permission to use parts of my article 'Anti-Psychiatry in Sartre's The Family Idiot'. Early versions of some of these ideas were presented to the inaugural meeting of the Sartre Society (New York, 1985).

Finally, I would like to thank my mother, father and sister, to whom this is dedicated.

Frequently Cited Works and Abbreviations

Hampshire, S. Freedom of Mind and Other Essays (FM)

---------- Thought and Action (TA)

Heidegger, M. Being and Time

Kant, I. Critique of Pure Reason

Kierkegaard, S. Concluding Unscientific Postscript

Murdoch, I. The Sovereignty of Good

Sartre, J.-P. Being and Nothingness (BN)

---------- Transcendence of the Ego (TE)

Spinoza, B. Ethics

Tugendhat, E. Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination

Wittgenstein, L. Notes On Certainty

Preface

> By setting off you would never find out the ends of the soul, though you should tread along every path: so deep a measure [logos] does it have.
> -- Heraclitus

The work that follows endeavours to explore some of the many connections between the philosophical problems of self-knowledge, self-definition and the ends of life, and the practical problems faced by an individual when he finds himself 'called' to examine his life, and to reflect upon some of the most important issues that he has ever encountered. In these rare moments, sometimes called moments of soul-searching, or moments of wonder, he finds himself facing his life in its most basic aspect, and using the most basic terms or 'yardsticks' available to him; he is compelled to review, evaluate and criticize his life not as a collection of isolated actions, events and experiences, but as a whole.

The questions that are raised in these moments -- fundamental practical questions such as 'Who am I?', 'Where am I from?', 'Where am I going?', 'What should I do?', 'Have I really learned how to live?', 'What is the meaning of my life?' and 'Can I justify my life?' -- are essentially the same questions every reflective person raises at least once over the course of his or her life.[1] They originate from the same alarming experience of the transcience and evanescence of life, and express the same urgent desire to find a meaning in life that will not be destroyed by death. In his autobiography Tolstoy writes:

> My question, the question that had brought me to the edge of suicide when I was fifty years old, was the simplest question lying in the soul of every human being, from a silly child to the wisest of elders, the question without which life is impossible....The question is this: What will come of what I do today and tomorrow? What will come of my entire life? Expressed differently, the question may be: Why should I live? Why should I wish for anything or do anything? Or to put it still differently: Is there any meaning in my life that will not be destroyed by my inevitably approaching death?[2]

In many cases -- perhaps in most cases -- such questions are never fully explicated and worked out. They are too difficult and unfamiliar; or there is not enough time; or basic material conditions (viz. proper food and shelter) are lacking; or it is more urgent to get on with one's life, rather than questioning it and wondering about it. But this does not mean that the questions are forgotten or simply put aside as other issues are put aside. Nor does it mean that pursuing such questions would be a worthless, superficial or impractical activity -- 'a pleasant way of passing the time...[but] not discussing anything whatever.'[3] Once 'grazed' by these questions, a person does not remain the same as he was before, living an unexamined and unreflective life. He is troubled by them, and changed, even if he does not immediately respond to the 'call' to examine himself.

If questions of this depth have vexed man for centuries, they have become even more acute in this century because of the loss of religious faith, the breakdown of traditional beliefs and social institutions, the experience of total war and mass murder, the threat of global annihilation, and the rapidity with which scientific achievements reveal to man that he is not master of his own house. Scientific and technological progress is bought at the

price of self-understanding and meaningfulness. The modern age is characterized by 'anomie, amorality, anhedonia, rootlessness, emptiness, the lack of something to believe in and to be devoted to.'[4] Thus the need to wrest one's life from the darkness, to be healed and made whole, to order distraught emotions, to make contact with one's soul. Thus the search for self-knowledge and self-definition, and the endeavour to find meaning in life -- a search first commanded by the oracle at Delphi more than two thousand years ago.

*

Making contact with one's soul, and facing the truth about one's life, sometimes occurs at the very end of life, just before the abyss. Literature and poetry provide many illustrations of the confrontation with one's truth at the moment of death, when life is about to be turned into destiny.[5] The epitaph the poet Pablo Neruda wrote for himself just before his death gives a sense of the immensity and irrevocability of this confrontation.

> And today in the depths of the lost forest
> he hears the sound of the enemy and runs away
> not from the others but from himself
> from that interminable conversation
> from the chorus which always accompanied us
> and from the meaning of life.
>
> Because this once, because just once, because
> a syllable or an interval of silence
> or the unstifled noise of a wave
> leave me face to face with the truth
> and there is nothing more to interpret,
> nothing more to say; this was everything.
> Closed were the forest doors.
> The sun goes round opening up the leaves
> The moon appears like a white fruit
> and man bows to his destiny.[6]

In the novel The Leopard, Giuseppe di Lampedusa depicts how the Prince Salina (the central character) takes stock of his life while lying on his deathbed. His confrontation with the truth about his life is a sad one.

> He was making up a general balance sheet of his whole life, trying to sort out of the immense ash-heap of liabilities the golden flecks of happy moments. These were: two weeks before his marriage, six weeks after; half an hour when Paolo was born, when he felt proud at having prolonged by a twig the Salina tree ...and many hours in the observatory, absorbed in abstract calculations and the pursuit of the unreachable....He summed up: "I'm seventy three years old, and all in all, I may have lived, really lived, a total of two...three at most. And the pains, the boredom, how long had they been? Useless to try and make himself count those; the whole of the rest; seventy years.[7]

The advent of radical self-questioning, and the possibility of radical self-redefinition, may occur in critical turning points in life, or in extreme situations, or in dark nights of the soul. Tolstoy's Ivan Ilyich faces the most important questions of his life at the low-point of a fatal illness, as his life is quickly ebbing away.

> Then he [Ivan Ilyich] was still and not only ceased weeping but even held his breath and became all attention: he listened, as it were, not to an audible voice but to the voice of his soul, to the tide of his thoughts that rose up in him.
> 'What is it you want?' was the first clear conception capable of expression in words that he heard. 'What is it you want? What is it you want?' he repeated to himself.
> 'What do I want? Not to suffer. To live,' he answered.
> And again he listened with such concentrated attention that even his pain did not distract him.
> 'To live. Live how?' asked his inner voice.
> 'Why, to live as I used to -- well and pleasantly.'
> 'As you used to live -- well and pleasantly?'

> queried the voice. And he began going over in his imagination the best moments of his pleasant life. But oddly enough none of those best moments of his pleasant life now seemed at all what they had seemed at the time....[8]

The train of Ivan's deathbed reflection progresses relentlessly; the questions become deeper and more comprehensive, until finally the strange thought occurs to him that perhaps he did not live as he should have lived. At first he dismisses this thought with the deceptive reassurance that he has done his duty, and lived a proper and orderly life just as others have done. But the thought returns again and again to haunt him, each time acquiring more awesome implications, and each time forcing him to review his life in deeper, and less conventional, terms. Eventually he asks himself 'What if in reality my whole life has been wrong?' All at once he sees his whole life in a profoundly different light; everything then takes on a radically different <u>meaning</u>.

> He lay flat on his back and began going over his life entirely anew. In the morning when he first saw the footman, then his wife, then his daughter, then the doctor, every movement they made, every word they uttered, confirmed for him the awful truth that had been revealed to him during the night. In them he saw himself -- all that he had lived for -- and saw plainly that it was all wrong, a horrible, monstrous lie concealing both life and death.[9]

This is not the end of Ivan's crisis. Having seen the collapse of all the most fundamental and apparently unshakeable beliefs he had once held about himself, he then catches sight of the light: even if his life is not what it ought to have been, it is still possible to put it right in the time remaining to him. Justification of his life at the very last moment is secured through a radical, and total, transformation, or self-redefinition: he realizes that it is others for whom he must

live, and not simply himself.

In his autobiography, Tolstoy provides a description of the 'arrest of life' he suffered in middle age, just after the publication of Anna Karenina. He likens the onset of a number of apparently 'foolish, simple, childish questions' about the meaning of life, and his identity, to the contraction of a fatal internal disease, at first signalled only by insignificant and easily-ignored symptoms.

> [Something] very strange began to happen to me. At first I began having moments of bewilderment, when my life would come to a halt, as if I did not know how to live or what to do. ...But this passed, and I continued to live as before. Then the moments of bewilderment recurred more frequently, and they always took the same form. Whenever my life came to a halt, the questions would arise: Why? And what next? At first I thought these were pointless and irrelevant questions. I thought that the answers to them were well known and that if I should ever want to resolve them, it would not be too hard for me; it was just that I could not be bothered with it now, but if I should take it upon myself then I would find the answers.[10]

These examples, and several others taken from literature and autobiography, will serve to orient and ground the discussion of self-knowledge and self-definition in the following chapters. Without such concrete individual cases, the discussion would risk floating free of the lived experience the epistemological and ontological conditions of which it seeks to make intelligible.

*

The work that follows does not concern itself with the content of any of the particular illustrations of the search for self-knowledge, and the resulting self-definition and self-formation -- as if a study of Ivan Ilyich's deathbed crisis, insight and self-redefinition would reveal the general nature and conditions of self-knowledge and self-definition. Such a study would only reveal one man's particular crisis and vision; any light that it happened to shed on the human condition would be highly refracted. The study of particular cases for their own sake is the proper domain of an entire genre of literature -- a genre dominated by such writers as Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Henry James, Conrad, Flaubert, Stendhal, Proust, Joyce and Virginia Woolf, and peopled by such self-reflective and inquisitive characters as Karamazov, Raskolnikov and the 'underground man' (Dostoyevsky), Ivan Ilyich and Levin (Tolstoy), Swann (Proust), Julien Sorel (Stendhal), Roquentin (Sartre), Herzog (Saul Bellow) and the Prince Salina (di Lampedusa). It is also the proper domain of an entire genre of autobiographical and confessional writing, ranging from Augustine to Rousseau, Goethe, Tolstoy, Mill, Ruskin, Trollope, Rilke, Stendhal, Gide, Genet and Sartre.

In addition to these written and highly articulate modes of self-inquiry and self-definition, there are many other ways in which the search for the ends of one's soul is carried out and expressed: these include musical composition,[11] painting and sculpture, certain kinds of psycho-analysis and psycho-therapy, conversation with others, the study of one's dreams, poetic composition and reflective contemplation.

The goal of this work is to examine philosophically some of the

conditions of self-knowledge, self-definition and self-formation, in order to come to an understanding of the essential nature of the process of reaching down into the depths of one's being by questioning, reviewing, criticizing and re-evaluating. What is important here is to understand the general epistemological conditions under which this deepening occurs; the general ontological characteristics of the reality which is deepened and defined; and the moral consequences of the acquisition of self-knowledge. These must be general conditions, independent of particular cases, and it is philosophy's task -- in particular, philosophy of mind and philosophical anthropology -- to uncover them.

The questions to be asked by ontology include: what is the nature of the soul, whose ends we seek to determine, and yet whose measure or logos, as Heraclitus rightly claimed, is so deep? What is the 'self' that self-knowledge is of? Is the self an objective reality that makes our various descriptions, evaluations, beliefs or interpretations about it true or false? Is the self a kind of thing, or a substance, or a mere collection of the bits and pieces of experience? What are we such that we can ask deep and puzzling questions about ourselves? The questions to be asked by epistemology are: what is the nature of our search for the ends of the soul? Can we know ourselves as we really are, or only under a certain description, interpretation or conception which conceals as much as it reveals? Is it the case that we can never reach the ends of the soul, no matter how many 'paths' we may tread? In self-knowledge is there any 'fact of the matter'? The questions to be asked by moral philosophy are: How does the

examined life make us better persons? What is self-examination for? Why is the unexamined life not worth living?

*

The thesis that will be defended and developed throughout this work in answering some of these difficult questions is that a person is essentially a self-defining and self-forming being, and that changes and innovations in the most fundamental descriptions, conceptions, beliefs or interpretations under which he views himself, and by means of which he can be said to know himself (and to have wrestled with the fundamental practical questions), necessarily occasion changes in what he _is_. No adequate description can be provided of a person which does not make reference to how he understands himself, and so defines himself.

Obviously the idea that a person is _self_-defining does not mean that he is what he says he is, or that he can make himself into whatever he likes simply by redefining himself. Self-definition is possible only on the basis of a number of biological, social, historical, genetic and neurophysiological conditions which an agent can neither bring into existence nor write out of existence; but if self-definition _begins_ with these conditions, it does not, to use Kant's distinction, _arise_ from them. The deepest conceptual and interpretative innovations in an agent's self-understanding ultimately run up against something that is resistant to their formative powers; but what this is cannot be identified as it is in itself, as a pure given, or as some underlying and unchanging human nature or essential self.

The thesis that a person is self-defining and self-forming has an epistemological dimension that can be situated and worked out by linking together two fertile and historically important epistemological concepts. One -- the concept of the subject's activity of constitution -- enjoys a distinguished lineage in the continental European philosophical tradition. The other -- the concept of the empirical under-determination of knowledge -- is important in the contemporary Anglo-American tradition, and particularly in discussions of the philosophy of science. The thesis that a person is self-defining also has an ontological dimension, which can be situated historically vis à vis the traditional substantialist, essentialist and empiricist models of the self; in order to be conceived as self-defining and self-forming, a person must be conceived in relational and historical terms as a complex and dynamic network of relations.

In defining something we set limits to it, distinguish it from other things, and render definite what is otherwise inchoate, poorly-defined or confused. Self-definition is philosophically interesting because it is intrinsically incomplete, and the 'material' which is rendered definite is always malleable: no final and fixed limits can be set in an individual's life-history to the number of deep conceptual or interpretative innovations by means of which he understands and defines himself. There is something profoundly elusive about the search for the ends of the soul: the very search pushes these ends further out. In self-inquiry, our situation resembles that of the traveller who pushes into a changing countryside that is altered by his own advance.

With each deep innovation in our self-definition, we are at once

revealed to ourselves and concealed from ourselves. Self-definition is not a wholly positive, illuminating or self-realizing endeavour; while it makes certain forms of experience possible, it also restricts certain avenues of inquiry, conceptualization and interpretation, and therefore certain possible areas of development in human experience. To trace the history of the formations in an individual's life-history which follow from historical changes in his self-definition and self-understanding is to trace the history of exclusions, restrictions, blind spots and dark areas side by side with the history of positive integrations, realizations and self-insights. Self-definition at once realizes and restricts, reveals and conceals: it is unavoidably dual. Thus it is that the cryptic Heraclitean fragment cited above -- 'by setting off you would never find out the ends of the soul, though you should tread along every path: so deep a measure does it have' -- receives a modern, or post-Kantian, interpretation.

*

Two contemporary philosophical theories are studied here as illustrations of some of the general ontological and epistemological conditions of self-definition and self-knowledge. Sartre's theory, falling within the tradition of existentialist thought traceable to Kierkegaard, emphasizes the importance of time, choice and creative activity in self-examination and self-definition. Sartre is critical of the foundational status given to rationality and knowledge; hence his rejection of such

important moral concepts as deliberation, rational volition and self-criticism. His argument that the fundamental practical questions of existence have to be worked out by actually existing (in contrast to trying to assume a detached and neutral point of view on one's life in order to understand it objectively) derives from Kierkegaard's suspicion of the use of objective methods of investigation in matters subjective: life is understood backwards, but can only be lived forwards.

Hampshire's theory, falling within a rationalist tradition of thought, traceable to Spinoza and proceeding through Freud, emphasizes the importance of rationality and objectivity in self-definition and self-knowledge. Hampshire argues that it is particularly important to understand the underlying causes operant in one's experiences; this is done by stepping back from the narrow and habit-bound subjective perspective to a more detached position, with a view to observing things which the onrush of events might not allow. This idea derives from Spinoza's view that the improvement of life, and the eventual attainment of liberating insight, demands that the understanding of one's experience, thought and action be placed in the largest and most objective context of explanation: one must aspire to the comprehensive view, and see things sub specie aeternitatis.

The choice of Hampshire and Sartre's theories to illustrate some of the problems of self-knowledge and self-definition may not be immediately obvious: why not, for instance, Spinoza and Kierkegaard? Why, in the first place, should two theories be studied?

First, Hampshire and Sartre's theories represent two of the

strongest and best-developed of contemporary theories. Both return again and again to the philosophical problems of the self, self-understanding, reflexivity, emotions and self-consciousness, not just as isolated problems, but as central to a general theory of man. Second, as Iris Murdoch argues in The Sovereignty of Good, they are both fairly representative of a widely-shared view of man, proponents of which include Hare, Ayer, Wittgenstein, Ryle, Merleau-Ponty, Ricoeur and many others. Their historical and philosophical proximity is all the more interesting given the fact that they emerge from different philosophical traditions (viz. Spinozist rationalism and existentialism), and use different philosophical tools (viz. analysis and phenomenology). Third, they illustrate an important conflict in contemporary philosophy on the importance of rationality and knowledge; more generally, they reflect a deep-lying tension between the meta-philosophical view that epistemology is first philosophy, and the view that ontology and hermeneutics are first philosophy. This tension has recently been articulated by Rorty; it is also evident in the post-modern critique of enlightenment ideals (e.g. Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida, Adorno). Fourth, both their theories of self-knowledge and self-definition have a clear-cut and very concrete application in contemporary psycho-therapy and psycho-analysis.

*

Neither Hampshire nor Sartre's theories of self-knowledge and self-definition are entirely satisfactory, because they both take as central to personal reality, and central to self-knowledge, what is in fact only one aspect. Both theories are partly correct -- the existentialist view because of its sensitivity to the vagaries of situated, time-bound existence, and its emphasis on the unavoidable element of choice in working out the fundamental practical questions; and the rationalist view because of its awareness of the need to go beyond the limited first-person perspective to a larger view, in order to deliberate and reason about the ends of life. (Tugendhat's attempt to find a middle way between the existentialist and rationalist views, by striking a balance between choice and reason, and between being in the world and detaching oneself from it, will be studied in passing.)

Nonetheless, both theories tend to be too one-sided in their emphasis on the agent's (self-) constituting powers. The activities they take as necessary and sufficient for self-knowledge and self-definition form only a part of a much wider spectrum of human experience. Both theories tend to overlook the fact that the acquisition of self-knowledge, and the resultant changes in life-plan, moral outlook and life-experience, involve passive and receptive experiences (e.g. revelation, listening, suffering and responding to others) as well as planned or directed actions (e.g. choosing, inquiring, deliberating or acquiring knowledge). To be self-defining does not necessarily mean that we are fully aware of what we are doing, that we design ourselves by a kind of psychic 'engineering', or that the self we find ourselves with at the end of our life is nothing but the product

of what we have self-consciously chosen, evaluated, investigated or formed during the course of life. In this process there is also a great deal that remains unspecifiable, and beyond or below our epistemic activities and choices. Heraclitus caught sight of this: the soul's measure (i.e. its logos) is so deep that it cannot be exhausted, comprehended, or unequivocally specified.

Much of life-history works itself out on a plane far deeper than our normal, and even our reflective and inquisitive, grasp, and at a level that makes such a grasp possible. Whatever this plane is, we are unable to specify it and 'read' it clearly and exhaustively while we are in the midst of living -- not because it is unknowable, but because it is what we are. The investigation of the deepest aspects of our lives is itself part of life; as Hegel also noted of Kant's project of critique, such an investigation cannot perfectly arrive at its goal because it is the goal itself -- it cannot come to itself because it is already there.

The fundamental questions we raise are not only questions about our lives, as if they were on a par with questions that we ask about things external and independent to us; they are asked with our lives, and somehow already express and presuppose what they are about. In posing to ourselves questions about the deepest aspects of our lives, we have ultimately only those aspects with which to question them: there is no independent starting-point, and no ideal Archimedean vantage-point outside of life that is exempt from its finite perspective, its evanescence, and its forward momentum. We are in the same awkward position as the butterfly in flight that is unable to read what is written on its wings (Pablo Neruda's metaphor) -- constrained to get on with our

lives while at the same time trying to fathom their deeper meaning and direction.

But the circularity infecting self-investigation does not condemn it to radical incoherence. Sometimes, in the midst of our lives, in this flight forward, we do listen to the 'voice of our soul', and catch glimpses of depths which are usually elusive; sometimes we do make up a 'general balance sheet' of our lives; sometimes we are left 'face to face with the truth/and there is nothing more to interpret/nothing more to say; this was everything.' But unless we are on the brink of death, we are unable to finalize this insight, to <u>fully</u> take a point of view on life in its entirety, and to formulate descriptions or interpretations which are beyond revision. For in so doing we have increased our awareness, and extended our experience from what it was before; we have now to try to examine our most recently altered awareness and experience, and so on.

Thus it is that our lives to a large extent elude our grasp, even as we are in the very process of defining them. The circumstances in which our lives unfold themselves 'tend to make those lives of ours strangers to their own underlying depths.'[12]

It may be that the relationship between a person and his life is ultimately mysterious; in the final analysis, Gabriel Marcel writes, 'I do not know what I live by nor why I live....My life infinitely transcends my possible conscious grasp of my life at any given moment; fundamentally and essentially it refuses to tally with itself.'[13] Ultimately, in the search for the ends of the soul, we face more paths than we can ever tread, and raise more questions than answers.

Chapter I

Man's Knowledge of the World

1. Introduction

Since Kant's 'Copernican revolution',[1] which renders the object of knowledge relative to and dependent upon the constitutive activity of the knower, and therefore at once revealed and concealed in the very activity of being known, empiricism, realism and the correspondence theory of truth have come under increasing attack. Modern philosophers as diverse as Nietzsche, Cassirer, Goodman, Quine, Kuhn, the later Wittgenstein, Feyerabend, Derrida, Rorty and many others can be grouped together, at least negatively, on the basis of their general suspicion of the concepts of 'matters of fact', 'the things themselves' (Husserl), the given, the 'world behind the scenes' (Nietzsche), and 'unconceptualized reality' -- a world, thing or reality to which knowledge, if it is to be objective, must correspond, and in which, if it is to be certain, it must be grounded.

Since Kant's declaration that the object of knowledge must conform to the conditions of knowledge rather than knowledge conforming to the object; and since Hegel's declaration that the sign -- and more broadly language, conceptualization and other intervening activities of communication and representation -- is the 'death' of the thing, an intractable problematic has been established in modern philosophy concerning whether there is a necessary formative or 'constitutive' element operating in human

knowledge and experience -- that is, a transcendental element over which the given has no sway, and from which abstraction, in order to reveal reality as it 'really is' independently of how we constitute or organize it, is impossible. Human knowledge, it is supposed, has a double root: the given data of the senses, and man's own contribution by means of which he organizes the given according to a priori forms. Man, it is supposed, is an active meaning-conferring being; his transcendental activity begins with what is given in experience, but does not arise from it (Kant).[2]

Developments in the physical sciences (as well as in literature and the plastic arts) have paralleled this philosophical problematic. One aspect, for instance, of Heisenberg's principle of indeterminacy is that the observer in a microphysical experiment is an active participant in the experimental situation, and not merely a neutral mirror: he interferes with quantum physical reality in the very process of observing it and learning about it, thereby introducing a certain element of indeterminacy into the microphysical situation. Because observer intervention is not one of the contingent and eliminable features of microphysical experimentation, and because the reality studied by the microphysicist is not 'hard', unchanging and thought-independent, but is to some extent shaped by his investigative activity, his results will in part reflect back his own image.

A wide-ranging (post-Kantian) critique of epistemology, and a wide-ranging critique of the model of man as a knower whose essential relation to reality is an epistemic one (e.g. a 'mirror of nature') has also paralleled this problematic. Once knowledge is limited by the very conditions which make it possible, and room

is allowed for faith (Kant) and other non-epistemic routes of access to reality, a number of alternative and equally powerful explanatory models can be found to replace the generally dominant epistemological model of man's relation to reality (i.e. the model which postulates man as primarily a knowing subject). The fundamental and primitive relation man has to reality -- and to his <u>own</u> reality -- is conceived variously in terms of praxis (Marx, Critical theory), interpretation (hermeneutics), symbol-formation (Cassirer and neo-Kantianism), linguistic activity (Wittgenstein), transcendence and projection (Heidegger, Sartre), and other relations to reality which function as the ground for knowledge, but are not <u>themselves</u> essentially a matter of knowledge. Knowledge is merely a founded mode of access to the real.

*

2. Realism and the Correspondence Theory of Truth

Alternative models such as these have challenged the principal realist contention that the reality which is the object of human knowledge must be thought-independent and to some extent determinate and ineluctable; they have also challenged the correspondence theorist's contention that there must be a clear and unequivocal separation between proposition and reality, or theory and fact, in order to have a workable theory of truth. Realism covers a variety of positions in modern ontology and

epistemology, but all of them converge in supporting the minimal and intuitively plausible claim that it is thought-independent reality with which our theories and beliefs must be concerned, and that it must be reality itself which makes how our theories and beliefs say it to be either true or false. Reality, the realist contends, must be determinate, and it must be possible to frame assertions which express its essential properties and states. The idealist position with which this minimal thesis is usually contrasted is that instead of running up against reality itself, man is in a sense always and already dealing with himself -- so completely enveloped is he in his own conceptual schema, linguistic forms, categorial frameworks, absolute presuppositions or symbols. The world necessarily appears to us as we are.

The realist position can also be expressed using the more shop-worn and common-sensical notion of matters of fact: it must be hard fact, and not just other propositions, theories, beliefs or basic presuppositions, which makes our propositions, theories and beliefs about what there is true or false. To be true or false is to be true or false simply in virtue of the facts (or how reality is independently of the knower). A sentence or theory is true not because we say that it is, or because we make it true, or because we cannot think or experience in any other way without presupposing it, but because that is how the facts themselves are.

The minimal version of realism also involves the important qualification that the reality in virtue of which our statements, theories and beliefs are true or false must to some extent be 'hard', 'stubborn' and 'given': the essential properties of reality simply are what they are independently of the thought,

investigation and theory-formation of the inquirer. The simple de facto characterization of some segment of reality does not alter its essential properties; it is 'indifferent', and remains independent to and unaffected by such characterization, or changes in characterization.

To take a simple example: the formulation and experimental verification of the statement that water boils at 100 degrees Centigrade does not alter the actual properties of water. If, in confirming this, the actual observation of test samples of boiling water alters the temperature, the use of control cases and repeated experimentation will remedy any bias intrinsic to the original experimental situation. The general lawlike structure and properties of reality remain unchanged by the inquirer's propositions, and by the interference caused by observation, experimentation and characterization; they would be there even if no human observers ever existed to experience or theorize about them.

Given these conditions, the problem of truth seems to be a relatively straightforward matter: our propositions are true if and only if they agree with, or are adequate (or faithful) to the reality they are about. They are false if they fail in such agreement. Propositions are true or false simply in virtue of how the world is. Even the exceedingly complex and apparently theory-laden propositions of scientific theories are true if and only if they agree with the relevant facts. The fact that the actual process of determining the truth-value of theoretically sophisticated or theory-laden scientific propositions is far removed from the common and straightforward experience of

determining the truth-value of mundane propositions still has no bearing on the question of the essential nature of truth.

To say that truth is, or accrues from, the correspondence of proposition with fact, however, is not to say very much that is of philosophical import. Just what does the phrase 'agreement with the facts' mean? What does it mean to say that a proposition is true if and only if the facts are as it says they are? What are 'the facts'? Can they be identified independently of our characterization of them? If not, then is there not a serious chance of instigating a regress to infinity, given that we cannot but resort to other propositions, presuppositions and concepts to determine a proposition's agreement with the facts? How can we suspend or stand outside our fundamental presuppositions about nature (i.e. conceptual bedrock), in order to check if they correspond with some unconceptualized reality? It seems quite obvious there must be more to the correspondence theory of truth than the deceptively simple idea that truth is what accrues when reality is how we say it is. As it stands, such a formulation appears to be merely a formal model of the correspondence theory of truth. In putting flesh on this model, correspondence theorists fall into several camps, the most notable of which is represented by the early Wittgenstein.[3]

In the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus Wittgenstein conceived the relation of correspondence between proposition and reality as a relation of picturing or mirroring. To say that a proposition is true means that the proposition, or its atomic constituents, pictures or mirrors an objective state of affairs (or the atomic constituents of this state of affairs). The relation of language

to reality is so close that the atomic constituents of propositions actually 'hook onto' the relevant atomic constituents of reality. The related (but not identical) problem of the determination of the truth-value of a proposition is a question of determining whether it corresponds, or pictures, the facts; this is done, for instance, by 'comparing' the proposition with the facts, or checking it 'against' the facts to see how faithfully it mirrors them.

Adherents to this and other versions of the correspondence theory of truth are careful in pointing out that the actual methods for determining the truth-value of propositions (e.g. 'comparing' propositions with reality) are not to be confused with the conditions for truth. More generally, the question of the search for truth is not to be confused with the question of the essential nature of truth.[4] Thus the actual epistemological constraints on establishing the conditions necessary for the comparison of simple proposition with the appropriate facts (e.g. the nature of man's perceptual and cognitive apparatus) do not affect the question of the conditions of the proposition's truth. What is philosophically important about this qualification is that it can be extended to cover the much more general claim that the transcendental conditions which both limit and make possible man's knowledge of reality are not to be confused with the truth-conditions of propositions about reality. The question of truth is essentially a question of the relation between knowledge and reality, or theory and objective matters of fact; it is not a question of whether the conditions and limits of knowledge even permit talk of the 'facts of the matter'.

The correspondence theorist relies heavily on this distinction between the conditions (or essential nature) of truth, and the determination of truth-value (or the search for truth), in order to deflect the standard counter-argument that is posed by the coherence theorist. The latter's argument that the methods for determining the truth-value of propositions can only be holistic and intra-theoretic is not, it is claimed, an argument against the concept of truth as correspondence. The correspondence theorist maintains that he is accounting only for the nature of truth, and not the epistemological problem of the nature and limits of man's knowledge of reality. His theory, he maintains, stands or falls without committing him to accounting for the problem of how the truth or falsity of propositions is established, and just how 'comparison with the facts' is possible. Here the coherence theorist replies that without further explication, the meaning of the crucial operative terms 'correspondence' and 'comparison with the facts' remains unclear or philosophically uninteresting.[5]

*

3. Kant's Copernican Revolution

The Kantian idea that the object of knowledge necessarily 'conforms' to the conditions of knowledge,[6] and the idea that there is a constitutive activity at work in human knowledge and experience which cannot be abstracted in order to reveal the real as it is in itself, demands that the question of the nature of truth be raised relative to the question of the a priori (or transcendentally ideal) conditions of possibility of human knowledge. Neither of these ideas necessarily lead to the relativization of truth (except as relative to an anthropocentric epistemology), but they do call into question the intelligibility of the idea that we can somehow apprehend reality as it is in itself, without the 'refraction' and distancing caused by the categorial framework.

The insight central to Kant's 'Copernican revolution' is that man qua knower is constrained by the very conditions of possibility of knowledge and experience to contribute to nature the concepts and categories through which he must experience and understand her -- to such an extent that, in Kant's words, 'reason has insight only into that which it produces after a plan of its own.'[7] As a meaning-conferring being, man defines himself and sets limits to his experience. The categories, in relation to the forms of space and time, define what counts as empirically real; they give experience its meaningful richness, patterning, unity and homogeneity -- without themselves emerging from experience, or being built up inductively on the basis of experience. If the

categorial framework were to change (e.g. through conceptual evolution, and not voluntative change), human experience would change with it. (This, Kant maintains, is not possible.)

Replacing the idea of a harmony, adequation or final accord between subject and object, or knower and known, is the principle of the necessary 'submission' of the object to the subject (or the knower's self-activity). Man, to employ Kant's repeated legalistic metaphor, is the 'legislator' of Nature; his knowledge and experience are not wholly reducible to the antics of external reality impinging upon a relatively plastic and receptive perceptual equipment, and somehow directing the mind's operations. There must be something more to knowledge and experience, because the merely passive accumulation of data would never 'add up' to yield the necessity and universality which human knowledge and experience possesses.

If there is something more -- if, that is, the knower does not render back only what his original and primitive connection with reality has given, if knowledge is 'read into the world by us' -- then it is plausible to suppose that some deep-lying source of creativity is at work in the human soul (cf. Chapter Four). Knowledge and experience begin with what is given to the senses, but they arise only in coordination with the work of man's own creative meaning-conferring (Sinngebung) activity. (It is important of course not to confuse this activity with voluntary, deliberate or conscious activity.)

The idea that there is no experience except as shaped by the mind's own activity represents Kant's answer to Hume's skepticism and empiricism. Knowledge and experience are not -- as empiricist

theories of perception suggest -- a matter of a desituated observer passively receiving sensations from outside the mind, upon which basis is built up a picture of the external world. Man is more than a plastic, receptive organism that is defined from the outside in; he defines himself on the basis of his inter-action with the outside. Thus the content of experience and knowledge always involves 'something more than the items which we could count up if we really went back to the history of our thought as the progressive filling in of a tabula rasa. And it is this something more which makes ideas meaningful, which makes experience experience and not just a "blooming buzz" of sensations.'[8]

This 'something more' is conceived variously by post-Kantian philosophers as an activity of organization, categorial structuring, rule-giving and meaning-conferring. Such is the knower's inter-action with the given element in sense-experience that in constituting it according to a priori rules, he 'goes beyond' its dictates;[9] and so close is this inter-action that neither moment of the relation -- given and constituted -- can be separated from the other moment, and examined as it is in itself.

In what does this activity of 'going beyond' -- this 'something more' -- consist? Kant's answer forms the basis of his theory of the synthetic a priori: viz. necessity and universality. The necessity and universality that derive from the activity of constitution are neither found in nor dependent upon mere sense-experience. This can be made clear simply by looking at the frequently-used modal terms 'all', 'always' and 'necessarily', none of which refer to or derive strictly from what is given in

sense-experience. In using these terms we say more than what is actually given to us in experience. By contrast, the 'raw' data given by the senses is limited, degenerate and fragmentary, and reflect only the narrowest and most uneven of inter-actions with the environment.

Kant owes this much to Hume: knowledge is not represented by such statements as 'The sun has been observed by thousands of men to rise on each successive day for the last two hundred years', or 'Water has been observed to boil each time in the last five-hundred occasions it has been heated to one-hundred degrees Centigrade', but by such statements as 'The sun will rise tomorrow' and 'Every time water is heated to one-hundred Centigrade it will boil'.[10] The difference between these two classes of statement is not one of degree but of kind: the former, unlike the latter, lack universality, and no increase in the number of individually observed cases will make up for this lack. Something else -- built into the very structure of the mind, and independent of experience but awakened by it -- must account for this difference.

In addition to the well-used metaphor of the spectacles of cognition, the broadest metaphorical interpretation of Kant's concept of the necessary submission of the object to the subject is the idea that it is we who are 'giving the orders'.[11] Reason, Kant argues, 'must not allow itself to be kept...on nature's leading strings, but must itself show the way with principles of judgment based upon fixed laws, constraining nature to give answer to questions of reason's own determining.' Reason must approach nature in order to be taught by it. 'It must not, however, do so

in the character of a pupil who listens to everything that the teacher chooses to say, but of an appointed judge who compels the witnesses to answer questions which he has himself formulated.'[12]

If experience and knowledge are structured in the form that they are by the rule-giving and meaning-conferring activity of the mind, then is it correct to infer that the cardinal insight of Kantian philosophy is that mind <u>makes</u> the world? To answer affirmatively, as the Idealist does (e.g. Fichte),[13] is to give the concept of constituting activity the heaviest possible explanatory burden -- a move to which Kant, who was both a transcendental idealist <u>and</u> an empirical realist, and who was strongly committed to the theory of the thing in itself, was clearly opposed. What the mind, through the imposition of the categories, constitutes or organizes, is <u>something</u> given -- something that is not itself a creation of the mind, and that is not knowable as it is in itself because it is not something which reason 'produces after a plan of its own'. There is a crucial distinction -- not always fully appreciated by those after Kant who have employed the concepts of constituting activity and transcendental frameworks -- between the idea that the mind comes to <u>apprehend</u> the object by an elaborate transcendental activity, and the idea that the mind <u>makes</u> the object it comes to know by these transcendental thought-processes.

*

4. Versions of the Concept of Constituting Activity

The idea that the knower has an active role with respect to the given -- what will be called from this point on the concept of constituting activity -- has been subject to stronger and weaker interpretations across the history of modern philosophy, ranging from full-blown Idealism to a qualified realism. That which arises with man's insertion into the world that was not there before, through a transcendental activity by which the mind shapes or defines the given, has been conceived variously by modern philosophers as the activity of conceptualization, categorization, meaning-conferring (or Sinngebung), theory-formation, paradigm-formation, symbolization, linguistic activity, imagination and interpretation.

One of the common features of these different forms of constitution is their transcendental nature: they cannot be reduced to contingent and idiosyncratic psychological additions that are built up inductively on the basis of experience. They comprise the very framework of experience; but the framework is not itself a part of that which it frames. Just as importantly, that which counts as the given element in experience cannot be identified and conceived in isolation from what man contributes to it according to principles that are prior to and underived from it; trying to isolate constituting activity from the constituted (e.g. a pure concept from a pure unconceptualized datum) in order to get to reality as it is in itself, is as misconceived as trying to separate the length of a rectangle from its width in order to determine its individual contribution to the total area of the

rectangle.

For purely heuristic purposes, the following characterizations of the concept of constitution will be deliberately general; conflicting points of detail between different interpretations will be overlooked. The purpose of this heuristic move is to highlight certain very general shared features of the concept of constitution, as well as some of the broader consequences issuing from it.[14] Also overlooked will be Kant's contention that the a priori conditions of thought and experience must be fixed and unchanging across human history.

Three very general structural resemblances link together the various stronger and weaker models of constituting activity. First, the knower is generally conceived as an active and intervening participant, and not as a passive and receptive mirror, of the reality that is the object of his attention. At some fundamental level man enters into the shaping, organizing or forming of what is given in experience. In doing this, he brings something to it which was not there before. Not only what he experiences, but the way he experiences it, carries the mark of his own activity. Whatever this intervening element is -- concepts, categories, meaning, value, structure -- it begins with certain given 'data' in experience, but does not arise from them. There is, in other words, an indeclinable element of creation or autogeny in man's most primitive relation to reality -- and also, as it will be argued later in connection with the problematic of self-knowledge, in his relation to his own reality.

Second, the work performed by constituting activity assures that we cannot step outside of our own thought and experience, and the

general transcendental conditions (or framework) of thought and experience, in order to compare them with reality as it is in itself. This would be circular, for in order to step outside of the conditions of thought and experience we would necessarily presuppose these very conditions: we cannot think any other way. Endeavouring to escape what we bring to reality, with the goal of apprehending the real as it is in itself, and setting our knowledge on an absolutely sure and rational ground, is meaningless, for we have nothing but the a priori conditions of thought and experience with which to inquire into and determine the conditions and constitutive features of thought and experience.[15] Thus the very attempt to step outside these conditions is constrained to move in a circle: it begins at its goal -- that is, with thought and with experience. (This obviously resembles Hegel's criticism of Kant's project of investigating the conditions of knowledge: the examination of knowledge can only be carried out by an act of knowledge, and cannot (Hegel argues) arrive at its goal but rather is the goal itself.)[16]

Later it will become clear how man, in his most primitive relation to his own reality, cannot suspend or stand outside of his own activity -- just as he cannot step outside of his own skin, or study the neurophysiology of the human brain without using his own brain. But it will also become clear how this does not condemn self-examination to radical incoherence: the circle, in other words, is not necessarily vicious.

Finally, a rather peculiar consequence follows from these two very general structural features: with the advent and advance of

man's constitutive activity, the force of the given in experience tends correspondingly to 'recede', and to exert a weaker and less exacting force in directing knowledge and experience. The degree of force exerted by the given is variable, and can be ranged along a continuum, here called (for heuristic purposes) a continuum of empirical determination. At one end of the continuum, where man's activity is considered to be at its strongest, the directive force and ineluctability of the given with respect to theory or belief-formation is at its weakest; the given recedes, and eventually becomes elusive. This does not necessarily mean that the given element in experience simply is what man's constituting activity makes it; rather, what counts as the given in man's experience is relative to the powerful work of constituting activity on the given.

At the other end of the continuum of empirical determination (e.g. a qualified realism), the range and power of man's constitutive activity is at its weakest, and the force and clarity of the given is at its strongest; within certain limits, the given element in experience directs thought and theory-formation. The former situation represents the under-determination of knowledge and experience by the given; the latter, a qualified full determination.

Even within the anti-realist and anti-empiricist end of the continuum there are a variety of stronger and weaker accounts of the principle of constituting activity; similarly, there are a variety of accounts of the corresponding 'recession' of the given, and the under-determination of knowledge. The strongest and most idealistic version here is the idea that what man knows is only

what he himself has put there; knowledge is ultimately self-knowledge, and the acquisition of knowledge is in some sense a deeply 'tauto-conceptual' or 'tauto-categoric' activity that reflects back man's image. Both these ideas are clearly evident, for instance, in Ernst Cassirer's neo-Kantian philosophy of symbolic forms:

> Physical reality seems to recede in proportion as man's symbolic activity advances. Instead of dealing with the things themselves man is in a sense constantly conversing with himself. He has so enveloped himself in linguistic forms, in artistic images, in mythical symbols or religious rites that he cannot see or know anything except by the interposition of this artificial medium. His situation is the same in the theoretical as in the practical sphere. Even here man does not live in a world of hard facts, or according to his immediate needs and desires. He lives rather in the midst of imaginary emotions, in hopes and fears, in illusions and disillusions, in his fantasies and dreams.[17]

Cassirer's claims bring out an idea shared by most of the interpretations of the concept of constituting activity that are located at the anti-realist end of the continuum. The advance of man's constituting activity spells the loss, on the side of the given, of a certain immediacy, determinateness, clarity and ineluctability -- an immediacy etc. which for realism is essential as part of the objective backdrop of knowledge. Knowledge comes to suffer a certain 'lack' and 'under-determinacy' in relation to its object. Once again, this condition characterizes not only the relation between man and external reality, but also the relation between man and his own reality.

5. The Myth of the Given: A Cursory Survey

However divergent their positive accounts of the nature and limits of human knowledge and rationality, and the nature and limits of the 'compensatory element' that man brings to the given element in experience, modern philosophers such as Nietzsche, Cassirer, Quine, Kuhn, Goodman, Hampshire, Wittgenstein and Rorty share a very general negative concern in rejecting the central claims of realism, empiricism and the correspondence theory of truth. These, roughly, are the claims that: a) reality is in principle identifiable and knowable as it is in itself, and that our successive theories are approximating more and more closely the way this reality is; b) that it is thought-independent reality which clearly and unequivocally determines the truth or falsity of our propositions, beliefs and theories about it; and c) that the essential properties of this reality remain unchanged by our various and often changing characterizations of it. This is the world as it 'really is', which one pragmatist (Rorty) has rejected as the 'world well lost'.

One of the negative conclusions shared by some of these diverse philosophers is that it is meaningless to theorize with a view to separating the nature of reality from the conditions of our knowledge and experience of it -- as if by doing so an unconceptualized reality would be revealed to which our knowledge could be compared, and in which it could ultimately be grounded. We cannot separate concept from percept, theory from fact, conceptuality from factuality, or the constituted from the given -- and therefore separate the world as we now see and experience

it, which is the result of a complex evolution of our ways of thought, language and action, from the world 'as it really is'. In short, we cannot return to a state of nature, and to an innocent eye, and then build from this absolutely certain and rational foundation.

A cursory and schematic survey of a number of philosophers will illustrate these ideas. Nietzsche is the most extreme in his rejection of the realist concept of 'the world behind the scenes':[18]

> Against positivism, which halts at phenomena -- 'There are only facts' -- I would say: No, facts are precisely what there are not, only interpretations.[19]

> The habits of our senses have woven us into lies and deception of sensation: these again are the basis of all our judgments and our 'knowledge' -- there is absolutely no escape, no backway or bypath into the real world! We sit within our net, we spiders, and whatever we may catch in it, we can catch nothing at all except that which allows itself to be caught in precisely our net.
>
> Man and Things. -- Why does man not see things? He is himself standing in the way: he conceals things.[20]

In Ways of Worldmaking, which is indebted to Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms, Nelson Goodman argues that 'there are many ways the world is', and every true description captures one of them:

> Talk of unstructured content or an unconceptualized given or a substratum without properties is self-defeating: for the talk imposes structure, conceptualizes, ascribes properties. Although conception without perception is merely empty, perception without conception is blind (totally inoperative)....With false hope of a firm foundation gone, with the world displaced by worlds that are but versions, with substance dissolved into function, and with the given acknowledged as taken, we

> face the questions how worlds are made, tested and known.[21]

Quine shares Goodman's suspicion of the realist concept of reality, without sharing his (and Cassirer's) claim that scientific knowledge is not an intrinsically <u>better</u> way of conceiving and making the world than other ways of worldmaking. Quine concludes his paper 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism' with the claim that it is nonsense to speak of a purely linguistic component and a purely factual component in the truth of any individual statement -- as if questions of meaning and interpretation could be neatly separated from questions of fact, and, more generally, as if our conceptual scheme could be separated from unconceptualized reality. In 'Identity, Ostension, and Hypostasis' he concludes that

> we cannot detach ourselves from [our conceptual scheme] and compare it objectively with an unconceptualized reality....it is meaningless to inquire into the absolute correctness of a conceptual scheme as a mirror of reality.[22]

Finally, Rorty argues that the relation between conceptual scheme and reality, or scientific paradigm and extra-theoretic fact, is not a relation of correspondence, adequation or picturing. The vocabulary of isomorphism, picturing and mapping is out of place, as is the notion of statements being true <u>of objects</u>, when we are dealing with our most fundamental beliefs and theoretical presuppostions. It is senseless, he argues, to expect that the most fundamental sentences of a theory or conceptual scheme (e.g. 'History is the history of class struggle') must be true of something -- history, 'the facts', or 'the way the world really is'.[23] The realist's concept of the real thought-independent world demands more than is philosophically plausible

-- a 'hard, unyielding, rigid, étre-en-soi which stands aloof, sublimely indifferent to the attentions we lavish upon it.'

> What [the realist] wants is...the notion of a world so 'independent of our knowledge' that it might, for all we know, prove to contain none of the things we have always thought we were talking about. He wants to go from, say, 'we might be wrong about what the stars are' to 'none of the things we talk about might be anything like what we think they are.' Given this projection from, as Kant would say, the 'conditioned' to the 'unconditioned', it is no wonder that antinomies are easily generated.[24]

*

6. The Empirical Under-Determination of Knowledge

According to the realist, the full or strict determination of knowledge is simply what happens when reality makes our multifarious propositions, beliefs and theories either true or false. No 'slack' between theory and reality, or proposition and fact, affects the connection. To preserve this intuitively plausible notion -- that to be true or false is to be true or false in virtue of how things are -- reality must be thought of as more or less determinate and ineluctable, and -- at least on its side -- fully determining. The essential properties of reality just are what they are simpliciter, and their mode of givenness is clear and unequivocal. Thus reality is not unclear, ambiguous, indeterminate or paradoxical -- only our knowledge and interpretation of it is. For the inquiry and the acquisition of knowledge to be directed or fully determined by the real, all we

as knowers have to do is get our methods right, and eliminate the unclarity, indeterminacy and paradox from our side of the knowing process.

If, however, a clear-cut separation cannot legitimately be made between theory and fact, conceptuality and factuality, or constituted and given, then it cannot legitimately be shown how unconceptualized reality directs the knower in theory-formation, conceptualization or categorization. One of the arguments shared by the critics of realism in coming to this negative conclusion is that reality itself sets no limit to the variety and scope of the ways in which it can be identified, individuated and classified. The concepts and categories through which we apprehend reality are not themselves wholly supplied by the reality whose apprehension they make possible. Thus instead of the determinate one-to-one correspondence holding between knowledge and its object -- as would be the case if there were full or strict determination -- there is a certain 'slack' or 'looseness of fit'. On the basis of the relatively weak determining constraints provided by reality, no particular concepts, categories or symbols can be directly and unequivocally 'hooked up' with any particular bits of reality.

Naturally the concept of the empirical under-determination has been subject to stronger and weaker interpretations, and has been 'dressed up' in various guises: an unsynthesized intuition (or, in different empiricist terms, raw sense data, pure impressions, percepts, behaviourial stimuli) can exert no influence on how it is to be synthesized; outside of what the knower brings to it, the evidence provided by reality is 'blind' or malleable; neither inner experience nor external reality is given with 'names'

written on it; the classification (or identification, description and individuation) of reality is essentially inexhaustible.[25]

It should be clear by now that the concept of empirical under-determination neatly complements the idea that the knower is active in contributing something to the object known. If the real does not by itself wholly direct the way in which it is organized, classified or given meaning, then it is plausible to suppose that it must be the knower -- or something operating in the knowing faculty -- that is called upon to compensate. Such compensatory activity is not itself built up inductively <u>across</u> experience; it is part of the transcendental activity of the mind. The real does not as it were 'speak' for itself, and it does not unavoidably force upon us a unique set of concepts; as knowers, then, we intervene, and 'speak' on its behalf.

Quine's statement of the thesis of empirical under-determination in 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism' is perhaps the most famous in recent philosophy. He likens the totality of man's knowledge and belief -- total science -- to a field of force whose boundary conditions are experience. Recalcitrant experiences at the periphery may prompt readjustments in the interior of the field in the truth-value of certain statements, but a fair amount of flexibility remains in determining which statements across the whole fabric need re-evaluating:

> the totality of our so-called knowledge or beliefs, from the most casual matters...to the profoundest laws of pure mathematics and logic is a man-made fabric which impinges on experience only along the edges....the total field is so underdetermined by its boundary conditions, experience, that there is much latitude of choice as to what statements to re-evaluate in the light of any single contrary experience. No particular experiences are

> linked with any particular statements in the interior of the field, except indirectly through considerations of equilibrium affecting the field as a whole.[26]

*

The epistemological restriction on separating conceptuality from factuality, theory from fact, or constituting activity from given, has much wider implications: it also has its issue in philosophical anthropology, because it reveals something important about the nature of man -- viz. a certain inner plasticity -- and his place in the world -- viz. that he is enmeshed in a massive and complex network of relations, and is thoroughly <u>in</u> the world and not just passively reflecting it from a detached position. The relations that comprise human reality are so entangled and inter-dependent that they are resistant to division into simple constituent components and <u>relata</u>. In the following chapters the ontological and philosophico-anthropological implications of this will be developed, especially in so far as they reveal something about man's self-knowledge and self-understanding.

CHAPTER II

Self-Knowledge

1. The Issues

Many of the contemporary critics of realism and empiricism have tended to focus only on the problem of the objectivity of man's knowledge of an independent and external reality; similarly, many of the contemporary opponents of the correspondence theory of truth have had to contend with such theoretically simple and 'world-oriented' propositions as 'The snow is white' and 'The cat is on the mat'. The inter-connected problems of objective knowledge, rationality and truth are considered almost exclusively as problems affecting man's knowledge of a reality which is external to and independent of him. Critics of the realist approach to this set of problems tend to be pushed into this position, because their target -- the realist's concept of reality -- is so intuitively plausible and close to common sense: viz. the world of middle-sized and middle-distanced objects such as rabbits, trees and patches of snow. The more sophisticated of test-cases for this set of problems has tended to be natural science, and particularly man's knowledge of the entities populating the worlds of the 'hard' physical sciences (e.g. atom clouds, galaxies, DNA codes).

The assumption that the problematic of objective knowledge, rationality and truth is defined essentially by the nature of

inquiries into external and independent reality is complemented by the idea that everything that is not external and independent to man must be considered as grading off into the 'merely' subjective, the unproveable or the arbitrary.[1] Suspicion of the 'merely subjective' has enjoyed a long history since the invention of scientific method, and since the distinction between primary and secondary qualities that is generated by the mathematization of nature.[2] It is assumed that there are only facts: man, the knower, does not enter into the equation. The world unfolds by itself and to no one. Sartre argues that

> the source of this unfortunate approach is well-known: as Whitehead said, a law begins by being a hypothesis and ends by becoming a fact. When we say that the earth revolves, we do not feel as though we are stating a theory or that we are relying on a system of knowledge; we feel that we are in the presence of the fact itself, which immediately eliminates us as knowing subjects in order to restore to us our 'nature' as objects of gravitation. For anyone with a realist view of the world, knowledge therefore destroys itself in order to become the world.[3]

But the identification of the problem of knowledge with the problem of the knowledge of external and independent reality, and the identification of reality with the external objective world, suffers a profound blind spot with respect to the reality of the knower who stands at the center and source of knowledge. By linking the problems in this way, the vast problematic of man's self-knowledge and self-understanding has been omitted, or redefined as a version of the former problematic. Man's self-knowledge is considered to be a version of the knowledge he acquires about himself (e.g. in the human sciences); or, it is considered too mysterious, too deep or too historically variable

to be a proper subject of attention. Thus it is rarely considered a suitable testing ground for the the inter-connected problems of objective knowledge, rationality and truth.[4]

In the following chapters it is hoped that some headway will be made in putting this neglect to rights. It will be argued that the problematic of self-knowledge -- man's inquiry into, and the acquisition of knowledge of, his own reality -- defines and raises just as importantly (if not more urgently and critically) some of the inter-related problems which issue from the post-Kantian critique of realism, empiricism and the correspondence theory. In the acquisition of self-knowledge, just as in the acquisition of knowledge of the natural world, the knower is an active participant in the knowing equation; he has a hand in shaping or organizing what is known. But in the case of self-knowledge, where the knower just is the known, what he shapes and defines is precisely himself.

This is a unique complication, because the 'object' of his knowledge -- which is apprehended through and across the work of constituting activity -- is not external to and independent of the source of the mind's activity as are the objects of knowledge which make up the world of nature: somehow, the 'object' of knowledge is the very source and subject of knowledge. No brute distance separates the self-knower from the known self. The consequences of this would be negligible if proximity to subject-matter were only a contingent and alterable feature of the epistemic situation. But it is not a property the self-knower has a posteriori: he is necessarily involved with the subject-matter of his study; he belongs to what he studies. 'Belongingness' is

a primitive or irreducible characteristic of the self-relation. Because of this proximity, the self-knower is revealed to himself -- and, equally, concealed from himself -- in a special and quite unique way.

If the knower just is the known, then his activity vis à vis the object of knowledge is no longer a straightforward and 'outward-directed' process of constitution or meaning-conferring: it is complex, and caught up in itself. The human mind, which contributes to nature the concepts, categories, symbols or other organizing structures through which man experiences and understands her, contributes as it were to its own experience -- and therefore to the experience of its own contribution to experience -- when it turns back towards itself and tries to apprehend the deep-lying source of its activity. Thus it is that the very activity of defining or shaping the given in order to apprehend it is itself apprehended only after it has been defined or shaped. It does not as it were coincide with itself (or 'catch itself red-handed') at the moment of origination. If this is the case, then the very conditions responsible for simultaneously revealing and concealing the known are themselves revealed and concealed in being made the subject of self-knowledge. Clearly this is a peculiar -- if not paradoxical -- situation, because in self-knowledge the knower and the known are one and the same, and the very acquisition of self-knowledge appears to describe a purely interior movement from the self to the self by the self: it would seem therefore to be the most direct and 'illuminated' of approaches.

The reflexive peculiarities of this situation may be clarified

by turning to the familiar metaphor of the tinted spectacles of cognition: in the reflexive turn, the tinted spectacles through which we see the world are themselves seen in and through the tint they produce; they are not seen as the colour that they really are, because they are not seen from an independent perspective (e.g. with a naked eye). They are seen from the inside, subject to their own mediating -- and self-distancing -- influence.[5]

It is precisely these reflexive peculiarities, and the implications they have for the nature and <u>limits</u> of self-knowledge, that will be the focus of much of the following discussion. The thesis that man is a self-defining and self-altering being should be able to accommodate and explain some of these peculiarities satisfactorily. Before proceeding, however, several important questions have to be raised about how they come to affect the three general structural features (outlined in Chapter One) that link together the different models of constituting activity. These features, it will be recalled, are: the element of creativity or autogeny in man's relation to reality; the impossibility of stepping outside the conditions of thought, in order to get to reality as it is in itself; and the 'recession' of the given with the advance of man's activity.

First, if the mind's transcendental activity is not itself wholly derivable from its interaction with the given element in sense-experience, but derives from a plan of its own, then where ultimately does its source lie? <u>Within</u> the experiencable and knowable world to which it gives meaning and shape -- or 'behind' this world (in, for example, the recesses of a noumenal subject)? <u>Can</u> it be uncovered? Do we enjoy a privileged and direct access

to it because it is what we <u>are</u>? Or is the attempt to apprehend the well-spring of knowledge and experience constrained to obey the very rules of the order it imposes? Is the work of uncovering the ultimate source of constituting activity unavoidably circular, because it necessarily presupposes the very activity whose source it seeks?

Second, what is the nature of self-knowledge if the knower is at once the source (or subject) of constituting activity <u>and</u> the known (or object) that is always already constituted and organized by it? How can the knowing subject be the 'object' known? Does this formulation -- knowing subject and known object -- describe a deep-lying tension or discord in the depths of the soul? Or is it possible, in Fichte's words, to be 'subject and object in one'?

Third, how can the given possibly recede with the advance of constituting activity, if it is the reality of the knower himself which in this case is given? Is it not the case, as common sense seems to dictate, that we know ourselves from within? Or, as the Cartesian claims, that we know ourselves directly and infallibly, as agents and experiencing subjects (i.e. the self is the most proximate, self-present, certain and accessible of all possible objects of experience and knowledge)? If the mind really knows nothing better than itself, and if the acquisition of self-knowledge describes a movement <u>from</u> the self <u>to</u> the self <u>by</u> the self, then under what conditions can the object of knowledge -- the knower -- possibly <u>recede</u> from himself? Again, how can something which is <u>prima facie</u> absolutely simple, unitary and self-present (i.e. knower = known) be conceived as complex or self-divided -- as having, in other words, to sustain a <u>relation</u>

to itself?

Finally, is the goal of the simple de facto characterization of reality tenable in the realm of self-knowledge? Can the self be exhaustively described? Do its essential properties remain independent to and unaffected by changing characterizations?

*

The central theme of the two main theories of self-knowledge that will be studied later as illustrations of the epistemological and ontological conditions of self-knowledge is that a person is essentially a self-defining and self-forming being, and that deep changes in his most fundamental self-definition occasion changes in what he is. Across his life-history a person gradually alters himself -- his behaviour, purposes, emotional life and range of experience -- by developing richer and more articulate definitions of himself. This is change from the inside, and not merely a blind response to external forces, stimuli and conditioning.

Naturally, the modus operandi of self-definition is subject to many different interpretations. Sartre, for instance, argues that it involves radical choice and projection towards one's ends. Hampshire argues that it involves the acquisition of knowledge of the causes moving one to action, and the forces that shape one's character. Others argue that it involves radical re-evaluation (Charles Taylor), reflective self-evaluation (Ernst Tugendhat), second-order desiring (Harry Frankfurt), and the creation of a narrative life-history (Gabriel Marcel, Alistair MacIntyre). The general concept of self-formation that underpins these different

approaches is certainly not an alien one in modern philosophy; it derives largely from the concept of Bildung -- a concept which, as Gadamer argues, breathed life into the human sciences of the nineteeth century, and which still allows us to experience the century of Goethe as contemporary and familiar, and the baroque era as remote and unfamiliar.[6]

Deep-lying changes and innovations in self-definition do not 'mirror' inner reality, or approximate ever more closely to some underlying essential Self, or an unchanging human nature: they define and alter inner reality.[7] Naturally this does not mean that a person simply is what he says he is, or that he is free to make himself into whatever he likes by simply redefining himself. Self-definition and redefinition are possible only on the basis of a number of inherited conditions (i.e. facticity) to which they must answer. At certain depths even the deepest self-definitions 'run up against' something which is resistant to their constructive and formative powers; but what this is cannot be identified as it is in itself, as a pure datum; and the various levels where self-definition encounters resistance are not necessarily uniform and unchanging.

Because of the self-alteration that accompanies deep self-definition and redefinition, the most fundamental beliefs, conceptions and projects by which an agent defines himself do not simply (and statically) correspond to an underlying given reality which straightforwardly makes them true or false: rather, they have a part in shaping and articulating this reality. In self-knowledge there is a close connection between constructability and malleability. What the self-knower describes, conceives,

interprets or chooses at this deep level is not something whose essential properties remain unchanging and ineluctable like an external and independent reality -- as if deep re-description, re-conception, re-evaluation or re-interpretation amounted to no more than finding different names for the same underlying referent (i.e. a 'museum model' of reference). Charles Taylor summarizes this: the deepest evaluations and interpretations we formulate of ourselves

> are not simply descriptions, if we mean by this characterizations of a fully independent object, that is, an object which is neither altered in what it is, nor in the degree or manner of its evidence to us by the description. In this way my characterization of this table as brown, or this line of mountains as jagged, is a simple description. Our strong evaluations may be called by contrast articulations, that is, they are attempts to formulate what is initially inchoate, or confused, or badly formulated. But this kind of formulation doesn't leave its object unchanged. To give a certain articulation is to shape our sense of what we desire or what we hold important in a certain way.[8]

These ideas will be developed in greater detail in the following chapters. Before continuing further along these lines, however, it is important to clarify what is meant by the term 'deep' self-knowledge, and to distinguish it from the conventional autobiographical reporting and character self-ascriptions that are often thought to constitute self-knowledge. It is also important to identify some of the difficulties posed by these different kinds of self-knowledge for the problem of truth-conditions.

*

2. Character Ascriptions and Simple Autobiographical Reports

In daily life an individual is often required to make routine character self-ascriptions, autobiographical reports, self-evaluations and self-analyses (e.g. 'I'm a very sensitive person'; 'I'm tolerant of others, despite occasional moments of irritability'; 'I'm an introvert type'; 'I suffer from intense self-doubt'). These are based on conventional psychological, moral and empirical concepts, and they are guided by commonly-recognized rules and criteria of applicability. Making these reports in response to others provides an opportunity for an individual to explain and justify his actions, and to reveal in public light the depth of his self-awareness. Making them to himself (e.g. in diaries, intimate journals and autobiography) is a way of articulating and setting bounds to his experience: individuating, identifying and describing emotions, moods, desires, purposes, etc. serves to shape them and render them more definite. Autobiographical reports are generally accompanied by conventional explanations (e.g. 'I'm an introvert type <u>because</u> x'), as well as conventional evaluations (e.g. 'I tend to suffer from intense self-doubt, but I wish I didn't'). Generally, they form part of a larger network of beliefs and interpretations, and constitute an important form of self-knowledge.

Autobiographical reports, self-ascriptions, etc. have an important social and communicative function: in describing himself in conventional psychological and moral terms, a person describes himself as if from the outside, just as he might describe others, or as he might be described by others. He

identifies in his own experience dispositions, character traits, motivational structures, and behavioural and emotional patterns that he believes others would attribute to him.

Determining the truth-conditions for these sentences does not give rise to serious practical problems. The relation of simple psychological and moral predicates (e.g. 'neurotic', 'intuitive', 'sensitive', 'opportunistic' and 'irresponsible') to reality, or 'the facts', is often thought of in pictorial, depictive or representational terms. Given certain general rules and criteria, these terms can be straightforwardly 'paired off' or matched with the relevant aspects of an individual's behaviour and emotions, in the same way that simple objective predicates can be matched with the corresponding properties of objects.

Similarly, determining the truth-value of character ascriptions, etc. does not give rise to serious problems, for a wide range of means for assessment is available. Particular cases of generous behaviour, for example, can be 'weighed up' against cases of mean behaviour, thereby enabling the attribution of the predicate 'generosity' to be assessed on inductive grounds (e.g. repeated instances of giving to others warrants the ascription of the term generous). More commonly, an individual's behaviour is compared with the behaviour of other persons acting in similar circumstances; testing the veracity and applicability of the character predicate will then be grounded in shared and consensually-endorsed criteria of similarity and difference. Again, character ascriptions may be tested for their veracity by relying upon the observational accuracy and character-assessment abilities of others who are more experienced in the matter.

There is, however, a problem with routine character self-ascriptions, autobiographical reports, rudimentary psychological views, self-evaluations and self-analyses -- a problem which clearly indicates the limitedness of this form of self-knowledge. In making these ascriptions and reports, an individual may become aware that the terms he uses are inexact, 'bulky' or rudimentary; they do not 'fit' what he feels or experiences as closely as he would like them to. Because they are under-specific, or 'under-targeted', there is a sense in which they do not fully 'belong' to him; they could equally well describe the experiences of others. In cases where care and attention to detail has not been exercised, the simplicity and public recognizability of the terms is bought at the price of accuracy and specificity.[9] Nietzsche is particularly critical of the imprecision of the conventional vocabulary of inner processes:

> Language and the prejudices upon which language is based are a manifold hindrance to us when we want to explain inner processes and drives: because of the fact, for example, that words really exist only for superlative degrees of these processes and drives; and where words are lacking, we are accustomed to abandon exact observation because exact thinking there becomes painful....Anger, hatred, love, pity, desire, knowledge, joy, pain -- all are names for extreme states: the milder, middle degrees, not to speak of the lower degrees which are continually in play, elude us, and yet it is they which weave the web of our character and our destiny.....We are none of us that which we appear to be in accordance with the states for which alone we have consciousness and words, and consequently praise and blame; those cruder outbursts of which alone we are aware make us misunderstand ourselves, we draw a conclusion on the basis of data in which exceptions outweigh the rule, we misread ourselves in this apparently most intelligible handwriting on the nature of our self. Our opinion of ourself, however, which we have arrived at by this erroneous path, the

> so-called 'ego', is thenceforth a fellow worker in the construction of our character and our destiny.[10]

Generally, it is assumed that increases in the sophistication and specificity of the vocabulary of the emotions and inner states will coincide more closely to what a person really experiences and feels; moreover, it is assumed that this process of refinement and 'targeting' constitutes a deepening of his self-knowledge. But there are conflicting views on this. Later it will be seen how strongly Hampshire's emphasis on the development of a sophisticated and richly differentiated vocabulary of the emotions and thoughts contrasts with Sartre's view. Sartre is critical not only of the imprecision and 'bulkiness' of the predicates employed in conventional character self-ascriptions etc. (cf. BN pp.557-59); he is doubtful of the very conditions of their applicability to first-personal experience. A person is free to apply to himself the character predicates and psychological terms of a sharply defined and richly differentiated vocabulary; but he cannot, Sartre argues, actually live them, or make them his own, without being guilty of self-deception. This is not a limitation deriving from the unavoidable generality of all language; it is built into the very structure of lived pre-reflective experience.

3. The Depth of Self-Knowledge

The character self-ascriptions, simple autobiographical reports, self-evaluations, rudimentary psychological views, etc. comprising an agent's routine dealings with himself do not exhaust the possibilities of self-knowledge. There is also a deeper self-knowledge -- self-knowledge as a virtue -- that is commanded by

the ancient Delphic inscription gnothi seauton (know thyself!). Moral self-knowledge involves a sensitivity to the depth of one's being, and to the way one's life is working out, that surpasses the ability to produce convincing autobiographical reports, etc. It is more an achievement based on a long-term moral struggle and a deep self-examination, than a skill that is exercised daily.

In practical terms, to ascribe this kind of moral sensitivity and awareness to an individual is to say that he knows 'what he is doing with his life', and 'what he is all about'; that he understands his moral, practical and intellectual limits, as well as the fundamental life-possibilities that are open to him;[11] that he has won through to a certain understanding and wisdom about what 'makes him tick' (e.g. his deep-lying motivational and emotional patterns); or that he has a deeper than usual grasp of the overall meaning and direction of his life.

How is this deeper moral understanding to be achieved? What relation does it have to the level of understanding appropriate to simple autobiographical reports, etc.? If a person were to push his review, self-criticism and self-inquiry one step beyond the level of simple autobiographical reporting etc., and as carefully and as accurately as he could, he would arrive at a slightly deeper and more comprehensive level of self-understanding, and at a more sophisticated depth-vocabulary. The terms in which he ordinarily understands himself -- his simple autobiographical reports, etc. -- would not then be discarded, but would be enriched in so far as they would be placed in a deeper and more comprehensive context (or framework, or set of terms) in terms of which they would be significant.

Nothing, however, prevents a person from continuing this process of revision -- of searching for deeper levels of understanding, and discovering a wider and richer context in which to place the previous forms of self-understanding. If the most recently-achieved set of terms by means of which he understands himself is not self-certifyingly fixed and final, then continued inquiry and revision will eventually lead to the discovery of a deeper and richer set of terms. Barring practical constraints, this process of inquiring, revising and refining can be continued, leading to deeper and more significant (imbedding) contexts.

The question this raises, however, is whether some definite and final set of terms, or framework of self-understanding, would <u>invariably</u> emerge were a person to press his inquiry and revision far enough. Would he uncover a basic, or fundamental, way of looking at himself and his life? Is it correct to suppose that the chain of significance must stop somewhere -- at some fundamental level that is not itself significant in still deeper and more comprehensive terms, and that constitutes the most basic framework in terms of which he understands himself and his life? Is it correct to suppose that there are such things as basic formulae or presuppositions in self-knowledge -- presuppositions underlying the empirical and psychological concepts comprising conventional character self-ascriptions etc., but which are not themselves of the same order? Or is the chain of dependence open-ended, and self-knowledge an heterogeneous and ungrounded collection? Is there a definitive context of self-understanding?

To argue, as Sartre does, that the chain of significance <u>must</u> stop somewhere, is to argue that there is some primitive

formulation, context or set of terms that gives form to a person's way of looking at himself, and that constitutes the basis of all reflexive ascribing, evaluating, inquiring and asserting. Such a basis is not itself derived from or dependent upon the levels of concepts which are significant in terms of it. There is an essential difference in logical type between the basic formulations or set of terms, and the empirical and psychological concepts that comprise simple autobiographical reports, etc. Whatever this basis is -- for Sartre it is a radical choice that marks off sense (or meaning) from non-sense -- it enjoys a certain autonomy (e.g. Sartre describes it as selbstandig).

If there is some fundamental framework or set of terms for self-understanding -- something that at a very deep level (bedrock) is responsible for giving form to a person's way of looking at himself -- it does not follow that he necessarily has a clear and distinct idea of it. He sees himself and his life through it, and by means of it; but precisely because it is so comprehensive and deep-lying, and so basic to his experience, he does not ordinarily see what he sees through. The most basic formulations by means of which he understands himself are exceptionally difficult to uncover and specify, not only because of the unfamiliar depths at which they lie, the absence of a precise depth-vocabulary, and (as Nietzsche claims) the painfulness of exact radical thinking; it is also characteristic of the distinctive logical structure of basic formulations or presuppositions that they cannot be fully and unequivocally described, specified or explicated, precisely because description, specification and explication can be made only in these terms (or within the framework), and not of the very

terms (or <u>of</u> the framework) which makes such activities possible. Something must lie behind description, specification and explication if any description, etc. is to be possible.

Commitment to the idea that there is some primitive formulation, framework or set of terms that gives form to a person's way of looking at himself is one of the differences between Sartre and Hampshire's views of self-definition. Sartre reworks this general transcendental idea to his own ends: because the very roots of self-definition and self-understanding are underived, and not significant in terms of anything else, they must be radically contingent and unjustifiable (i.e. they are not ultimately grounded in anything external to them such as reasons, moral laws, the Good, the Other). Bedrock, Sartre argues, hangs over an abyss.

The general idea that something -- frameworks, basic formulae -- must remain behind or transcendent to the activities of inquiring, interpreting and justifying, if anything is to be investigated, interpreted, etc., is not an uncommon one in the history of modern philosophy; its most familiar application, however, has been to the problem of man's knowledge of the external world. It calls to mind the general transcendental distinction (found in Kantian and post-Kantian philosophy) between the framework and that which the framework makes possible. The study of Sartre's transcendental theory of self-definition in Chapter 6 will naturally raise the issue of 'transcendentalism without necessity'; that is, whether the most fundamental terms in which personal experience is defined are necessary and fixed for all time, or contingent and alterable. In this discussion will be recognized a version of the more general problem of the rationality of foundations.

4. Truth Conditions in Deep Self-Knowledge

One of the interesting issues here is whether the truth conditions and methods of verification that are applicable to the comparatively small-scale and routine sentences comprising character self-ascriptions, autobiographical reports, etc. are also applicable to the most basic formulations in terms of which they are significant; that is, whether talk of corresponding, picturing or representing applies equally well to the bedrock of self-definition, and to the fundamental descriptions and evaluations that a person occasionally makes about the depths of his being. If not, how do they 'connect' with reality? Are the most basic formulations by means of which he understands himself and his life 'held' <u>because</u> he is convinced of their correctness, or their absolute faithfulness to reality -- just as he assents to or 'holds' certain character self-ascriptions, etc. because he is convinced of their correctness?

When a person turns his attention from particular aspects of his life to his life in its entirety; from routine character self-ascriptions etc. to the framework which makes them possible; from 'small-scale' inquiry and self-evaluation to radical inquiry, some of the most important concepts of the correspondence theory of truth -- correspondence, representing and picturing -- fail to do the work that they successfully perform at the more 'local' level. This idea can best be introduced by analogy with the problem of establishing truth-conditions for the concepts that comprise the categorial 'grid', or absolute presuppositions, of our conceptual scheme for the natural world.

If it is plausible to think that the short sentence 'The earth has one moon' can be straightforwardly 'paired off' or matched with the relevant bit of reality, and determined to be a faithful or unfaithful account of things, then it is slightly less plausible in the case of the Copernican assertion 'The earth goes around the sun'; it is still less plausible for the assertion 'There is no such thing as absolute space'. With such fundamental and comprehensive sentences as 'The universe is infinite' and 'For every action there is a reaction'; or, with fundamental theoretical principles (e.g. the Principle of the Uniformity of Nature (J.S. Mill), or the second Law of Thermodynamics), the breakdown of the correspondence theorist's concepts of picturing, representing or matching seems to be complete: it is hardly plausible to think that there is something with which they could be 'paired off', and something to which they could straightforwardly correspond.[12]

A similar grading-off of plausibility affects the problem of establishing truth-conditions for the most basic formulations by means of which a person understands himself and his life.[13] This grading-off is evident in the move from conventional character-ascribing sentences such as 'I am generous', to deeper and larger-scale evaluative sentences such as 'I hate my childhood and everything it stands for' (Sartre); and, ultimately, to the assertions uncovered by radical questioning (e.g. Tolstoy's Ivan Illyich), where the very framework of self-understanding -- that which gives form to a person's way of looking at himself -- is called into question. At these depths, no other terms or 'yardsticks' are available for comparison and assessment,

precisely because it is the terms in which other investigations, explications and evaluations are carried out which are themselves in question.

Once again, the breakdown of the correspondence theorist's concepts of picturing, representing and matching seems to be complete: it is implausible to think that there is something to which the most basic formulations, or the most radical insights and evaluations, could straightforwardly correspond, or something which they could faithfully mirror, as simple character self-ascriptions and autobiographical reports do. More generally, this implausibility suggests that the idea of a clear and unequivocal separation obtaining between knowledge and inner reality (or proposition and fact) is philosophically untenable, or unwieldy and uneconomical, in its application to the problem of the relation between a person's most fundamental self-conception or self-interpretation, and how he actually is. It suggests that there is no such thing as what a person is independently of how he conceives, interprets, evaluates or chooses himself at the deepest of levels.

This is a serious criticism not because in self-knowledge there is no truth, or no reality to be known, or because the most basic formulations by means of which a person understands himself and his life are arbitrary because they fail to clearly 'hook onto' reality; it is because neither relata comprising the self-knowing relation -- viz. basic formulations, and the inner reality with which they somehow connect -- are capable of maintaining clearly and unequivocally the necessary distance and independence vis à vis each other for some of the principal relations demanded by the

correspondence theory (viz. 'being made true or false' and 'faithfulness to reality') to be established. At this depth, the relata are too closely and too actively inter-twined, and too alterable with respect to each other; they cannot be identified and specified in isolation from each other, and then matched or 'paired off'.

This does not mean that we are forced to abandon altogether the idea that truth is what accrues when our beliefs somehow 'fit' or 'connect' with inner reality; nor are we forced to shift automatically to relativistic-sounding talk of coherence and truth relative to the framework of self-definition, or to pragmatic-sounding talk of utility and convenience. To maintain that self-knowledge fails to connect with reality, or that truth is relative to a framework, would have the unwelcome effect in moral philosophy of weakening the explanatory power of the concepts of self-deception and self-ignorance, and therefore of weakening the distinction between virtue and vice in its application to self-knowledge.

It is important therefore not to go too far in criticizing the correspondence theory; at this stage, the most philosophically economical route is to rethink the nature of truth as correspondence in light of the concepts of self-definition and self-formation. This means preserving some of the guiding intuitions of the correspondence theory -- viz. that truth is truth 'in virtue of' reality; that it is what accrues when our beliefs somehow 'connect' with reality; and it means dropping other intuitions -- viz. that truth is a matter of propositions 'picturing' or 'matching' reality.[14]

To account for the idea of 'fitting' or 'connecting with' reality, a modified correspondence theory must replace the idea of picturing or matching with the idea of a dynamic inter-relation between the most basic formulations by means of which a person understands himself, and the inner reality they are about. The deepest conceptions, beliefs, projects and evaluations by which a person defines himself and his life to a certain extent constitute -- or make -- the reality which makes them true or false; they are true or false, correct or incorrect, even while the inner reality in virtue of which they are true or false is constituted and shaped by them. Even when they are wrong, inexact or distorted, they somehow constitute and alter the reality in virtue of which they are wrong.

The idea that truth is truth 'in virtue of' reality naturally raises the difficult ontological question of precisely what this inner reality is. Criticism of the concept of a 'hard' thought-independent reality is not tantamount to denying the existence of the inner reality that is the target of self-knowledge, viz. the self. Even if the most basic formulations by means of which an individual understands himself and his life do not unequivocally 'hook onto', represent or 'mirror' a Self, or an underlying essence or human nature, they are obviously about something; they are not about themselves, or about other beliefs and propositions, or about nothing at all. That is, they do not simply 'create' their object -- the self -- out of nothing, or out of a vast fund of other concepts and beliefs. But what then is this reality if it is not the substantial Self, the I-am-I, a bundle of perceptions and ideas, or an inner essence? This question -- an

ontological one in contrast with the epistemological ones above -- cannot simply be dismissed; it will be one of the goals in the following chapters, particularly Chapter Four, to determine why, if there are no hard matters of fact in the realm of self-knowledge, it still cannot be the case that there are no 'facts of the matter' whatsoever, or that 'anything goes'.

*

5. The Incompleteness of Self-Inquiry

-- man is the still undetermined being.
-- Nietzsche

To preserve some of the guiding intuitions of the correspondence theory of truth, the ideas of 'fitting' or 'connecting with' reality have been suggested; to explain these would in turn involve explaining the possibility of the reflexive peculiarities that arise from the dynamic inter-relation between the most basic terms in which an individual understands himself, and the inner reality these terms are about. Just how is it possible for these basic terms to have the peculiar role of constituting -- or <u>making</u> -- the reality which <u>makes</u> them true or false?

The 'raw matter' of inner reality is in part malleable and constructable. It does not force upon an individual a unique set of terms or basic formulations by means of which he must understand and define himself. That is, he enjoys a certain flexibility in determining which terms or formulations will define him and constitute his identity. The malleability of the inner is

the counterpart in the problematic of self-knowledge of the third general structural feature of the concept of constituting activity -- viz. the 'recession' of the given with the advent and advance of man's constitutive activity.

The malleability of inner reality can be conceived and expressed in a variety of ways. In Sartrean terms, something is 'lacking' in inner reality, and comes to 'haunt' the deepest levels of self-definition, viz. the self as it is in itself, as a complete, self-coincident, unchanging reality. This formulation will be discussed in Chapter Six. In terms a little less opaque than Sartre's, and free from his exclusively ontological approach to the problem, the descriptions and interpretations under which an individual views himself, and by means of which he identifies, individuates and describes inner reality, are essentially incomplete and revisable. This, roughly, is Hampshire's formulation, which will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Literature and depth psychology also yield perspectives on the malleability of the inner life. Metaphors of liquidity, for instance, are often employed to give a sense of the elusiveness and apparent formlessness of the inner life when it is made the subject of introspection: the 'stream of consciousness',[15] or the 'inner flux' of subjective life, stands in sharp contrast to the relative stability and solidity of the middle-sized and middle-distanced objects that surround us, and that are discrete and numerable.

The malleability of inner reality is closely tied to its constructability. If it is not composed wholly of 'hard facts' that are awaiting discovery -- as if it were already divided into

types or natural units, and simply required labelling -- then the self-knower must himself have a hand in shaping and articulating it. But if this is the case, then the most basic formulations or terms by means of which he understands himself are, at least to a certain extent, self-confirming: he shapes or transforms himself in such a way that he fits the general orientation of these basic formulations, thus giving back evidence and other items that tend to support and reinforce that orientation. The idea that some of the facts in virtue of which self-understanding is true are manufactured by self-understanding[16] parallels the first general structural feature of the concept of constituting activity that was noted earlier -- viz. the element of creativity or autogeny (or self-activity) in man's relation to the object of knowledge.[17]

Self-inquiry is a particularly difficult and unsatisfying task because of the malleability of inner reality. There are two reasons for this. First, because the constituted (i.e. the activity of shaping and articulating) cannot be separated from the given (i.e. the 'material' shaped), the goal of trying to apprehend inner reality as it is 'in itself' is as misconceived as the goal of trying to apprehend external reality as it is 'in itself', independently of the a priori conditions of thought. A reflective and self-inquisitive person is not free to return to a state of nature, and to an innocent eye, on himself, and then build from this absolutely certain foundation. However deep and far back he inquires into the very roots of his self-definition, into what makes his experience his, and his own, he will always find it impossible to finalize the inquiry (e.g. by 'breaking out' beyond the most basic formulations into 'hard' fact). This, in

outline only, is the counterpart to the second general structural feature noted in Chapter One in connection with the concept of constituting activity -- the impossibility of stepping outside the conditions of thought and experience in order to get to reality as it is in itself.

There is a further reason accounting for the acute difficulty of self-inquiry: the 'object' of self-inquiry, which by nature is malleable, is changed by the very advance of the inquiry, and is therefore one logical step ahead of the most recent advances of the inquiry. To inquire into inner reality -- and therefore to identify, individuate and specify it -- is to intervene with it and shape it (like the microphysicist's intervention with microphysical reality). But to do this is to change it from what it was prior to the advent of inquiry; and yet it is this prior state which is the original target of the inquiry. Michael Polanyi describes how this situation affects the human sciences:

> Man's capacity to think is his most outstanding attribute. Whoever speaks of man will therefore have to speak at some stage of human knowledge. This is a troublesome prospect. For the task seems to be without end: as soon as we had completed one such study, our subject matter would have been extended by this very achievement. We should have now to study the study that we had just completed, since it, too, would be a work of man. And so we should have to go on reflecting ever again on our last reflections, in an endless and futile endeavour to comprise completely the works of man....Everytime we acquire knowledge we enlarge the world, the world of man, by something that is not yet incorporated in the object of the knowledge we hold, and in this sense a comprehensive knowledge of man must appear impossible.[13]

Once an individual's self-inquiry is thought to be completed, the targeted area for inquiry -- the depths of inner reality --

would have been extended and reshaped by this very achievement. Each deep self-insight, self-evaluation or self-interpretation would enlarge and complicate the original subject-matter of inquiry. To be consistent, he would then have to inquire into the inquiry that he had just completed, and the alterations that it had occasioned in his life, since these too would now comprise the reality that is the target of his study; for criticizing, reviewing and taking stock of one's life, and trying to apprehend the deepest roots of one's way of life, are important and influential events <u>in</u> one's life. But then he would always have to study his last studies, and the resulting life-alterations, in a task which could end only with his own death (i.e. totalization is possible only at the moment of death).

The incompleteness of self-examination reveals something important about inner reality. In the very process of inquiring into himself at the deepest levels, the self-inquirer somehow <u>intervenes</u> in the reality he is after, instead of merely uncovering it, recording or observing it; somehow he <u>brings</u> something to it and actually shapes it, instead of <u>answering</u> to it or submitting to it, and establishing an <u>adequation</u> between it and his knowledge. Thus it is that the very object of self-examination -- the self -- recedes from the inquirer's grasp with the advance of his inquiry; in this sense the self is 'systematically elusive' (Ryle), and the inquiry is 'condemned to eternal penultimacy'.[19] Both Hampshire and Sartre see in this peculiar situation an argument against determinism, and a place for human freedom.

6. The Break with Cartesian Ideals

It is becoming more and more apparent how the application of the concepts of constituting activity and empirical under-determination to the problematic of self-knowledge are responsible for introducing into man's relation to himself a certain distance, complexity and darkness. This does not spell the 'death' of the self (as it might, in the corresponding problematic, spell the death of the 'thing'); but it institutes a very clear break with the ideals of the Cartesian model of knowledge and self-knowledge (viz. apodicity, immediacy, simplicity and clarity).

If a person shapes himself in the very process of understanding himself, and if his self-inquiry is by nature 'condemned to eternal penultimacy', then his search for himself describes a self-distancing rather than a self-coinciding movement. He is always transcending himself and distancing himself from himself (i.e. receding) in finding new ways to understand himself; he is like the traveller who pushes into a countryside that is altered by his very advance. Self-inquiry does not mark out a straightforward process of revealing more and more facts, as if it is getting closer to the final truth; it is a self-transcending process in which the inquirer is at once revealed to himself and concealed from himself.

The idea that the facts which make self-understanding true are manufactured by self-understanding seems to be a quantum leap away from realism -- and, in fact, most naive and common-sense beliefs about the nature of the self. The realist will maintain that without something to make propositions true or false,

independently of other propositions or beliefs, the entire problematic will be on the slippery slope to relativism: any self-description, self-conception or self-interpretation passing itself off as fundamental can simply be made true if there are no hard facts to which we can appeal to settle conflicting truth-claims. The realist's ruling assumption is that the relation between what a person *is*, and how he conceives, describes or interprets himself, must be clear-cut and unproblematic; each *relata* should be able to be kept separate from the other, and studied as an independent component. The problem here is that it is unclear if sense can be given to the crucial term '*is*', as the realist wants to understand it, in the all-important phrase 'what a person *is*'. For what a person *is* is to a certain extent dependent upon how he understands what he is.

The Kantian and post-Kantian explanatory frameworks, with their combined concepts of constituting activity and empirical under-determination, might seem to lead towards this slippery slope, because they raise a host of thorny issues about the objectivity of self-knowledge, and questions about the nature and location of the self which is the 'object' of self-knowledge. Kant was well-aware of a number of difficult questions about the objectivity of self-knowledge, and the nature of the self.

> How the 'I' that thinks can be distinct from the 'I' that intuits itself,...and yet, as being the same subject, can be identical with the latter; and how, therefore, I can say: 'I, as intelligence and *thinking* subject, know myself as an object that is *thought*, in so far as I am given to myself [as something other or] beyond that [I] which is [given to myself] in intuition, and yet know myself, like other phenomena, only as I appear to myself, not as I am to the understanding' -- these are questions that raise no greater nor less

> difficulty than how I can be an object to myself at all....[20]

But the Copernican revolution instituted by Kant may equally well point in the direction of a solution to some of the problems it creates, by providing the grounds for a new explanatory paradigm for the concepts of the self and self-knowledge. One of the philosophically plausible candidates that might fill the explanatory gaps opened up by the critique of the traditional Cartesian and empiricist models of the self and self-knowledge, and that might provide strong and rich answers to the questions that have been raised about the objectivity of self-knowledge, is what will be called from this point on the relational model of the person. The cardinal principle of the relational model -- that a person is a complex and dynamic network of relationships, and exists in such a way that he must take up or assume a relation to his existence (i.e. he is a composite, complex, relational being) -- derives in part from the Kantian idea that there is an inseparable inter-relation between conceptuality and factuality, or constituting activity and the given. These ideas will be taken up in Chapter Four.

*

7. Empirical and Phenomenological Characteristics of Self-Inquiry

Before proceeding any further in outlining the epistemological and ontological conditions of self-knowledge, it is important to provide illustrations of some of the ways the search for self-knowledge is actually realized by different individuals. A glimpse of what is meant by the term self-examination was provided in the Preface in Tolstoy's story of Ivan Ilyich. It is to this and other literary works that it is worth turning to illustrate some of the distinctive empirical and phenomenological characteristics of self-examination.

a) Prompting the rare and uncommonly difficult event of self-examination is a series of deceptively simple and profoundly unsettling (or, in Tolstoy's words, 'accursed') questions: 'Who, ultimately, am I?'; 'Where, ultimately, am I from?'; 'Where, ultimately, am I going?'; 'What do I live my life by?'; 'What is the meaning of it all?'; and 'What does it all add up to?'. Part of the deceptiveness of such questions is that they pass themselves off as questions of fact. Accompanying these questions are a number of moral or evaluative questions: 'Who, ultimately, do I want to be?'; 'Who, ultimately, ought I to be?'; 'What do I want to do with my life?'; 'What is the good life?'; 'By what can I justify my life?'; and 'Do I really know how to live?'.

Naturally, such penetrating questions are not often posed so explicitly and articulately, and in such a clear and simple format (as other factual and evaluative questions are). Questions of this depth and power often remain implicit and 'oblique', imbedded as it were in a larger train of questions, or implicit in a

general mood of inquisitiveness: they question more than we can say they question, and more than we can possibly answer.

Furthermore, deep self-questioning is not necessarily a 'datable' activity; that is, it does not always have its issue in clear-cut, numerable and observable results. The cumulative effects of self-inquiry may be evident only after many years, as the fruits of a slow, gradual and methodical process (e.g. prolonged psycho-analytic or psycho-therapeutic therapy); or, they may be revealed in one short-lived extreme situation (as Sartre's novels and plays often illustrate); or, as in the case of Ivan Illyich and the Prince Salina, in the face of impending death.

b) In deep self-examination an individual endeavours to come to grips with his life as a whole. It is not the study of individual examples of desires, emotions, actions and purposes that gives self-examination its depth, although learning about particular cases through sustained attention and reflection is a necessary part of it; nor is self-examination simply a matter of being able to 'reel off facts' about events in the past.

A single case of unrequited love, for instance, or a singularly memorable outburst of anger, may provide an individual with 'material' for many reflective insights into his emotional life. But the study of isolated cases is not enough; he may know a great deal about the nature of one particular outburst of anger, or one ill-fated love-affair, without knowing his own emotional life, and how one event fits together with everything else. Similarly, a sensitive and 'highly-tuned' awareness to the thousands of particular little details, nuances and easily-

overlooked traits that make up life (e.g. recollecting long-forgotten smells and feelings from childhood) does not by itself constitute deep self-knowledge; what is required is a principle of synthesis and organization -- a supreme example of which is Proust's -- to connect them and situate them within a larger context.

Similarly, it is possible to go to the very opposite extreme, and to be too general and abstract about oneself. (Such may be the drawback for instance of Sartre's autobiography The Words.) In this kind of self-examination, a single interpretative principle or theme is given too much explanatory power, with the unwanted result that many singularly important details in life are assimilated in one sweeping reduction. Every bit of evidence yielded by self-examination counts as supporting the a priori interpretation -- as if the development of a single over-arching theme somehow tokened depth. But uncritical concentration on the totality -- the grand synthesis, or the one overarching theme -- is liable to float free of reality and become a self-reifying fiction.[21]

c) The process of going deeper into oneself, of using the most basic resources, formulations and yardsticks to examine one's life, is exceptionally demanding, not only because of the absence of familiar guideposts and conventional ways of questioning, but because it is not explicit and specifiable in the way that the other less than radical inquiries are. There is nothing like a clear-cut and universally applicable scientific procedure, or a set of general rules, in the search for self-knowledge.

This is particularly evident once a certain depth of inquiry is

reached. The self-inquirer finds himself unable to provide a clear and methodical reconstruction of what he is doing; he is unable to state how he arrived at a particular insight, other than by identifying certain general conditions of the inquiry. This is not because he is confused about what he is doing, but because his inquiry does not move forward through the application of a kind of procedure, method or format (although the application of such a procedure or method may help to trigger the inquiry).[22] (Breaking off self-inquiry to formulate general rules, or match it with general rules, may even inhibit the process, in the same way that concentration on the mechanics and rules of piano playing, instead of playing, will inhibit a performance.) The train of Ilyich's death-bed questioning for instance moves forward in a mysterious way.

The requirement for complete clarity and explicitness in moving from inquiry, and the application of a method, to conclusion, is imported from other domains of inquiry, where the criterion of reconstructibility is called upon for the safeguarding role it can play in the process of justification.[23] But certain kinds of deep insight, just like certain creative insights at the origin of a work of art or an invention, happen without one being able to tell exactly why or how they do happen.

e) Despite the lack of a clear and fixed procedure, and the unreconstructability of self-examination, two very broad approaches can be discerned: the analytical-investigative approach, and the creative approach.[24]

i) Examining the deepest aspects of one's life may be approached as if one is working out a profoundly difficult and enigmatic

riddle, the final answer to which will be found only by careful detective work relying on powers of observation, analysis and inference. This involves collecting and sifting through data, testing different explanatory hypotheses, filling in discontinuities and gaps, and making inferences. Life presents itself as a kind of puzzle; the self-examiner alone can find the master-key.

Similarly, self-examination may be approached as an hermeneutic task, involving the interpretation of the enormous wealth of signs and clues in the vast array of events comprising life. In searching for the hidden meaning behind the familiar face of things, the self-examiner must rely on guesswork and hunches, and make interpretive rather than strict (or logically deductive) inferences. Unlike the careful scientific detective, he engages in a kind of archaeology of the layers of meaning; deciphering the evidence involves both inference and creative insight.

ii) Self-examination may also be considered an essentially creative endeavour, not unlike creating a work of art, or a piece of literary fiction. It is a process drawing upon one's deepest intuitive and creative powers; the goal is to see and express things in one's life in a different, and more personal, way. Observation, inference, deciphering and interpretation are important elements in this process, but something more is required for self-insight: viz. a moment of creative and imaginative inspiration. Telling the story of one's life, for instance, involves creating a set of highly familiar and expressive terms in which to view one's life.[25]

Family resemblances link together the many offshoots of these different approaches to learning about oneself. Some of the activities comprising this broad network include: questioning the meaning of one's life, and radically evaluating one's fundamental beliefs (as Ilyich does); questioning what one lives by (as Tolstoy does in his autobiography); recollecting and retrospecting (as, for instance, Christa Wolf does in A Model Childhood); contemplating and speculating (as, for instance, Herzog does in Saul Bellow's Herzog); deliberating about alternative ways of life; writing autobiography or confessions, or employing media such as paint or music; making up 'true stories' about one's life; interpreting one's dreams; testing and evaluating the character ascriptions, interpretations or psychological constructions of others; and, perhaps most importantly, questioning oneself in conversation with others who are more experienced and impartial (as in psycho-analysis and certain kinds of psycho-therapy), and who take responsibility.

*

Given these empirical and phenomenological characteristics, a number of epistemological questions can be raised about the conditions and limits of self-knowledge. These are questions that will have to be addressed by any satisfactory account of self-knowledge.

First, what are the observable practical effects of under-determination in self-inquiry? Do emotions, wants and desires, and more generally a person's deepest way of being, forever elude his grasp, and prove impossible to apprehend and name with any real certainty and finality? Is it perhaps more accurate to say that it is their real meaning which eludes him, and which is under-determined?

Second, what are the observable practical effects of constituting activity in self-knowledge? Are emotions and moods actually moulded by the words and concepts used to individuate, identify and describe them? Do searching autobiographies give a form and direction to life that was not previously there? Will years of psycho-analytic therapy actually manufacture some of the facts which support the psycho-analytic interpretation, and transform the analysand into a psycho-analytical being?[26]

Third, how can a person begin to inquire into the most basic formulations by means of which he understands himself and his life, given that he cannot but presuppose these formulations in order to question them? What is the starting-point? Can he step back from them? If everything that is involved in posing fundamental practical questions, and in working them out, is done in terms of his life -- as it were with his life -- then is self-detachment and objectivity of attitude an appropriate method of

inquiry? Is this perhaps the only appropriate approach to self-examination, given that the proximity of the inquirer to the inquiry may be a source of error and deception?

Finally, is knowledge the actual goal of an individual's quest to know himself, or is it something other than knowledge, e.g. wisdom, tranquillity, liberation, authenticity? Does self-examination make life easier to live, or does it make it more complex, more alterable, more uncertain and more opaque?

CHAPTER III

Two Perspectives in Self-Examination

1. Introduction

It is necessary to raise a further set of epistemological questions to complement the questions raised earlier about the nature and limits of self-knowledge with respect to the combined concepts of constituting activity and empirical under-determination. The issues raised by these questions will mark out the second major epistemological matrix within which the problem of self-knowledge can be situated. Once the problem is given this definite form, it will be possible to turn to Sartre and Hampshire's theories of self-knowledge for illustration.

The issues that will be raised here also fall under the umbrella of modern epistemological problems about truth, objectivity and the theory-fact distinction. But these issues concern not so much the nature of the conditions of knowledge -- the transcendental conditions which apply to all knowers in all forms of knowledge -- as the nature of the search for self-knowledge, given that the knower is a finite and situated intelligence with relatively limited resources, and that the object of his inquiry is his own life.

Bearing this in mind, the guiding question is: what is the best way to examine one's life in its entirety, in response to the fundamental practical questions: from the 'inside' as an agent

and participant, and in terms that are familiar, highly personal and maximally individuating? or from the 'outside' as a detached observer, in terms that are abstract and general enough to be assimilated into a general explanatory scheme that grants no special privilege to the fact that the self-examiner <u>is</u> what he is examining?[1]

The more general philosophical problem to which this points, but which will not be taken up directly, is the problem of free will and determinism. Are the basically teleological, intentional and agential categories in which the agent understands his own actions, emotions, body and experience -- categories in terms of which he defines himself -- the same categories in which he must be objectively explained? Are the beliefs of a conscious agent who is planning, deciding and performing actions <u>true</u> beliefs? Or, are all the categories by means of which he defines himself and formulates to himself his ends and the meaning of his experience mere surface play and rationalization, and all his acting on the basis of reasons mere irrational behaviour? To apprehend the truth, should he try to understand his own actions, experiences and mental states in terms of general explanatory schema which make no reference to the familiar categories of agency, design and purpose in which he ordinarily understands and defines himself, and which make up the general framework (or 'Lifeworld') of human life?

*

2. Finitude

Before proceeding to the second matrix of epistemological questions, it is important to examine the situation of the self-inquirer. This will involve some digression, particularly on the concept of temporality, but in Chapter Four the same themes will be taken up again.

As an agent and centre of action a person is finite, embodied and situated. His range of action, and his power to define himself, are circumscribed by a number of factors which have been inherited, conditioned into him or learned from infancy, and which cannot be written out of existence. He is not a 'prisoner' of these factors; it is mistaken to think that he cannot but passively submit to their influence, or that he is defined in his essentiality by them. But however much he defines and redefines himself, and however much he renders back more than what his conditioning or make-up have given him and made of him, he still has to answer to these conditions; self-definition necessarily begins with these conditions, even if it does not wholly arise from them. Included amongst these 'factical' conditions are his particular historical and geographical place, his language, class and social relations, economic structures and education; a physical, biological, genetic and neurophysiological make-up; perceptual and intellectual capacities, a gender, and manifest or latent traits of social and sexual conditioning; character structures, emotional habits, deep-lying motivational tendencies, dispositions, and habits of thought and expression that have been built up since infancy.

These conditions account for a person's place within the world not only as a finite, dependent and limited agent, but also as a knower and self-knower. Human intelligence is infinitesimally small and weak in an infinitesimally large and complex universe; man's understanding of the world -- and himself -- is minute, partial and transitory (compared with divine intelligence). A number of conditions -- over and above the capacity of the human brain, and the limited structure of the human perceptual apparatus -- account for how epistemic activities -- including the search for self-knowledge -- are as much limited and dependent because of these factical conditions as other activities not directly concerned with knowing and observing.

One of the deeper and perhaps more subtle conditions which account for a person's finitude has a temporal bearing: viz. the relationship between a person and his future existence. This is an easily-overlooked condition, but it is an important one in understanding how a person is situated and finite, and how this finitude affects his attempts to examine and define himself. It is also important in coming to understand the central role the concept of temporality plays in existential philosophy.

A person does not just live life naively and unreflectively, wholly at one with the passing show, and happily unconcerned about the future: he has a life to lead, a life which he must assume and constantly come to grips with. There may be occasions when he is able to step back and look down upon himself as if from above, just as others look upon him; he may watch his life passing before him as if it is not his own, and feel somewhat untroubled by the spectacle he sees unfolding before him. But the essential

difference in perspective -- a difference which, arguably, diminishes or even negates the validity of any insights achieved from the detached observer's perspective -- is that he himself has to be the person upon whom he is looking down: no one else can do this. The life he is watching is his own. He alone has to see it through to the end. Evading this serious and harsh 'contract'[2] with the future, or trying to 'bend' the rules of the contract (e.g. trying to play or experiment[3] with it), is existentially impossible: the contract, which is all or nothing, can only be annihilated, and this only with the annihilation of the contractee (i.e. suicide). Here, the term 'being' must here be conceived as a verb, and not, as it usually is, as a substantive: being, or existing, is an 'exercise', or a distinct 'operation' by which an existent 'assumes' and takes over its existence.

Nothing can remove the burden of having to be from a person's shoulders; no one else can be a substitute. (A similar burden and non-substitutability applies to death: no one can take one's own death away.) The relation that a person has to his own existence as it impends is fundamentally different from the relation that someone else can have to it. Another person can relate to it theoretically, prognostically, or observationally, just as the first-person may do; the difference is that the latter cannot avoid practically relating to his existence as his own. It is essentially his own, and no one else's. This sense of 'ownness' or 'belongingness' (or, in Heidegger's terms, Jemeinigkeit) is an irreducible feature of the self-relation.[4]

At the most primitive level, the relation a person has to his future can be reduced to the unavoidable choice between continuing

to live and putting an end to it all: this involves taking up a stance of affirmation or negation towards his own existence -- as it were an ultimate yes or no to the unavoidable question 'to be or not to be'. Ernst Tugendhat argues that

> the existence that impends at any given time is of such a kind that I have it to be, that is, I have to carry it out in one way or another, or I must decide no longer to go on with it....As long as we exist we relate ourselves to this existence, and we relate to it as our respective future....this being is given to us as something that we have <u>to be</u>, and that is <u>at issue</u> for us; in this respect, the relation of oneself to the being that is so experienced can only be a practical one, that is, a voluntative and affective relation.[5]

The idea that there is a relation between a person and his existence -- an idea that will be developed in Chapter Four, and illustrated in the chapter on Sartre -- can be rephrased: it is not just that a person is what he is; he has himself to be. There is an essential lack of simplicity in existing, a duality between the existent and its existence. The 'enterprise' of existence is not written into the very nature of things. A person is not given existence by divine decree; nor does he have it by virtue of his essence (e.g. Spinoza's <u>conatus essendi</u>); nor is it a function of the biologically natural struggle for survival.[6] The relationship between a person and his existence is not a straightforward, definite, natural or unquestioning one: it is, on the contrary, much more tenuous, under-defined, or 'in question'.[7]

Existing, having to continue <u>being</u>, is something which <u>impends</u>, something which presents itself as an unresolved issue. There is an important distinction here between continuing with a particular way of life, or life-project, and continuing with living itself:

it is not a particular form of life which impends (e.g. life as a cloistered scholar, or as an ambitious businessman), but living itself, or existing *simpliciter*. As long as a person is alive, there is no relief in his having *to be*. He cannot naively and unreflectively accept the burden of having to be: he finds himself condemned to take up an attitude to his very existence. Thus he may weary of it, or feel indolent before it, or feel an aversion towards it, or care about it, or try to flee it, or feel condemned by it.[8]

The temporal finitude described by this harsh contract with the future is an important and often neglected feature in explaining man's place in the world as a finite and situated inquirer and knower. In particular, it is important for the problem of self-definition and self-knowledge: the attempt to make contact with one's soul, to review one's life, and to work out the fundamental practical questions are necessarily limited and constrained by time, by the shortness of life, and the onrush of events. The self-inquirer is *in* the midst of his life as much as he is in the midst of the world: he is in the 'thick' of history -- *his* life-history, which is incomplete and still in the making. Thus in his attempts to take stock of his life, he has to contend with the same degree of opacity, unforseeability, urgency and contingency that affects attempts to make sense of contemporary events in human history. As there is no ideal vantage-point that is external to the vicissitudes of his own life-history -- a vantage-point unaffected by the pressures and limits of time, and from which he can gain an untroubled synoptic vision of things -- a person endeavouring to examine his life in its entirety finds

himself in a similar position to the luckless mariners who have to repair and rebuild their ship while it is afloat and in motion, without the advantages afforded by drydock (Neurath's metaphor). To shift metaphors, his difficult situation resembles that of the butterfly in flight that is unable -- whilst in flight -- to read what is written on its wings (Neruda's metaphor).

It should be added here that the atheist view that a person is granted only <u>one</u> life to live complicates even more deeply the awareness of temporal finitude: what is immediately apparent with this harsh vision is the sheer irrevocability of the events comprising life.[9] Sartre evokes this sense of finitude in the <u>War Diaries</u>: prior to his insight into the nature of historicity he considered himself to be 'a thousand Socrates'.

> Until then I'd been preparing to live. Each moment, each event, had brushed past without ageing me: they had always been rehearsals before the play; everything I did from now on was done <u>with my life</u>; I couldn't take my moves back, everything was inscribed in that narrow, short existence....I was discovering late that one has only one life.[10]

*

3. The Epistemological Problem

In light of the constraints imposed by the subtle temporal sense of finitude just outlined, as well as the more obvious factical conditions, how can the fundamental practical questions of life be worked out? How can a person come to grips with such deep questions when he knows that while he is working them out them he still has to get on with the task of living; that working them out is itself a <u>part of</u> living; that no one else can work out these questions for him (just as no one else can relate to his

existence in quite the same way that he does); and that the resources at hand to pursue the inquiry are relatively crude, incomplete and subject to alteration?

Do these conditions not condemn his inquiry to arbitrariness, mere 'subjective' musing or radical incompleteness? Is his situation not a little like that of the man who, seeking escape from a burning house, stops to inquire into the nature of the fire (a Buddhist metaphor)? Like the owl of Minerva that flies only at dusk, after the chaotic events of the day, should the self-inquirer strive to examine his life only when he is at the end, on the brink of death? Or is this equally impossible? Is it the case that 'for man finally to be revealed to himself he would have to die, but he would have to do so while living -- while watching himself cease to be'?[11] These questions can be articulated a little more precisely.

a) Is there not a risk that the factical and temporal constraints would impair an individual's ability to examine his life fully and well? Is it not possible that without some form of investigative compensation and correction his self-examination would presuppose, and therefore merely express, his conditioning, make-up, inherited beliefs and immediate situation, rather than call them into question and genuinely examine them? Is he confined to the narrowness and transitoriness of personal existence, like a prisoner chained in a cave who is forced to experience only what is temporary and parochial?

b) Is the study of one's life-history in the direct 'onrush' of events (i.e. the view sub specie durationis, with the future impending) a reliable starting-point and source for self-

examination? Is the deep historical conditioning of the self-inquirer's knowledge and experience a genuine barrier to attaining accurate self-knowledge? Again, should he not try to compensate for potential investigative hazards arising from the finite, historically-engaged view, by trying to detach himself as much as possible from it, in order to see it from the outside as others -- contemporaries, obituarists or biographers -- might see it? Should he not try to achieve a view on his life that is to some degree independent of his actual participation in it -- as if the fact that it is his life and no one else's (i.e. the primitive sense of ownness or belongingness) is an irrelevant factor in discovering its most essential aspects? In short, is deep self-examination the proper work of a participating, engaged agent, or a detached observer viewing himself from the outside?

c) On the other hand, does the observer's viewpoint reveal one's life as it really is? Might it not risk distorting life-history by conferring on it a false clarity, neatness and orderliness that life as it is actually lived -- 'forwards' and from the inside -- lacks? Might it have the unwelcome effect of making life appear as if it is only a life remembered -- deprived of the onrush of events and the reality of an impending future? Can a common ground be established that allows for the integration or mediation of the two viewpoints and their respective orders of explanation?

d) Finally, what is the role of reasoning, deliberating and searching for justification in self-examination? Do these ostensibly corrective activities allow a person to review and test his most fundamental beliefs about himself, and his insights,

decisions and projects, from an external vantage-point which allows him to see himself more accurately? Or do they fall short when questions about the most receded depths of the soul, and the very root of self-definition, are at stake? Are these activities valid only in so far as they are internal to and based upon a way of life? Is it only once a way of life is accepted, or chosen, or already in the making, that reasoning about it and trying to justify it are meaningful?

*

Sartre and Hampshire's theories of self-knowledge fall on different sides of the fence in answering these questions -- and have to fall this way because of their different views on rationality and knowledge. The former theory, taking as its point of departure human temporality and finitude, defends the agent's finite and embodied perspective, as well as the familiar teleological, intentional and agential categories in terms of which persons understand and define themselves, as the only valid one in understanding human experience. Sartre maintains that the fundamental questions of existence are worked out in situ by existing; aspiring to stand outside life, and the life-project, with a view to reasoning and deliberating about it in objective terms is really a form of self-deception. The latter theory, taking as its point of departure the ability of man to step back from the situation confronting him and see it at one remove from the onrush of events, defends the validity of the observer's perspective; working out the fundamental questions of life

involves inter alia dispassionately studying, learning, reasoning and acquiring knowledge of the hidden causes of behaviour, and integrating this with the agent's finite, lived perspective.

The distinction generating the various questions about the agent's and the observer's perspective is itself an exaggerated one erring on the side of philosophical tidiness. Self-examination as it is actually practised is messy and complex, containing elements of both perspectives and explanatory orders in unsystematic combinations, and often without regard to points of logical consistency and epistemological compatibility. It would be more accurate to picture a vast continuum of different investigative perspectives, along which a self-inquirer moves within the span of a full life. Located at one end of this continuum is the observer's view -- a view from the outside, with its respective explanatory order -- and at the other end the agent's 'lived', deeply situated view -- the view from inside life, with its respective explanatory order. Ranged between are a panoply of different perspectives. For purely heuristic purposes, however, the exaggerated opposition will remain the centre of attention, and the only arguments to be canvassed will be arguments for and against the two end-points of the continuum.

It is important to point out that both standpoints represent more than mere epistemological stances, or methodological devices, that happen to be open to the self-inquirer: they also embody certain fundamental ontological characteristics of human reality. Man, as it will become clear later, is essentially a relational being, and the relation he has to his own reality is characterized by a deep-lying ambivalence: at one and the same time man is an

observer of himself and an agent who is himself; a student of his behaviour, actions and experiences, and the central participant in them; a critic of himself and a loyalist to himself. At once he is distanced from the depths of his soul, condemned never to exhaust its limits; and intimately associated with these depths, just in virtue of the fact that they are his. His life belongs to him; and yet it eludes him, and he can weary of it. Ontologically, then, man is a being related to himself in an ambiguous way. In Chapter Four, where the discussion will turn from epistemology to ontology, a relational model of man will be explored that tries to accommodate these apparently conflicting characteristics and tendencies.

*

4. The Observer's Perspective

The idea that an individual should adopt an observer's detached and non-participative perspective on his life in order to study it, work out the fundamental questions, and to define himself, is guided by the general assumption that such a vantage-point would allow him to be more aware of the influence of many of the conditions that make him a finite and situated intelligence. It is assumed that such a perspective would allow him to 'see around' his previous intellectual and moral limits, and gain an enlarged vision of himself and his place in the world. Precisely how this perspective is achieved, and the extent to which it can actually

be realized and integrated into life, are issues that are naturally subject to different interpretations.

Uniting some of these interpretations, however, is the assumption that investigative compensation involves a kind of 'ascensional' movement of stepping back from one's original perspective and place in the world to a larger, more comprehensive perspective. This involves placing oneself at one remove from the immediate and pressing demands of a situation; one's immediate reactions to the onrush of events are suspended or delayed, thereby enabling one to observe them from a perspective that is not as engaged and narrow. By virtue of its distance, the new 'observational' perspective and its explanatory order are less personal and egocentric than the original one; and because the new perspective includes as one of its objects the relation between the original perspective and reality, the intellectual, perceptual or moral partiality of the original perspective will be evident, and can be corrected accordingly.

If the observer's perspective makes possible the inclusion of ourselves in a conception that is not exclusively linked to our original perspective, and if this higher-order perspective in turn can be made the subject-matter of a more comprehensive perspective, and so on, then in the ultimate instance we should be afforded the opportunity of observing and analyzing the most essential characteristics of our experience and our lives in a way that can be understood without actually having had such experiences, or without actually having been the central participant. This would represent an absolute and centreless perspective on ourselves. The primitive sense of belongingness

connecting us to our lives and our future would no longer be a factor. We would -- at least in principle -- be enabled to review our lives, observe our actions and experiences, study our bodies, and test our deepest beliefs, insights, decisions and projects, as just one person amongst others. And this, it is supposed, is a necessary condition for working out the fundamental practical questions of life fully, well, and objectively as possible.[12]

The central argument used to defend this idea is quite simple: a self-inquirer's secure and accurate understanding of what is most essential in his life, and most deep-rooted in his self-definition, no more follows necessarily from the fact that he is himself the subject-matter of inquiry, than the secure and unbiased understanding of the nature of masculinity or feminity follows from his particular gender, or the understanding of neurophysiology follows from the fact that he has a brain. Some of the most fundamental aspects of his life simply have nothing to do with his particular perspective and situation in the world, with his self-definition, and with the fact that he is, and has to be, himself, when he carries out the inquiry. His proximity to the subject-matter might assure that he has an indeclinable interest in the inquiry; but it does not follow from this that it is the privileged starting-point for the inquiry, or the guarantee of epistemic accuracy and certainty. It may be no more and no less than the (psychological) motivation for inquiry.

Phrased in much more general terms, an individual's attempt to work out the fundamental practical questions, and to clarify the most fundamental terms by means of which he defines himself, requires that he go outside of himself, beyond his own narrow

resources, categories, and 'yardsticks'. The self must be subjected to the other-than-self. Only by doing this can the insights achieved in self-examination, and the decisions made on its basis, be tested publicly, in such a way that other persons (e.g. psycho-analysts, therapists, priests, wise elders, shamans) can have a say, and can help correct the false beliefs, mistakes, misinterpretations or illusions to which the self-inquirer might be subject. Without these corrections, he is liable to apprehend the most fundamental issues of his life not as they really are, but only in so far as they appear to him at a particular time, and in so far as they are coloured by his parochial interests, beliefs and self-deceptive ruses. From the inside, and in the 'heat of the moment', he may not see himself as he really is: he himself gets in the way.[13]

Deliberating, reasoning and searching for justification -- especially in relation with others who are more experienced in the matter, or wiser -- are ways in which this corrective and external check to the narrow subjective perspective can be realized; they function as a kind of 'epistemic prophylactic', by protecting against the charisma of views and beliefs that are appealingly simple or novel (e.g. 'wild self-insight' and deceptive self-images). Careful deliberation and reasoning allow us to step back from ourselves and our situation, to observe ourselves from a more critical perspective, and with a yardstick independent of the narrow, and often self-serving, resources of the self.[14]

Much of learning -- and life in general -- seems to reproduce this general movement away from the narrow confines of the self: moving from the particular to the general, from the narrow to the

synoptic, from heated engagement to calm observation, or from the single instance to the rule, is an expansionary and ascensional movement, a process of casting off 'blinders' and untested prejudices. Philosophical variants of this general picture of ascension include the liberation from the chains of ignorance and illusion, and the eventual apprehension of the Good beyond being (Plato); the apprehension of things sub specie aeternitatis, and the intellectual love of God or Nature (Spinoza); the realization of the majestic awesomeness of the eternal return (Nietzsche); the effecting of the phenomenological epoché (Husserl); and the advent of a prise de conscience and a purifying reflection (Sartre).

*

5. The Argument Against the Observer's Perspective

A certain degree of detachment from oneself, and a certain impartiality and investigative carefulness, are obviously very useful tools for examining one's life in its entirety. But are they necessary tools? Can self-examination be carried out successfully without taking up the observer's perspective? Are there depths in our souls that no amount of detachment and impartiality will reveal? These doubts are spelled out by three general but quite powerful arguments.

*

a) Left unchecked, and taken to its logical conclusion, the observer's perspective on life would lead to neither a true, nor a useful, picture of things. It is much more likely to lead to a cosmically isolating picture -- a 'view from nowhere' (Nagel) in which our lives would appear at the vanishing point as radically contingent, insignificant and minute events in an overwhelmingly large and indifferent universe.[15] The drawback of this absolute perspective is obvious: it gives us both too much and too little. It would reveal the world unfolding by itself and to no one, in terms that have little or no bearing on the embodied human perspective and Lifeworld, with its familiar general framework of teleological, agential and intentional categories; and it would fail to accommodate the full existential impact of the terms in which we live our lives, understand ourselves, and define ourselves.

Furthermore, if such a centreless and desituated view could be translated into a policy of action, it would either lead to despairing adaptationism and quietism, or require an implausibly massive alteration of the general framework (or Lifeworld) of human life within which we dwell and ordinarily understand ourselves.[16] In the latter instance, the readjustments that would be required for the terms in which we define ourselves, and for the way in which we think about our ordinary wants, desires, beliefs, motives and emotions, would be tantamount to a revolution. Barring the issue of philosophically plausibility, is this radicalism humanly desirable?

Just this may be one of the most serious shortcomings of Spinoza's view of freedom, morality and self-knowledge -- and any other metaphysically revisionary theory which proposes that we define and understand ourselves in terms radically different from the ones we already have. Such a theory demands too much: it is too unforgivingly radical and difficult in asking us to see behind the familiar and 'middle-sized' human face of things, and to become disinterested observers of man in Nature. Spinoza even acknowledges this at the end of the Ethics: the 'way' to liberation, he writes, is 'as difficult as it is rare'.

The successful application of Spinoza's 'way' requires the adoption of a kind of observer's perspective on ourselves: we must strive to understand our own actions, bodies and mental states in terms which make no reference to the familiar categories of agency, design and free will. These categories, and the associated view that we are the absolute source and owner of our actions, are illusions arising from ignorance and the play of the

imagination. In one of his letters Spinoza writes:

> Further conceive, I beg, that a stone, while continuing in motion, should be capable of thinking and knowing, that it is endeavouring, as far as it can, to continue to move. Such a stone, being conscious merely of its own endeavour and not at all indifferent, would believe itself to be completely free, and would think that it continued in motion solely because of its own wish. This is that human freedom, which all boast that they possess, and which consists solely in the fact that men are conscious of their own desire, but are ignorant of the causes whereby that desire has been determined.[17]

However noble Spinoza's picture of the ideally wise, free and self-understanding man, something in it still appears alien: the adoption of the observer's perspective which is required for the disinterested contemplation of the workings of Nature, and for the suspension of the teleological, intentional and agential categories in which we understand our own experience, requires too great an alteration of the huge unchanging core of 'natural' human experience, belief, emotion and behaviour. It would be tantamount to a Copernican revolution in the inner life, in the psychology of the sentiments, in the way we define ourselves, and in the way we think about ourselves and our place in Nature.[18]

The life of the wise man as Spinoza pictures him is certainly a noble one: it is the life of a man without the destructive and life-inhibiting emotions of hate, anger, jealousy and fear. Serenely contemplating the workings of God or Nature under the aspect of eternity, and thereby achieving a certain control over his passions, the wise man finds himself much less engaged by the transient demands of the world, and the constraints of temporal finitude (e.g. those listed above in Section 2): he is 'scarcely ever moved in his mind'.

But the life of Spinoza's wise man is also a life without extreme situations and ultimate moral conflicts -- a life without the future bearing down and demanding difficult moral choices between radically different ways of life and sets of virtues. It is a life without such familiar experiences as hope, devotion, moral condemnation, sacrifice, mystery, despair, uncertainty, pride, shame, fantasy (and certain kinds of imagination), regret, love of particular things and a number of other familiar human emotions which, inter alia, place us in relation to the other person.[19] The question this raises is obvious: would the revolution in our thinking about ourselves not have the unwanted effect of narrowing down or flattening out the massive diversity and complexity of human experience? If so, is this desirable? Is there just one 'way' and one vision of life that is true?

*

b) Does the observer's perspective in self-examination really compensate for potential investigative bias arising from the factical conditions listed above? Does it achieve what it sets out to do only at the cost of greater investigative impairment -- namely, falsifying life?

Existentialists, particularly Kierkegaard, argue that the view on one's life yielded by an observer's perspective is not the most appropriate one for the purposes of self-examination: if it secures comprehensiveness of perspective, it is only at the expense of accuracy of detail, fine discrimination and an appreciation of complexity -- in much the same way that a general

map of the world sacrifices detail for comprehensiveness.[20] But (existentialists maintain) we no more rely on stepping back from our lives in order to struggle with the fundamental practical questions of life than we use a map of the world to find our way through a local forest. The confusion resulting from allowing the observer's 'aerial' view to subordinate the agent's situated view has the unwanted effect of making life appear abstract, over-simplistic and neat. Taken to the extreme, this is tantamount to viewing one's life as if one were one's own short-sighted (or hind-sighted) obituarist. Such a move severely distorts the subtle temporal or historical sense of finitude that is one of the distinctive features of the agent's perspective -- viz. the impending future, and the onrush of events that make up the warp and woof of lived experience. Sartre is particularly critical of such strategems as le survol and the retrospective illusion, and his development of this important criticism will be taken up later.

*

c) Finally, is the idea of a workable integration or translation linking together the two perspectives and orders of explanation philosophically tenable? Even if it is possible to shift from participating agent to detached observer -- one moment in the midst of our lives and the next stepping back from them -- does it follow that we can reconcile and integrate the different results yielded by each perspective? More generally, are the

teleological, intentional and agential categories by which an agent defines and understands himself somehow translatable into the general covering laws which explain his actions, experiences and emotions objectively, and which typically make no reference to his own familiar categories?

In 'A Kind of Materialism' Hampshire argues that a Spinozist materialist defending the double aspect theory of personality would prove himself adept at 'shifting attention back and forth from the consideration of persons as active observers of the physical world to the consideration of them as also observed objects.'[21] Not only would the materialist be able to explain the action sequence 'A intends to achieve X,' 'A decides to do Y to realize X' and 'A does Y' in terms of general physical laws which cover the sequence, without making reference to A's own agential and purposive categories; because they are about the same thing, he would be able to shift back and forth between these two explanatory levels and perspectives. Hampshire likens the identity of specific thought and specific bodily processes to the identity of the activity of writing, which involves making physical inscriptions, and the activity of thinking the thoughts that are being written down.[22] Both are activities of the same person, but the former sequence of muscular movements is to be explained by physical laws, and the latter by the laws of thought.

What is interesting -- and contentious -- about the double aspect theory is the idea that the materialist would be able to successfully shift back and forth between perspectives and explanatory orders with respect to his <u>own</u> actions, intentions, experiences, bodily changes and emotions. The terms in which the

materialist normally understands and defines himself would complement the terms in which he is objectively explained; with practice, the latter may even come to guide and inform the former. Exact and objective knowledge would then actually become self-knowledge. Given this perspectival and explanatory shifting, and the fact that the two perspectives are simply different aspects of the same thing, Hampshire argues that it can always be asked what it would actually be like to be a materialist, 'not simply affirming an abstract thesis in the classroom, but actually living and acting with some of the specific knowledge that a materialist claims must be obtainable.'[23]

But is the idea of a smooth shift from one perspective and order of explanation to the other defensible? Sartre, as well as many non-existentialists, argue that it is not. One of the general counter-arguments they share is that the shift in explanatory orders and perspectives is phenomenologically and psychologically impossible. Merleau-Ponty summarizes this: 'I cannot conceive myself as nothing but a bit of the world, a mere object of biological, psychological or sociological investigation.'[24] I cannot put general natural-scientific knowledge about myself to use in formulating to myself my actions, emotions, bodily changes and experiences;[25] nor can I legitimately and non-self-deceptively define myself according to them. The incompatibility of these perspectives and explanatory orders is one of the dominant themes in Sartre's Being and Nothingness: 'I am the one who cannot be an object for myself, the one who cannot even conceive for myself of existence in the form of an object....' (BN p.241) This is evident in his discussion of the body.

> [If] after grasping consciousness in its absolute interiority...I then seek to unite it with a certain living object composed of a nervous system, a brain, glands, digestive, respiratory, and circulatory organs whose very matter is capable of being analyzed chemically into atoms of hydrogen, carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus, etc.,...then I am going to encounter insurmountable difficulties.
>
> (BN p.303)

Such ideas are so pervasive, and so much an unseen presupposition of our mundane experience, that it is exceedingly difficult to pick out the various conceptual strands comprising them. With some artificial maneouvering, however, two very general strands can be separated. One strand focusses on some of the phenomenological features of the lived, first-personal, embodied viewpoint, viz. its apparent incomparability and singularity, and its built-in resistance to explanation from the outside. The other strand focusses on the built-in limitations of the objective explanatory viewpoint in dealing with lived experience. The general conclusion of both lines of reasoning is the same: the agent's 'lived' and embodied perspective cannot legitimately be 'put on all fours' with the explanatory order which accounts for it -- and potentially undermines it -- in general, non-agential, non-teleological (e.g. deterministic or materialistic) terms. Kierkegaard's version of the first strand will be studied soon; here, the second one will be outlined very briefly.

One of the shared arguments in the second conceptual strand is that there is an unavoidable 'slack' or looseness of fit between both perspectives and their explanatory orders. The observer's perspective allows us to view our experiences, thoughts, emotions, bodily workings and actions impersonally and disinterestedly -- as

part of the overall course of Nature, or as instances of a general pattern of lawlike (or rule-governed) behaviour, or as explicable by reference to impersonal, causally-determined factors that do not enter into the phenomenological features of the first-person point of view. It falls short, however, because it does not allow us to pick out the objectively-explained desires, beliefs, emotions or bodily changes as <u>ours</u> in particular: it is under-specific. (Thus, for instance, it fails to reproduce the sense of ownness or belongingness that connects us to our lives.) The explanatory order proper to the observer's perspective concerns itself exclusively with the realm of the possible (or the hypothetical), in contrast with the actual (the here and now). It does not specify individual cases (e.g. this feeling of anger), but only the average case, or the general pattern; thus it characterizes only what <u>would</u> happen in any given case given certain variables -- without rigidly specifying what <u>does</u> in fact happen. It reveals us to ourselves as strangers: what we see is not an easily-recognizable image.

The under-specificity which affects this explanatory order can be illustrated succinctly: the actions and experiences of an individual man A can be explained fairly rigorously in general psycho-analytical terms as those of a typical, neurotic, middle-aged male driven to act out his fantasies because of an unresolved Oedipal complex; but not every neurotic middle-aged male suffering from an Oedipal complex is A. The difference here is not merely an accidental one; it is built into the very structure of the explanation. Similarly, A's anger or desire can be given a full explanation in neurophysiological terms in such a way that it

falls under a general covering law: but not every case of anger or desire falling under this covering law is A's. The important point here is that the lack of coincidence between the levels of explanatory specificity cannot be written off on the basis of a mere promissory note about the future success of reduction and exact specification in scientific explanation. General causal explanations of human behaviour and experience cannot be maximally individuating, for then they would no longer be universally applicable.

The idea that general explanations of human behaviour are unavoidably under-specific (i.e. fail to maximally individuate) -- an idea which might be identified only with existential and phenomenological thought -- has found proponents in many branches of modern philosophy and literature.[26] Tolstoy captures the intuitive plausibility of this idea in his autobiography:

> The main thing was that my personal question, the question of what I am with all my desires, remained totally unanswered [by scientific knowledge]. I realized that these areas of knowledge may be very interesting and quite attractive, but their clarity and precision are inversely proportionate to their applicability to the questions of life; the more they attempt to provide answers to the questions of life, the more vague and unattractive they become....[27]

*

6. Self-Inquiry and Proximity

In trying to avoid the spectre of Cartesianism and privileged access, defenders of the observer's perspective argue that a secure understanding of what is most fundamental in one's life no more follows necessarily from the fact that one is oneself the subject-matter of inquiry, than the secure and unbiased understanding of masculinity or feminity follows from one's particular gender, or the understanding of neurophysiology follows from the fact that one has a brain. Not only do they consider the relation between the inquirer and the subject-matter of his inquiry an unexceptional relation; they also consider it an inessential and contingent one, and a potential source of illusion or error. The self-inquirer is too close to himself to get an accurate view on his life. But in denying privileged access, defenders of the observer's perspective deny more than they need to.

This is particularly evident in objective psychology. In the name of scientific objectivity, the psychologist refuses to consider that the persons he is studying are like himself. He admits that he is a person, but refuses to consider that this participation in the subject-matter of inquiry can be put to any methodological or investigative use; he even considers it a hindrance and source of error. When he admits that he is a man, Sartre writes,

> he will think that this human character should be conferred upon him a posteriori and that he cannot, qua member of this class, be a privileged object of study, except for experimental convenience. He will learn then from others that he is a man: his human nature will not be

> revealed in any special manner under the pretext that he *is* himself that which he is studying.[28]

However, some form of epistemic privilege can be accorded to the relation between the self-inquirer and the subject-matter of his inquiry without automatically landing in an uncritical infallibilism. The self-inquirer -- particularly the individual who is engaged in examining his life, and in searching out the 'ends of his soul' -- is privileged in his study. He enjoys a methodological head-start, because his inquiry is such that it is done *with* his life; it is peculiar to this kind of inquiry that the inquirer, the inquiry and the subject-matter of inquiry are one and the same reality. Everything that goes into his search, everything upon which the search depends, and everything which it uncovers -- is himself.[29] This is not a contingent and eliminable characteristic. There is no other way. He is engaged in a task which by nature always pulls him back into himself; just in *thinking* about the subject-matter of his inquiry, and studying it, he is actually *living* it. He is *all* that he is thinking about and inquiring into.

It is a central principle in Sartre's, and most existential-phenomenological philosophy, that the proximity of the self-inquirer to the subject-matter of his inquiry is the very starting-point and pillar of inquiry. It is not a source of arbitrariness or 'mere subjectivity'. Man is privileged in the study of man because, unlike the objects of study which are external to him, 'he is characterized as the *existent which we are*. In this case the questioner finds himself to be precisely the questioned, or, if you prefer, human reality is the existent

whose being is in question in its being.'[30] In Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions Sartre argues that

> what must differentiate all research into man from other types of strict investigation is precisely this privileged circumstance, that the human reality is ourselves. 'The existent that we have to analyse,' writes Heidegger, 'is ourselves. The being of this existent is my own.' And it is no negligible matter that this human reality should be myself, because it is precisely for the human reality that to exist is always to assume its being; that is, to be responsible for it instead of receiving it from outside, as a pebble does.[31]

A similar principle is also operant in hermeneutics, as well as in many philosophies of the social sciences: one of the conditions of possibility of the study of man is that I myself am an historical being, that the man who is observing and studying history is the man who is also making and living history. A version of this principle is defended by Vico who, in opposition to Cartesian doubt and the apodicity attributed to mathematics, defends the epistemological primacy of the man-made historical world on the grounds of the homogeneity of the subject and object; we understand historically because we are ourselves historical beings. The historical world is a world that is constituted and formed by the human mind; the given that we encounter is already constituted. Dilthey takes up the same argument: 'The first condition of possibility of a science of history is that I myself am an historical being, that the man who is studying history is the man who is making history.'[32]

On the individual level, the proximity of the inquirer to the subject-matter of his inquiry means that the review and examination of his life is not a matter of 'guessing in the dark' (Popper), and formulating hypotheses that may be wildly off-track

(as if, in this area, such a 'logic of discovery' could be formulated). The self-inquirer is necessarily already involved with the subject-matter of his inquiry; he does not have to seek it without ever having had any acquaintance or involvement with it. His inquiry, in other words, does not move forward by traversing unfamiliar external distances; nor does it suffer from the risk of radical error. Thus in the study of man, Sartre argues,

> truth is not encountered by chance; it does not belong to a domain where one must seek it without ever having any presentiment of its location, as one can go to look for the source of the Nile or of the Niger.
> (BN p.569)

*

Here it is very important to be clear about the issue of fallibility in self-inquiry, and to avoid losing the early footholds leading to the relational model of man by slipping into Cartesian infallibilism. From the fact that a self-inquirer enjoys a certain prior involvement with the subject-matter of his inquiry, it by no means follows that he enjoys an immediate and certain access to himself; or, that he is ipso facto self-transparent; or, that the statements he makes about his higher-order intentional states, emotions, moods, actions and experiences are true in virtue of the fact that they are his. Deep self-knowledge, unlike immediate self-consciousness, is an achievement and not a given; it is not something a person necessarily has in virtue of his proximity to the known. The simple awareness that

one is in pain is a given and not an achievement. It cannot be demanded of someone, strived for, or attributed to him as a virtue: he simply has it. If deep self-knowledge were like this -- if it were given, and self-transparency simply a part of the human condition -- then self-ignorance could not possibly be considered a vice; it would merely be an epistemic defect.

Even if the search for self-knowledge does not suffer from the risk of radical error, a person can be deceived, mistaken and ignorant about his particular emotions, actions, moods and past experiences. On a larger scale, he can be deceived, wrong about, or blind to some of the deepest-lying aspects of his whole <u>way</u> of life. These are not wholly accidental defects for which he is not responsible, and which he cannot somehow <u>try</u> to change.

Here it should be evident how the asymmetry between knowledge of an external reality and self-knowledge also cuts across the absence of self-knowledge, or ignorance. Man's ignorance about the nature of an external and independent reality does not in general affect <u>its</u> essential properties, or mode of givenness, to the extent that it affects his own reality. Self-ignorance is an important distinguishing characteristic: no characterization of a person's life may omit as one of its essential elements his current awareness or ignorance of himself. Self-ignorance is not merely an epistemological peculiarity: ignorance is not the simple <u>absence</u> of knowledge, but a kind of moral neglect which has profoundly practical effects (e.g. in his relations with others). It is not simply a fact about his epistemic achievements; it is also symptomatic of moral passivity.

A person must be considered an authority when he is reviewing

and examining his life, and working out the fundamental practical questions, because he is that into which he is inquiring; it is his life, and he relates to it as no one else can. But he must also be considered a fallible, deceivable and finite authority, because he is not wholly one with the life into which he is inquiring; he is related to it, and compelled to assume it and take it up; it presents itself as an issue, as something which impends. This concept of relationality will be developed in the following chapter.

*

7. Kierkegaard on Self-Examination

> Life can only be understood backwards,
> but it must be lived forwards.
> -- Kierkegaard, Journals

A threefold purpose will be served now by turning to Kierkegaard's theory of self-examination: first, in his work the different criticisms of the observer's perspective (e.g. the investigative ideals of detachment, neutrality and objectivity) coincide and reach their strongest and most difficult expression; second, Sartre's theory of self-knowledge and self-definition can be understood against the Kierkegaardian background; finally, his criticisms of abstract thought and the aspiration to see things sub specie aeternitatis will highlight some of the general differences between the existentialist and Spinozist-rationalist approach to self-knowledge.

Kierkegaard does not deny the validity of the objective attitude in certain kinds of inquiry. However, he is adamant in denying its applicability to inquiries about the human soul. He argues that the attempt to integrate the findings yielded by the observer's viewpoint with those of the subjective or existential viewpoint; or the attempt to allow the former to dominate the latter, in order to deal objectively with the fundamental problems of existence -- are profoundly misconceived. In this area, knowledge and existence (viz. the existence of the individual) are incommensurable. Truth, Kierkegaard says cryptically, is subjectivity.

One apparent implication of this cryptic statement is that the

very possibility of self-examination is dependent upon the individual's engagement and interest in the subject-matter of his inquiry, viz. himself. Detachment, disinterest and impartiality are simply out of place in dealing with such deep and personal existential questions. Thus Kierkegaard writes that the question of one's <u>own</u> existence is the 'stumbling-block' for all speculative, abstract and existentially-neutral inquiries (and, presumably, the downfall of all explanatory schema that omit the familiar agential, teleological and intentional categories of self-understanding and self-definition.) Rationality and the acquisition of knowledge are consigned to play a relatively minor role in guiding the self-examination and soul-searching that occurs before making a choice between conflicting ways of life, life-plans and sets of virtues. Kierkegaard maintains that the self-proclaimed equanimity of rational, abstract thought assures us that we have as many reasons for doing something, making a decision or accepting a way of life, as against it; this leads to dilemmas not unlike that faced by Buridan's ass.[33] In the ultimate instance, reasons come to an end, and choice must take over.

The sharp distinction that Kierkegaard makes between knowledge and existence means that the process of defining oneself, reviewing one's life, and working out the fundamental existential questions, is more a matter of being in the world, and a way of relating to one's existence, than a matter of acquiring true propositions: we learn about the depths of our souls only in a highly subjective way, by existing.[34] Self-knowledge then is not a question of knowing <u>why</u>, in general, we are as we are -- the

causal explanations of what moves us to action, or what lines of conditioning have made us what we are. This kind of knowledge is of secondary importance. The nature of subjectivity is such that we cannot legitimately transform this objective knowledge about ourselves into self-knowledge -- shifting smoothly, as the Spinozist materialist ostensibly does, from the objective perspective to the subjective one. The mere possession of objective or abstract knowledge does not, for instance, bring with it the primitive sense of belongingness (or 'ownness') that connects us to our lives. Nor does possession of objective knowledge tell us what to do, and who we should be. Knowledge, in short, is not enough. Even if, per impossibile, the self-inquirer were armed with the totality of true objectively-established propositions about himself description), he would still not know how to be himself by virtue of his merely having them.

> 'Truth,' [Kierkegaard] said, 'is the act of freedom.' I would not know how to be my own Truth even if its premisses were given me in advance: to reveal it means to produce it or to produce myself as I am; to be for myself what I have to be.[35]

To avoid the objectivist implications that might be associated with the maxim 'know thyself', Kierkegaard uses the term 'choose oneself'. In Either/Or (Vol.2, p.263, Princeton, 1959) he writes:

> The ethical individual knows himself, but this knowledge is not a mere contemplation....it is a reflection upon himself which itself is an action, and therefore I have deliberately preferred to use the expression 'choose oneself' instead of 'know oneself'.

Kierkegaard's assertion that the subjectivity of the existing individual is radically heterogeneous to knowledge, and that the questions of existence cannot be worked out objectively, is

important not only from an epistemological and ethical point of view: it reveals something important about the nature of a person. The real subject, Kierkegaard argues, 'is not the cognitive subject, since in knowing he moves in the sphere of the possible; the real subject is the ethically existing subject.'[36] Originally, a person is not an object to himself; he does not relate to himself as he does to other things -- manipulatively, theoretically or disinterestedly. The most primitive relation he has to himself, to his existence, is a relation of engagement and interest -- what Kierkegaard calls inter-esse.[37] This is an irreducible ontological characteristic, upon which all attempts at self-abstraction founder. Existence, Kierkegaard claims, constitutes 'the highest interest of the existing individual, and his interest in his existence constitutes his reality. What reality is cannot be expressed in the language of abstraction. Reality is inter-esse....'[38]

Kierkegaard argues that an individual's attempt to detach himself from his own existence, with a view to studying it objectively, and to calculating rationally and disinterestedly upon future courses of action, is a highly artificial move that involves a certain estranging -- and pathological -- self-transformation. There are two points to be distinguished here: first, the self-inquirer who steps back and abstracts himself from the subject-matter of his inquiry, on the assumption that greater abstraction yields greater investigative objectivity, only renders the very condition of his inquiry -- his own existence -- irrelevant. Second, the impartial and detached self-inquirer cannot actually live his life according to his principles of

abstraction, without ipso facto refuting them.

First, the attempt to work out existential questions objectively and impersonally relies on what Kierkegaard calls an 'approximation process,'[39] which is unavoidably indirect, mediate and abstract. The abstract results of such an inquiry are significant only for the 'depersonalized abstraction' into which the self-inquirer has transformed himself;[40] his inquiry does not reveal 'the facts' about his way of life, but arti-facts, which are the residue of a highly artificial and theory-loaded 'work' on himself. In such cases, the 'person of the abstract thinker is irrelevant to his thought':[41] he becomes too objective to talk about himself, and eventually 'loses himself in objectivity'. By eliminating from his inquiry the unique and distinctly subjective features of his own experience -- features which root him into a particular place and time -- he eliminates the very pillar of support of his inquiry: he 'vanishes from himself'.[42]

Second, the wholly objective attitude cannot normally be lived for any great length of time. With characteristic irony, Kierkegaard asks whether the abstract philosopher who attempts to view his own life and death from a detached and neutral position sub speci aeterni is 'himself sub specie aeterni even when he eats, sleeps, blows his nose, or whatever else a human being does? Is he himself the pure "I am I"?'[43] To actually exist as an idealist (or, for instance, as a Spinozist materialist and determinist), rather than being an idealist ideally (e.g. in the classroom only), is an extremely 'strenuous' task: however skillful the idealist or materialist may be in shifting back and forth from one viewpoint and order of explanation to another (e.g.

the objective to the subjective, or the scientific to the first-personal); or in 'translating' the results from one order to another; or in reducing one order to another -- existence will always present itself as a 'hindrance' and as an 'objection'.[44] Existing is the inassimilable residue, the one thing that abstract thought cannot get hold of without ipso facto nullifying.[45]

Perhaps the strongest claim Kierkegaard makes in this regard is that the signs of an existential pathology are to be found in the prolonged maintenance of the objective attitude. Taken to the extreme, the attempt to live as an idealist by maintaining an objective attitude is symptomatic of a kind of despair, or an existential schizophrenia. The wholly detached person is fantastic with respect to his own reality: 'it is only in a fantastic sense that an existing individual can be constantly sub specie aeterni.'[46] The abstract thinker who neglects his own existence as an individual is a 'duplex being', and a 'fantastic creature'.[47] He has annihilated himself as the particular existing individual, and has become a stranger to himself.[48] 'Death and hell -- I can make abstraction of everything, but not of myself; I cannot forget myself, not even in my sleep.'

*

8. Summary

The epistemological tension between the observer's perspective, and its respective order of explanation, and the agent-participant's perspective, and its order of explanation, lies close to the heart of the problem of self-knowledge. But in asking why such a tension between perspectives exists in the first place, we are led beyond epistemology into the domain of ontology, and in particular into the study of the being of a person. This will be the subject of the following chapter.

The tension here is not simply an accidental feature, as if the available perspectives on human experience merely happened to divide up along observer and agent lines or, in older terminology, objective and subjective. Such a tension also reveals something important about human reality, about a person's <u>being as</u> a knower. Essentially, the end-points on the continuum represented by the agent and observer's perspective correspond to two fundamentally different ways a person <u>relates</u> to his own reality. He does not simply happen to exercise a certain ability when he steps back to observe himself and study his experiences; he <u>is</u> a <u>being</u> of distances. Nor does he simply happen to be interested in his life, and its central participant: interest is not just an epistemic stance, but somehow constitutes his reality (<u>inter-esse</u>).

In models of self-examination and self-knowledge that defend the validity of the observer's perspective, most of the explanatory power is carried by the concepts of rationality and knowledge. Freedom of mind (Spinoza), or freedom of the intelligence, is

above all important. In models that defend the validity of the agent's perspective, most of the explanatory power is carried by the concepts of human temporality, historicity and existence. Freedom of choice is all important. (Some of the guiding insights of the rationalist and empiricist models of the self embody these conflicting ideals.)

Neither perspective on its own -- the observer's and the agent-participant's -- is entirely satisfactory in self-examination.[49] Later it will be argued that the central ideas of both models -- observation and agency, detachment and participation -- inevitably fall short, and encounter a blind spot, at precisely the place of their condition of possibility: something has to lie behind detachment and participation if any detachment or participation is to be possible.

CHAPTER IV

The Relational Model of the Self

> Man is but a network of relationships, and these alone matter to him.
>
> -- Antoine de Saint-Exupery
> Pilotte de guerre

> Being at rest with itself, identical with itself, unaltering; the only 'Being' vouchsafed to us is changing, not identical with itself, it is involved in relationships.
>
> -- Nietzsche

1. Ontological Questions

In the previous chapters two basic matrices of epistemological issues have been developed concerning the nature of self-examination, self-definition and self-knowledge. The general epistemological coordinates which they define can soon be illustrated by Sartre and Hampshire's theories of self-knowledge. Each theory will have to face up to the questions that have been raised; each can be assessed on the basis of how it approaches them, and on the basis of how at the same time it 'saves the phenomena' -- that is, leaves intact the empirical and phenomenological features of actual self-examination mentioned in Chapter Two.

At the end of the last chapter it was suggested that there is more to the problem of self-definition and self-knowledge than the

study of its epistemological conditions and limits: the study also involves ontology and philosophical anthropology, because it raises just as clearly a number of difficult questions about the nature of the self-knower. The question 'What is self-knowledge?' for instance quite naturally refers to and is complemented by the question 'What is self-knowledge of?' To deal with this, a third matrix of questions has to be developed.

If the epistemological and ontological aspects of the problem complement and reinforce one another, it is important nonetheless to keep them separate; neither aspect should be allowed to collapse into the other; nor should one be allowed to subordinate the other. If this happens, it should only be at the end of the analysis of the problem, and not at the beginning. In passing it should be mentioned that the 'ontologization' of the problematic is one of the obvious difficulties with Sartre's theory of self-knowledge and self-definition: because knowledge is conceived as a mode of being, and therefore as a founded mode of access to the real, it is assumed that ontology -- the study of the being of the for-itself -- takes precedence over epistemology. But even if Sartre is correct in stating that ontology is fundamental, it does not follow that epistemological issues can be clearly -- let alone successfully -- formulated and explained ontologically; nor does it follow that they should be accorded derivative status, as they are for instance in Being and Nothingness.[1]

The ontological questions fall into three groups. First, what is self-knowledge of? What is it that a person's deepest beliefs, descriptions and interpretations about himself pick out and refer to? To what extent do they reveal a pre-existing 'object' -- the

self -- and to what extent do they shape and constitute it? What can the nature of this 'object' be, if to a certain extent it is malleable?

Second, what kind of being can be both constituting and constituted, participant and observer, self-proximate and self-distanced? Can such apparently conflicting properties be supported by an unchanging and self-identical substance (Descartes), or by a bundle (Hume)?

Finally, how can the deepest descriptions, conceptions, interpretations or beliefs under which a person views himself be adequate or inadequate -- or correct or incorrect -- with respect to inner reality, if at the same time the reality in virtue of which they are adequate or inadequate is not independent to them, but is itself shaped and <u>altered</u> by these very descriptions, conceptions, etc.? How can it be known, and at the same time changed by being known? What is the nature of a person if he can transform himself in such a way that he fits the general orientation of his deepest self-understanding?

*

2. Traditional Models of the Self

Since Descartes, such questions about the nature of the self have often been answered by recourse to either the substance model of the self or the empiricist model.[2] The former model, originating with Descartes, and developed in various directions by Leibniz, Hegel, Fichte and Husserl, conceives the 'object' of

self-knowledge as a simple, enduring, self-present, self-identical substance that functions as the unifying and transcendent pole of changing attributes; it is the centre and owner of experience, and the real referent of the word 'I'. According to the latter model, which originates with Hume, and is represented by certain branches of Buddhism and radical empiricism, the self is not a real substantial object that exists prior to experience; it is a synthetic construct -- a collection or bundle -- that is built up across experience, through the force of habit (or external conditioning), and according to associative principles; its status as the a priori unifying centre of experience is purely imaginary, and the evidence it gives of itself is fragmentary, uncertain and changing.

*

3. The Substance Model of the Self

The substance model of the self occupies a central place in the programme of the rationalists, one of whose main goals was to show how reality could be made fully intelligible to a human reason that is unaided by supernatural revelation, faith or theological mystery. One of the rationalist's central convictions was that the intellect is a source of knowledge in itself. Truths provided by the intellect are of a different kind from those based on sense experience; they are truths of reason, and are unchanging and necessary. In so far as they are self-evidently true, they

commend themselves to the natural light of reason, one sign of which is the clarity and distinctness with which they can be conceived.

Descartes located the absolutely certain (or apodictic) premises on which to build the edifice of knowledge in interiority, in the dictum cogito ergo sum: the very fact of thinking, which the thinker cannot doubt, implies the reality of the self that thinks. The guiding insight of the Cartesian model of self-knowledge is that we know ourselves from within, as active agents, and as the centre of knowledge and experience. The most important characteristic of the self is that it is a thinking subject that is immediately aware of its own activities; it knows nothing better than itself, and its true nature as an active thinking being can only be apprehended in self-consciousness. Certain truths about the self are thought to follow from the cogito: viz. that it is a simple substance that remains identical across changing states; that it is a thinking and not an extended thing; that it is free from the corruptibility which infects extended things; and that the relation of immediacy and transparency the self has to itself is primarily a contemplative and theoretical relation rather than a practical and volitional one.

The substance model of the self, and the emphasis on interiority, was later developed by Fichte and Hegel, who broadened the foundational status of the Cartesian dictum from theoretical to practical philosophy, thereby establishing it as the foundation for a rational and fully autonomous life. Hegel's optimism about the Cartesian shift towards interiority is signalled in his Lectures on the History of Philosophy.

> Actually we now come to the philosophy of the modern world, and we begin this with Descartes With him we truly enter upon an independent philosophy, which knows that it emerges independently out of reason....Here, we may say, we are at home, and like the mariners after a long voyage over the tempestuous sea, we can finally call out, 'Land!'...In this new period the essential principle is now to grasp the inner sphere as such, and to set aside the claims of dead externality and authority; the latter is to be viewed as out of place here.[3]

The same optimism about interiority is expressed by Fichte. The opening lines of the Introduction to The Science of Knowledge read:

> Attend to yourself: turn your attention away from everything that surrounds you and towards your inner life; this is the first demand that philosophy makes of its disciple. Our concern is not with anything that lies outside you, but only with yourself.[4]

In The Vocation of Man Fichte writes:

> Who am I? Subject and object in one -- the conscious being and that of which I am conscious, gifted with intuitive knowledge and myself revealed in that intuition, the thinking mind and myself the object of the thought -- inseparable and ever present to each other.[5]

In discarding substance ontology while retaining the concept of self-consciousness and the emphasis on interiority, much of Husserlian phenomenology, and certain branches of existential-phenomenological philosophy, have elevated the cogito (or mind, consciousness, or subjectivity) beyond its place as the central methodological principle of philosophy, and as the theoretical starting-point, to the undisputed foundation for an enlightened, authentic existence. In recent years, however, post-structuralist thought (e.g. Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze) has challenged the primacy of place given by Husserlian and Sartrean philosophy to mind, consciousness or subjectivity turning back on itself with a

view to finding within itself its own law and principle of existence.[6]

*

4. The Empiricist Model of the Self

The empiricist response to the substance model of the self and self-knowledge is best represented by Hume, who argued that if the facts were really as Descartes had maintained, then we should be able to look into ourselves and apprehend a simple, self-identical, self-present and substantial self. But Hume maintained that

> when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I can never catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception.[7]

Hume ventures that persons are 'nothing but a bundle or collections of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement.' The mind

> is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations. There is properly no simplicity in it at one time, nor identity in different; whatever natural propension we may have to imagine that simplicity and identity.[8]

> What is the soul of man? A composition of various faculties,passions, sentiments, ideas; united, indeed, into one self or person, but still distinct from each other. When it reasons, the ideas...arrange themselves in a certain form or order; which is not preserved

> entire for a moment, but immediately gives place to another arrangement.[9]

The guiding insight of the empiricist model of self-knowledge is that we know ourselves as objects, in a way that is not fundamentally different from the way we know external objects. In defending this view Hume is required to deny the guiding insight of the rationalists -- that we know ourselves from the inside, directly and immediately, and in so far as we are active agents. Hume denies the validity of Descartes' inference from the fact of thinking to the propositions of rational psychology[10] (i.e. propositions about the thinker): the 'self', which is insubstantial, composite and fleeting, is known only by introspection, a faculty whose data are subject to the same fragmentariness as the data of the external senses. There is no direct access. Because the self we know through introspection is an object that is not fundamentally different from any other, the problem of the unity of the self is essentially no different from the problem of the unity of external objects.

Hume's skepticism about the self -- that it is nothing but a bundle of impressions and ideas -- follows inexorably from the cardinal claims of empiricism, viz. that all knowledge is based on the data of the senses, including inner sense, and that the boundaries of possible sense-experience mark out the boundaries of possible knowledge; as well as from the main principles outlined at the opening of the first book of A Treatise of Human Nature (viz. the genetic principle, the atomic principle and the associative principle). Given these claims and principles, there is very little else for the self to be than a bundle, and very little else for self-knowledge to be but fallible, fragmentary,

and limited to common-sensical reporting. The discrete atomic units of experience enter into combination with one another, but they are not unified by virtue of an identifiable agent of constitution. The self, Hume argues, has the problematic type of identity that can be attributed to plants, animals and commonwealths.

But associative mechanisms, and radical complexity and impermanence, are not enough to make up a person: if the mind is capable only of perceptions, and if (as the atomic principle demands) all perceptions are separable, then it becomes impossible to account for the togetherness of that bundle which we call a mind or self, and which distinguishes itself by engaging, for instance, in introspecting and empiricist-oriented philosophizing. Introspection seems to be a dual-natured activity rather than an anonymous one belonging to no one (e.g. 'it introspects'): for implied in Hume's famous phrase 'when I enter most intimately into what I call myself' is the existence of both the introspected and the introspector, bundle and bundler, or, more generally, introspectabilia and something -- perhaps an unspecifiable X -- to which introspectabilia belong.[11] Hume was forced to recognize these problems, but left them unanswered: 'for my part I must plead the privilege of a sceptic, and confess that this difficulty is too hard for my understanding.'

One of the most important criticisms to be generated by this problem is that empiricism cannot but yield a barren concept -- a given without meaning, or 'a field of perception devoid of any data for its own interpretation' (Whitehead).[12] The given which according to the empiricists predominates in sense-experience

simply is what it is independent of the activity of the knower; he has simply to take it for what it is, as a brute and ineluctable fact. But this is highly unsatisfactory, for the main property of brute fact is just that we cannot understand it: 'we cannot see any reason why it should be what it is, but must accept it without explanation and indeed as ultimately inexplicable. If what we know in sensation is brute fact, it follows that sensible knowledge must always be lacking in intelligibility.'[13] This applies with equal force to inner experience, and the knowledge we have of ourselves: an inner manifold of sense-data without meaning and without a centre.

Kant took Hume's failure with the concept of the self as a sign that there can be no knowledge without a knower, or without some contribution from a knower that is more than the sum total of the original given inputs of experience: there is no receptivity without activity. Purely passive contents of experience cannot build themselves up into a coherent system of knowledge and intelligible experience unless they are given shape and meaning by something to which they belong. If this is the case, then it becomes plausible to suppose that there must be a principle of synthetic organizing activity behind or transcendent to the manifold of passive contents of experience; a principle, in other words, which is not built up inductively on the basis of the experience it organizes. Once it is supposed that there is no knowledge without the intellectual and discursive activity of a knower, the way is opened up for the Kantian (and various other post-Kantian versions) of the concept of constituting activity, the main outlines of which have already been discussed.

5. Kant's Concept of the Self

> Since Copernicus, man has been rolling from the centre toward X.
>
> -- Nietzsche, The Will to Power

> The whole difficulty is as to how a subject can inwardly intuit itself; and this is a difficulty common to every theory.
>
> -- Kant, Critique of Pure Reason B68

Kant's development in the Critique of Pure Reason of a third way between the empiricist view that knowledge is essentially a matter of pure sense experience, and the rationalist view that it is essentially a matter of pure intellection, has often been viewed as a via media that avoids the impasses and dead-ends of both theories while preserving some of their guiding insights. In light of the ontological questions raised earlier, Kant's third way is particularly interesting in its application to the concept of the self.

Like Hume, Kant found that Descartes' rational psychology was mistaken. But the counter-arguments with which he backed up this conclusion (in the Paralogisms of Pure Reason) were more complicated than Hume's, and in part directed against the empiricist model of the self. Kant argues against Hume -- and with Descartes -- that experience requires a unitary subject self to which experience belongs, or to which it can belong:[14] without being related (or relatable) to a unitary consciousness, all the data of the senses could not be mine (Critique of Pure Reason B132). Still, he acknowledges with Hume that no such unitary and

unchanging subject self can actually be found by introspection, as something that is in experience: 'consciousness of self...in inner perception is simply empirical and continuously changing; it can produce no fixed and abiding self in the flow of inner representations' (Al07). Kant also argues that the rational psychologist's ostensible encounter with the self-certain and substantial subject of experience can be explained fully in terms of the mind's tendency (or 'natural inclination') to go beyond the bounds of sense.

From the absence of any fixed and abiding self in the flow of inner experience, however, it does not follow that the self does not exist. Kant's master-stroke, which some philosophers have criticized for its obscurity, and for creating more problems than it solves, was to argue that the self-active subject of experience must be a presupposition of experience -- behind experience as its condition, rather than a potentially knowable object in experience. Qua transcendental presuppostion, it cannot also be part of the empirical order which presupposes it: that is, it cannot be its own object directly and immediately (as Fichte, for instance, maintains). (Here, Hegel agrees with Kant: if the subject were an object, then that which has experiences would itself be an item for those experiences. Kant 'is perfectly correct when he maintains that the Ego is not a soul-thing, a dead permanency which has a sensuous present existence.')[15]

But if the self-active self is not part of the empirical order which presupposes it, then self-knowledge is necessarily limited, and a certain distance and opacity is placed at the very heart of the self-knower: I cannot know myself directly as the

determining, experiencing, constituting subject -- that is, as the source of the constitutive activity of knowing -- for this would require a direct intellectual intuition which only a divine intelligence possesses. I cannot know the self that thinks and constitutes -- the active self -- since the only concepts I might invoke for this purpose are the categories; but since these spring from the unity of apperception, and presuppose this activity, they cannot themselves be used to determine it.

What then is it that we know in self-knowledge? Obviously it is not the substantial and self-present self of the rationalists, for substance is precisely one of those categories which presupposes the self-active self. The only self we can know is the phenomenal (or empirical, or psycho-physical) self -- not the self as it is in itself: we only know what we appear to be, and this comes through inner sense, which has always already been subjected to the 'work' of the categories (and, more primitively, the form of time). Thus, 'I have no knowledge of myself as I am but merely as I appear to myself' (B158); 'I cannot determine my existence as that of a self-active being...[but only] as the existence of an appearance' (B158n). The self that is the target of self-knowledge is the self qua object, as determined and not as determining (B407); it is in time, and therefore changing and alterable, and not transcendent to time as its source.

> The subject, which is the object of the [inner] sense, can be represented through it only as appearance, not as that subject would judge of itself if its intuition were self-activity only, that is, were intellectual.... it intuits itself not as it would represent itself if immediately self-active, but as it is affected by itself, and therefore as it appears to itself, not as it is.
>
> (CPR B68-69).

In the Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals Kant sums up his view:

> Even as regards himself -- so far as man is acquainted with himself by inner sensation -- he cannot claim to know what he is in himself. For since he does not, so to say, make himself, and since he acquires his concept of self not a priori but empirically, it is natural that even about himself he should get information through sense -- that is, through inner sense -- and consequently only through the mere appearance of his own nature and through the way in which his consciousness is affected. Yet beyond this character of himself as a subject made up, as it is, of mere appearances he must suppose there to be something else which is its ground -- namely his Ego as this may be constituted in itself; and thus as regards mere perception and the capacity for receiving sensations he must count himself as belonging to the sensible world, but as regards whatever there may be in him of pure activity (whatever comes into immediate consciousness, not through affection of the senses, but immediately) he must count as belonging to the intellectual world, of which, however, he knows nothing further.[16]

Kant was well-aware of the problems incurred by dividing the self, and by making the I that thinks distinct from and yet somehow identical with the I that intuits itself: problems, essentially, arising from the relational nature of the self, and the peculiar relationship of 'accord in discord' under which its relata are held together. The importance of Kant's master-stroke for much of modern philosophy however is not so much its attempted solution to the empiricist-rationalist impasse -- with all the problems attendant upon invoking the concept of the thing in itself (e.g. the noumenal self) -- as the distinctively new relational vision of the human soul -- as divided, essentially temporal, and as finding accord in discord -- and the distinctly new framework of properties believed to characterize the soul as a

composite and temporal reality -- viz. distance, complexity, heterogeneity, and a profound opacity.

With the advantage of philosophical hindsight, the self as Kant conceives it might be described as suffering from a form of epistemological schizophrenia; for what the Kantian move reveals is a profoundly limiting structural disequilibrium, or discord, or split, at the very heart of human being.[17] The split is an epistemological one between two selves, and more generally between sensibility and understanding, receptivity and activity, imagination and reason, noumena and phenomena, temporality and its origin, the de jure conditions of knowledge and de facto knowledge. The accord or harmonious integration of these heterogeneous moments (or relata) is found only in a fundamental discord.[18] Thus it is that man's being, which is fundamentally relational in nature, is alienated from the epistemological wholeness, unity, self-presence and simplicity that is enjoyed by divine intelligence; it is not wholly one with itself, precisely because it is only in so far as it relates itself to itself (as sensibility to understanding, etc.).

What is it that divides the self from itself, and prevents it from attaining wholeness and unity? Part of Kant's answer -- an answer later taken up and made a central explanatory principle by existential philosophy -- rests upon the important concept of time. Human temporality is a necessary and untranscendable feature of experience; it defines and limits human experience and knowledge in its deepest recesses. Kant's emphasis on time stands in sharp contrast to the characteristic distrust in much of Western philosophy of all that is temporal, transitory and subject

to fluctuation. In Platonist and neo-Platonist metaphysics, for instance, time is considered to be the source of illusion or inadequate knowledge. True knowledge, including true self-knowledge, must transcend the constraints and distortions of time. With the Copernican turn's relocation of time in the very depths of the human subject, Kant restored to time its importance as a distinctively human form of experience -- but only at the cost of separating the subject from itself, and setting limits on knowledge and experience that Platonists and other pre-critical metaphysicians must deny.

To understand how the form of time divides human reality from itself, it would be necessary to examine in further detail the connection Kant makes between time and the self, the latter of which is somehow both in time and behind it as its source; and, to examine the connection he makes between time and the self-activity of the productive imagination (viz. the Schematism). In sketching this in only the briefest of outlines here, it should become a little clearer how, after many conceptual digressions, and after the accumulation of many layers of philosophical sediment, the conceptual links that Kant made between time and the divided self were picked up and developed by phenomenology and existential philosophy: man, a broken totality, is essentially a temporal being; his very being (i.e. being construed as a verb and not a substantive), his having <u>to be</u>, is temporal.

As the necessary form of inner and outer experience, temporality assures man of his finitude, and distinguishes him from divine intelligence, which is wholly desituated and free from the divisive constraints of time and history. The empirical and

knowable self is temporally finite, a subject of time and subjected to it; it is fluctuating and changeable. But man is also the very source of the temporal conditions which separate him from himself.

Located below or behind the empirical self, in the obscure recesses of what Kant called the productive imagination, is the very source of time. The productive imagination is distinctive because it is not only the source of time, but of all synthetic activity in general -- and so, ultimately, of the limits of all experience. It is a mysterious, half intelligent, half instinctive faculty; it produces schemata, which Kant describes -- in one of the most obscure and most important parts of the Critique of Pure Reason -- as 'nothing but a priori determinations of time' (A145). The schemata somehow fertilize and realize the pure concepts of the understanding.[19] Precisely how they carry out this synthesis is unclear, and must remain so; Kant describes the power of the pure productive imagination to mediate and synthesize the heterogeneous faculties of the sensibility and the understanding (A124) as a 'blind but indispensable function of the soul without which we should have no knowledge whatsoever, but of which we are scarcely conscious.'(A78)

The most distinctive property of the imagination is its self-activity; it must be self-active in its work of realization or fertilization, because neither faculty (viz. sensibility and understanding) determine or generate it, and the mere juxtaposition of the faculties will not of itself trigger their synthesis (A51). In this mysterious work of fertilization, where time, imagination and autogenous self-activity co-mingle in the

deepest recesses of the human soul, the sensibility '<u>realises</u> the understanding in the very process of <u>restricting</u> it.' (B187, emphasis added)

The mysterious co-mingling occurring at the very root of all human experience cannot be made fully transparent. The nature of the imagination's spontaneous activity is opaque to us: because it does not itself belong to or emerge from either of the two extremes it synthesizes, it can neither be known nor intuited as it is in itself.

> This schematism of our understanding, in its application to appearances and their mere form, is an art concealed in the depths of the human soul, whose real modes of activity nature is hardly likely ever to allow us to discover, and to have open to our gaze.
> (A141)

The dual function of the source of time and synthetic activity to both <u>realize</u> and <u>restrict</u> is the very essence of human experience. Time has a profoundly ambiguous status, for man is both its source and its victim, its origin and its emergent; it reveals man to himself and conceals him from himself. Originating in the inapprehensible depths of the human soul, time is <u>both</u> a fundamental condition for all experience, including self-experience and self-knowledge, <u>and</u> one of the fundamental conditions which prevent the immediate and direct knowledge <u>of</u> ourselves as self-active beings <u>by</u> ourselves as self-active beings. The deep-lying spontaneous imagination in which temporality originates resembles an epistemological <u>pharmakon</u>, in so far as it is responsible both for the heterogeneous and limited self-relation of experience, and the very fact that there is experience.[20]

The distinguishing characteristics of the Kantian vision of the dirempted, time-bound, relational self -- distance, complexity, temporality, opacity -- represented a new and important change in the direction taken by explanatory accounts of the self and self-knowledge. Such a vision was undoubtedly troubling to the traditional models of the self: viz. the substance model, which thought it had found in interiority the very paradigm of simplicity, clarity, absolute self-presence and self-certainty; and the empiricist's bundle model of the self, with its emphasis on common-sense accessibility.

But if the new framework for dealing with problems of the self and self-knowledge was philosophically troubling, it was not unexpected, for it follows naturally from the guiding insights of Kant's Copernican turn. The idea that in man is a deep-lying source of creative activity leads naturally to the idea of the 'recession' of the given; and the idea of the necessary submission of the object of knowledge to its transcendental conditions leads naturally to the idea that the object of knowledge -- including the self -- is both revealed and concealed. In application to man's knowledge of himself, these two principles are responsible for distancing and concealing man from himself, and introducing a number of unalterable limits in the search for self-knowledge: as regards pure self-activity, wherein lies the very source of human temporality (and ultimately of all human experience), man knows nothing further. We are not free to plumb the depths of self-activity -- even if everything that we are springs from them; they remain an elusive and 'hidden power deep in the human soul.'[21]

In passing it should be noted that one of the most important steps in the consolidation of certain aspects of Kant's new vision of the self and self-knowledge was taken by Hegel. Hegel's relational model of the self takes the Kantian vision of the self as self-divided and self-distanced several steps further, because of its emphasis on the profoundly negative aspect of the self-relation, and its dynamization of the concepts of identity and negation. As a 'self-restoring sameness', or a 'reflection in otherness within itself', the subject (according to Hegel) 'is not an original or immediate unity as such.'[22] This is to be contrasted with divine intellection which, as Kant had already suggested, is not split or divided from itself, and therefore does not suffer from negativity. In itself, Hegel argues, the life of God is 'one of untroubled equality and unity with itself, for which otherness and alienation, and the overcoming of alienation, are not serious matters.'[23] The finite human self, by contrast, is characterized by profound unrest and negativity; it is divided from itself, and is forced to become an other to itself before eventually returning to itself. (Nietzsche, the early Marx and Kierkegaard also use a relational model which emphasizes the concepts of difference, negativity and 'self-othering', thus even further consolidating certain aspects of Kant's vision of the self and self-knowledge.)[24]

The appearance of this new framework of characteristics (viz. distance, complexity, temporality, opacity) is an important event in the development of the relational model of man, some of the general distinguishing characteristics of which bear a close resemblance to those of the Kantian model of the self. The

historical development of the relational model from Kant onwards is too complex to be explored here; but it is no historical coincidence that the three most central concepts of the relational model are constituting activity, empirical under-determination and temporality. Moreover, the relational model of man can be considered as one of the heirs to Kant's critique of Rational Psychology: it too rejects the vision of the subject as a determinate, simple, self-present, self-identical and centred substance -- a Self, Ego, or I-am-I to which knowledge would conform, and in which it would be grounded. The subject, or the self, is complex, self-distanced, opaque to itself and thoroughly temporal.

*

6. The Relational Model

To answer the ontological questions raised above about the nature of the 'object' of self-knowledge, without simply repeating the founding principles of the traditional models of the self, and therefore facing the same philosophical impasses which they encountered, another general model of the nature of the self has to be developed. Along the way a new model has been in the making, and several references have been made to it. It is now time to tie these together.

The founding insight of the new model is the idea that the self is essentially a relational being. The self exists as a relation between the past, present and future; as a relation between given

and constituted; as a relation to the world and to others; and as a relation to itself. The self is not first a metaphysically simple entity which later enters into relations; it *is* only in so far as it is a network of relations.

The idea that the self *is* only in so far as it is a composite of heterogeneous elements somehow held together in time; the idea that even in the subject's reflexive turn back upon itself there is an element of constituting activity, of bringing something into the world which was not there before; the idea that in self-examination a person can either step back from or remain engaged in the subject-matter of study; and the idea that there is a relationship between the self and its future existence: these various characteristics reveal the human self as essentially *relational*.

The relational model of man, and the closely associated idea that man's being or life is an issue for him, is by no means a novel idea in the history of Western philosophy; it would be misleading, moreover, to suggest that its source is to be found in Kant's Copernican turn. (Kant's importance lies in the introduction of a new framework of characteristics grafted onto a relational model.) The idea that the self somehow relates itself to itself, or is an issue for itself, is found for instance in Plato's *Sophist* (viz. the dialogue of the soul with itself).[25] It is also to be found in Aristotle, and later in Spinoza's concept of *conatus* (viz. all living creatures strive to preserve their being). Although the principal claims of the model that will be developed in the following section are quite general, and interpretable in a number of ways, they tend to consolidate the

Kantian vision of the self as somehow divided and distanced from itself.

*

7. The Self's Relation to Itself

In Chapter Three a number of inherited and conditioned factors were identified as responsible for limiting a person's range of action and knowledge, and as accounting for his place in the world as finite and situated. These conditions include: historical and geographical place; language; class; race; biological, genetic and neurophysiological make-up; perceptual and intellectual capacities; gender; manifest or latent traits of social and sexual conditioning; dispositions and deep-lying motivational tendencies that have been built up since infancy; and the relation to the future, to having to continue being.

The influence exerted by these conditions in shaping behaviour and experience might suggest that everything about a person can be wholly explained by reference to them; or, that he is nothing but the overall result of these conditions; or that he is their puppet and mouthpiece.

> Far from being able to modify our situation at whim, we seem to be unable to change ourselves. I am not 'free' either to escape the lot of my class, of my nation, of my family, or even to build up my own power or my fortune or to conquer my most insignificant appetites or habits. I am born a worker, a Frenchman, an hereditary syphilitic, or a tubercular. The history of a life, whatever it may be, is the history of a failure....Much more than he

> appears to make himself, man seems to be made by climate and the earth, race and class, language, the history of the collectivity of which he is a part, hereditary, the individual circumstances of his childhood....
>
> (BN pp.481-82)

The relational model denies this: a person is not a 'prisoner' of the conditions which shape him. However much his actions, character and experiences come to be shaped by his conditioning and inheritance, he renders back more than what they have given him and made of him: the 'something more' that he renders back in defining himself is triggered by these conditions, and answers to them, but it does not arise from them. In making something out of what has been made of him, there is -- within limits -- an element of autogeny.

A person does not exist in a merely factual sense. His mental and emotional life is not exhaustively describable by simple *de facto* characterizations such as might be provided of objects. It is incorrect to characterize him as simply *having* wants, desires, motives, emotions and other mental states, and passively registering their effects; it is also incorrect to characterize him as simply submitting helplessly to his dispositions and deep-lying motivational patterns. A person is always more than what he is factually, supposing *per impossibile* that an 'inventory' or strictly factual list could be provided of everything that he has been made into, or conditioned to be.

The central principle of the relational model can be formulated simply: the distinctive characteristic of a person is his ability to want to be different, in his wants, preferences, purposes, desires, dispositions, emotions, conditioning, character and make-up, from what he is. He has the distinctive ability to take up an

attitude with regard to what he is -- with regard, ultimately, to his very existence. Thus he exists in such a way that he assumes a relation to what he is, and defines himself on the basis of this. It is not the case that he is simply one with what he is, for what he is at any one moment is partly constituted by his relation to himself. No adequate description can be provided of what he is without taking into account the relation he has to himself.

The relata comprising the network of relations (viz. what man is, and the relation he takes up to what he is) are so tightly-knit and inter-dependent that they cannot be isolated and studied as they are in themselves. A 'pure' and unadulterated emotion, for instance, can no more be identified and described as it is 'in itself', independently of how it is assumed, than the activity of assuming the emotion can be identified as it is in itself.

Here it can be seen how the argument returns full-circle to the complementary concepts of constituting activity and empirical under-determination as these were developed in the first chapters: relating to what one is involves an element of constituting activity (i.e. of making, organizing, or meaning-conferring), as well as an element of empirical under-determination (or 'slack', malleability). The inherited or conditioned social, historical, biological and genetic factors that to a certain extent make a person what he is are not fully determining; they do not come fully formed, with 'labels' on them. To take a simple example: a disposition to shyness (which, for instance, has its origin in early infant conditioning) is never complete and unchangeable; during the course of an individual's life-history, the disposition

is as much actively assumed (e.g. worked over, focussed, studied, named, described and interpreted) as it is suffered and consented to. It is in this 'work' of defining and forming that a person renders back more than what has been originally given.

One of the most interesting and philosophically important aspects of the 'slack' and incompleteness characterizing the self-relation is the effect it has on the relation between the self and its existence. A person exists in such a way that he relates himself not only to what he is, but to the very fact that he is. This was outlined in Chapter Three: a person is able to take up an attitude to the very fact of having to be, of having to continue to the end, without respite, the life that he has. The enterprise of being -- not this or that person, with this or that lifestyle, but just being -- does not present itself as intrinsically obvious, finalized or out of question. Before this enterprise he can feel indolent and weary, hesitant or anxious. There are 'certain moments in human existence where the adherence of existence to an existent appears like a cleaving.'[26]

*

8. Self-Responsibility

In the Nichomachean Ethics Aristotle noted that we hold people responsible for their character, as well as for their behaviour. We find ouselves trying to do something about the kind of people we are. To a certain extent we are able to control our moral outlook, and even our fundamental life-outlook.

The relational model of the person can account for this. To the extent that a person relates himself to his existence by assuming

it and making something of it, he can be considered responsible for himself and what he does with his life.[27] This is not responsibility in the sense of being responsible for one's particular actions and behaviour, and the consequences of one's actions; it is a deeper and more comprehensive sense, covering an entire way of life, or a way of being in the world. In relating himself to himself, a person is placed in a position to either acquiesce to what he is (e.g. a destructive emotional pattern), or to try to alter what he is. (Naturally this raises the difficult question of whether actual success in restructuring is a necessary condition for the ascription for self-responsibility.)

Obviously the scope of self-responsibility, and the point where it grades off, is subject to stronger and weaker interpretations. The essential idea, however, is clear: man is not an entirely helpless victim of his character, his conditioning, or his make-up -- in short, what he has been made to be. This does not mean that he is the 'master of his own house', free to make himself over as he sees fit. To a certain extent, however, he is able to restructure and redefine certain aspects of his life, and his way of being. To this extent, he is responsible for himself. The qualifying phrase 'to a certain extent' is sufficiently vague to allow a great deal of interpretative flexibility to the concepts of self-alteration and self-responsibility; this will be illustrated in the sections on Sartre and Hampshire.

At the outset, however, it is worth mentioning that atheistic existentialism presents the strongest and least forgiving interpretation of self-responsibility. In Sartre's early work the concept of self-responsibility is closely tied to the concept of

the radical choice of a way of being: responsibility derives from the fact that an individual must choose, and continue to maintain, his way of life in the face of a number of always-viable alternatives. If he cannot change the brute underlying factical conditions which make him what he is, he is free to change his way of being, and the meaning of the factical conditions which root him into a particular place and time. Equally, he is free to acquiesce, in self-deception, to his situation, character and make-up, 'as if' they were unavoidable and unchangeable. The one thing he is not free to do is not choose. Morally -- and existential philosophy is profoundly moral despite its apparently value-free ontology of the person -- it is man's task to define himself; he is wholly responsible for who he is, and morally accountable for what he makes of himself. Some of these claims resemble those made by Kant in Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone: 'Man himself must make or have made himself into whatever, in a moral sense, whether good or evil, he is or is to become. Either condition must be an effect of his free choice; for otherwise he could not be held responsible for it, and could therefore be morally neither good nor evil....'

In his later work Sartre qualified his harsh view that 'in reality, things will be as much as man has decided they are', and outlined a less controversial version of self-responsibility. He still acknowledges that a way of life is to a certain extent under-determined by make-up, character and situation, and by social conditioning and inheritance; but he considers the range of restructuring and redefining power to be much narrower than what he had earlier envisaged. A man can make something out of

what has been made of him, and 'render back' something more than what has been given, but this restructuring is itself profoundly conditioned by and relative to a situation, and cannot break away entirely from it.[28] Still, it is man's task to assume and work on what has been left to some extent under-determined and unfinished; he is responsible for who he is, even if he can do no more than assume his being.

> [The] idea which I have never ceased to develop is that in the end one is always responsible for what is made of one. Even if one can do nothing else besides assume this responsibility. For I believe that a man can always make something out of what is made of him. This is the limit I would today accord to freedom: the small movement which makes of a totally conditioned social being someone who does not render back completely what his conditioning has given him. Which makes of Genet a poet when he had been rigorously conditioned to be a thief.[29]

This theory of self-formation bears some interesting resemblances to J.S.Mill's compatibilist theory in the Logic of Moral Sciences, which is designed to refute the nigh-fatalist theory of the 'Necessitarian'.

> The Necessitarian believes that his character is formed for him and not by him; therefore his wishing that it had been formed differently is of no use; he has no power to alter it. But this is a grand error. He has, to a certain extent, a power to alter his character. His character is formed by his circumstances (including among these his particular organization), but his own desire to mould it in a particular way is one of those circumstances, and by no means one of the least influential. ...[We], when our habits are not too inveterate, can, by...willing the requisite means, make ourselves different.[30]

CHAPTER V

Hampshire's Theory of Self-Knowledge

> ...everyone has the power, partly at least, if not absolutely, of understanding clearly and distinctly himself and his emotions, and consequently of bringing it to pass that he suffers less from them.
>
> -- Spinoza, Ethics

1. Introduction

In Stuart Hampshire's broadly Spinozist theory of self-knowledge, as this is developed in Thought and Action (1959), Freedom of the Individual (1965), Freedom of Mind (1972)[1] and, with certain qualifications, his more recent work Morality and Conflict (1983), one finds a clear expression of the thesis that man is essentially a self-defining being, and that changes and innovations in the most fundamental descriptions, conceptions, beliefs or interpretations under which he views himself, or art forms through which he expresses himself (cf. TA p.246), occasion changes in what he is. Our experience is always 'being modified by the conceptual framework at all times imposed on it.' (TA p.40).

> [The] range of the emotions, feelings and attitudes of mind, identified and distinguished from each other, changes as the forms of human knowledge change. We identify new emotions and attitudes that have never been recognized before. With a new self-consciousness, and with the extended vocabulary that goes with it, we discover new motives for action and new objects to which practical intentions are directed.
>
> (TA p.244)

In developing this thesis, Hampshire's theory of self-knowledge presents an instructive contrast to Sartre's theory, much as Spinoza's epistemology does to Kierkegaard's, because he identifies the modus operandi for self-definition as knowledge and understanding, and not radical choice or radical re-evaluation. The contrast is evident in the emphasis he places on the role reason and knowledge have in self-definition and self-alteration for improving a way of life, and in the achievement of freedom; in the emphasis he places on the importance of stepping back from oneself, criticizing and deliberating, and acquiring a deeper understanding of the causes behind one's actions, emotions, beliefs and basic character structures; and in his reliance upon Spinoza and Freud. This stands in clear contrast to Sartre, for whom reason, deliberation and the search for justification play only a minor role in apprehending and defining ourselves, and for whom the acquisition of knowledge of one's dispositions, tendencies and character traits, and their underlying causes, is subsidiary to one's deep-lying choice of their fundamental meaning. In addition, Sartre is well-known for criticizing Freud's concept of the unconscious, and the quasi-mechanist (and quasi-hydrological) interpretation that Freud gives of the unseen economy of non-intentional drives and impersonal forces.

And yet there are enough similarities between Hampshire and Sartre's general view of man, and their general defense of the connection between self-consciousness and freedom, for Iris Murdoch in The Sovereignty of Good to classify them both as existentialists, differing only in the emphasis they place on the role of reason; the former's 'vision' of man represents the more

tempered and reason-inclined wing of existentialism, whereas Sartre's represents what she calls the Surrealist wing. Murdoch's sweeping criticism of both Hampshire and Sartre will be explored later, in Chapter Six.

*

2. Epistemology

Implicit in Hampshire's epistemology are versions of the concept of constituting activity, and the complementary concept of the empirical under-determination of knowledge, as these were developed in Chapters One and Two. Man as knower has an ineliminably active role in the equation of knowledge; correlatively, the reality that is the object of his knowledge is not divided into units that are identifiable apart from some particular system of classification -- a system which is a distinctly human product, carrying all the marks of our activity. For Hampshire, as for the other philosophers cited in Chapter One (e.g. Nietzsche, Cassirer, Goodman, Quine), it is senseless to inquire into the absolute correctness of our classification and conceptual schema as a mirror of reality.

> After the early experiments of Russell and Wittgenstein, most contemporary philosophers are probably convinced that the idea of 'the facts', which are already individuated in reality independently of our forms of reference to them, is an illusion that cannot be given a sense. We divide and re-divide reality into its segments and sub-segments along the lines of our practical interests, which are reflected in our conventions of reference.
>
> (TA p.216)

Hampshire's epistemology therefore fits within the basic coordinates of the problematic that were outlined in Chapters One and Two, and must contend with some of the reflexive peculiarities that arise when, in the search for self-knowledge, the activity of constitution is turned back upon itself. Hampshire acknowledges the source of these peculiarities: 'As the knowledge that we may have of our own mental powers is reflexive knowledge, the object of knowledge and the knowing subject change and extend their range together.' (TA p.255). Given this reflexive 'feed-back loop', and the self-modification it provokes, is the realist goal of the simple de facto description of reality still tenable for self-knowledge? Does the peculiar relation between inner reality and classification system (or given and constituted) in self-knowledge permit us to apprehend ourselves as we really are, or only under a particular description, and only by 'looking through the spectacles of our established vocabulary' (TA p.62)? Can we get behind our classificatory activity to some real underlying and unchanging self, or an human nature? Is there such a thing? In what sense are the false descriptions and interpretations under which we view ourselves false?

Also at work in Hampshire's epistemology is the agent-observer dualism. Precedence is given to the latter perspective -- to detachment, or 'stepping back' -- as this was developed in general terms in Chapter Three: the idea that 'we look for knowledge that is more and more objective, and less and less limited by our particular standpoint' (TA p.68) guides the search for self-knowledge as much as any other form of knowledge. This, barring the important change in philosophical direction in Morality and

Conflict (which will not be studied here), stands in contrast with the existentialist view that the articulation of the limited and historically-engaged agent's perspective is a necessary condition for accuracy in self-examination.

Like Spinoza, Hampshire argues that the pursuit of reflexive knowledge requires that an individual detach himself as much as possible from the finite and engaged view from inside his life -- the view sub specie durationis, in the direct onrush of events -- in order to achieve a more disinterested and comprehensive view of himself and his place in the order of things. Reasoning, deliberating, criticizing and searching for justification have a central place in this task, as part of an overall program of improving the understanding and shaping one's way of life (cf. TA p.248). These activities are essential in the search for self-knowledge, even if complete rationality, full knowledge and total detachment are unattainable. Rationality

> presupposes a full knowledge of the hitherto unrecognized causes of the confinement of one's choice to a particular range of possibilities. Complete rationality and full knowledge of every possibility open to us are an ideal limit at which we never in fact arrive and never could arrive....We cannot suppose a man who is totally detached from every confining interest and equally open to every possibility. His self-consciousness must always operate upon a given material, the material of his own language and of its social background, and it could not operate in a void. But everyone has had the experience of coming to view some of his interests, previously accepted as inevitable, with a new detachment, as material upon which his own deliberate choice can operate.
>
> (TA p.256)

To understand the background of Hampshire's model of man,[2] his theory of reference and classification, and his theory of the

inexhaustibility of description, will first have to be outlined. This is a general theory that covers the most primitive relation man has to external reality, as well as the most primitive relation he has to himself. It picks up the thread from Chapter One, where the theory of empirical under-determination was discussed in very general terms.

*

3. Hampshire's Theory of Classification

A central argument of Thought and Action is that in the final analysis there is no unique set of concepts, mental or objective, that is forced upon man as unavoidable. The multifarious systems of classification by which man identifies, individuates and describes reality are in principle inexhaustible. This is not an empirical observation about the vast plurality of classification systems that have made an appearance across human history; it is the stronger a priori claim that there is no necessary end, nor a necessary starting point, in any classification which aims to correspond to the true divisions of experience and reality. Resemblances and differences between different aspects of reality (e.g. 'the same object', 'the same sensation') are picked out and determined by principles that are necessarily revisable, and subject to change in accordance with changing human interests and purposes; they are not grounded in or directed by an unyielding, 'ineluctable', thought-independent reality.

> It is in principle impossible that we should ever come to the end of it and complete our description. This is true, not only because we cannot set limits to reality or give a possible sense to the words 'I have identified all the things that there are'; but, more strongly, because we cannot even give sense to the words 'I have identified all the things that there are in this room'.
>
> (TA pp.21-22)

The essential incompleteness of our description of reality means that it is senseless to expect to return to a state of nature that is logically prior to the advent of classification schema, with a view to ascertaining how our most fundamental classificatory principles stand with respect to reality. It is a false assumption, he argues, that there must be 'natural, pre-social units already discriminated as the ultimate subjects of reference in our experience: that social convention and artificiality enters only at the second tier of language, resting on a first tier of basic and natural discrimination which is independent of any institutions of social life.' (TA p.26) The institution of language cannot be rebuilt upon such an ostensibly rational foundation. This is Hampshire's version of the third general structural feature of the concept of constituting activity, viz. the 'recession' of physical reality with respect to the advent and advance of our epistemic activity.

The most interesting aspect of this argument for the purpose at hand is that the inexhaustibility of description applies with equal force to the identification, individuation and description of our own mental states, emotions, moods and sensations. The discriminable objects of reference in our inner experience are not given once and for all, with 'labels' attached (cf. FM iv, pp.246-

247); they under-determine our systems of classification, and force upon us no unique set of mental concepts. There are no theoretically determinable limits to the variety of classification types that may be introduced (cf. TA p.21) in our dealings with our mental states, emotions, moods and sensations; they can be classified and reclassified (or defined and redefined) in any number of ways -- ranging from primitive vocabularies which allow the identification, individuation and description of only the most extreme or common emotions and sensations, to refined, highly sophisticated ones that reveal an intensely active and richly differentiated inner life. We must therefore avoid resting self-description on the naive realist belief that the publicly established rules for the classification of our mental processes are the permanently obvious and self-justifying rules (cf. TA p.242).

> [When] I try to describe the felt quality of my experiences, putting my intimate feelings into words, I must always have the sense that words fall short, that any description can only be indefinite and untestable and liable to mislead. This is because feelings cannot be thought of as objects which can be surveyed by different observers from different points of view....
>
> (TA p.66)

The open-endedness that characterizes self-description is not a wholly positive feature, for it means that every step towards self-transparency is accompanied by the closing-off of other avenues of classification, and other vocabularies, that would reveal to us others facets of emotion, mood and sensation. Even in the development of highly specific and well-targeted psychological vocabularies, we are as much concealed from ourselves as we are revealed to ourselves. Thus in reflection or

self-analysis, when we feel ourselves to be getting closer and closer to the 'final truth' about our deep-lying character traits, our feelings, our emotional patterns, etc., we must always remind ourselves that it is meaningless to expect to ground our endeavours in some logically prior or natural state -- 'an ultimate and natural object of reference, which is somehow unavoidable and obvious.' (TA p.2Ø) We cannot put self-knowledge on such a sure and rational foundation. No description of things can be complete, final and ideally adequate, despite the demand for finalization and certainty that we may feel in searching for the ends of the soul.

This darker aspect of self-definition -- the density and ambiguity of experience, its resistance to finalized description and interpretation, and the profoundly exclusionary nature of self-definition -- is the reverse side of the open-endedness of description, and the other side of our freedom to be self-defining and self-forming. In his early work, however, Hampshire does not explore at length the implications of the exclusions, negations, concealments or repressions that accompany self-definition. Later, in Morality and Conflict, he writes:

> A person hesitates between two contrasting ways of life, and sets of virtues, and he has to make a very definite, and even final, determination between them. This determination is a negation, and normally the agent will feel that the choice has killed, or repressed, some part of him.[3]

*

4. Hampshire's Model of Man

Philosophical anthropology -- the study of man for its own sake -- is not a self-consciously stated goal of Hampshire's work, just as epistemology is not an explicit part of Sartre's; moreover, the relational model of the self that has been developed in general terms in the previous chapter is not named as such by Hampshire. But a version of this model is operant in his concept of reflexivity, and is implied by his criticism -- one resembling Merleau-Ponty's criticism -- of the empiricist's view of man as a desituated and disembodied observer passively receiving sensations, upon which basis a picture of the external world is built up (cf. TA pp.40-47).

Underpinning Hampshire's concept of reflexivity, and his criticism of the empiricist model of the self, is the view that a person is not wholly passive with respect to the character he has inherited, and the immediate desires, wants, preferences, emotions and purposes that press themselves upon him. He is not wholly subject to or 'swept' along by his wants, desires, emotions, etc., as if he had no choice in what moved him to action and constituted part of his will. Nor is he a 'prisoner' of his character (cf. TA p.185), in the sense that he cannot but acquiesce to the natural and socially-conditioned limitations of his thought and experience -- viz. the deep-lying dispositions, motivational patterns and other character structures that make him what he is (TA p.186); thus he cannot in good faith predict that he will succumb to the influence of these factors in his actions (TA p.129, p.187). In addition to this, an agent's higher-order mental states cannot be

exhaustively characterized by the kind of simple de facto descriptions that can be given of recalcitrant, numerable, external objects (i.e. descriptions that leave the essential properties of the object unchanged).

One of the essential distinguishing features of a person is that he is a reflectively self-aware and self-critical agent who is able to want to be different from what he is, and who is able to decide what he will allow to constitute part of his character and way of life. He exists in such a way that he takes up a relation to what he is (e.g. wants, desires, tendencies, emotions and character structures). In this relation to himself something more is rendered back than what has been given (i.e. there is an element of creativity or autogeny); in describing and redescribing his inner experience, he modifies it from what it was before. The medium through which this self-relating operates is language.

> I can only be in a position to watch my own mental states, as opposed to simply having them or living them through, if I have the means of labelling them. I may think and speak of them as if they were objects to be manipulated in relation to my intentions.
> (TA p.125)

*

5. Self-Responsibility

Hampshire also defends a strong version of the concept of self-responsibility, as this was developed in the last chapter. The acquisition of reflexive knowledge is not a purely theoretical or

epistemic achievement, separable from the moral and practical element: here knowledge becomes decision (TA p.175). To the extent that a person takes up a relation to his mental states and his character, through an increased understanding of their causes, and through thinking and speaking of them as if they were objects to be manipulated in relation to his intentions; and to the extent that he is able to want to be different from what he is, and is able to identify which of the desires, wants, character traits, etc. he wants to constitute part of his will and character,[4] he is placed in a position of choice to either acquiesce to their influence, or to try to change them. Once he is aware of what his wants, desires and emotions are, and why they are as they are, he can no longer be considered their helpless prisoner -- dumbly registering them and succumbing to their dictates.

Like Spinoza, Hampshire counsels self-examination and self-watching as activities that are essential to leading a moral life, and attaining freedom of mind. He dismisses the old French moralist view (e.g. Stendhal) that a person should not live watching himself live ('Il ne faut pas se regarder vivre'), that he should live 'naturally' and naively, 'at one' with his emotions and desires ('reflection poisons desire').

Hampshire argues that the more self-aware an agent is in reviewing and criticizing his own intentions and actions, the more he is aware of how the limits of his own habits of classification determine the possibilities open to him (TA p.267). In acquiring this awareness, he is placed in a position to become more explicit and articulate in formulating to himself the ends of his actions.

The awareness of alternative ways of thought and classification -- ways which, prior to the advent of self-awareness, were repressed or considered irrelevant -- brings with it new perspectives on his situation and his inner experience. With this increased awareness, and the increased range of possible action and experience, comes increased responsibility.

> Human beings can identify their own limitations, as one feature of the world among others to be self-consciously accepted, or, if possible, deliberately changed, rather than simply responded to. They can understand the causes of the limitations of their own thought and interests, and they may either acquiesce in these limitations or they may try to change them.
>
> (TA pp.185-86)

Hampshire gives the case of a person suddenly becoming aware of himself as trying to annoy someone else; prompting this awareness is the switch from the perspective of the unreflective agent to the perspective of a spectator viewing his own action as if from the outside.[5] (Perspectival changes such as these, when a collection of hitherto-unrelated events is suddenly seen as forming a unified pattern, are not infrequent occurences during the course of psycho-therapy and psycho-analysis). With the advent of self-awareness, the situation as he experiences it, and the situation as it would be described by an outside observer, changes: the additional factor is his self-awareness. Prior to the advent of self-awareness, it would have been false to describe him as consciously trying to annoy; but if he continues on the same course of action after having become aware of the fact that there is a pattern, and an underlying meaning, then it will be true to describe him as consciously trying to annoy. He is now in

a position to try to alter his course of behaviour, and is 'responsible for changing or not changing [his] policies in one direction rather than another.' (TA pp.188-89)

> I cannot escape the burden of intention, and therefore of responsibility, which is bestowed upon me by knowledge of what I am doing, that is, by recognition of the situation confronting me and of the difference that my action is making. As soon as I realise what I am doing, I am no longer doing it unintentionally. Any impartial and concurrent awareness of the tendency and effect of my own activities necessarily has to this extent the effect of changing their nature....That which began as impartial observation turns into something else; the knowledge becomes decision.
>
> (TA p.175)

What is interesting here is the range and depth Hampshire attributes to the connection between knowledge and responsibility. A person is responsible not only for his particular actions; he is also responsible for his very way of life, or what Hampshire calls the 'longer trajectory' of his own conduct. It is in virtue of his awareness of the whole tract of his conduct (TA p.221), and his reflexive knowledge of the causes of his make-up, that a person finds himself in a position to respond to what he knows, and to become responsible -- either by allowing his general conduct and character traits to continue to be shaped or defined by the factors of which he has recently become aware, or by trying to change these factors:

> my character is still something for which I am responsible....If I had thought that my history, and the external causes influencing me, were...bad in their effects, I at least could have tried to find the means to prevent or minimize their effect....I am faced with the choice of acquiescing or of trying to find the means of diverting or minimizing their effects.
>
> (TA p.187)

If the conclusions of Hampshire's theory of self-responsibility,

and the strong connection he makes between self-awareness and freedom, seem to resemble in broad outline the existentialist theory, which defends the idea that a person is responsible for his very way of being, the grounds upon which Hampshire's conclusions rest are very different. Hampshire's view emphasizes much more strongly the epistemic element involved in the way a person takes up a relation to his experience: self-definition, the self-alteration occasioned by it, and the self-responsibility implied by these activities, rest upon the gradual acquisition of reflexive knowledge, and the improvement of the understanding, and not radical choice or evaluation. 'Only with knowledge comes the opportunity of choice and therefore full responsibility. If I did not know what I was trying to do, no possibilities of deliberate change were open to me.' (TA p.132) In Sartre's view, as it will be seen later, full responsibility comes only with choice, of which knowledge, reasoning and deliberation are only derivative or founded modes.

The full strength of Hampshire's views on responsibility for one's character can be brought out by contrasting them with the views aired by John Hospers, who calls upon psycho-analytic evidence (as Hampshire does, but with obviously different results), and a nigh-fatalistic (but not necessarily Freudian) theory of unconscious motivation, to cast doubts on the very possibility of genuine self-insight, self-alteration and self-responsibility.

> There are many actions...for which human beings in general...are inclined to hold the doer responsible, and for which, I would say, he should not be held responsible. The deed may be planned...nonetheless his behaviour was

> brought about by unconscious conflicts developed in infancy, over which he has no control and of which...he does not even have knowledge. He may even think he knows why he acted as he did, he may think he has conscious control over his actions, he may even think he is fully responsible for them; but he is not.[6]

Each of us, Hospers maintains, is the product of causes and lines of conditioning in which our own volition plays no part, and of which our awareness and understanding are to a large extent merely epiphenomenal surface play. Because no one is the author of his character, it is as senseless to blame a person who is unable to alter his character defects as it is to praise another for successfully altering them. The very ability, and the very effort spent in trying to modify or redefine inherited or conditioned character defects is itself a product of heredity or early childhood conditioning -- factors over which a person has no control. 'We did not give ourselves this ability; and if we lack it we cannot be blamed for not having it.' Passively acquiescing to our wants, desires, motives, emotions, dispositions and character, or trying to alter them (and learn about them), amount ultimately to the same thing. Thus an individual's intelligence, his powers of reasoning, and his reflexive awareness, do not enable him to escape from unconsciously motivated behaviour: they only give him 'greater facility in rationalizing that behaviour; [his] intelligence is simply used in the interest of the neurosis -- it is pressed into service to justify with reasons what [he] does independently of the reasons.'[7]

*

6. Two Kinds of Description

If the inexhaustibility of description applies with equal force to the identification, individuation and description of our own mental states, emotions, moods and sensations, as it does to our description of external reality, there is still a very important asymmetry which must also be taken into account: the conditions under which self-description is possible are not essentially the same as the conditions under which the description of an external and independent reality is possible. (This recalls some of the distinctions made earlier between knowledge of the world and self-knowledge.)

The observation of external physical objects normally has no effect on them; the reality that is observed is independent, and its true nature 'can be established in a variety of other ways, and by different observers from different points of view. No one observer is a privileged observer.' (FM iv, p.235) The observer is free to successively change his perspective, with a view to making adjustments that compensate for some of the initial perspectival bias; and he is aided in his task by the fact that other observers occupying different perspectives can correct him.

> In the external world the objects are there as potential objects of reference, whether or not I have the linguistic resources, and the knowledge, to specify their differences and to be aware of them as distinguishable from each other; the knowledge that I may have about their nature does not in any way constitute, or change, their nature.[8]

By contrast, the discriminable 'objects' of reference in man's inner experience -- his moods, emotions, sensations -- are not independent of the linguistic resources available to him, and his

powers of discrimination, to the degree to which external objects of reference are independent. Without resorting to Idealist ontology, the latter kind of relation may be described as an 'internal relation': neither relata -- the referential and descriptive mechanisms on the one hand, and the 'objects' of reference and description on the other -- can be considered wholly in abstraction from one another, or broken down and then reconstructed in a componential analysis (cf. Chapter Two). Here, it is as meaningless to speak of a purely linguistic component and a purely factual component in the truth of any individual sentence (or collection of sentences) about the inner life, as it is to speak of the individual contribution the length of a rectangle makes to its total area.

One of the most important and most unique characteristics of such a close and inseparable inter-relation between inner experience and the relevant referential and descriptive mechanisms, is that significant changes and innovations in the latter are accompanied by significant changes in the experiences themselves, and in their modes of givenness; similarly, changes in the methods by which the properties of certain experiences are established (e.g. according to a psycho-analytical rather than a behaviouristic psycho-therapeutic method) are accompanied by changes in the experiences and mental states themselves.

The connection between language and experience is a dominant theme in Hampshire's work, and its full implications will soon be developed in greater detail. At this early stage it is important to recognize that the alterations in experience that are occasioned by changes in classificatory mechanisms or method is

not a straightforward causal change. Such changes follow, according to Hampshire and Spinoza, from the nature of the intentionality of mental states, or their 'directedness' towards an object. In what follows, the concept of intentionality will be outlined very briefly, in order to provide some background to the problem of self-alterability and self-formation.

*

7. Intentionality

All higher-order mental states and experiences -- desires, wants, beliefs and emotions -- are intentional; that is, they are all <u>about</u> something. A person is angry at B for failing to pay back a loan; he is jealous of B because of his behaviour towards D; he is afraid that X; or he is hopeful that Y because of Z. In each case the subject is 'directed' towards some definite state of affairs; he is 'aiming' at something. Directedness is one of the characteristics thought to distinguish an intentional mental state or mental relation from a physical state or relation, and to secure the former's irreducibility to the latter. (The term directedness however is not an altogether happy one because of its obviously metaphorical nature.)

Despite the apparent plausibility of such a move, higher-order intentional states cannot be separated into simple components (e.g. the 'pure feeling' of anger plus the object of anger). Intentional states are essentially relational in nature. Anger

cannot be abstracted and considered as it is in itself, independently of what it is directed towards. There are no such states as anger *simpliciter*, jealousy *simpliciter*, or hope *simpliciter*: they are necessarily indexed as anger *that* x, jealous *that* y, or hope *that* z. If a person is unable to determine what he is angry, jealous or hopeful about, then it cannot be proper to describe his mental state as one of anger, jealousy or hope. Were a person to insist that he is angry, and also insist that he does not know what he is angry about, and further insist that he is unable to say anything more about his condition; such a person either would not know what anger is, or he would have no reason for describing his mental state as anger rather than as something else.

One of the peculiarities of intentional states -- again, a peculiarity thought to distinguish mental states and relations from physical ones -- is that they can be directed towards something which does not exist. To understand how this can be so, it is important to understand how the intentional object -- what the mental state is about -- is different from the relevant facts of the situation (e.g. the outstanding debt, the mad dog on the road). It is not simply the factual state of affairs about which a person is angry, afraid or jealous. It may be true to describe B as having failed to repay a $10,000 loan -- but this is not what the mental state is *about*. A person is not angry at the fact itself, that is, about certain spatio-temporal objects standing in a particular concatenation, or certain events in the space-time continuum; he is angry *that* x. The expression 'A is angry' is not completed by expressions such as 'the unpaid loan,' but by the

expression 'that the loan is unpaid'.

One of the important consequences of this -- one warranting the application of the term 'opaque' to intentional states -- is that the object of the subject's anger may not actually exist: B may have in fact repaid the loan without informing C. What his state of mind is about can only be identified under a certain description which specifies it and which (in Husserl's terminology) is 'essentially correlated' to the intentional act. A person C is angry that B has not repaid the loan. The intentional object is 'that B has not repaid the loan;' and this obviously is not the same as the fact that there is an outstanding debt.

From this brief sketch of the principle of intentionality two important consequences follow. First, changes in the intentional object are accompanied by changes in the intentional state. This is not a causal change, as if one component of the experience triggered a change in another, separate or separable, component (e.g. anger plus object, or feeling plus thought).[9] It may be occasioned by the subject's changing view of the object to which his anger or hope is directed, or by his changing view of the explanation or identification of his anger or hope. Second, there is an important complication that occurs when a mental state itself becomes the intentional 'object' of a higher-order intentional state (e.g. a belief about a belief, a desire about a desire, a belief about one's emotional patterns, a desire to change one's way of life); again, the change this effects is not a causal change. Hampshire summarizes these two consequences:

> [it] is a common characteristic of the higher mental states, and of all intentional states,

> that the subject's belief about the explanation, and therefore about the nature, of his contemporary state of mind is always one of the factors that determine what his state of mind actually is. Intentional states of mind ...are not independent objects, which remain unchanged by the subject's changing views of their nature. The subject's watching, and the conclusion of his watching in some discrimination of what his state of mind is, will be constitutive elements in his state of mind.
> (FM iv, p.236)

The historical antecedent to Hampshire's use of the concept of intentionality is to be found in Spinoza's philosophical psychology, with its strong theory of the thought-dependence and intentionality of emotions. 'Modes of thought, such as love, desire, or the emotions of the mind, by whatever name they may be called, do not exist unless in the same individual exists the idea of a thing loved, desired, etc. But the idea may exist although no other mode of thinking exist.' (Ethics, II, Axiom 3) The point of this axiom is that the subject's thought or belief about the object of his emotion is an essential constituent of his emotion. Without this thought, it would not be what it is. It is important to distinguish Spinoza's axiom from the weaker idea that the subject's thought or belief is merely about his emotion -- as if emotions could actually be separated into a feeling component and a thought component. What Spinoza is bringing out is that they are thoughts and beliefs which are inside emotions.

Thought about the object of an emotion includes a thought -- however crude and unarticulated -- about the emotion's cause, its nature and its occasion. A person can always provide an answer, however simple and crude, to the questions 'What are you angry about?' and 'Why are you angry?' His thought or belief about the explanation of his mental states

> need not have been explicitly or clearly formulated in his mind. Thought here could be no more than a vague imagining, or an unquestioned assumption....if he regretted, he had the idea of loss, even if the idea was not a fully explicit one, and even less was formulated by him at the time.
>
> (FM iv, p.240)

Thought serves to distinguish the emotion from other emotions. If a person is afraid that X because of Y, or hopes that X in light of Y, then his belief ('because of Y' or 'in light of X') must be included in any adequate account of his state of mind as one of its constituent elements -- even if it is a false belief. 'The nature, therefore, of each passive state must necessarily be explained in such a manner that the nature of the object by which we are affected is expressed.'(Ethics, III, Prop. 56) Hampshire summarizes Spinoza's claim:

> 1) The emotions and propositional attitudes are distinguished from each other principally by their actual and notional causes, where the notional cause is the subject's thought about the cause. 2) The subject's thought of the object of the emotion (what he fears, is angry with and about) and of the propositional attitudes includes a thought about the cause or occasion: if his thought of the cause or occasion is substantially changed, his thought of the object will be changed; and if the subject's thought of the object is changed, his dispositions and behaviour are correspondingly changed.[10]

Changes in a person's thought about the causes or object of his emotion, or changes in his thought about what it is, are therefore effective in changing the emotion itself. This is one of the points in Spinoza's psychology that has important implications for psycho-therapy and psycho-analysis.[11]

> Love and hatred toward any object, for example toward Peter, are destroyed if the joy and the sorrow which they respectively involve be

> joined to the idea of another cause; and they are respectively diminished in proportion as we imagine that Peter has not been their sole cause.
>
> (Ethics, III, Prop. 48)

> If we are affected by an emotion which is related to many and different causes which the mind contemplates at the same time with the emotion itself, we are less injured, suffer less from it, and are less affected therefore toward each cause than if we were affected by another emotion equally great which is related to one cause only or to fewer causes.
>
> (Ethics, V, Prop.9)

The connection between this part of Spinoza's psychology and modern-day psycho-therapy will be taken up in the section entitled 'Heteronomy, Insight and Liberation'.

*

8. The Problem of Error in Self-Description

Given the internality of the relation between linguistic resources and the discriminable objects of reference in inner experience; the principle of the intentionality of mental states; and the formative power exerted by linguistic and descriptive resources on inner experience, it would be misguided to assimilate the problem of error and corrigibility in avowals and descriptions of higher-order intentional states to the problem of the misrecognition and misidentification of independent physical objects (to which we bear only 'external' relations). Mistaken or inexact descriptions about the inner life are not like mistaken descriptions of tables, rabbits or galaxies, the real properties

and modes of givenness of which remain largely indifferent to our characterizations of them.

This of course does not mean that there are no real mistakes in self-knowledge (as the private language theorist and Cartesian maintains) -- only that the nature and conditions of such mistakes are significantly different. Before looking at the conditions of such mistakes, it is important to be clear about what kinds of mistakes can be made.

First, it is always possible to misidentify, misdescribe or 'under-specify'one's current experiences and mental states. False beliefs, inattention, inexact interpretations, false explanations or an overly-crude vocabulary of the sentiments may contribute to this. A very simple example is mistakenly-directed anger. A person C may be angry at B for what he thinks is B's deliberate neglect in failing to do something; typically, the more he focusses on this as the cause of his anger, the more inadequate will be his understanding, and the more his emotion will be excessive and passively suffered. But if it later occurs to him that he had mistakenly identified the object of his anger by failing to take into consideration certain important features of the situation -- for instance, the fact that B could not possibly have carried out his deed because of a physical disability -- then his anger will change. He (C) cannot be angry if he has nothing to be angry about. Naturally the affective disturbance of anger (e.g. physiological residues such as tension, higher blood pressure, nervousness) will not immediately evaporate with his change in belief about the object; but its direction and meaning will be altered.

Again, it may occur to C that his classification of the emotion (viz. as anger that p) is over-simplistic, crude (cf. TA p.14Ø) and 'wooden', in the sense that it omits a vast range of subtle differences between emotions. He may feel that the terms he employs in his autobiographical reports, self-ascriptions, self-analyses etc. do not 'fit' exactly what he feels or experiences. Hampshire argues that increases in the sophistication and specificity of the vocabulary of the emotions and inner states will articulate and refine the emotions and inner states themselves. Refining and articulating the vocabulary is not a matter of simply finding new names for the same underlying objects: emotions themselves change with refinements in the vocabulary that allow for greater accuracy and discrimination in the identification, individuation and description of experience.[12] What was previously experienced as anger that p may now be experienced as resentment that p or mild annoyance that p. A more sophisticated vocabulary of the emotions (such as is developed and internalized over many years of psycho-therapy or self-watching) renders a person's emotional life more sophisticated and complex.[13] 'We find more in the nature of things, and in their appearance, the more variously we view them and classify them.' (TA p.34)

Finally, literature abounds with illustrations of the misdescription and misidentification of emotions, one of the most recurrent cases of which concerns the elusive emotion of love. This sometimes reaches tragic-comic excess in the desperate lengths to which certain romantic characters go to determine whether the emotions they experience amount to real love, passing

infatuation, self-deception, recurrent emotional projection, or some less exalted form of sentimental attachment. In studying their contemporary feelings, their dark moods and their fluctuating emotions, they do not find them clearly and unequivocally labelled, and unchanging; it is this -- a certain malleability (or under-determination) of inner experience -- wherein lies their torment. They find that the relation they have to themselves is frustratingly unlike their relation to discrete, numerable, middle-sized objects; for what they are trying to identify is not an inner object to which a name or predicate is correctly or incorrectly attached.[14]

It might be thought that some of the explanatory burden in dealing with the problem of error in avowals and descriptions of the inner life could be lifted by placing the first-person perspective on the same epistemic footing as the third person perspective: describing ourselves is not in any essential way different from describing others, or being described by others. The descriptive terms are the same, as are the criteria for their applicability. This is the main thrust of the Wittgensteinian argument against private language.

It is undeniable that other persons, particularly if they are trained and more experienced, often know better than the first-person what he feels, and can therefore correct him, provide him with a name, description or interpretation, or methodically study (and offer rough predictions) of his emotions and actions; they can see a person for what he is, without the interest and bias attaching to the first-person perspective, and without the distortion that might result from the historical engagement (and

sense of 'belongingness') of the first-person perspective. But there is still an important sense in which the conditions for the application of mental predicates differ from the first to the third-person point of view: in some sense a person stands in a unique and privileged position with respect to his own inner states and experiences in a way that other persons logically cannot -- even when he is mistaken or deceived about them, and misdescribes them.

Just what is this sense? It is certainly not a matter of infallible and immediate access to our inner states (i.e. Cartesianism). Following the lead of Freudian psycho-analysis, Hampshire is careful to point out that there are a great many ways in which a person may be in error in his conception, interpretation or identification of his experiences: 'he is the authority, but he is a fallible, deceivable authority.' (FM iv, pp.236-7) In what then does this epistemic privilege lie?

A person's claim to knowledge about his own experiences does not have authority solely in virtue of the fact that it is his claim, but because the fact that his thought or belief of his experience as having a certain object and cause -- more generally, how he relates to it, assumes it and describes it -- is one of the factors which is constitutive of what his experience actually is. His description of his feeling may be incorrect, but it is still a factor in determining (or shaping, or forming) what that feeling is. Such is the deep-lying constitutive power of the mechanisms for identification, description and individuation.

> The subject of any emotion, or propositional attitude, which has an intentional object, has an authority, though not an overriding one, in determining what his state of mind is (e.g.,

> whether he fears or what specifically he fears): if he believes that he fears A, or is envious of B because of C, or that he is discouraged by D, or hopes for E because of F, this belief has to be included in any adequate account of his state of mind, even if the belief is erroneous. If the belief is erroneous, then his state of mind must be a confused and complex one.[15]

An individual may think, for instance, that what he is currently feeling about a difficult inter-personal situation is guilt; but in thinking this he may have viewed it in the wrong context, or identified it with a crude and conventional description which neglects the singular complexity of the emotion. Or, quite simply, he may have been inattentive, and unconcerned with accuracy in discriminating between his many emotions. In this sense he may be wrong about the object of his feeling, and his description an incorrect one; and in this sense another person is in a position to correct him.

But the fact that he conceives and describes his state of mind in <u>this</u> particular way will be an important element in what his state of mind actually <u>is</u>: it is not merely the wrong label, which can be replaced by another label without leaving a trace. Thus 'he cannot, so to put it, be merely wrong or wholly wrong; if he is in some way confused about his state of mind, or self-deceived, then his state of mind must be a complex and confused one.' (<u>FM</u> iv, p.237) Because a person's description or interpretation of his experiences and mental states can somehow be wrong, and because they still enter into <u>shaping</u>, <u>focussing</u> or constituting the state or experience they are wrong about, an incorrect description occasions a certain degree of distortion (ranging from weak to devastating) of the reality it identifies,

individuates and describes; thus it is that talk of inadequacy, incorrectness or unfaithfulness is closely linked to talk of illusion or deception. Naturally this raises important questions about the nature of truth as correspondence to reality -- an issue that will be addressed soon.

*

9. Stepping Back

A central principle in Hampshire's philosophy, which derives from Spinoza's concept of the idea ideae, is that at any moment in life it is always possible for a subject to 'step back' from and study his contemporary desires, wants, emotions, dispositions, motivational patterns and purposes, as well as his habits of thought and belief. In doing so he finds himself in a position to determine why they are as they are, and what they are -- and this leads ultimately to 'reflexive knowledge'. Some of the general epistemological conditions for stepping back to the observer's perspective were discussed in Chapter Three.

The ability to formulate reflexive or second-order thoughts is one of the most distinctive powers of the mind. Spinoza -- who does not use the term stepping back, or the agent-observer duality[16] -- calls it the ability to formulate ideas about ideas: 'a person who knows anything by that very fact knows that he knows, and knows that he knows that he knows, and so on ad infinitum.' (Ethics, II, Prop. 21, Note) [17] On the basis of this, Spinoza argues, 'everyone has the power, partly at least, if not

absolutely, of understanding clearly and distinctly himself and his emotions, and consequently of bringing it to pass that he suffers less from them.'(Ethics, V, Prop. 4, Note) There is, Spinoza argues, 'no emotion of which we cannot form some clear and distinct conception (Ibid., Corollary) Thoughts, construing this term widely to include beliefs and desires, may always be made the 'objects' of second-order thoughts, just as beliefs may be made the 'object' of second-order beliefs, and desires made the 'object' of second-order desires.[18] But they are not just 'objects'. What is important here, given the principle of intentionality discussed earlier, is that what a person thinks or believes about the nature and causes of his thoughts, beliefs, and desires is to some extent constitutive of them. In stepping back from and carefully reflecting upon his experiences, a person is placed at one remove from their immediacy and urgency. In so doing, and in coming to 'see round' them (TA p.215), he puts himself in a position to: a) criticize the narrow limits of his experience, emotional life and habits of thought (TA p.2Ø8); b) raise questions about his past and future which were not immediately apparent or significant in the heat of the moment, and from within the original system of classification; and c) pick out resemblances and differences between aspects of his past, and the situation confronting him, which previously were obscure. In replacing inadequate knowledge with more adequate knowledge (Spinoza's terms), he can come to understand the influences in his own environment and upbringing that have formed his habits of thought and shaped his experience.

Aware of the limits to my thought set by his-

> torical conditions, I may set myself at all times to consider my own past actions, and my present intentions, from the vantage point of other systems of thought....I may ask myself how [an] action, so identified [by myself], might be described in different ways by men who habitually attended to different features of situations and who classified actions by reference to different criteria. I would be trying to see all around my proposed conduct with a view to testing its rightness or permissibility.....This possibility of 'seeing round', and of testing an intention by alternative descriptions in any difficult case, is itself a maxim of conduct, a part of a particular moral outlook.
>
> (TA pp.214-15)

Stepping back and seeing round are not purely intellectual endeavours, as if they involved sharpening one's descriptive skills and attaching increasingly refined labels to experience; they also involve deep moral and practical changes in a person's way of life. Spinoza recognized the possibilities of restructuring and self-alteration -- more generally, the power -- that can be derived from increasing one's understanding, and defining more sharply one's emotions: 'An emotion which is a passion ceases to be a passion as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it' (Ethics, V, Prop.3); for in so far as an emotion is constituted by the thought of an external cause, the rejection of that thought as false amounts to the 'destruction' of the emotion (cf. Ethics, V, Prop.2).

Hampshire modifies the Spinozist view that with knowledge comes the power to change, by adding to it his own theory of classification. Only with the ability to review alternative conventions of thought and new possibilities of classification (TA p.214), and only with the increase in understanding to which this leads, can a person see beyond the narrow and often self-reifying

confines of his experience, and entertain real possibilities for self-alteration which do not simply presuppose it (cf. Chapter Six for Sartre's explicit denial of this possibility). He is not a prisoner of his inherited or conditioned patterns of thought and experience. With practice, he can review, and eventually adopt, alternative conventions of thought; and this, as psycho-therapies on the 'thought-end' of the spectrum of therapies demonstrate, can lead to significant practical changes in his way of life.

Hampshire argues that one of the marks of a rational person is that he knows that his own interests, emotions and purposes are comparatively confined, and that he habitually views situations and his own experiences 'largely in the set and conventional terms that he has inherited and passively learnt.'(TA p.213) He knows that there are many alternative ways of defining himself, and classifying his actions and mental states, that are not immediately apparent to him; he knows that his own self-definition -- his system of classification -- is not necessarily the richest or the most adequate one. He will, Hampshire argues, consider himself more free in his thought 'whenever he is able experimentally to detach himself from his own habits and conventions of thought and to redescribe his own situation and conduct from a new point of view and in new terms.'(TA p.213) An irrational person by contrast is ignorant of the inexhaustibility of classification; just as he passively accepts the inherited conceptual scheme as the scheme that uniquely limns the true nature of reality, so he uncritically accepts his currently-held vocabulary of the sentiments and inner states as the final and unchanging way of defining himself.

1Ø. Regret

Obviously there is a point in any individual's life when he begins to acquire this self-awareness, and to raise fundamental questions which once had been dismissed as irrelevant or non-sensical. But effecting a break with what is obvious and familiar is not itself obvious. Where, and what, is the starting point? How can a person start the train of questioning, and start to become aware of alternative possibilities of classification and self-definition, from within his own confined system of classification? As there is no meta-language from which he can assess his original system, does he not presuppose what he has learnt and passively inherited in the very attempt to disengage himself from it? Is the examination of his classification scheme and his relatively confined ways of thought not itself an act of thought, and therefore an endeavour that is condemned to begin at its goal ('it cannot come to itself because it is already there' (Hegel))?

Entering psycho-analysis, or putting oneself in the hands of a well-trained and more experienced person (e.g. a shaman, priest, village elder, wise man or educationalist), are almost sure-fire ways by which this process of self-inquiry and self-redefinition is triggered. But they still leave unanswered the question why one should be prompted to put oneself into these unusual situations in the first place. Another starting-point of self-awareness is the extreme situation: crises, anxiety, or the rapid approach of death.[19] Hampshire's account is interesting because the mechanism that he identifies as triggering the break with the given is a

mundane, unmiraculous and easily-recognizable sentiment, viz. regret over lost opportunities and unseen possibilities.[20]

Hampshire argues that even from within his narrow circles of thought and classification, a person is free to look back on his past and regret that he has habitually and uncritically moved within such confined circles, and that more various distinctions in emotion and expression have never been presented to him. A person is regretful when he recognizes that on past occasions he has failed to notice many of the more interesting features of the situation which then confronted him, the conduct he then adopted, and the emotions he then experienced. Built into his regret is the suspicion that he has been enclosed within relatively narrow habits of thought, which present to him only a limited range of action and experience.[21] This counter-factual attitude helps loosen the hold exerted by his current habits of thought -- even if the realization begins from well inside them, and may realize them as much as loosening their grip (cf. Chapter Six).

> [He] has too narrow and too crude a conception of the possibilities of behaviour and expression. He is aware, perhaps for the first time, that there are ways of discriminating and noticing differences in situations confronting him, and in manners of performance, that have never hitherto entered into his thought and intentions....
>
> (TA p.209)

Hampshire's use of the concept of regret stands in contrast with the existentialist model of the starting-point of self-awareness in two important ways: first, in its emphasis on the role of the past (i.e. looking back) rather than the future; and second, in its emphasis on a rather unspectacular sentiment that need not arise in extreme situations. Sartre by contrast denies that

regret -- as well as self-criticism and deliberation -- has any real and independent effectiveness in changing the basic structures of a person's self-definition and way of life. Regret cannot be radical; it is simply another way that the basic structures, or the most basic terms by means of which a person lives, are realized and expressed. It reflects back to a person what he already is, and not what he might have been.[22]

*

11. Freedom, Determinism and Reflexive Knowledge

Hampshire attributes a great deal of philosophical importance and explanatory power to the concepts of stepping back and reflexive knowledge: a fundamental distinction between two kinds of explanation -- one appropriate to history, psychology and other studies which require a non-reductionistic account of the familiar agential, intentional and teleological categories in which agents understand and define themselves, the other appropriate to physical sciences -- can be derived from the idea that it is a person's knowledge about the explanation of his own intentional states that 'modifies the descriptions applicable to the phenomenon explained, and also modifies the explanation itself' (FM i, pp.15-16). It is the peculiar self-modifying feature of reflexive knowledge which requires that psychological explanations be distinguished from explanations of physical states (FM iv, p.232). Reflexiveness

> is one distinguishing feature of psychological explanation, which may be a good basis for saying that deterministic conceptions cannot finally be applied without restrictions to mental events: the subject's knowledge of the cause always, in his own case, to some degree modifies the effect.[23]

In addition to carrying a great deal of the explanatory burden required to distinguish the human from the natural sciences, the self-alteration generated by a person's reflexive knowledge of the causal mechanism in his own psychic processes makes a place for what Hampshire, following Spinoza, calls freedom of mind. Just what is this? Even if a mental state is altered by the acquisition of knowledge of its causes, or a change in one's beliefs about the notional explanation, how does this secure freedom? What kind of freedom does Hampshire mean? Is it a break in the causal chain? Moreover, does an explanation have to be true to the facts to effect such a change, or does the agent simply have to believe that it is true?

Hampshire begins with the fact that an agent has an entirely different perspective on his situation from a non-participating observer, and an entirely different way of establishing what he will do when he does something.[24] In most cases he knows that he will do something because he has decided to do it -- and this is very different from the inductive knowledge that is the basis for the spectator's scientifically-established prediction of what he will do. What the agent knows, he knows from the inside.

But there is an even more important aspect of the agent's awareness of his own actions: if he becomes aware of the spectator's prediction of his behaviour, then he is in a position to try to falsify or invalidate it by trying to resist or alter

the predicted sequence of behaviour. He cannot remain indifferent to the observer's inductive knowledge of the determinants of his behaviour; his very awareness changes the situation as he confronts it, and he is forced to decide what to do in the face of the new situation. He might, for instance, come to see certain courses of action, previously considered as real life-possibilities, as falling far outside the scope of his natural powers; his inability to realize them is part of the natural and predictable course of events. Given this new awareness, and faced with a newly-articulated situation, he must decide anew.

> [An agent's] knowledge of the natural course of things -- inductive knowledge -- certainly includes knowledge of his own mental processes, including his decision-making process. But in deciding upon action, there is an unavoidable stepping back process, which entails that any inductive knowledge of what we will, or would, do, or decide to do, in the natural course of things is knowledge of the situation that confronts us: and in respect of this situation, once recognized, it must be true (logically must) either that we intend to alter it in some way, or that we intend to leave it as it is and to allow events to take their natural course.[25]

But does this refute the determinist thesis? Without stretching his thesis too far, the determinist can reply that the very attempt to alter the predicted behaviour by stepping back from it and seeing it anew is itself predictable, and no less causally determined (e.g. by early infantile conditioning) than other kinds of behaviour (cf. Hospers, above). Stepping back, the determinist argues, is not intrinsically different from any other predictable mental event, although phenomenalistically -- from the inside -- it certainly <u>appears</u> to be free, and gives us a feeling of being free. But it too can be fully explained without making reference

to the agential, intentional or teleological categories by means of which the agent defines and understands himself. In short, how is stepping back, and the self-alteration supposed to follow from it, not itself determined and predictable? How can it be a source of freedom?

Hampshire's counter-argument is based on the general idea that the target of a reflexive inquiry is altered by the very advance of the inquiry, and therefore systematically elusive; that is, the agent's newly-acquired awareness of the predictable pattern of behaviour constitutes an extra variable that is not taken into account by the original scientific study upon which the prediction is made. Hampshire argues that the recognition of a general causal pattern in one's own behaviour unavoidably alters the initial conditions targeted by the outside observer for explanation and prediction, even though the lawful connection continues to hold between the initial conditions and the originally identified and predicted state of mind. The observer's prediction is falsified by the very fact that it is made known to the agent observed, who is changed by it and thereby eludes it: it never catches up with what it sets out to do. Thus is introduced an element of unclarity and ambiguity into the determinist hypothesis, and thus a restriction is imposed upon the determinist's claim to predictive exhaustiveness and theoretical comprehensiveness. This is freedom at the vanishing point of explanation.

Hampshire illustrates this with a simple (and outdated) materialist-determinist hypothesis, according to which every distinct physical state of the organism is invariably correlated

with every state of mind. On this hypothesis, every mental state is invariably correlated with a distinct physical state that can be produced or removed by certain physical stimuli. The removal or modification of these physical stimuli will have an immediate corresponding effect on the mental state itself. A person would cease to be angry with Jones (because of y) if the appropriate physical change is made: he would only consider y as a reason for being angry when he is in the appropriate physical state; and when he is in the appropriate physical state, he would always find some reason for being angry with someone (cf. FM i, p.16; cf. also p.222).

If he comes to understand the physiological states associated with his anger at Jones, and the causes of these states, then his psychic state would be altered. What began as anger at Jones would now become an awareness of a changed physiological state, 'in relation to which Jones's action was merely an inessential occasion.' The acquisition of a deeper and more comprehensive knowledge of the associated causal mechanisms of his mental states means that he would no longer believe that Jones's action was a necessary ingredient to his anger. His mental state must now be characterized differently: he may be agitated and upset, but he is no longer angry at Jones.

It is in this way that the acquisition of knowledge of the causal explanation of an emotion changes the emotion itself: 'once convinced of the truth of the scientist's explanation', he would have to 'determine his attitude to Jones's action all over again.' (ibid. p.19, emphasis added) This is Hampshire's interpretation of Spinoza's claim that 'an emotion which is a

passion ceases to be a passion as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it,' and the associated idea that 'in proportion then as we know an emotion better is it more within our control, and the less does the mind suffer from it.' (Ethics, V, Prop. 3)

Hampshire's argument that the aspiration to an exhaustive materialist-determinist explanation cannot be satisfied does not involve refuting the determinist thesis head-on by showing that there is a break in the causal chain (i.e. contra-causal freedom):

> It is not true that as soon as I understand why I behave in a certain way, where the 'why' connects my behaviour with some regular and general causal pattern, I immediately become, by virtue of this knowledge alone, an exception to the causal law....Merely grasping or recognising a general law, or a tendency to which I am subject, by itself gives me no immunity from its operation. The slogan 'freedom is the knowledge of necessity' may suggest that it does. But recognition of a causal uniformity at least is a first step towards finding the means of evading its effects by trying to alter the initial conditions, or the boundary conditions, upon which the operation depends.
>
> (TA p.190)

Hampshire's strategy is to try to deflect the determinist's argument by revealing a logical inconsistency in its claim to exhaustiveness. He argues that there is 'an unclarity, or even an ambiguity' in the central claim of materialism that all states of mind are in principle explicable by reference to a covering law in a deterministic system of explanation, just like any other natural phenomena (FM i, p.19). Because the subject's acquisition of knowledge of the causal explanation of his state of mind changes his state from what it was, it follows, Hampshire argues, that what originally had to be explained according to the materialist hypothesis (viz. anger) has now vanished, or is now a different

experience (FM i, p.14). If the materialist explanation seeks to explain this most recently modified state, it too Hampshire argues will come to suffer from a similar setback if the agent becomes aware of the new explanation, and so on.[26] The object to be explained continually recedes, and (like Ryle's elusive 'I') systematically eludes the scope of the determinist's prediction. In the case of the causal explanation of anger, the discovered physical causes are the causes

> of that independently identifiable state which the subject previously classified as anger, thereby explaining the state in a way which he now knows to have been erroneous. The causes of that state which he has previously classified as anger will no longer be causes of anger. This is the reason why the causal explanation of intentional states and processes is not a simple matter. The reflexive knowledge of the causal mechanism constitutes a change in the effect. And this is the complexity which makes a place, as Spinoza suggested, for freedom of mind.
>
> (FM i, p.2Ø)

This in essence is Hampshire's response to the determinist charge that stepping back, and the self-alteration occasioned by it, are themselves predictable: the subject's knowledge of the explanation by itself alters the state that was targeted for explanation. This, Hampshire argues, creates an explanatory 'unclarity' or 'ambiguity',[27] even though the lawful connection continues to hold between the initial conditions and the originally-identified state of mind. This is not an ontological claim about a break in the causal chain; it is an epistemological limitation built into the structure of explanation.

The logical structure of this explanatory ambiguity reflects the logical structure of the complexity that infects the study of man

in its most general aspect -- viz. its unfinalizability (cf. Chapter Two). The target of self-inquiry is always advancing, because each new insight enlarges and complicates the originally-targeted object of study; similarly, each innovation or revolution in man's fundamental descriptions and beliefs about himself actually change their object -- man -- from what it was before. Self-inquiry is by nature pushed one step beyond itself.

The materialist hypothesis is only one model amongst many that show how self-alteration is occasioned by the acquisition of reflexive knowledge.[28] Obviously it is not the only kind of explanatory schema which involves a 'reflexive feed-back loop,' and which occasions ambiguities in exhaustive prediction: across the history of human knowledge there are many explanatory models which can to varying degrees of success explain and predict behaviour, emotions, moods and other experiences, and which yet trigger the very self-alterations that limit their scope.

*

12. The Problem of Truth in Self-Knowledge

It has already been asked <u>how</u> the self-alteration generated by an agent's knowledge of the causal mechanism in his own psychic processes makes a place for freedom of mind. But this is not the only important question: it is also important to determine if the newly-acquired explanation (or reclassification) -- or, more generally, the understanding a person acquires of his actions and

experiences -- has to be objectively true to effect such an alteration. More generally, is truth a necessary condition for self-alteration? Or is it simply a beneficial feature which may help? (One question Hampshire does not raise is whether facing the truth may be a deterrent in restructuring and redefining one's actions and experiences). Does an agent simply have to believe that the newly-acquired understanding of his experiences, or the explanation of the causes of his mental states, are true? Finally, just what are the conditions of truth here -- correspondence to reality, internal coherence, pragmatic effectiveness -- or something else? The case just studied offers some direction here: the outdated nineteenth-century materialist hypothesis in terms of which a person may identify and understand the physiological states associated with his anger need not be objectively true to effect changes in his mental states (e.g. to dissolve his anger), and to produce an ambiguity or lacuna in the explanatory schema aspiring to exhaustiveness in prediction. The subject's understanding of the physiological states associated with his anger may alter his anger even if the understanding is false or inexact, or later to be falsified (e.g. by new discoveries in physiology).

More generally, the thoughts and notional explanations under which a person views his mental states are constitutive of them independent of their truth-value; they may be as effective in shaping them and in occasioning self-alteration when they rely upon a primitive shamanistic explanatory schema that is consensually endorsed as true, and that satisfies only minimal criteria of intelligibility (e.g. coherence, scope, intuitive

plausibility), as when they rely upon rigorously tested scientific explanatory schema. Again, they may be false by all accounts but the agent's, and still be effective. Truth, in the sense of a theory, interpretation or set of beliefs corresponding to reality, or being made true in virtue of reality, is not an essential ingredient in shaping and altering a person's experience. What then is? And does isolating truth-value like this not run the risk of relativizing truth to what the agent says or believe it is?

What seems to be essential in occasioning self-alteration is the agent's conviction of the truth-value of the explanation, and not truth-value per se. The agent must be so convinced by the explanation or interpretation that he comes to make it his own: explanation must somehow become personal insight (knowledge must become decision). That in which the convincingness of the explanation or interpretation consists includes, inter alia, the satisfaction of such 'non-cognitive' criteria as intuitive plausibility, closeness to common sense, explanatory scope, theoretical elegance and internal coherence -- criteria general enough to cover explanations or interpretations of many different levels of sophistication and complexity. As long as the contents of such explanations are not wildly inaccurate and implausible, false, inexact, under-developed and unfaithful explanations will shape or alter the experiences they account for by making them more complex. Naturally there is some place where they run up against something that is resistant to their powers of alteration; but what this is cannot be identified as it is in itself, as a pure given datum.

> When the notional explanation of the feeling -- that is, the explanation that the subject gives to himself -- is changed, the state of mind is changed also, whether or not the original notional explanation was correct; secondly, when the notional explanation diverges widely from the true explanation, the true account of my state of mind must be a complex one, which exhibits this confusion.
> (FM iv, p.247)

Thoughts about what explains an emotion -- what it is, how it is different from similar emotions, why it is -- may be effective in dispelling or restructuring the emotion even though they are not objectively true. An individual's irrational fear of harmless insects (e.g. he believes them to be harmful) can be overcome if he is given reasons that convince him that they are not dangerous. But the alteration in his behaviour would occur even if the reasons which convince him are not in fact true: he may believe that certain insects are harmless because he has been told -- quite incorrectly -- that they never bite humans. What is essential is that he accept the reasons, and be convinced by them. Restrictions, obviously, are in force on the contents of the reasons given him; if the information is too specific (e.g. this individual insect on this wall will not bite) or too general (e.g. all insects are harmless), or if it is out of context (e.g. using theory-heavy dream interpretation or astrological analyses to explain mundane irrational fears), it would fail to cover the cases about which he is concerned.

Spinoza was well-aware that the truth of an explanation of one's behaviour and emotions may be what makes it acceptable and convincing -- but that explanations are not effective in changing behaviour (e.g. irrational fears) solely in virtue of being 'objectively' true. Truth may contribute to the acceptability of

an explanation or interpretation, but the explanation may produce changes in virtue of its acceptance rather than its truth-value.

> We know that, when we groundlessly fear any evil, the fear vanishes when we hear correct intelligence; but we also know, on the other hand, that, when we fear an evil which will actually come upon us, the fear vanishes when we hear false intelligence, so that the imaginations do not disappear with the presence of the truth, in so far as it is true, but because other imaginations arise which are stronger and which exclude the present existence of the objects we imagine....
>
> (Ethics, IV, Prop.1, Note)

Evidence for this is also found in psycho-analysis, which provides a subject with a new framework or set of terms in which to understand his experience. The psycho-analyst's inexact interpretations of the meaning of the analysand's past behaviour, conditioning, traumas and sexual experiences may be as effective in producing insight and therapeutic change as 'true' ones. It is the analysand's conviction of their truth, and not truth-value itself, or the truth that would emerge in the long-run (after all theoretical and factual issues were settled), that is one of the decisive signs of the validity of the analyst's interpretation.[29]

After one of Freud's interpretations, the Rat-Man 'admitted that all of this sounded plausible, but he was naturally not in the very least convinced by it.'[30] This, Freud says, is because he had not yet 'worked through' the interpretation; as he works through it, it should become evident that it accounts for more and more material. The mark of this is that his present and past experiences should become more understandable. So long as he is not fully convinced, the material must be considered unexhausted. The epistemological difficulty with this is that it still leaves

unexplained how knowledge *about* oneself becomes *self*-knowledge -- that is, how the analyst's interpretations are finally transformed, in the process of 'working through', into the analysand's conviction and insight. Is it because the interpretations are 'faithful' to objective reality -- how the analysand really is and has been -- and simply force themselves on the mind by virtue of their truth? Or is it because the analysand is *persuaded* that they are true, such persuasion arising, *inter alia*, from a number of extra-rational and extra-theoretic characteristics of the analytic situation which may have little or no bearing on truth-value?

Late in his career Freud appeared to incline towards the latter formulation, acknowledging that truth-value is not an essential ingredient in the process of working through an interpretation, in turning it into self-knowledge, and in effecting therapeutic change:

> The path that starts from the analyst's construction ought to end in the patient's recollection; but it does not always lead so far. Quite often we do not succeed in bringing the patient to recollect what has been repressed....Instead of that...we produce in him an assured conviction of the truth of the construction which achieves the same therapeutic result as a recaptured memory.[31]

This also occurs in dream interpretation: the analysand acquires 'a profound conviction of the reality of these primal scenes, a conviction which is in no respect inferior to one based on recollection.'[32]

According to Freud, what is essential is not the truth or correctness of the analyst's interpretation, but whether the analysand develops an 'assured conviction' of its truth; and this

is not something that the analyst rationally reveals to him, but something he produces in him. There is, in other words, an element of non-rational persuasion in 'working through', over and above the interpretation's truth-value and its connection with reality. Admitting this, however, raises a difficult epistemological problem which calls into question the legitimacy of psycho-analytical theory as a rigorous science: viz. the question of whether there is any (or enough) truth in the psycho-analytic theory underlying the analyst's interpretations, or whether the latter may be merely (or mostly) a vehicle of blind change -- as it were psychic surgery that simply produces conviction and change without the right points of contact with reality. In place of acquainting the analysand with himself (i.e. the edifying task of bringing him to self-knowledge), psycho-analysis may be little more than the adaptationist process of rearranging things in his head in a slightly better working order (by means of fictictious self-images that become second nature):[33]

> [There] is a popular myth about analysis -- that it makes the patient a clearer thinker, that it makes him wise and good, that people who have been analyzed know more than other people do. Analysis isn't intellectual. It isn't moral. It isn't educational. It's an operation. It rearranges things inside the mind the way surgery rearranges things inside the body -- even the way an automobile mechanic rearranges things under the hood of the car.[34]

If this latter alternative is admitted to hold in at least some cases, then it is arguable that the limited connection between theory and reality in psycho-analysis is not intrinsically different from the limited connection between theory and reality in brain-washing: both produce effects, but why this is so

remains a mystery, and independent of the underlying theory. Supporting this are a number of related factors: analysand suggestibility, the analyst's overwhelming emotional and intellectual power over the analysand,[35] the analysand's seduction by a sophisticated and popular technical discourse, self-confirming interpretations, and the placebo effect of psycho-analytic interpretations.[36]

If the practical effectiveness and therapeutic value of a psycho-analytical interpretation is not strictly dependent upon its truth-value and theoretical content, but upon its being believed and endorsed by the analysand as <u>his</u> self-knowledge, then it may be the case that such non-epistemic and extra-theoretic factors as the dynamics of internalization and endorsement, the suggestibility of the analysand, the deep-lying <u>decision</u> of the analysand to accept the analyst's picture of him, and the power of consensual endorsement -- or perhaps something deeper, perhaps even wholly independent of the fact that the interpretation is explanatory or interpretative, or even psycho-analytical -- that account for its practical and therapeutic effectiveness. It may be the case that the power of psycho-analytic therapy to occasion therapeutic change resides in the very fact <u>that</u> hitherto-unknown, inchoate or under-described experiences are now known; or, the very fact <u>that</u> a name, identifying description or interpretation is put to a sequence of experiences (independent of their theoretical content, or of <u>what</u> the name or description is).

At the most rudimentary level -- a level damaging to any claim psycho-analysis makes about leading the analysand to objectively true self-knowledge and insight -- it may be the case that once an

unintelligible and disconnected set of experiences is named, its 'spell' and disruptive nature is broken; the analysand is given a set of terms and relationships that enable him to fit his experiences into an intelligible whole. What is crucial for effecting therapeutic change is not the truth of the interpretation proffered by the analyst, but its meaningfulness and intelligibility (assuming that it obeys a certain number of minimal conditions such as internal coherence, explanatory scope, intuitive plausibility, and consensual endorsement).[37] But this, arguably, leaves psycho-analysis on a theoretical par with shamanism, myth, astrology and other meaningful -- but not necessarily true -- methods purporting to lead to self-insight.[38] And if meaning rather than objective truth is the central issue in self-definition and self-alteration, then conditions deeper than the acquisition of knowledge must be sought to account for self-alteration. This, essentially, is Sartre's position.

*

13. Heteronomy, Insight and Liberation

Characteristically, Hampshire grounds his account of self-determination and autonomy on the acquisition of reflexive knowledge and the improvement of the understanding. In developing this, he draws upon Spinoza's goal of freedom from bondage of the passions, and freedom of thought (TA p.210), as well as the concept of therapeutic change and cure in Freudian psycho-

analysis.

Liberation through the acquisition of self-knowledge leads to self-determination and autonomy, the end result of which bears certain superficial similarities to the existentialist concept of authenticity. One noticeable point of overlap, for instance, is their respective use of the concept of passivity in connection with the lack of self-awareness: an heteronomous person fails to do anything with his life, or make something out of himself. He confronts his life and his experiences passively, without assuming them or imposing any order, and without wanting to be different in his desires, purposes, emotions, etc. from what he is. Thus he is not self-active, and he does not transcend his situation. He leads an unexamined and uncritical life.

But there are also many profound differences between self-determination in the existential sense of authenticity, and self-determination in the rationalist sense of liberation from ignorance, irrational passions and unconscious impulses. Most simply, the former is grounded in freedom of choice, the latter in freedom of thought and intelligence. Many of the differences between these different views can be explained by differences in the main 'unit' of explanation operant in their respective models of the person: the basic 'unit' of explanation for the existentialists is a person's existence, his way of being, whereas Hampshire's is the mental states, dispositions, emotions and motivational patterns that make up a person's character and way of life.[39] Existentialists argue that that to which a person relates in relating himself to himself is his very existence, his being; according to Hampshire, it is a relation to the emotions, desires,

dispositions and deep-lying tendencies that give his life a certain overall 'trajectory' (TA p.222). Such terms as 'way of being' and 'man's existence' -- as well as the idea of taking up a relation to one's impending future and death -- do not underpin Hampshire's account of the self-relation.[40]

The differences between these different visions of liberation and the ends of life can also be brought out clearly by looking at their respective pictures of heteronomy. Hampshire draws on Freud and Spinoza, rather than Kierkegaard, Heidegger and the existentialist tradition -- many of whose representatives have been more than suspicious of the concepts of drives, unruly passions and the unconscious, and most of whom criticize at length the use of reason, and the primacy of place accorded to knowledge. Existentialists do not dispute many of the empirical and phenomenological observations made by Spinozists and psycho-analysts about heteronomous behaviour -- for example, recurrent and self-destructive emotional patterns, indecisiveness, irresponsibility, self-ignorance and inconstancy; but they deny explanations which rely on the concept of the unconscious and past determinants, instead of the concepts of choice and future-directedness.

For Hampshire, knowledge and understanding, and not radical choice, take primacy of place in the question of the ends of life; the freedom that a person lacks or enjoys 'is not an absolute freedom of the will, but rather a relative freedom of intelligence.'(TA 209-10) In the rationalist tradition in which Hampshire stands, heteronomy is conceived as bondage through ignorance and the tyranny of destructive emotions. It is a kind

of unfreedom of thought (TA p.210). An irrational and enslaved person is one who is not active in reviewing the wide range of his states of mind, opinions and intentions; he 'passively finds them forming and changing without the deliberate imposition of an order on them. He is so much less free and self-determining.' (TA p.268)

From Spinoza Hampshire takes the idea that a man's bondage is due largely to a relative passivity of thought, to ignorance of the causes of his states of mind, and to limited and habit-ridden ways of thought and perception. Spinoza characterizes heteronomy as the unchecked play of desires, and the 'fluctuation' of the mind reflecting the multifarious influences of Nature to which it is subject; this is a state of fantasy and obsession, which Spinoza designates by a term Kant was soon afterwards to elevate to a level of explanatory pre-eminence: imagination. In ordinary experience 'we are disturbed by external causes in a number of ways, and...like the the waves of the sea agitated by contrary winds, we fluctuate in our ignorance of our future and destiny.' (Ethics, III, Prop.59, Note) Man is so dominated by emotions and passions of which he is largely ignorant that 'we say that he is delirious or mad'; emotions such as 'avarice, ambition, lust, etc. are a kind of madness' (Ethics, IV, Prop. 44, Note), and they 'indicate our impotence'. This is not heteronomy as the enslavement of the will (as in Kant); it is the enslavement of the understanding. Spinoza describes the enslaved mind as to a greater or lesser degree disintegrated, because the train of its thoughts is not determined by the subject's own activity. When for instance a man isolates a single object or cause as the centre

of his interest, and as the sole source of his joy or sorrow, he is failing to realize the infinite complexity and hugeness of the causal network in nature, and therefore neglecting the complex multi-factorial form that any adequate explanation of his interest or pleasure will have to take. He forgets the sheer inadequacy of his understanding, owing to his place in nature as a finite intelligence occupying a narrow perspective. One of the practical errors consequent to this intellectual obsession will be an emotional obsession -- loving or hating a particular thing with blind and self-destructive concentration (cf. Ethics, IV, Prop. 44).

> Instead of being detached and skeptical in reflecting on the infinite complexity of the causes, we shall be uncritically certain that we have identified the original good or evil within our environment. We shall therefore tend to act as if our welfare depended solely upon the destruction or preservation of this particular thing. Our conduct will for a time exhibit the same blind and helpless partiality, the same imaginative obsession with one thing, suggested to us by our environment, as the true cause of our present pleasure or suffering.
>
> (FM ii, p.189)

An awareness of the necessary incompleteness of our understanding is in itself one of the starting-points for self-knowledge, and the eventual transformation of negative and destructive passions into active and self-determining states. 'When the mind contemplates itself and its own powers of acting, it rejoices, and it rejoices in proportion to the distinctness with which it imagines itself and its power of action.' (Ethics, III, Prop.53) The final end towards which a man's reflexive knowledge is directed is freedom of mind and happiness (beatitudo), which consist in the contemplation of the system of

Nature as a whole.

> The free man is wholly absorbed in the development and exercise of his own powers of mind and body, and is always aware of his status as a finite mode of Nature. As he becomes less and less affected by passive emotions, and in proportion as his knowledge increases, he becomes more and more identified in his own mind with the whole process of Nature; the order of his ideas approximates more and more closely to the order of ideas which constitutes God's thought; he becomes progressively detached from his particular interests as a particular person interacting with a particular environment, and he comes to view all things sub specie aeternitatis.[41]

From Freud Hampshire takes the idea that much of a person's life is under the domination of the unconscious, so that often he simply does not know what he is really doing. There are many times when he 'may be said to be pursuing a policy, and executing a plan, without in any sense knowing that that is what he is doing.' (TA p.132) In many situations a person is simply incapable of recognizing and controlling influences upon his conduct that may be evident to others (ibid. p.191).

With Freud Hampshire acknowledges the existence of unconscious processes and irrational, aggressive, destructive impulses, many of which originate in childhood and exert a powerful and often unseen influence over the course of a person's life. A neurosis is a kind of self-ignorance. Freud borrows a Platonic metaphor to illustrate the domination of the unconscious: the relation between consciousness and the unconscious, or the ego and the id, is like the relation between a rider and a horse:

> The horse provides the locomotive energy, and the rider has the prerogative of determining the goal and of guiding the movements of his powerful mount toward it. But all too often we find a picture of the less ideal situation in

> which the rider is obliged to guide his horse in the direction in which it itself wants to go.[42]

Both Hampshire and Freud maintain that the way these unruly forces can be controlled and diminished, and the way autonomy can be achieved, is to be found in Spinoza's concept of reflexive knowledge: the recognition and understanding of the forces that govern our lives is the first step to discovering how we can control them. The realization of the depth of influence of unconscious drives and motives in my actions and experiences 'sets me free to control, or at least to try to modify, unconscious intentions, as awareness of my passions as being of a certain kind sets me free to control and direct their natural expressions.' (TA p.133)

> As an applied science, psycho-analysis identifies the increasing freedom of the agent to control his own conduct and states of mind with an extended self-consciousness, with a capacity to recognise in memory motives and purposes that he had not recognised before. Psycho-analysis therefore provides a reflexive knowledge of the workings of the mind that fits into the philosophical definition of freedom in terms of self-knowledge.
> (TA p.255)

Some, but obviously not all, of the goals of Freud's psycho-analytic therapy resemble those Spinoza postulated as the outcome of the improvement of the understanding and the acquisition of reflexive knowledge:[43] viz. to lead the analysand to a rational (self-) understanding of the previously unacknowledged causes and motivations of his neuroses, irrational feelings, recurrent emotions and forms of behaviour; and, by using his own reason, and by criticizing, deliberating and reflecting upon these causes, to overcome them and control them, and achieve a partial

liberation from their tyranny. Only after they have been made conscious by the work of reflection and analysis can unconscious impulses be recognized as belonging to the past, robbed of their 'charge of energy', and deprived of their significance.

> Talk is therapeutic in itself. By talking about the instincts, Freud says, we do not cause the instinctual demand to disappear... but we accomplish a 'taming' of the instinct. Through talking about sexuality we can control it, so the healthy man can choose to express his sexual appetite and yet not be irrationally driven by it. Self-mastery being a function of self-consciousness, by making sexual desires conscious, says Freud, we gain mastery over them to a degree no system of repression can possibly equal. Talk -- language -- is the essential medium of consciousness, and therefore the essential means of liberation.[44]

Freud describes the therapeutic process as putting the analysand in a position 'to extend, by the information we give him, his ego's knowledge of his unconscious.'[45] 'The method by which we strengthen the patient's weakened ego has as its starting point an increase in the ego's self-knowledge.'[46] Again, 'we induce the patient's thus enfeebled ego to take part in the purely intellectual work of interpretation, which aims at provisionally filling the gaps in his mental resources.'[47]

> The psycho-neuroses are substitutive satisfactions of some instinct the presence of which one is obliged to deny to oneself and others. Their capacity to exist depends on this distortion and lack of recognition. When the riddle they present is solved and the solution accepted by the patients these diseases cease to be able to exist. There is hardly anything like this in medicine, though in fairy tales you hear of evil spirits whose power is broken as soon as you can tell them their name -- the name which they have kept secret.[48]

*

14. Criticism

The principal criticisms of Hampshire and Spinoza's rationalist theory of self-knowledge, self-definition and self-alteration have already been broached in Chapter Three, in the discussion of the validity of the observer's perspective and its respective order of explanation. These criticisms can be summarized succinctly by a series of questions: is knowledge and insight enough? Is knowing the causes of one's mental states enough to occasion self-alteration or therapeutic change? Does stepping back to the observer's perspective falsify life as it is actually lived in the heat of the moment, and confer on it a neatness, clarity and orderliness that is bought only at the price of suppressing the profoundly historical-temporal dimension of human reality? Are rational powers (e.g. detachment, self-observation, criticism and deliberation) separable from a person's deepest emotional and motivational make-up, and free from corruption and rationalization? More generally, what is the relation between thought and being in the relation a person has to his own reality? Is it the case, as Sartre says of Kierkegaard, that

> whatever one may say or think about suffering, it escapes knowledge to the extent that it is suffered in itself, for itself, and to the degree that knowledge remains powerless to transform it....Kierkegaard is right: grief, need, passion, the pain of men, are brute realities which can neither be surpassed nor changed by knowledge....[Kierkegaard] insists above all on the primacy of the specifically real over thought, that the real cannot be reduced to thought.[49]

i) Hampshire is not entirely clear about the exact role played by reflexive knowledge in occasioning self-alteration and eventual

liberation or therapeutic change, or the extent to which a person's mental states are 'formed' and 'focussed' by his attentive watching and articulation. Given the heavy explanatory burden carried by the concept of reflexive knowlege, it may seem that knowledge is a sufficient condition in occasioning self-alteration -- as if self-conscious thought, and insight into the causes of one's emotions, were all that is required in modifying them (and rendering one self-responsible). Hampshire's claim that only with knowledge comes the opportunity of choice and full responsibility is not always kept distinct from the much stronger idea that full responsibility always follows from knowledge.

> I cannot escape the burden of intention, and therefore of responsibility, which is bestowed upon me by knowledge of what I am doing, that is, by recognition of the situation confronting me and of the difference that my action is making. As soon as I realize what I am doing, I am no longer doing it unintentionally.
> (TA p.175)

The weak point of this conceptual connection, however, is that it does not distinguish clearly enough between intention, knowledge and responsibility for marginal and complex cases, and does not allow enough room for the multiform gradations of knowledge and intention in human behaviour. It does not, for instance, distinguish clearly enough between doing something unintentionally, and doing it unknowingly, or no longer doing something unintentionally and no longer doing it unknowingly. Nor does it fully account for those many 'grey areas' of human behaviour where, because of deep-lying emotional problems, full intention and responsibility are not normally ascribed to a subject, even though it is recognized that he is, in some sense, aware of what he is doing. Just what are these 'grey areas'?

The limits on the effectiveness of an individual's effort to reshape and redefine his emotions, dispositions or character traits by reflecting on them and learning about their causes are strikingly brought out in the case of deep-lying psycho-neurotic and psycho-pathological disturbance. Certain types of neuroses, destructive emotional patterns and personality disorders are so deep-rooted and powerful that the sufferer's very attempt to learn about them, to alter them, to find means to minimize their effects, or to take responsibility for them, are themselves symptoms and expressions of the pathological causes. They simply represent a new way of realizing them, and not real and independent actions. Hospers is correct at least on extreme pathology: the very effort spent in trying to alter certain inherited or conditioned character defects and other severe disorders is itself a product of heredity or conditioning over which a person has very little actual control, even after many years of attempted restructuring and therapeutic intervention.[50]

It would be a hard and unforgiving form of psycho-therapy which, in failing to grant validity to the distinction between no longer doing something unintentionally and no longer doing it unknowingly, maintained that as soon as an anorexic realises what he is doing, and why he is doing it, he is no longer doing it unintentionally; and, that in becoming aware of his problem, and the long-term bodily damage it is wreaking, he is necessarily faced with the choice either to acquiesce to the deep-lying causes of his problem, or to try to find the means of diverting or minimizing its effects (i.e. making a policy of action) (TA p.187).

But extreme cases of psycho-pathology are not the only empirical counter-instances to the conceptual connection Hampshire makes between knowledge, responsibility and intention. It is a commonplace of psycho-analysis and psycho-therapy that even in the most mundane behaviour reason (e.g. the ability to be detached and rational in self-observation) is often pressed into service by unconscious impulses to provide rationalizations and self-deceptive stratagems. Reason is not the independent faculty or impartial judge it purports to be.

More importantly, it is also a commonplace in psycho-therapy that the simple acquisition of knowledge and insight often has very little practical or therapeutic effect, even on less extreme kinds of neuroses and emotional problems; many other conditions that are not necessarily related to the acquisition of knowledge, or the content of knowledge, must be satisfied before positive change and eventual liberation can be achieved (e.g. the right material circumstances, the right timing of the acquisition of insight). Freud maintains that 'if we communicate to a patient some idea which he has at one time repressed but which we have discovered in him, our telling him makes at first no change in his mental condition.'[51] What he lacks is a sense that the knowledge is his own, that it is self-knowledge. In ''Wild' Psychoanalysis' Freud writes:

> If knowledge about the unconscious were as important for the patient as people inexperienced in psycho-analysis imagine, listening to lectures or reading books would be enough to cure him. Such measures, however, have as much influence on the symptoms of nervous illness as a distribution of menu cards in a time of famine has on hunger.[52]

Moving to a more general level, the problems incurred by failing

to distinguish clearly enough between intention and knowledge reveal a deeper problem in Hampshire's model of man: viz., that reason is not an independent and impartial faculty in dealing with the emotions and the will. Iris Murdoch criticizes Hampshire's theory for picturing man as divided up too neatly into a composite of reason (which gives us knowledge of our tendencies), will (which is the capacity to decide about our tendencies), and emotion. Self-knowledge is the opening of possibilities before us in a manner independent of the will. Hampshire

> refuses to allow that feelings might put pressure on reason in a way that couldn't be controlled by the will. For he wishes to keep reason intact and uninfluenced by anything outside itself. Or rather, if it is influenced by anything outside itself, perhaps by a particular emotion, he wants to say that reason can step back and make a new assessment of this total situation, and that in light of this assessment the will can make a new decision. But is this realistic?[53]

Sartre's radicalization of this criticism will be discussed in the following chapter. It is interesting to note here, however, that the philosopher who has exerted the most influence on Hampshire -- Spinoza -- seems to be more sensitive to the corruptibility of reason by the passions, and to the many gradations that exist between knowledge, reflexive knowledge and emotion. Because of the weakness of reason in its search for the causes of the passions, and the total or partial failure to which it is always susceptible in modifying and redefining them, Spinoza was careful to distinguish between knowledge as a necessary and a sufficient condition for effecting liberating change from the bondage of the passions: by itself, knowledge is not enough, and it requires compensation in a form other than knowledge -- viz.

desirable and non-destructive emotions.

An emotion, Spinoza maintains, 'cannot be restrained nor removed unless by an opposed and stronger emotion.' (Ethics, IV, Prop.7) Reason must use the energy and power of the emotions to change the emotions, for 'no emotion can be restrained by the true knowledge of good and evil in so far as it [the knowledge] is true, but only in so far as it is considered as an emotion.' (Ethics, IV, Prop.14) By itself, knowledge is not enough. It must somehow be transformed into an active emotion that is more powerful than the destructive and undesirable emotions which enslave a person. Reflexive knowledge must itself be a kind of power, viz. the power by which it is possible, if not actually to destroy the enslaving passions, at least to make them constitute the smallest possible part of the mind (cf. Ethics IV, Prop.2Ø, Note).

ii) There is one further consideration to be made when assessing the full extent of the power exerted by knowledge in self-definition and self-alteration, viz. the question of what makes knowledge self-knowledge. The full implications of this consideration will be taken up and developed in the following chapter on Sartre, in the analysis of his criticism of the 'illusion of the primacy of knowledge'.

The proliferation of interpretative and explanatory schema assures that many alternative and often conflicting explanations, interpretations, descriptions and visions of human experience present themselves to any thoughtful and self-aware individual during the course of his lifetime.[54] He is faced with a veritable marketplace of ideas for conceiving and shaping the self. Different modes of experience and ways of being human, different

psychological vocabularies and forms of expression, and different ranges of emotion, are opened up and explorable through encounters with other persons, as well as through encounters with therapies, religions, and forms of literary and artistic expression.[55]

But an individual's acceptance of an explanatory scheme, interpretative framework, etc. as comprising genuine self-knowledge and self-insight -- his gradual conviction about its truth or appropriateness -- is not itself wholly a matter of knowledge and insight.[56] In the process of developing a conviction about its truth, and making it his own, the various epistemic activities in which he engages -- adducing grounds, testing for explanatory strengths and weaknessess, and weighing different criteriological factors (e.g. plausibility, internal coherence) -- ultimately come to an end. They do not carry a person across the divide that separates the mere possession of knowledge from the 'living' possession of self-knowledge.

The fact that the final acceptance of the verdict of an explanation or interpretation as constituting self-knowledge is not itself wholly brought about by knowledge is important, and connects with the discussion in the following chapter. For it suggests that the mere possession of knowledge fails to produce the strong sense of belongingness or ownness that characterizes self-knowledge;[57] a number of non-epistemic factors (e.g. choice) also have a role in the acceptance of something as a valid explanation or interpretation, of allowing oneself to be convinced by it, and of somehow making it one's own. (This is similar to Polanyi's theory of the strong personal and 'tacit' element in knowledge.) In self-definition and self-alteration something

deeper is at work -- something that is not itself the work of knowledge.

(Independently of the question of the acceptance of particular explanations or interpretations as knowledge, it is arguable that the very acceptance of the verdict and dictates of knowledge -- rather than the acceptance of the deliverances of blind faith, intuition or superstition -- is not itself wholly a matter of knowledge. Obviously such an argument challenges the rationalist belief in the self-evident desirability of knowing as much as possible about things.)

This points to a more fundamental problem about the relation between knowledge and being, and a related meta-philosophical problem about the primacy of epistemology, and its relation to ontology. Knowledge (as Kierkegaard argued) may tell me about my past, what moves me to action, and what explains my experiences and character. But it will not by itself answer the fundamental practical questions by telling me who I should be, or how to be; nor will the simple acquisition and possession of true explanations of my behaviour and experience tell me how to internalize them and make them my own (i.e., put them 'on all fours' with how I am for myself). Something more -- a choice or act of personal commitment -- is required. From the fact that true explanations and characterizations may successfully settle the issue of what I am, and why I am as I am, it does not follow that they successfully work out the question 'Who am I?'.

The gap between the mere possession of knowledge, and actually living it and putting it to practical use, can be brought out by a thought experiment. Even if per impossibile the knowledge

available to me comprised an ideally complete and accurate state description of everything that makes me what I am -- as it were a 'theory of everything' linking up into one internally coherent framework the various psychological, sociological, biological, genetic and neurophysiological descriptions of every state comprising my life-history -- I would still not know how to make it mine, and how to be what I now know of myself.[58] The relation that I would have to this ideal state description would not be intrinsically different from the relation that someone else could have to it. The problem of 'belongingness' would always get in the way (cf. also Chapter Three, Section 2). (Hence Merleau-Ponty's assertion: 'I cannot conceive myself as nothing but a bit of the world, a mere object of biological, psychological or sociological investigation. I cannot shut myself up within the realm of science.')[59]

Ultimately, these issues point to the problem of the primacy of knowledge, and the relation between knowledge and experience in reflexive matters. It may be case that the depths to which a person must penetrate in real self-inquiry are resistant to the various (intellectualistic) activities that Hampshire considers essential for self-knowledge and self-alteration, viz. regretting, stepping back, reviewing, clarifying, criticising, deliberating, reclassifying and acquiring knowledge of the causes of one's mental states. Hidden in these depths are the very conditions for stepping back, reviewing, criticizing, etc. -- conditions which are not themselves a possible subject for the activities they condition. They mark out the 'blind-spot'[60] in self-inquiry and self-definition. The ideal Hampshire identifies of the completely

rational, lucid, self-aware man (cf. TA p.256) is not just unattainable but impossible.

The idea that something must remain behind the activity of knowledge and inquiry if anything is to be known[61] (i.e. that some of the deep-lying sources of our epistemic activities are not possible objects of our attention, criticism, deliberation and knowledge) means that knowledge carries us only so far: what makes the acquisition of knowledge and insight (such as Hampshire conceives it) possible is not itself a matter of knowledge and insight. We find confronting us in the field of self-inquiry a blind spot that hides something we cannot explicate and specify, or take into account in our inquiry, because it is what makes inquiry possible. Every attempt to apprehend it and gain some insight into it inevitably presupposes it, and therefore falls short. Thus it is that the depths of the soul give themselves as profoundly elusive. The transcendental distinction between the condition or source of epistemic activity, and the activity itself, refers us to Sartre's theory of self-knowledge.

CHAPTER VI

Sartre's Theory of Self-Knowledge and Self-Definition

> Every person is always faced in his own lifetime with the task of wresting his life from the various forms of night.
>
> -- Sartre

1. Introduction

Sartre's theory of self-knowledge is based on the general idea that man is a self-defining and self-interpreting being, and that changes in the way he defines himself, interprets himself and projects himself towards his ends, are accompanied by changes in what he is. Man defines himself by his project; he is 'defined by his choice of ends' (BN p.468): 'what makes his person known to him is the future and not the past; he chooses to learn what he is by means of ends towards which he projects himself.' (ibid.) Sartre summarizes these ideas in programmatic fashion in the lecture Existentialism is a Humanism:

> Atheistic existentialism...states that if God does not exist, there is at least one being in whom existence precedes essence, a being who exists before he can be defined by any concept, and that this being is man....What is meant here by saying that existence precedes essence? It means that, first of all, man exists, turns up, appears on the scene, and, only afterwards, defines himself. If man, as the existentialist conceives him, is indefinable, it is because at first he is nothing. Only afterward will he be something, and he himself will have made what he will be.[1]

Sartre's development of the central idea that man is a self-defining being is importantly different from Hampshire's, and carries several steps further the criticisms that were made at the end of the last chapter. Although they both discuss, in different terminology, a person's ability to step back from his character and situation, to assess them anew, and to choose a new perspective on the world and himself; and although they both conceive the ability to withdraw as a sign of human freedom, and man's distinctive talent for defining and redefining himself, Sartre's view is more radical, and much less intellectualistic, than Hampshire's. Sartre argues on a transcendental level that man <u>is</u> freedom; the capacity to withdraw from things is a given. Hampshire argues that freedom is achieved; stepping back is a gradual, effortful activity. More importantly, Sartre conceives the <u>modus operandi</u> of self-definition and self-alteration not as the acquisition of knowledge and the exercise of reason, but as something which is ostensibly much deeper -- something which is presupposed by these particular epistemic activities, and which founds them: viz. radical choice, and the fundamental project. This is central to his criticism of epistemology, and the foundational status given to knowledge in modern philosophy. Knowledge is not enough in self-definition and self-alteration; nor is reason an independent and impartial faculty in dealing with the emotions, the will and the obscure depths of one's being.

Sartre's concept of radical choice and projection will be explicated in the following pages; at the outset, however, it is important not to give radical choice a too voluntaristic and intellectualistic reading, as if we choose the way we define

ourselves and change ourselves in the same way we choose this or that car, or choose this or that particular description under which to view our emotions. Following Kant, Sartre sees man as a active meaning-conferring being who defines himself and sets limits to his own experience: but this constitutive activity is not itself derived from experience. Self-definition as the radical choice of meaning occurs on a transcendental level; it is what makes meaningful experience possible, but is not itself within experience as a discrete or isolable part. Sartre describes it in characteristically transcendental terms as fundamental and total.

The transcendental interpretation of self-definition clearly distinguishes Sartre's from Hampshire's theory. For the latter, self-definition and self-formation are gradual; they are built up slowly, by forming and focussing one's mental states and emotions -- a process that occurs through watching and describing them, criticizing oneself, and using a richer and more differentiated vocabulary.

Part of Sartre's general critique of the epistemological approach to the problem of self-knowledge rests on the argument that epistemic activities such as stepping back from oneself, observing oneself, criticizing one's past self, reasoning, and deliberating about courses of action and life-possibilities, necessarily presuppose a transcendental level which is exceedingly difficult to clarify and specify, and which is not itself subject to these activities. Something must remain <u>behind</u> knowledge and the exercise of reason if anything is to be known or made the subject of reasoning; the deep-lying source of our epistemic,

theoretical and voluntative activities is not a possible object for them. Because that which makes the acquisition of knowledge and insight possible is not itself a matter of knowledge and insight, the analysis of the problem of self-knowledge and self-definition must be pushed still deeper.

This general idea will be the subject of much of the following chapter. By way of introduction, some light might be shed on it by considering the logical structure of higher-order investigative activities such as deliberation and self-criticism. When we deliberate about choices, courses of action and life-possibilities, we do not at the same time deliberate about our current deliberating; nor can we at the same time fully specify <u>why</u> we notice and deliberate about these particular life-possibilities and not others. Later, naturally, we can turn back and try to specify why. But this higher-order noticing and deliberating is after the fact, and it too suffers the same limitation as the first-order deliberation. Similarly, when we criticize our past actions and emotional patterns, we do not at the same time criticize our criticizing; nor can we fully specify at the time why we pick out these particular actions and emotions, and not others, for criticism.

Such higher-order activities cannot be the activities upon which they are performed (or, in Sartre's more sweeping terms, the totalizing consciousness is not simultaneously the consciousness totalized).[2] Something underlies these activities, and makes them possible, without itself being a possible subject for them. In general, such activities as deliberating, criticizing, reviewing cannot be radical. This points the way to a much more general

conclusion: knowledge depends on something -- for Sartre, a choice, a deep-lying engagement and way of being in the world -- which knowledge (and, more generally, epistemology) cannot itself account for, because it presupposes it.

Failure to take account of this underlying condition of possibility, and the limits imposed by it, often inhibits and distorts the search for self-knowledge. When such activities as reflecting, criticizing and deliberating ignore these limits, and confuse the transcendental level with the experience it makes possible, problems invariably arise. Going beyond the 'bounds of experience' in this way is not a purely theoretical or intellectual error; it results in the production of a false, over-simplistic, over-unified perspective on the object that is the focus of their attention -- viz. one's own life. Sartre's theory is interesting for its sustained attempt to show how activities such as these -- activities aimed at getting a clearer vision of who one is, and wresting one's life from the darkness -- typically lead to distortions of the very experience they are meant to clarify and reveal: e.g. impure reflection, the retrospective illusion, the ego as a false synthetic construct, le survol.

The other important part of Sartre's critique of epistemology, based on a critique of causality (BN pp.448-49), rests upon the claim discussed earlier, viz. that knowing what moves us to action, what accounts for our emotional patterns, and why our desires etc. are as they are, is not enough for self-definition and self-formation. Knowing what we are, and why we are as we are, are not enough to tell us who we are, or who we should be.

Similarly, the mere possession of objective or causal knowledge does not produce the sense of ownness or belongingness necessary for self-knowledge: it will not reveal me to myself as I am for myself. Something more is needed -- for Sartre, a deep-lying choice or engagement -- which is not itself the work of knowledge.

Sartre rests this argument upon an important distinction between knowledge (connaissance) -- which he characterizes as 'thetic', 'positional' and analytical, and as 'supposing reliefs, levels, an order, heirarchy' (BN p.155), and a subject-object dualism -- and lived, prereflective experience: the experience that makes up the warp and woof of daily life is not based upon or mediated by this knowledge, but is that upon which knowledge is 'founded'. There is, in Sartre's terms, an incompatibility between the lived and the known. This too distinguishes Sartre from Spinoza and Hampshire, for whom knowledge cannot be separated from experience, or the cognitive from the affective.

Sartre's criticism of the foundationalist status accorded to epistemology, and his idea that knowing is only a 'founded' mode of access to the real, is based on Heidegger's 'relocation' of knowledge vis à vis Dasein's being-in-the-world; the thinking and knowing subject is an abstraction from the totality of the person qua being enmeshed in the world. Heidegger argues that a

> a 'commercium' of the subject with a world does not get created for the first time by knowing, nor does it arise from some way in which the world acts upon a subject. Knowing is a mode of Dasein founded upon Being-in-the-world. Thus Being-in-the-world, as a basic state, must be Interpreted beforehand.[3]

But if one of Sartre's concerns is to attack what he calls the illusion of the primacy of knowledge, and (like Heidegger) to

resituate the claim of knowledge and reason with respect to being (i.e. ontology, and not epistemology, is fundamental philosophy), then he is not denying the possibility of self-knowledge. He is giving it a different sense, by formulating it as an ontological and phenomenological problem with a transcendental dimension, rather than an epistemological problem. Naturally this may seem a little unusual, since the very grammar of the term self-knowledge suggests that it is essentially a problem of knowledge. But it is undeniable that self-knowledge in a very broad sense of the term -- coming to grips with our lives, working out the fundamental practical questions, determining who we are and what we are doing with our lives, changing ourselves, overcoming self-deception and self-estrangement -- is a central preoccupation of Sartre's philosophy.

> What I'm trying to say is that people -- people everywhere -- wish their own life, with all its dark places that they sense, to be an experience not only lived, but presented. They would like to see it disengaged from all the elements that crush it; and rendered essential by an expression that reduces what crushes them to inessential conditions of their person. Everyone wants to write because everyone has a need to be meaningful -- to signify what they experience. Otherwise it all slips away -- you go about with your nose to the ground, like the pig made to dig for truffles -- and you find nothing....[4]

We are 'in question' just in being alive and in having to be, and we have the task of learning about ourselves and making sense of our lives. But we do not achieve this by taking a point of view on our lives -- our 'project of being' -- for we have no meta-language or meta-project -- as it were no Archimedean point -- from which to observe the overall passage and meaning of our lives. We are deeply situated in the midst of our life-history,

and must try to come to terms with ourselves with only very limited intellectual resources, and limited vision (like Neurath's mariner's or Neruda's butterflies). The way we actually formulate and work out the fundamental practical questions about life is itself part of the very process and order that the questions are about: we pose them with our lives, and not as spectators standing outside life. With Kierkegaard and Heidegger, Sartre argues that the basic questions of existence are worked out by existing.

Sartre therefore can be classed as falling into the broad post-Kantian tradition mentioned in Chapter One -- a tradition characterized by its wide-ranging critique of the model that pictures man as essentially a knower whose most basic relation to reality is an epistemic or theoretical one. If our epistemic activities necessarily fall short because they presuppose a transcendental level which they cannot fully articulate and uncover, then there must be other, non-epistemic and non-theoretical routes of access to ourselves, and other ways of defining ourselves. We are not closed off from ourselves just because our epistemic activities fall short. Amongst the alternative routes of access that Sartre identifies are pre-ontological comprehension (based on Heidegger's concept of pre-understanding), interpretation, pure reflection and anguish.

Naturally this raises the question of what self-knowledge is about. Like Hampshire and many other contemporary philosophers mentioned earlier, Sartre is critical of the realist concept of 'the facts', the given, or reality as it is in itself independently of man's constitutive activity. He is particularly

critical of the application of these concepts to human reality, as if we could identify a noumenal self, an human nature, or an unchanging essence. Sartre defends the general idea that there is a virtually inseparable 'inter-relation' between the constituted and the given, choice and facticity; what man has been made into, and what he makes of himself, cannot be analysed and separated into two discrete components. 'We find no given in human reality -- human reality in the sense that temperament, character, passions, principles of reason would be so acquired or innate data existing in the manner of things.' (BN p.476)

But Sartre's use of the complementary concepts of constituting activity and empirical under-determination tends to be more radical than the other philosophers mentioned earlier; moreover, he divorces these concepts from a strictly epistemological interpretation (i.e. constituting is part of man's very being, and not only a property of the knowing-knower equation). In his early work, much more weight is given to the constituting side of the inter-relation than to the constituted or factical side; facticity is so mute that it cannot be identified as such, outside of how it is constituted or 'recovered'. 'It is impossible to grasp facticity in its brute nudity, since all that we will find of it is already recovered and freely constructed.' (BN p.83)

This means that in relation to our own facticity -- what we have been 'made to be' owing to biological, genetic and neuro-physiological factors, and social, linguistic or historical conditioning -- there are no 'hard facts', and no human nature or essential self waiting to be uncovered -- facts the identification of which would finally resolve all the fundamental practical

questions. Man, Sartre says in his rather uncareful terms, is nothing but what he makes of himself.

Obviously this assertion requires qualification if it is to avoid lapsing into an uncritical idealism. What Sartre means is that man defines himself on the basis of given conditions which he can neither bring into being nor remove. But man, to recall a phrase used earlier in Chapter One, is 'something more' than the sum-total of these conditions. The most primordial act of self-definition, of 'making something out of what he has been made to be', is not wholly reducible to his conditioning and inherited make-up; if it begins with these factical conditions, it does not arise from them. At the very 'zero-point' of man's upsurge or projection into the world there is an element of radical novelty, an act of primordial sense-bestowing. This is the transcendental 'scene' of radical choice.

As a composite of given and constituted, or facticity and choice, man must be conceived as a fundamentally relational being: man is a complex and self-altering network of relations -- a network that is essentially dynamic, temporal and projective. This stands in sharp contrast with the view that man is essentially a bundle and passive recipient of sensations (Hume), an essence, an unchanging thinking substance (Descartes) or a transcendental ego (Husserl). What is interesting about Sartre's version of the relational model of man, and what connects him to Kant's undeveloped vision of the mysterious and hidden co-mingling of time and creative constituting activity in the depths of the soul, is its strong emphasis on temporality. Man is a constantly forward-moving process, a 'bridge' between past, present and

future. He defines himself by his historical project.

*

2. Sartre's Relational Model of Man

Sartre builds upon the central principle of the relational model of man, viz. that what is distinctive about a person is that he is capable of wanting to be different, in his wants, desires and purposes, from what he is. The for-itself is not one with itself; it is a relation to itself, a presence to itself; it 'exists at distance from itself' (BN p.78). That is, a person is not simply one with his inherited dispositions, conditioned emotional patterns, biological make-up, etc.; he does not passively and unthinkingly register their effects (cf. BN p.481); nor is he a prisoner of his character (as Hospers argues). Instead of being defined by these conditions, he exists in such a way that he actively assumes them, and defines himself in relation to them. Something more is involved in this self-definition than what results from the mere juxtaposition of these conditions -- an irreducible element which begins with them but does not arise from them. A person is not just what he has been made; he can always 'make something out of what has been made of him....[He] does not render back completely what his conditioning has given him.'[5]

Sartre, however, goes far beyond this minimal model of the relational self. With Sartre the framework of characteristics introduced by Kant's new vision of the self (and later

consolidated by Hegel) -- heterogeneity, distance, opacity, temporality -- receives one of its strongest expressions: in assuming and defining himself in relation to given conditions, a person also negates these conditions. Sartre is much more forceful than Hampshire in bringing out the sense in which man is a 'broken totality' and a divided being: the act by which man defines himself is self-dirempting, producing what Sartre describes variously as a 'fissure', 'split' or décalage in the very heart of human being. In defining himself, man transcends himself and projects himself beyond given conditions: he denies their influence. There is a sense in which he is not himself. Sartre works this sense to great advantage: man 'is what he is not, and is not what he is.' Sartre's model also differs from Hampshire's in so far as it conceives the problem of the self-relation as a problem of the way a subject relates himself to his own existence, over and above the relation he may have to the particular emotions, wants, desires and dispositions that comprise his mental life.

Sartre's interpretation of the central ideas of the relational model of man -- that man exists in such a way that he must take up a relation to his existence and make something of it; that he cannot simply be what he is (BN pp.76-77); that he is nothing but a 'relation to the world' (BN p.3Ø6); that he enters into a 'free engagement' with the manifold of desires, wants, dispositions, etc. -- stands out in one important respect from Hampshire's: viz., the emphasis it places on the elements of negation, non-identity and heterogeneity in the self-relation. Here he follows Kant and Hegel, whose models of man bring to light the peculiar

relationship of 'accord in discord' under which the relata composing human reality (e.g. sensibility and understanding, imagination and reason) are held together. What is important in this picture is not just that man is a relational being -- a view that has been held by many other philosophers -- but that the distinguishing properties of man's existence as a complex network of relations, and as a meaning-conferring being, are negativity, distance and heterogeneity. Mind, Sartre argues (following Hegel), is the negative (BN p.19).

Something of this darker element of the self-relation was glimpsed earlier in Chapter Five, in connection with Hampshire's account of the density and ambiguity of mental states, and their resistance to finalized description. But Hampshire does not explore as fully the divisive nature of the reflexive relation, the fact that every self-definition involves a negative, exclusionary or diremptive element as well as an integrative element.[6] Nor is it clear that this element can be fully explained in epistemological terms, as (for instance) a function of the inexhaustibility of our linguistic and descriptive resources. Such at least would be Sartre's argument. His alternative vision of the relational self requires a considerable shift in argumentative rigour and technical vocabulary -- a shift corresponding to a shift from the problematic of knowledge to the problematic of being.

Sartre employs a variety of inter-related terms to bring out the darker, negative side of man's self-definition and self-formation: lack, transcendence, projection, internal distancing, presence, nihilation, nothingness. The theme is developed on the

phenomenological level (i.e. consciousness), the ontological level (i.e. being-for-itself), and on the existential level (i.e. the fundamental project). (Because Sartre fails to show precisely how these levels are compatible with one another, or inter-translatable, the terms 'man' and 'person' will generally be used to forge a broad link between them.)

In what does this element of negation that so distinguishes Sartre's version of the self-relation consist? What is it that man lacks in his endeavours to define himself? And how is the element of divisiveness and lack manifested?

It might seem plausible to suppose that man lacks above all else an overall life-plan, or a deep and comprehensive sense of the meaning and ends of his life. Alternatively, it might be supposed that he lacks metaphysical certainty -- something as deep and reassuring as the answer to the problem of existence, or a truth that functions as a kind of centre. Again, it might be supposed (as Hampshire and Spinoza maintain) that what he lacks is knowledge and understanding of himself, his emotions and his place in the world.

Each of these candidates -- particularly the last one -- seem quite plausible, but for Sartre they are still too particular and one-sided, and imply something still deeper. What man lacks in his endeavours to define himself and apprehend himself, what he strives for in the ultimate instance, is much more obvious -- and ipso facto much less obvious -- than any of these candidates: it is his own being. Man lacks -- himself. Human being, Sartre argues, is not enough (BN p.440): 'it is haunted by the presence of that with which it should coincide in order to be itself.' (BN

p.1ØØ) The attempts man makes to define himself by searching for a life-plan, an overall truth, a centre, or greater knowledge, are ultimately explicable in terms of the lack of being.

What does Sartre mean by this peculiar idea? Here the epistemological schizophrenia that Kant saw as distinctive of man, and as preventing man from aspiring to divinity, receives an ontological interpretation. Man is split, divided against himself, because he is always surpassing himself and his given situation towards a future ideal, viz. the ideal of being himself. This Sartre identifies as the state of pure non-relationality and equilibrium -- a state which, paradoxically, is the very antithesis of human reality and self-definition.

> The supreme value toward which consciousness at every instant surpasses itself by its very being is the absolute being of the self with its characteristics of identity, of purity, of permanence etc, and as its own foundation. (BN p.93)

Human reality is a perpetual negating and surpassing of given conditions (e.g. biological, genetic, racial, social conditioning) towards a coincidence with itself which is never given (BN p.93). Man exists as an incomplete project of being, the goal of which -- rest, completion, positivity, self-coincidence -- is altogether beyond the human condition: it is the condition of God. The idea that man vainly strives after a condition higher than his own -- a finalized self-definition -- has already been found in Kant, who argued that it is man's natural inclination to go beyond his finite and divided human condition -- beyond the 'bounds of sense' -- in search of divine intelligence.

The incompleteness that affects man's self-definition means that he is 'always something other than what can be said of [him]...[he

is] the one [who] is already beyond the name given to [him], beyond the property recognized in [him].' (BN p.439) It is because man cannot transcend his ontological status as a finite and divided being, or 'recuperate' his being -- despite his 'passion' to do just this; and because there is no final condition or resting place -- despite his attempts to find or make one -- that self-definition and self-formation are condemned to incompleteness and revisability.

Divisiveness and negation also affect the relation a person has to his particular desires, wants, purposes and emotions. He is 'in question' in the manifold empirical expressions of his project to be. States of mind such as belief are 'troubled' in virtue of the fact that he is conscious of his belief, and therefore not entirely one with it.[7] Emotions such as sadness exist in an 'unstable disequilibrium', because a person cannot simply be sad without having to make himself sad; something is lacking. In contrast with Spinoza's view of passions as compelling and ineluctable, Sartre views emotions as lacking in inertia, recalcitrance and intensity; emotions are not a physiological 'tempest' over which a person has little or no control, and to which he must passively submit (cf. BN p.445).

> I cannot treat my sadness as an impulse finally achieved and put on file without recreating it, nor can I carry it in the manner of an inert body which continues its movement after the initial shock. There is no inertia in consciousness. If I make myself sad, it is because I am not sad -- the being of sadness escapes me by and in the very act by which I affect myself with it.
>
> (BN p.61)

The importance these ontological conditions have for the problem

of self-knowledge and self-definition is clear. Turning inwards, we find our mental states and experiences lacking in a certain intensity, stability and inner solidity; we never meet with the determinateness and inertia we expect -- what Sartre calls the identity, purity, substantiality and permanence of the self. Self-inquiry is haunted by the very self it seeks. Thus we are not only mistaken, but deceived, when we think that we have grasped something essential to our identity, something that allows us to attribute to ourselves the properties, dispositions etc. that we normally attribute to external and independent objects; we find that we are always something other than what we can say of ourselves. The phenomenological aspects of this elusiveness will be discussed later.

*

3. Human Temporality and Self-Definition

Time divides the self from itself, and prevents it from attaining the wholeness, unity and simplicity that is enjoyed by a divine being. Time, of which man is both the source and victim, is the essential structure of the self-relation, and the dominant characteristic of man's openness onto the world. By 'dynamizing' and historicizing the transcendental structures of experience in the form of an ek-static project (instead of unchanging categories), Sartre develops in his own idiosyncratic way Kant's vision of the human soul as divided and fundamentally temporal.

Sartre describes man as an historical agent who defines himself

by his project. Man is not identical with the given situation, and his given conditioning, dispositions, character, etc., but exists only in so far as he is a relation to them -- a relation that is essentially temporal and developmental.[8] Human being is a 'perpetual, searching historialization' (BN p.569), a pro-ject of being. To exist is to be ek-static, to stand forth (ex-sistere); it is not just to be in time, but to be temporal.[9]

> For us man is characterized above all by his going beyond a situation, and by what he succeeds in making of what he has been made -- even if he never recognizes himself in his objectification.[10]

> Man defines himself by his project. This material being perpetually goes beyond the condition which is made for him....[Our] needs -- like our passions or like the most abstract of our thoughts...are always outside of themselves toward....This is what we call existence, and by this we do not mean a stable substance which rests in itself, but rather a perpetual disequilibrium, a wrenching away from itself with all its body.[11]

Every aspect of human life is subject to what Sartre variously calls transcendence, transformation, transition, projection, dépassement.[12] Time is what distances man from himself, and it is across time that he has the task of defining himself and trying to become himself. In this project of self-definition nothing is immune to transition.

A less-strongly emphasized version of this incompleteness is found in Hampshire's theory of self-definition, with the concept of the inexhaustibility of description. But Sartre carries the analysis one stage further, by exploring the self-deceptive stratagems to which man resorts to compensate for the plasticity and incompleteness from which he suffers. The state of incompleteness, he argues, is profoundly unsatisfactory; man

cannot easily live with a view to time's relentless scythe. In trying to compensate for the transitoriness of life, he tries to go beyond the bounds of the human condition by conferring on himself precisely those things that he lacks: inner stability, substantiality and self-sufficiency. His considers his current self-definition as fixed and final, and the words and concepts he employs in identifying and describing his experience as unchanging and uniquely representative; similarly, changes in self-definition are considered no more than ways of finding better labels for 'the same' underlying and unchanging thing which anchors them, and not part of a process of change that ends only with death.

The general form taken by this futile aspiration beyond the human condition is set in terms of -- and against -- the temporal: the future ideal of self-coincidence or non-relationality is wholly outside of time, and therefore not susceptible to mutability and development: 'man seeks a repose in self, the atemporality of the absolute coincidence with himself.' (BN p.142) This is futile, because by nature he is engaged in making history without mastering it, finalizing it, or taking an objective point of view on it. Until this ideal and unrealizable telos is achieved, the future will continue to impend, to 'cut relentlessly like a spur into the flesh of every present' (Nietzsche). If, per impossibile, man were wholly one with himself, he would be outside of time and history: he would be God.

These ontological conditions and limits are important in the analysis of the the problem of self-knowledge and self-definition. The endeavour to determine who one really is, to work out some of

the fundamental practical questions, and to wrest one's life from the dark, is by nature incomplete and revisable. An individual cannot exhaust the limits of his soul -- not because they are unknowable, but because they are always being redefined and pushed onwards by his very attempts to study them and define them. He is like the traveller who pushes into a strange countryside that is altered by his very advance. The originally-targeted object of his self-inquiry and self-definition is changed by the inquiry's advance, and is therefore one step ahead of the inquiry (cf. Chapter Two). It is only at the very moment of death that completion or totalization is possible; only then, when life is turned into destiny (BN p.115), can man finally be revealed to himself, and justified in asserting 'there is nothing more to interpret/nothing more to say; this was everything' (Neruda). But then the self-inquirer would somehow have to live through his own death to be fully revealed to himself.

*

4. Meaning and Under-Determination

If man is not wholly defined by the factical conditions into which he has been 'thrown'; if there is something more involved in his self-definition than what results from the mere collection and juxtaposition of these conditions -- then just what is this 'something more'? What is it that appears with his 'irruption' into the world which was not there before, which begins with the

given factical conditions but does not arise from them? Sartre's answer is puzzlingly simple: meaning.[13] Man is the 'being who transforms his being into meaning, and through whom meaning comes into the world.'[14] Man alone is responsible for the meaning things have. The most primitive connection between man and world, and man and himself, is not causal, perceptual or theoretical; it is the creation of significance or meaningfulness. It is this that man 'renders back', and that comprises that 'something more' the outlines of which Kant discerned with the concept of Sinngebung. It is this -- deeper than knowledge, thought, classification or conceptualization -- which describes the most primitive connection he has to his own reality in defining himself.

The concepts of the choice or invention of meaning, the original upsurge into the world, and fundamental projection, are extremely difficult and elusive concepts in Sartre's thought. They are clearly radicalized and as it were 'ontologized' versions of Kant's concept of constituting activity.[15] But what exactly does Sartre mean by the radical choice of meaning? To get a rough idea of the vast scope and explanatory power he attributes to this concept -- before trying to determine what he means -- some of the claims he makes for it will simply be listed.

Sartre claims that man is free to determine for himself the fundamental meaning of the given factical conditions that root him in a particular situation, and that make him what he is (e.g. his class and social conditioning, and his biological, physiological, and genetic makeup). He is not free to choose these conditions, because he finds himself 'thrown' into them; but he is free to

determine what they mean for him. This choice serves as the 'foundation for the ensemble of significations which constitute reality' (BN p.464, emphasis added); but it is not a choice which itself constitutes reality ex nihilo (as a full-blown idealism would argue). One of the illustrations Sartre provides of the distinction between factical conditions and the meaning conferred on them is the case of physical disability:

> Even this disability from which I suffer I have assumed by the very fact that I live; I surpass it toward my own projects, I make of it the necessary obstacle for my being, and I cannot be crippled without choosing myself as crippled. This means that I choose the way in which I constitute my disability (as 'unbearable', 'humiliating', 'to be hidden', 'to be revealed to all, 'an object of pride,' 'the justification for my failures', etc.).
>
> (BN p.328)

The radical choice of meaning, the for-itself's original upsurge into the world, and the fundamental project are so comprehensive and fundamental that they explain such apparently heterogeneous phenomena as an individual's choice of clothing, his furniture, the street on which he lives, the city in which he resides, the books he reads and the recreation which he enjoys, (BN p.463); they constitute the totality of his 'tastes, his likes, his hates, etc. inasmuch as there is a thematic organization and an inherent meaning in this totality.' (BN p.468)

The concepts of radical choice and the fundamental projection, however, are designed to explain far more than an individual's 'style' of life. If they were limited only to this, then the distinction between a merely subjective choice reflecting an individual's idiosyncracies and whims, and a choice that is much deeper and less arbitrary -- that is a revelation and articulation

of the world -- would lose its force. Sartre clearly intends radical choice to be stronger than the subjectivist hypothesis; it not only explains the highly specific nature of individual experience, but also the most general objective structures of the human world. The world appears to us as we are. 'We choose the world, not in its contexture as in-itself, but in its meaning, by choosing ourselves.' (BN p.463) Through our upsurge into being, we make the world appear as world. Man's meaning-conferring (constituting) activity stands at the centre of a world whose very organization as centred and as world (e.g. causally structured) it makes possible.

Thus Sartre argues that the free choice of meaning which characterizes the for-itself's upsurge or projection into the world causes a whole system of relations to be established, from the point of view of an end, between items in the world. So deep-lying and total is this choice that 'it does not imply any other meaning' and 'refers only to itself.' (BN p.457) It is responsible for arranging 'the world with its meaning, its instrumental complexes, and its coefficient of adversity' (BN p.465); for 'unfolding time' (BN p.465); for creating a whole system of meaningful human relations, which can only be understood in terms of a projected end; for causing there to be a certain objective structure of the world (BN p.449); for arranging the order of instruments in the world, which is 'the image of my possibilities projected in the in-itself' (BN p.200); for determining what counts as a datum, without determining that it is a datum (BN p.487); and for providing the grounds on which something can function as a cause or motive for action (BN p.437).

The 'fundamental act of freedom is...a choice of myself in the world and by the same token it is a discovery of the world.' (BN p.461)

Sartre's description of the free choice of meaning and the original upsurge and projection of the for-itself is certainly not without problems. First, a number of different concepts -- freedom, choice, meaning-conferring, creativity, the fundamental project -- are collapsed into one another, without any clear explanation of how they can be collapsed together. Similarly, he tends to explain them in terms of one another, without showing how they can be so explained. The concept of meaning seems to be comprehensive enough to explain everything in human experience, from the most minute gesture to the most general causal structures of the world; every explanation can be grounded in it. This can be attributed in part to Sartre's peculiar use of the term pour-soi, which (like Heidegger's concept of Dasein) fails to distinguish clearly between the concept of a person and the concept of man, and between human reality in its most general aspect, and the concrete, historical individual. Throughout Being and Nothingness the concepts of radical choice, meaning-conferring and projection are called upon to account equally for both human reality and the individual, resulting in the confusion of the transcendental and the empirical order.

Second, it is not entirely clear what the concept of the free choice of meaning, and the concept of the original upsurge are supposed to explain -- the very existence of the most general objective structures of the world -- causality, temporality, instrumental complexes, etc. -- or the meaning which these

already-existent structures are given? Does Sartre's version of the concept of constituting activity suffer from the problem that was mentioned earlier, viz. failure to make a clear distinction between the idea that the mind (or human reality) comes to apprehend the world by an elaborate transcendental activity, and the idea that the mind makes the world it comes to know by these transcendental activities? Are these concepts idealist or realist explanatory concepts -- or do they represent some third way that borrows from both without yielding to either?

Finally, do the concepts of radical choice and fundamental projection explain self-definition only by obscuring the issue? Just what does Sartre mean by choice, meaning and projection? How can these concepts carry such a huge explanatory load? It is no answer to state that meaning is that which man confers upon the given -- for it is precisely this which has to be explained. Are these concepts invoked merely as an obfuscating explanatory stopgap? Do they have any empirical application? What could count as an empirical counter-instance, given their scope?

It will be argued that Sartre does not intend the concepts of the radical choice of meaning, original upsurge and the fundamental project to be grounded on empirical observation, and built up from particular cases; nor does he intend them to be falsifiable by particular empirical counter-instances: they are transcendental concepts, in so far as they are basic to any human experience whatever. The scope attributed to these concepts is so wide-ranging that their acceptance would call for a deep conceptual reorientation in the way we think about the relation between man and world.

Naturally this raises important questions about the nature of transcendental explanations, viz. why we should accept any reorientation in the familiar categories in which we understand ourselves; how a transcendental event such as the upsurge of the for-itself can be 'mapped onto' the concrete historical event of the birth of an individual; and, how such concrete historical events as life-change are possible, given that the upsurge of the for-itself, and its projection into the world, are transcendental events.

5. The Depth of Radical Choice

Sartre argues that the radical choice or invention of meaning -- the originative step by which man transforms his being into meaning, and projects himself from darkness into light -- is so basic to human experience that it cannot be explained by anything else: it is a transcendental event. Sartre's version of self-definition as the choice or invention of fundamental meaning is designed to imbed all other versions of self-definition. The central operative terms in Hampshire's theory of self-definition and self-alteration -- viz. the exercise of reason and the acquisition of reflexive knowledge -- are too narrow, and fail to meet the stringent criteria that Sartre postulates.

What Sartre seeks to uncover is a form of self-definition that is fundamental and total -- an activity or engagement with oneself and with the world which is prior to everything else, which presupposes nothing, and which accounts for the internal coherence, richness, unity, patterning, inner differentiation and specificity of an individual's experience. At this level he hopes to find the most basic formulations or terms by means of which a

person defines and understands himself -- terms that are not derived from any others, and that are not significant in terms of anything else.

If there is something -- some 'bedrock' or fundamental framework -- which meets these stringent criteria, then reflection, deliberation, criticism, the acquisition of reflexive knowledge and all other particular and gradualistic activities that are considered to be bound up with self-definition and self-formation must by necessity be understood in terms of it -- in terms, Sartre argues, of a 'primary project which is recognized as the project which can no longer be interpreted in terms of any other and which is total.' (BN p.479) This must be located on a transcendental level, and not within experience, or built up from it. Such activities as reflection and deliberation cannot, of necessity, reach it -- not because it is an unknowable noumenal reality, but because it is the very condition of possibility of their significance (i.e. it is their source of meaning), and not amongst the range of their possible targets. They are not formative or active with respect to their source.[16]

But what is it for radical choice, and the original upsurge of man, to be radical and total, and prior to the various epistemic and voluntative activities that are within experience? Is there really something this total and fundamental? And why does Sartre think that 'bedrock' in self-definition takes the form of choice, rather than, for instance, evaluation or interpretation? Is it possible that self-definition at the deepest-lying levels is much more passive, or even mysterious, than any of these? Finally, is there a transcendental element in self-definition?

Ordinarily, the concept of choice is thought to cover discrete and easily-identifiable events that have their issue in observable 'middle-sized' actions and behaviour. A person chooses this car rather than that, or chooses to enlist in the armed forces rather than going on to higher education. The radical choice of meaning is not to be confused with these isolable and highly specific empirical choices, or modelled upon them -- as if it were no more than small-scale choice writ large, or a choice whose object and outcome is simply larger than other objects, but whose essential structure remains the same. Nor does it involve the characteristic sub-actions that accompany empirical choices: e.g. finding reasons and ranging them along a continuum from weak to strong, deliberating, weighing pros and cons, envisaging alternatives, talking to others, casting one's lot and finally acting.

In trying to uncover a much deeper sense in the concept of choice, Sartre's task is not unlike the task of the revisionary metaphysician[17] who finds radically new meanings for relatively common concepts (e.g. the concepts of doubt, person and world). One of the methods of the revisionary metaphysician is to show how the fallacy of simple location (Whitehead) restricts our ordinary thought to an atomistic picture of human actions and experiences, thus obscuring important connections between the various concepts under which these actions are identified: this is the fallacy that a thing, event or action simply is what it is in an isolated and isolable region of space, and in a discrete unit of time.

The fallacy of simple location is particularly common in thinking about the nature of life-history. A life in its

entirety must be considered as a single, long-term, historical project, and not as a collection of parts which can be analysed into their simple components. Naturally a life qua totality is much more difficult to apprehend and describe than the particular wants, actions, emotions, beliefs, dispositions and behaviour patterns that comprise it. In the most mundane ways of thinking, we have a blind spot towards the totality, and tend to forget that particular actions and experiences are meaningful only in so far as they are parts of a larger whole.[18] This is how the fallacy of simple location applies to the concept of choice: to think that the concept of choice is significant only in so far as its range of application is restricted to discrete events inside life-history that have their issue in middle-sized observable actions is to omit the wider, holistic view of choice as that which alone can account for a man in his totality.

*

6. The Transcendental Status of Radical Choice

Radical choice as the most basic form of self-definition is a transcendental event located at the very origin of the for-itself's upsurge or projection into the world. It is not an empirical event 'inside' experience (e.g., choosing a car), or built up from the mere collection of particular experiences, but something which makes the empirical events comprising experience possible, in so far as it gives them their meaning and their

highly-specific 'internal colouration'. 'The fundamental project which I am is a project concerning not my relations with this or that particular object in the world, but my total being-in-the-world.' (BN p.48Ø). Merleau-Ponty evokes the sense in which it forms the horizon of experience, and functions as an ever-present and unforgettable tradition.

> One day, once and for all, something was set in motion which, even during sleep, can no longer cease to see or not to see, to feel or not to feel, to suffer or be happy, to think or rest from thinking, in a word to 'have it out' with the world. There then arose, not a new set of sensations or states of consciousness, not even a new monad or a new perspective...[but] a fresh possibility of situations ....There was henceforth a new 'setting', the world recieved a fresh layer of meaning.[19]

The radical choice that is the 'primordial founding event'[2Ø] of self-definition is a choice or invention of meaning. The 'unit' of meaning it makes possible is not analogous to the unit of meaning represented by the single word, or the comparatively straightforward act of naming; nor is it analogous to a sentence or collection of sentences. If the search for an analogy with linguistic units of meaning is carried one imaginative (and holistic) step further, the meaning bestowed by radical choice can be likened to the meaning of a language considered as a whole living organism (e.g. the meaning of the English language, rather than particular meanings within the language).[21] It is the framework in its entirety, a total matrix of relations. Sartre calls it a 'veritable absolute':

> in each inclination, in each tendency the person expresses himself completely, although from a different angle, a little as Spinoza's substance expresses itself completely in each of its attributes. But if this is so, we should discover in each tendency, in each

> attitude of the subject, a meaning which transcends it. A jealousy of a particular date in which a subject historicizes himself in relation to a certain woman, signifies for the one who knows how to interpret it, the total relation to the world by which the subject constitutes himself as a self.
>
> (BN p.563, emphasis added)

Because the radical choice of meaning by which the for-itself relates itself to the world and to itself, and defines itself, is fundamental and total, it cannot properly be considered on the same logical level as discrete empirical events that are within experience. In so far as they reproduce the general transcendental distinction between schema (or framework) and content, the transcendental characteristics and powers that Sartre attributes to the radical choice, the original upsurge, and the fundamental project have an essentially Kantian dimension; but it is a localized or individual-specific Kantianism (i.e. centred in the for-itself), without the rigid necessity and universality that Kant found in the categorial structuring of experience.

The Kantian element is evident, for instance, in the relation that Sartre sees holding between constituting activity and facticity. The inter-twining of original choice with given factical conditions resembles the inter-action (viz. accord in discord) that Kant sees occurring between understanding and sensibility: the former moment of the relation (choice, understanding) begins with the latter moment (facticity, sensibility), but does not arise from it. This element of autogeny was noted in the opening chapter as one of the general features of post-Kantian versions of the concept of constituting activity.

An equally important Kantian aspect in Sartre's theory of self-

definition -- an aspect distinguishing his theory from Hampshire's -- is the transcendental aspect: the transcendental scope and powers accorded to radical choice, the original upsurge and the fundamental project clearly resemble the transcendental scope and powers accorded to the categorial structures that underlie experience, and that make experience in the form we know it possible. It will be recalled from Chapter One that Kant argued that an a priori categorial framework is a necessary and immanent feature in human experience. The categorial framework defines and delimits human experience in so far as it confers on it its richness, patterning and integrative unity; it prevents it from deteriorating into the 'blooming, buzzing confusion' that would result if the mind were no more than collection of passively-received sensations. Man qua knower and subject of experience is active; his experience has a definite discursive structure, boundedness and homogeneity, behind which or transcendent to which are certain determinate and universal (a priori) principles of organization that are responsible for defining it. These principles are not themselves built up inductively on the basis of experience. They are transcendental principles, the discordant aspect of which was discussed earlier.[22]

If man were only a plastic and passively-receptive organism (as the empiricist model of mind suggests) -- undefined by extensive categorial pre-structuring, and without meaning-conferring powers -- then his experiences and mental states would be no more than a reflection of the environment. Experience would be impoverished, and would lack the necessity, homogeneity, inner unity and, most generally, the meaning, that characterizes experience as we know

it. But even before the impingement of experience (if such a 'zero-point' could be envisaged) man finds himself endowed with a rich and internally coherent system of categories -- a system that is part of the very 'furniture' of the mind; because of this, and only because of it, a relatively small amount of degenerate experience (based on a relatively limited and uneven inter-action with the environment) allows him to make a vast leap beyond the given to a rich, internally systematic, and communicable, form of thought and experience.

The categorial framework that is built into the very structure of the mind allows man to 'make infinite use of finite resources'. If it rigidly constrains and delimits human thought and experience, thereby preventing man from understanding certain aspects of reality, and preventing him from attaining epistemological wholeness and unity, it is also what makes human experience possible, and provides the basis for man's freedom and openness onto the world. In the 'Schematism of the Pure Concepts of Understanding' Kant no more than identified the close and rather mysterious connection between the scope and limits of human experience -- the (pharmakon-like) ambivalence between the realising and restricting powers of the transcendental; but he did not dig deeper into this 'art concealed in the depths of the human soul'.

Why man has these particular categories and principles of organization and not others -- that is, why human experience has this particular necessary shape, degree of homogeneity and internal differentiation and not another (i.e. why experience is as it is, and means what it does); and even more deeply, why

there is a categorial structuring of experience at all, and not some radically different (non-categorial) form of intelligence: these are ultimately inexplicable questions.[23] We can determine how experience is, and what must lie behind it to make it so (e.g. categories, forms of sensibility); but we cannot determine why the entire framework that lies behind human experience is as it is. That there is a distinction between the transcendental and the empirical is necessary; but what it is, is not.

The existentialist interpretation of the idea that there is no discernible higher-order necessity attaching to the fact that human experience has this particular, and internally necessary, categorial structure is interesting: the fact that the shape and limits of human experience could have been otherwise implies that the transcendental structure of experience is itself contingent -- and absurd. The framework of experience is not itself necessary, even if it is the source of necessity within experience.

Sartre preserves some of these Kantian ideas, and the general transcendental approach, but develops them in distinctly existential terms first by relocating them on the level of the historically-developing for-itself (instead of Reason); and second, by dynamizing the transcendental, i.e. transforming it into an event and form of projection, in contrast to Kant's timeless and unchanging categorial structures. '[What] makes all experience possible is...an original upsurge of the for-itself as presence to the object which it is not.' (BN p.176 emphasis added) The problem with Sartre's use of the transcendental approach, however, is that he is not always clear about the precise subject of the radical choice and projection; it is unclear whether these

transcendental events account for the for-itself's experience qua concrete, historical individual (e.g. Genet), or qua human reality in its most general aspect (e.g. man). The personal and the anthropological are not always clearly distinguished.

The for-itself's experience has a definite and projective (rather than discursive) structure, because at its origin lies the radical choice (and the emergent fundamental project) as a determinate principle of organization that does not itself build upon (or arise from) the particular events or contents of experience; this is 'the original relation which the for-itself chooses with its facticity and with the world.' (BN p.457) Like the internally coherent structure of experience that is generated by the categorial framework, the for-itself's 'upsurge' and projection into the world is responsible for experience having the inner unity, patterning, richness, directedness, individuality and 'inner colouration' that we know it as having.

Without the rich and internally coherent organization provided by the radical choice and the fundamental projection -- without this 'fresh possibility of situations' -- the for-itself's experience would simply be a reflection of its environment, its inherited factical structures and social conditioning. It would be nothing but a plastic and passively-receptive organism, 'layers of heterogeneous and irreducible meanings'[24] lacking in self-direction and self-unity. Its experience then would be severely under-defined -- impoverished, disconnected, fluctuating, and without clear-cut bounds between self and other. But following Kant, Sartre sees man as a meaning-conferring being who defines himself and sets limits to his own experience: if human

experience is to be possible, it must be defined and given shape by a transcendental structure (e.g. categories) or event (e.g. choice) that provides the transcendental framework of experience. From an uneven and limited inter-action with the environment, and from relatively 'mute' factical conditions (e.g. social conditioning and biological and genetic givens) which in combination with each other would not be enough to account for the unity, specificity and meaning of experience, man rises up in the world and defines himself.[25] He 'renders back' something more than what he has been given.

Radical choice, at the moment of upsurge into the world, not only defines the for-itself's experience, but restricts it and excludes other forms of experience. It is dual-edged, like the pharmakon -- at once revealing and concealing, realizing and excluding. If, in defining the bounds of experience, it closes off certain forms of experience, and ways of being, it is also that which provides the basis for the for-itself's freedom and creativity, and allows it to project itself beyond itself.

There is a further important similarity between the concept of the radical choice of meaning and Kant's categorial structure of experience: no higher-order necessity can be found to account for the fact that experience is such as it is, with this particular meaning and form. Why the for-itself's experience comes to be shaped by this particular choice, and not any other choice -- that is, why its deepest-lying self-definition takes this shape, with this unity and internal differentiation, with these ends, and these bounds -- these facts are ultimately inexplicable and, in Sartre's terms, absurd. They are not themselves explicable in

terms of its self-definition and experience. There just is no answer to the question of why this particular 'layer of meaning', this particular 'setting' rather than any other, comes into being.

This is another of the dark areas that distinguishes Sartre's theory of self-definition from Hampshire's. The shape and fundamental meaning of the for-itself's experience could have been, and (unlike Kant) always could be, radically otherwise. The radical choice qua transcendental organizing structure of personal experience is itself radically contingent, and itself 'non-sense', even if what it shapes is itself meaningful. It confers on experience a certain necessary organization, but is not itself generated by a higher-order organizing activity.

This is closely tied to one of the strongest and most cryptic of transcendental claims in Sartre's theory of self-definition: viz. that the radical choice of meaning by which the for-itself defines itself in its upsurge into the world is so deep-rooted and autonomous (or 'selbstandig') that it 'does not imply any other meaning, and...refers only to itself.' (BN p.457) It is 'that by which all foundations and all reasons come into being.' (BN p.479) Such is its depth that it is 'prior to logic'; it is a 'pre-logical synthesis' that 'decides the attitude of the person when confronted with logic and principles.' Thus 'there can be no possibility of questioning it in conformance to logic.' (BN p.57Ø)

One apparent implication of these cryptic claims is that an individual's attempt to rationally criticize, justify or evaluate the deepest roots of his way of being -- his project -- are meaningful only in terms of it; but in presupposing it in this way, they would be guilty of circularity.[26] Sartre argues that

they would 'implicitly suppose the being-in-the-world of the for-itself just as all the demonstrations attempted by Euclid's Postulate implicitly suppose the adoption of this postulate.' (BN p.457) The most basic terms -- those in which other interpretations, evaluations and justifications are carried out -- are not themselves in question, and open to radical interpretation, evaluation or justification. There is no meta-language available by means of which a person could assess the deep-lying roots of rival life-conceptions and ways of being.

From this it should be clear that the radical choice at the moment of the for-itself's irruption into the world (i.e. the ultimate point[27] in the process of self-definition) represents a kind of 'groundless ground'. There is nothing deeper than it or transcendent to it which might in turn define it and ground it. It functions as an unsupported 'bedrock', beyond which there is nothing. 'The absolute event or for-itself is contingent in its very being.' (BN p.82) It 'is its own foundation qua for-itself' (BN p.84), but it is a contingent foundation because it is that by which the very idea of a foundation comes into being. It stands at the centre and ground of an experience whose very organization qua centred and grounded it makes possible; but because of this privileged position vis à vis experience, the centre is itself ungrounded.

In calling radical choice selbstandig, and 'that by which all foundations and all reasons come into being' (BN p.479; cf. also p.82), Sartre wishes to divest it from traditional foundationalist claims: it is not as it were made of the 'purest crystal, the hardest thing there is' (Wittgenstein).[28] That is, it is not the

self-certifying and self-justifying foundation of personal identity and personal being. The radical choice by which the for-itself defines itself is unjustifiable in the sense that it does not '[derive] from any prior reality, but...serves as foundation for the ensemble of significations which constitute reality' (BN p.464); and it is 'absurd' because it is that from which all rationality and sense springs. Because it is absolute and unsupported, it is also 'fragile' (BN p.465), and susceptible to total revision. Such is Sartre's peculiar version of the concept of constituting activity: it represents a kind of (Kantian) transcendentalism without necessity.

Despite obvious differences of subject-matter, aim and method, the peculiar transcendental status that Sartre attributes to the radical choice and original upsurge as that which defines the meaning and limits of human experience bears certain resemblances to the status attributed by Wittgenstein (in Notes On Certainty) to the 'bedrock' that underlies our language games -- the slowly shifting 'riverbed' that defines the limits of our thought.[29] Both Wittgenstein and Sartre defend a kind of transcendentalism without the necessity, universality and rigid fixity that Kant attributed to the transcendental. Both maintain that the distinction between framework (or schema) and content is necessary; both maintain, furthermore, that the most fundamental level at which thought and experience are defined and delimited, and given the shape and meaning that they have, hangs as it were over an abyss.

Like Sartre, Wittgenstein relies on a general transcendental distinction between schema and content, or the framework and that

which it makes possible. In Wittgenstein's case, this is the distinction between the framework of human knowledge and belief, subtended by the fundamental principles and presuppositions of a language game, and the meaningful empirical concepts, questions and sentences made possible by the framework. The general idea this reflects -- that something (e.g. a framework, scheme or categorial structure) must remain behind or transcendent to the activities of inquiring, doubting, asserting, specifying, justifying and making meaningful assertions if anything is to be investigated, doubted, etc. -- is not an unfamiliar one in epistemology and the philosophy of science (cf. Chapter One). It has its roots in Aristotle's account of the first principles of science (arché), and Kant's account of the scheme-content distinction and the categorial structuring of experience; it also resembles Collingwood's theory of absolute presuppositions,[30] Kuhn's theory of the scientific paradigm,[31] and Carnap's doctrine of internal and external questions.[32]

Located at the very 'bedrock' of a language game are certain fundamental propositions and beliefs that are relatively unchanging, and very difficult to identify. These propositions are neither derived from experience, nor justified by the inquiries, explanations and forms of communication that they make possible; they do not presuppose anything else. Wittgenstein likens them to the 'riverbed' of thought.

> It might be imagined that some propositions, of the form of empirical propositions, were hardened and functioned as channels for such empirical propositions as were not hardened but fluid; and that this relation altered with time, in that fluid propositions hardened, and hard ones became fluid. The mythology may

> change back into a state of flux, the riverbed of thoughts may shift. But I distinguish between the movement of the waters on the riverbed and the shift of the bed itself; though there is not a sharp division of the one from the other....And the bank of the river consists partly of hard rock, subject to no alteration or only to an imperceptible one, partly of sand, which now in one place gets washed away or deposited.[33]

What is philosophically interesting about the resemblances between Wittgenstein's transcendental account of the bedrock of knowledge and belief, and Sartre's transcendental account of the bedrock of self-definition, is the lack of rationality they see as characterizing this deep-lying level. In neither case is bedrock considered to be built up from or derived from experience; in neither case, furthermore, is bedrock considered to be indubitable, a priori true, or self-certifying. The deep-lying propositions in our language game are neither dubitable nor indubitable, neither true nor false, neither rational nor non-rational -- precisely because they comprise the framework within which these very distinctions have sense. 'If the true is what is grounded, then the ground is not true, nor yet false.'[34] The radical choice, similarly, is neither rational nor non-rational, because it is that by which all foundations and all reasons come into being.

Like Sartre, Wittgenstein is careful to avoid a foundationalist interpretation of the transcendental (i.e. bedrock). The deepest propositions of a language-game stand fast, and are beyond doubt, but not because they constitute an indubitable a priori foundation, or because they are directly 'hooked onto' or grounded in reality. When considered in its entirety, the language game, like the for-itself's project, is beyond being justified or

unjustified:[35] 'it is not based on grounds. It is not reasonable (or unreasonable). It is there -- like our life'.[36] Thus giving grounds and searching for justification ultimately comes to an end -- within the framework.[37] To doubt, evaluate or justify the deepest-lying propositions of the framework is to mistake them for the relative propositions and beliefs for which they serve as the condition. This is only possible by moving to another frame of reference or conceptual scheme, based on a completely different set of principles. From the inside, we have no clear knowledge of what our deepest presuppositions are; they cannot be inquired into, specified, evaluated or justified. The attempt to identify, specify or evaluate the deepest roots of our way of being also suffers from similar limitations.

From this brief comparison with Wittgenstein's account of bedrock, and from the lengthy analysis preceding it, it should be clear how Sartre uses the concepts of the radical choice of meaning, the original upsurge, and the fundamental project as transcendental explanatory categories which explain everything else without themselves being explained. They are the condition of possibility for the meaningfulness of the for-itself's experience, including all epistemic and voluntative activities, but are not themselves conditioned, and not themselves subject to these activities. Because experience has the highly-specific and meaningful phenomenological structure that it has -- internally coherent, richly differentiated, unified, patterned -- there must be some deep-lying constitutive activity which defines it. Some determinate principle of organization that is not itself found within experience as a content or item, must set limits to it and

prevent it from deteriorating into a meaningless 'blooming, buzzing confusion'.

Most generally, there must be this transcendental event if the concept of self-definition is to make sense. It represents the ultimate point in the explanation and analysis, and cannot be explained by anything else. If, per impossibile, the roots of the for-itself's self-definition were justifiable and explicable by reference to something external to them (e.g., objective reasons, a self-certifying ground, a moral law or axiom, God, the Good, the Other), then they would not be fundamental and total, and this would imply that there is an even deeper level in self-definition which has been overlooked. If, per impossibile, they were self-justifying and self-certifying, then the for-itself would not be human but divine. Radical choice, original upsurge and fundamental projection are Sartre's version of the general philosophical principle that the first principle of all existence and meaning is itself underived.[38]

Such then is the hallmark of a priori transcendental analysis. The question raised earlier -- 'Just what does Sartre mean by radical choice?' -- is, from the transcendental point of view, ill-formed, since it suggests that the transcendental concept of radical choice is explicable by reference to something else, to something beyond the transcendental.

*

7. The Elusiveness of Radical Choice

Is the transcendental accessible? Can we apprehend the radical choice of meaning as it is in itself? Can we go back to the very source (or Ur-sprung) of our self-definition, to the first moment of our upsurge into the world when the world received a fresh layer of meaning? Or does this primordial founding act, 'that by which all foundations and all reasons come into being' (BN p.479), remain a mystery, an art hidden in the depths of the soul? Is our existence 'too tightly held in the world to be able to know itself at the moment of its involvement'?[39] Does Hegel's criticism of Kant's concept of the transcendental also apply to Sartre's account of the transcendental, viz. that the investigation of the conditions of cognition and experience is itself cognitive, and part of experience, and cannot arrive at its goal but rather is the goal itself?

Sartre approaches the problem of the apprehensibility of self-definition from two angles, one existential and ontological, and concerned with radical choice, the other phenomenological, and concerned with the nature of the ordinary lived experience the meaning of which the choice makes possible. The target of both approaches is the same: to show the derivative and secondary status of knowledge and rationality in relation to the lived. The phenomenological approach will be taken up after the examination of the existential approach.

Sartre argues that the radical choice and project by which we define ourselves and project ourselves towards our ends are so fundamental and total that they remain opaque with respect to many

of the investigative activities by which we try to apprehend them. Because they are responsible for defining a person's attitude to logic, rational principles and investigative methods, there can be no possibility of questioning them in conformance to logic and rational principles (BN p.570). Qua condition, the radical choice is not itself a possible subject for the rational and epistemic activities whose meaning it conditions. Every attempt to reveal, identify and specify it according to rational means presupposes it, and therefore falls short -- so deep is its 'measure'.

But this is not a vicious circle. If the radical choice and original upsurge remain inapprehensible with respect to our rational directed investigative endeavours, and in some sense elusive, they are not hidden and receded like Kant's schematism; they are immanent in experience. Sartre calls the fundamental project a 'mystery in broad daylight' (BN p.571). Somehow we always already understand the radical choice and the fundamental project -- even if not clearly and explicitly -- because these are precisely what we are. The transcendental structure of experience is immanent in lived experience: we are nothing but what we have chosen of ourselves. Our acts, desires, emotions and dispositions necessarily reflect back the roots of our self-definition, and the ends towards which we are projected. (Cf. Chapter Four, Section 6)

Radical choice, Sartre argues, is fully experienced by us; we 'understand it without understanding it.'[40] We do not have to seek it without 'without ever having any presentiment of its location, as one can go to look for the source of the Nile or the Niger' (BN p.569). By analogy, we have a certain implicit understanding of the categorial framework that shapes our

experience, just by virtue of its proximity to experience: reason, Kant argues, 'has insight only into that which it produces after a plan of its own':[41]

> In this field nothing can escape us. What reason produces entirely out of itself cannot be concealed, but is brought to light by reason itself immediately the common principle has been discovered.[42]

If the radical choice is fully experienced by us, and is somehow tacitly understood because it is what we are, it does not follow that we know it as such. On the contrary, we are unable to fully identify and specify the event or structure that gives to experience its most fundamental shape and meaning; that is, we are unable to transform our 'trans-lucidity' to ourselves, our inarticulate understanding, into complete self-transparency and self-knowledge. Here Sartre connects the phenomenological concept of the pre-reflective cogito (which will be examined soon) with the concept of pre-understanding: we have an undeveloped, 'non-thetic', 'non-positional', non-analytical apprehension of the deepest aspects of ourselves, and the original founding act which marks our irruption into the world and the subsequent trajectory towards our ends; this is a 'pre-ontological' and 'pre-judicative' comprehension.[43] (It should be noted that Sartre slips this important concept into the argument without a great deal of defence or preparation.)

Like Heidegger,[44] Sartre construes this implicit understanding of the radical choice and fundamental project in ontological rather than epistemological terms: it is not a form of knowledge (in the sense that it 'supposes reliefs, levels, an order, heirarchy' (BN p.155)), and it does not involve thought, analysis

or conceptualization. It is a way of being, of projecting ourselves into the world and towards our ends; the understanding of human reality is itself a definite characteristic of human reality. (Once again, this coincides with Sartre's meta-philosophical goal of criticizing the foundational status so often given to epistemology.) Pre-understanding (like verstehen) is primitive, unspecific and inarticulate (just as are the other non-epistemic modes of insight, viz. fulgurating intuitions and anxiety); in it everything is presented 'all at once' (BN p.571; cf. also p.155), in a state of extreme indifferentiation, 'without shading, without relief....All is there.' (ibid.) The fundamental project exists

> by means of our very engagement, and therefore we shall be able to apprehend it only by living it. Thus we are always wholly present to ourselves; but precisely because we are wholly present, we cannot hope to have an analytical and detailed consciousness of what we are. Moreover this consciousness can be only non-thetic.
>
> (BN p.463)

> [If] the fundamental project is fully experienced by the subject and hence wholly conscious, that certainly does not mean that it must at the same time be known by him; quite the contrary.
>
> (BN p.570)

It should be obvious by now that Sartre sees knowledge as distinct from pre-reflective experience, and not as part of a smooth continuum that would, for instance, make it possible for objective knowledge about ourselves to become self-knowledge (Hampshire), and to inform our actions and decisions. If we fully experience the very deepest roots of our way of being, and have an implicit and undeveloped understanding of them, just in virtue of living them, it is also part of the very structure of experience

that we cannot transform this understanding into an analytical, 'thetic' and 'positional' knowledge without at the same time losing something of paramount importance: viz. the primitive sense of 'belongingness' or mineness, the fact that the project is experienced as a 'living possession'. I cannot know my radical choice and project (in the sense of being able to study, analyse and conceptualize it) in so far as I live it for myself, and in so far as it is mine; I can only know it from the outside, at a distance, as another knows it. This is an unalterable limit.

The grounds for this limitation were discussed earlier: the relation that I have to my own life is fundamentally different from the relation that another can have to it. Another can relate to it theoretically, observationally or prognostically, but he cannot relate practically to it: that is, he himself does not have to be the person whose life he is observing and studying. The difference between living and knowing the project, and the corresponding difference between my perspective on the deepest aspects of my way of being, and the other's perspective, is based on this primitive and irreducible sense of belongingness. The most important transcendental aspects of self-definition are elusive with respect to our epistemic efforts; epistemically and theoretically, we suffer a blind spot to our project. 'We shall be able to apprehend it only by living it.' (BN p.463)

Still, it is a central principle of Sartre's existential psychoanalysis that everything about a man can be communicated, given the right tools and data. A 'regressive analysis' based on the articulation and explication of this pre-understanding will lead us back to the fundamental project, and to the very moment of our

involvement in the world. The 'pillar of support' for this regressive analysis, and for existential psycho-analysis, is our tacit pre-understanding of human reality; starting from it, and going further and further back, we can reach 'the original relation which the for-itself chooses with its facticity and with the world.' (BN p.457) But if regressive analysis is based on our implicit pre-understanding of ourselves, it does not follow that it is a better and more accurate version of it; on the contrary, because it is a founded, or derivative, mode of apprehension, it cannot reveal us to ourselves as we are for ourselves. This represents an unalterable limit, and not merely a contingent defect of our epistemic apparatus or conceptual scheme. Clearly the difference between experiencing or tacitly understanding the project, and knowing it, reflects the deeper distinction that Sartre makes at the outset of Being and Nothingness between consciousness and knowledge.

Sartre's conclusion is that what always escapes the analytical methods of investigation and recovery 'is the project as it is for itself....This project can be experienced only as a living possession; there is an incompatibility between existence for itself and objective existence.' (BN p.571, emphasis added) We never apprehend ourselves except as a choice in the making. The radical choice and fundamental project can only be known from the outside, from the point of view of the other, and not as it is lived, for itself, with its irreducible sense of belongingness.

> A good comparison for my efforts to apprehend myself and their futility might be found in that sphere described by Poincaré in which the temperature descreases as one goes from its center to its surface. Living beings attempt

> to arrive at the surface of this sphere by setting out from its center, but the lowering of the temperature produces in them a continually increasing contraction. They tend to become infinitely flat proportionately to their approaching their goal, and because of this fact they are separated by an infinite distance.
>
> (BN p.286)

Even in self-analysis then, where analyst and analysand are one and the same, the process of articulating pre-understanding unavoidably leads us further and further away from the lived, first-personal perspective. The inquiry back into the original upsurge of the project -- a questioning back that occurs only through the project or tradition -- is limited by the very structure of experience. We ourselves cannot know the original event (or upsurge) of self-definition, the founding source of experience, as it is in itself, even if we fully experience it and always relive it; we have only a tacit understanding of the original step when we emerged from darkness into light and made an irrevocable contract with existing.[45]

The same limits to self-apprehensibility are to be found in Sartre's later work (which can only be briefly cited here). In L'Idiot de la famille the distinction between consciousness and knowledge is expanded into the distinction between 'lived experience' and comprehension. Flaubert, Sartre argues, has a 'comprehension of the most obscure origins of his own history'; 'his awareness of these depths was not an intellectual one', but consisted of 'fulgurating intuitions' in which he simultaneously saw everything and nothing.[46] This is a 'comprehension of oneself which cannot be named and which perpetually escapes one.'[47] Lived experience, Sartre says, is perpetually susceptible of

comprehension, but never of knowledge....[One] can know certain psychic phenomena by concepts, but not this experience itself.'[48]

*

8. Radical Choice and Deliberation

For as you began, so you will remain.
-- Hölderlin

The case of the inferiority complex illustrates Sartre's idea that however far we travel back, we always encounter the fundamental project and the radical choice of meaning (i.e. the radical choice of meaning 'refers only to itself'), without being able to know these as they are lived. An individual suffering from a deep-rooted inferiority complex cannot 'step back' (Hampshire) from it while he is in the midst of living it; although he has an implicit and undeveloped understanding of himself, he cannot 'break out' and see his self-definition from the outside, from a logically or conceptually neutral vantage-point. The descriptions and moral concepts by means of which he identifies himself, the evaluations he makes about himself, and the interpretations he holds about his dispositions, emotional patterns, character and past -- all these are internal to his fundamental project of being inferior before others. They are meaningful only in terms of the deepest-lying roots of his self-definition. Even the attempt he makes to deliberate and think about an alternative way of being, or about lost opportunities

(Hampshire), reinforces and refers to his current way of being. He cannot, to use Hampshire's terms, step back from and 'see round' his habits of thought, behaviour and emotion.

> I can be 'freed' from my 'inferiority complex' only by a radical modification of my project which could in no way find its causes and motives in the prior project....Thus so long as I am 'in' the inferiority complex, I can not even conceive of the possibility of getting out of it. Even if I dream of getting out of it, the precise function of this dream is to make me experience even further the abjection of my state; it can be interpreted therefore only in and through the intention which makes me inferior.
>
> (BN p.475)

The attempts made by a person suffering from the inferiority complex to redefine himself or cure himself by deliberating, criticizing and acquiring knowledge about the causes of his condition -- central ideas in a Spinozist-based therapy -- may effect superficial and piecemeal alterations, but these will not reach down to the deepest levels of his being; ultimately, his endeavours at voluntary reform only realize his project of being inferior in another way (cf. BN p.475). Psychic ailments, Sartre argues, can be cured only as a totality, for they are part of the total project of the person.[49]

This means, on a more general scale, that self-definition is not a gradualistic and piecemeal activity; it is not achieved by first deliberating, stepping back and reflecting on oneself, criticizing, evaluating, acquiring knowledge, and then choosing.

> This is not because the [radical] choice is less conscious or less explicit than a deliberation but rather because it is the foundation of all deliberation and because as we have seen, a deliberation requires an interpretation in terms of an original choice.
>
> (BN pp.461-462)

There is therefore no question of putting self-definition on a sure and rational foundation; nor is there any question of objectively justifying one's response to the fundamental practical questions by appeal to external criteria. Reasoning, stepping back, deliberating, criticizing and searching for justification do not have meaning in some neutral logical space that is prior to the transcendental event of choice. From this Sartre concludes that the attempt to change oneself by deliberately willing oneself to change must be futile, because the voluntary decision to change already finds its motives within the radical choice of one's ends: 'it can attack these ends in appearance only.' (BN p.475)

Sartre's belief in the 'profound inefficacy of a voluntary act directed on itself' (BN pp.471-2) clearly contrasts with Hampshire's confidence in the efficacy of stepping back, deliberating, criticizing oneself and regretting former actions. When I deliberate, Sartre argues,

> the chips are down. And if I am brought to the point of deliberating, this is simply because it is part of my original project to realize motives by means of deliberation rather than by some other form of discovery (by passion, for example, or simply by action....
> (BN p.451)

*

Tugendhat: The Effectiveness of Deliberation

In contrast to Sartre and Heidegger, the German philosopher Ernst Tugendhat argues that self-definition and self-determination must be linked to the question of truth and rational justification

if they are to avoid falling into arbitrary subjectivism.[50] Self-determination proper must be reflective and deliberative,[51] and can only be realized in a reflective self-relation which is directed to an 'objectively justifiable' choice of what is good. In particular, an individual's attempt to work out the fundamental practical questions must answer to others who are more experienced in the matter. In a passage clearly marked out for the Heideggerean notion of individual resolute choice, as well as the Sartrean notion of absurd and unjustifiable radical choice, Tugendhat argues:

> If the will were not obliged to rely upon reasons in the penultimate instance, my adoption of a position would be without force, and would not be my adoption of a position....the distinguishing feature of that choice which can be characterized as self-determination is that the choice is carried out in the mode of rational volition.[52]

Deliberation such as Tugendhat conceives it must be objective. It is resistant to the temporary bias, deception and subjective whim that can easily affect such crucial moments in a person's life, because it involves the appeal to reasons in assessing the various and often conflicting ways of working out the fundamental practical questions. By deliberating, a person can get outside himself and his current and restrictive self-definition. The inquiry that is involved in this (e.g. the process of formulating descriptions and interpretations about himself, and appealing to reasons) is not done purely <u>for himself</u>, and <u>in his own terms</u>; that is, the meaning of his inquiry is not internal to or grounded in a prior, or transcendental, act of self-definition.

But Tugendhat's position on the power of rationality in self-definition is qualified: in the <u>penultimate</u> instance, reasoning

and deliberating must have an independent force and validity, if the choice is not to be mere arbitrary whim. The force that reasons have at the penultimate stage must be independent to the process of self-definition, because a person's recognition of a reason as a reason, and as a valid and binding reason, cannot at this stage depend on his volition, subjective whim or 'pre-logical' transcendental choice. But this is not all there is to self-definition. In the ultimate instance, Tugendhat argues, reasons come to an end in the process of deliberation, and cannot ground the way the fundamental practical questions are worked out, or the shape taken by self-definition.[53] The process of adducing grounds must come to an end when decisions about one's life are at issue.

The distinction Tugendhat makes between the penultimate and ultimate stages in self-determination is not like the transcendental one Sartre makes between the framework in its entirety, and that which the framework makes possible. Nor is his idea that the process of adducing grounds must come to an end when decisions about one's life are at issue to be confused with an absurd or ungrounded choice in the Sartrean sense of a transcendental choice by which all foundations and all reasons come into being. Sartre's view of self-definition is much more radical; he sees self-definition as operating entirely on the transcendental level. Tugendhat denies this: self-determination or self-definition is not 'prelogical', since it still obeys objective norms of rationality; nor is it transcendental, in the sense that it makes all personal experience possible, implies no other meaning, and 'refers only to itself'. Tugendhat's version

of self-definition lies midway between Sartre's and Hampshire's: he maintains that self-determination (or self-definition) 'is grounded in the question of truth even though it can not be fully resolved in this question.' [54]

*

9. The Elusiveness of Ordinary Experience

Sartre's approach to the problem of the apprehensibility of self-definition has already been studied from the existential and ontological side; this approach focussed on the nature and apprehensibility of radical choice and the fundamental projection, which represent the very zero-point of self-definition. Complementing this is the approach from the phenomenological side, which focusses on the nature and apprehensibility of ordinary lived experience, the meaning of which the radical choice and fundamental project makes possible. This is a study of experience which is always already defined, and already subject to transcendental organization; it is not the act of definition itself, and the framework itself, neither of which are discrete events or items within experience. Despite the differences between levels (framework and content, transcendental and phenomenal), the same basic structures, and the same basic restrictions on apprehensibility are in effect. Similarly, the target on which both approaches converge is the same, viz. the derivative and secondary status of knowledge in relation to the

lived. Epistemically, we suffer a blind spot to the transcendental framework: it is lived and not known. We suffer a similar reflexive blind spot in the stream of ordinary lived experience.

Before turning to Sartre's account of the essential structures of lived experience to see how the elusiveness of radical choice and the fundamental project are manifested in the phenomena of ordinary experience, the argument from the ontological and existential side will be recapitulated very briefly. It was argued that Sartre's concept of the radical choice of meaning has an essentially Kantian transcendental structure: radical choice has a similar meaning-conferring role at the individual level that the categories have at the level of reason in general. The for-itself's experience has a definite structure, unity, internal coherence, homogeneity, boundedness and overall style because behind it, and co-extensive with it, stands the radical choice (and fundamental project) as a determinate principle of organization that does not itself build upon (or arise from) the contents of experience.

Once a transcendental distinction is admitted between experience (or what is 'in' experience) and the fundamental framework of experience, a number of epistemic restrictions come to affect the attempt to identify and uncover the transcendental level. Radical choice is inapprehensible in so far as it is the very condition of meaning for epistemic activities -- a condition that is not itself a possible subject for the activities whose meaning it conditions. But this does not mean that we are opaque to ourselves. Somehow we always already understand the radical choice and the

fundamental project -- even if not clearly and explicitly -- because the transcendental structure of personal experience is also immanent in lived experience. The radical choice and fundamental project are fully experienced by us, and somehow tacitly understood, even if we do not know them as such.

In this tacit understanding, everything is presented 'all at once', without articulation or specification. Nothing is hidden. But we cannot transform this understanding into knowledge. We cannot know our project as it is for itself; it can be experienced only as a 'living possession'. The only way it can be known is from the outside, from the point of view of the other, and not as it is lived and tacitly understood.

The transcendental distinction between knowledge and experience, and the limits to self-apprehension imposed by it, manifests itself in ordinary experience in a peculiar way: ordinary experience is such that we have a blind spot to the deepest well-spring of our self-definition. Our attention is elsewhere, directed outside, and not towards its origin or its framework. Normally, we experience things without being aware of what allows us to experience them, and what sets limits to our experience -- just as we are unaware of the eye as the source and condition of sight. The eye, like the conditions which allow us to experience things, 'is there everywhere as the surpassed....The perceptive field refers to a centre objectively defined by that reference and located in the very field which is oriented around it. Only we do not see this centre as the structure of the perceptive field considered; we are the centre.' (BN p.317)

*

1Ø. Pre-Reflective Experience

Sartre was well-known for his 'horror' of the inner life, and the underlying 'alimentary' epistemology which postulates interiority as a uniquely privileged source of knowledge ('as a dead permanency which has a sensuous present existence' (Hegel)), and introspection as a kind of unfailing inner vision. Anything which might obscure conscious experience from itself, and confer on it limits other than its own (e.g., the transcendental ego, psychic forces, human nature, unconscious drives) is rigorously exorcised from his various writings on the emotions, imagination, reflection and memory.[55] Here, as elsewhere in Sartre's work, it is his biographical and autobiographical descriptions -- sometimes bordering on ridicule -- which are the most revealing of his theoretical position. In The Words he describes the introspective antics of one of his grandfather's associates, M.Simonnot, who impressed the little Sartre by the perspicuity of his inner gaze, which illuminated an inner landscape populated by solid and inert tastes, desires and preferences.

> When Anne Marie asked him...whether he liked Bach, whether he enjoyed the seashore or the mountains, whether he had pleasant memories of his native town, he would take time to reflect and would direct his inner gaze to the granite-like mass of his tastes. When he had obtained the information that had been requested, he would communicate it to my mother in an objective tone accompanied by a nod of the head....Of course, I was quite able, when questioned, to state my preferences and even assert them. But when I was alone, they eluded me. Far from feeling them, I had to hold on to them and push them, to breathe life into them. ...I was nothing: an ineffaceable transparency.[56]

Later Sartre realized that his childhood feeling of ineffaceable transparency, and the lack of intensity and definiteness of his desires, preferences, emotions and beliefs, are actually fundamental characteristics of the train of ordinary pre-reflective experience.[57] What he describes on the ontological level as the lack of a Self -- the lack of 'the absolute being of the self with its characteristics of identity, of purity, of permanence etc.' (BN p.93) -- manifests itself on the phenomenological level as the elusiveness and under-determination of experience and emotion, the sign of which is the futility of introspection.

Sartre maintains that a person has a large blind spot towards himself; he cannot see himself as others see him, or experience himself as many of the common terms used to identify and describe his emotions, actions and feelings may suggest. For himself, he does not have definite and measurable qualities or character traits: he cannot be an object for himself (cf. BN p.241) -- at least not without self-deception. Engaged in the normal train of daily events, he does not ordinarily experience himself as being of a certain nature, as having a certain character, as fulfilling a certain social role; he does not feel himself (for instance) as intelligent, ambitious, witty or easy-going. Nor does he experience certain sequences of action as (for instance) adventurous, dull, momentous or prescient -- that is, in the terms which are commonly used to identify and describe actions after the fact.[58] For himself (on the pre-reflective level) he is not anything, or rather, he is nothing but a perspective on a situation, an 'incomprehensible monster'. Something is always

missing in his attempts at introspective specification.

Similarly, the train of a person's pre-reflective experience does not divide up into neat and easily-labelled units: his mind is not peopled with 'antagonistic forces whose type of existence is comparable to that of things.' (BN p.40) He can never know, for instance, the precise intensity of his emotions and experiences, that is, the extent to which he feels, and the extent to which he plays at feeling. Preferences, desires, feelings, passions and motives are under-determined; they demand that he 'hold on to them and push them, [and] breathe life into them.' This obviously contrasts with Spinoza's view of the strength and determinateness of emotions, and the struggle of reason with unruly passions (cf. BN p.32).

In his mundane and uninterrupted dealings with the world and with others, a person is largely unconcerned with defining his mental states, or observing himself, or learning about the causes of his emotions and desires; the natural course of pre-reflective experience is directed outwards, and does not divide into an introspector and introspectabilia, or experience and a subject of experience. Obviously this does not mean that a person has no awareness of his mental states. He apprehends certain states, moods, desires, emotions, etc., but only across the world, as a perspective on the situation confronting him; they are part of the quality and tenor of events, part of his way of being in the world, and not events which first happen 'in his head' (like M.Simonnot's well-cultivated tastes and desires), only to be projected outwards.

The ordinary lived experience whose fundamental meaning and

structure is provided by the radical choice, is by nature non-reflective: the focus of attention is outside. Reading a book or climbing stairs are events that occur spontaneously and naturally; they do not suffer the arrested development caused by stepping back and taking a point of view on them to determine what they are and why they are. Certain types of action -- particularly complex actions such as playing tennis or playing a musical instrument -- are severely inhibited when they are made the object of contemporaneous reflection, analysis and commentary. Emotions are also particularly susceptible to alteration when they are reflected upon, analysed and described. In general, ordinary experience can only sustain one major focus at any one time, and cannot at the same time be focussed upon itself. If it is interrupted, the sense of context, continuity and forward-directedness is destroyed. Polanyi describes this as the mutual exclusivity of focal and tacit awareness.

> If a pianist shifts his attention away from the piece he is playing to the observation of what he is doing with his fingers while playing it, he will become confused and may have to stop. This happens generally if we switch our focal attention to particulars of which we had previously been aware only in their subsidiary role.[59]

What is distinctive about the ordinary pre-reflective experience is that it is uninhabited by an I or an ego. In stating this, Sartre is making a phenomenological claim; a close phenomenological study (e.g. using eidetic variation) of ordinary 'lived through' experiences will show that they are without an I.[60] This does not mean that they are radically impersonal: the fundamental project -- which is not to be confused with the self or ego -- still underlies these experiences, and gives them their

specificity and meaning. But the I is an object for consciousness, or in front of consciousness, and not co-extensive with pre-reflective experience.[61]

> When I run after a streetcar, when I look at the time, when I am absorbed in contemplating a portrait, there is no I. There is consciousness of-the-streetcar-having-to-be-over-taken, etc., and non-positional consciousness of consciousness.
>
> (TE pp.48-49)

Sartre's claim that ordinary pre-reflective experience is largely transparent, and uninhabited by an ego or self, is important, because it is precisely such experiences to which we turn in trying to learn about ourselves. It is a common assumption that if we could understand their nature, and why they are and to whom they belong, then we would have the proper material with which to examine ourselves. But if we fail to encounter anything determinate, clear and unequivocal in reflecting upon these experiences, if our self-inquiry is under-determined by the very self which is its ostensible target, then we may be inclined to compensate by inventing precisely those things we lack: viz. the self or ego. The search for self-knowledge is then bound to run into difficulties.

*

11. Non-Positional Self-Consciousness

The ordinary unreflected stream of experience is not a simple and anonymous registering of events, unaccompanied by awareness of where the self ends and the other begins. There is also an ineliminable element of self-consciousness, even if the 'self' in the formulation 'self-consciousness' is not the simple and unitary 'seat' of experience.[62] This tacit awareness parallels the tacit 'pre-ontological' comprehension that a person has of himself and his project. Ordinary experience is comprised of both the non-reflected intentional direction to objects, and an implicit non-focal awareness of this experience. Sartre calls this the 'translucidity' of consciousness to itself, or 'consciousness of non-reflected consciousness'.

Like our tacit and undeveloped self-understanding, the implicit awareness that always accompanies ordinary experience is not clear-cut and focussed. In perceiving that p, wanting that p and believing that p there is both a directed and quite specific awareness of the object (that p), as well as an implicit 'non-positing' or 'non-positional' awareness of this very awareness. The latter form of awareness is merely an implicit awareness <u>that</u> there is an experience of something, and that this experience is <u>not</u> the object towards which it is directed: it does not 'posit' or thematize anything (cf. <u>TE</u> p.45).

> [This] consciousness of consciousness -- except in the case of reflective consciousness...-- is not positional, which is to say that consciousness is not for itself its own object. Its object is by nature outside of it, and that is why consciousness <u>posits</u> and <u>grasps</u> the object in the same act. Consciousness knows itself only as absolute inward-

ness.

(TE pp.40-41)

The pianist Polanyi describes for example is not so engrossed with the situation that he has no sense of where he as agent ends, and the environment (or otherness) begins; he is not wholly unaware that he is playing music, that his fingers are moving, or that a piano is there in front of him. He has an implicit non-focal awareness of these features of his situation, even if they cannot at the same time be made explicit and articulate.

Once again Sartre uses this idea to criticize epistemology. The most salient characteristic of ordinary pre-reflective experience is that it is not a form of knowledge. (This parallels his claim that our tacit self-understanding is not a form of knowledge or judgement.)

> [In] the non-thetic consciousness, consciousness is not an object for consciousness. What is involved here is not knowledge, which supposes object-subject duality, but the translucidity intrinsic to consciousness as its existential condition.[63]

It would be incorrect, given Sartre's account of knowledge as 'positional' and 'thetic', to describe the pianist as knowing that his fingers are moving; nor would it be correct to describe his awareness as consisting in his holding thoughts or beliefs, however vague and unformed, about the nature and cause of his experiences and mental states. The self-relation in ordinary pre-reflective experience is more primitive than a relation of knowledge.

Despite the shared emphasis on the intentional element in experience, Sartre's picture of the structure of ordinary experience contrasts quite strongly with Hampshire and Spinoza's.

This is evident in two important ways: first, a subject experiences emotions, desires, wants and other mental states without necessarily having concurrent ideas, thoughts or beliefs about them. Although he has an undeveloped and tacit awareness of his experience, he does not necessarily have an idea or thought, however vague and unformed, of what he is experiencing and why he is experiencing it.

Sartre conceives the relation that experience has to itself as a direct, non-cognitive relation (BN pp.xxviii-xxix): thought-dependence, 'concept-saturation' or mediation by belief is not an essential ingredient for ordinary experience to have the shape that it does. Experience is simply accompanied by a tacit and 'pre-judicative' understanding and awareness. Spinoza and Hampshire's concept of intentional experience is much more heavily thought-dependent: there are no emotions or mental states without the subject's thought or belief about them entering in as essential constituents. This is more than a tacit awareness: thoughts and beliefs are as it were inside mental states, even if they are not explicitly or clearly formulated (FM iv, p.240). There is no purely thought-independent experience.

The second important difference between Sartre and Hampshire is the mutual exclusivity that Sartre claims is built into the very structure of ordinary experience: ordinary pre-reflective experience is not for itself its own object or topic (TE p.41). Its object is by nature outside of it. This means that the subject that thinks or experiences is not simultaneously the subject thought of or experienced. There is a certain blind spot in experience. Sartre uses this mutual exclusivity as an argument

against Descartes, Fichte and Husserl: 'the consciousness which says I think is precisely not the consciousness which thinks.' (TE p.45) He also uses it as an argument about the apprehensibility of character: a person of a certain character or nature (in so far as this is attributed to him by others) cannot have an intuition of himself as such a character; he has a blind spot to what he is.[64]

Normally, when I am thinking about something, I am not simultaneously thinking about this very thinking, although later I can make it the object of a higher-order thought; similarly, my act of criticizing something is not itself the topic of my criticism. It is about something other than it. This exclusivity applies to many ordinary mental activities and experiences. Ryle for instance describes how certain higher-order actions are logically condemned to eternal penultimacy, thereby giving us a sense of the 'systematic elusiveness' of the 'I'.

> To try, for example, to describe what one has just done, or is now doing, is to comment upon a step which is not itself, save per accidens, one of commenting. But the operation which is the commenting is not, and cannot be, the step on which that commentary is being made. Nor can an act of ridiculing be its own butt. A higher order action cannot be the action upon which it is performed. So my commentary on my performances must always be silent about one performance, namely itself, and this performance can be the target only of another commentary.[65]

The exclusivity that is built into the very structure of ordinary experience and self-awareness reflects the deeper distinction found at the outset of Being and Nothingness between consciousness and knowledge (or experience and knowledge). Sartre's goal is to found knowledge on consciousness and

experience, in opposition to a long line of philosophers from Plato who have founded experience on knowledge.[66] At the same time, however, he wishes to preserve a kind of 'guaranteed access' to the real -- a bulwark against radical error -- by means of the concepts of tacit self-understanding and the pre-reflexive cogito. The explicit target of his criticism of the foundational status attributed to knowledge is Spinoza's (and the French philosopher Alain's) concept of the idea ideae, according to which 'a person who knows anything by that very fact knows that he knows, and knows that he knows that he knows, and so on ad infinitum.' (Ethics, II, Prop. 21, Note; cf. Chapter Six, Section 9) In the crucially important opening pages of Being and Nothingness Sartre writes:

> What is this consciousness of consciousness? We suffer to such an extent from the illusion of the primacy of knowledge that we are immediately ready to make of the consciousness of consciousness an idea ideae in the manner of Spinoza; that is, a knowledge of knowledge. (BN p.xxviii).

Sartre's argument in brief is that the reduction of consciousness to knowledge introduces the subject-object dyad into consciousness. This is unacceptable, because it leads to a vicious infinite regress (idea ideae ideae, etc., or the knower known, the knower known by the known, etc.). From this Sartre concludes that consciousness must be established ontologically and not epistemologically: 'Consciousness of self is not dual. If we wish to avoid an infinite regress, there must be an immediate, non-cognitive relation of the self to itself.' (BN pp.xxviii-xxix) By thus abandoning the primacy of knowledge, 'we have discovered the being of the knower and encountered an absolute, that same

absolute which the rationalists of the seventeenth century had defined and logically constituted as an object of knowledge.' (BN p.xxxii)

Although this occurs at the very starting-point of Being and Nothingness, it represents the major theme of the second (viz. phenomenological) approach that Sartre takes to the problem of the apprehensibility of the roots of self-definition. The target of both approaches is the same: to show the derivative and secondary status of knowledge in relation to the lived. Moreover, the conclusion of both approaches is the same: the deepest levels of our way of being are lived and not known. The very structure of lived experience is such that self-definition and self-alteration cannot be a matter of the acquisition of knowledge; there is no simple, clear and smooth transition from knowledge to decision, emotion and action. This restriction parallels the restriction on the transcendental level, viz. that the very structure of the framework of experience is such that self-definition cannot be a matter of knowledge. Knowledge, in short, is not enough.

In passing, it is worth noting that the exclusivity that Sartre sees built into the very structure of ordinary experience and self-awareness is not an isolated explanatory measure. Like Kant's philosophy, where understanding and sensibility, noumena and phenomena, receptivity and activity, etc. confront each other and find their accord only in discord, Sartre's early and middle philosophy is marked in its most general outlines by extensive dichotomies, antitheses and mutual exclusivities: e.g. being for-oneself versus being for-others; looking versus being looked-at; rational problem-solving consciousness versus imaginary and

emotional behaviour; reflective experience versus unreflective experience.[67]

*

12. The Unrealizable Ascriptions of Others

Sartre's account of the structure of ordinary experience, and his account of the inapprehensibility of the radical choice, are important in showing how the search for the deepest roots of one's self-definition, and the attempt to work out the fundamental practical questions, do not have as their object and terminus what any common sense account tells us they must have: the inner self. Faced with the elusiveness and insubstantiality of inner experience, and at the same time led astray by a naive realism which holds that introspection, reflection and other self-examining activities must be about an inner self, an inner nature, character, or some other hidden psychic agency that is isolable and determinate, a self-inquirer is naturally inclined to look outside to others, and to the objects towards which he is directed, for an indication of what he is, and for a general model for apprehending himself. Typically, he tries to find in his own experience characteristics which have the 'load' of the middle-sized and middle-distanced objects of his environment (e.g. stable dispositions, properties). He tries to find in or behind his various actions, wants, desires, emotions, purposes and dispositions a self or ego which unifies and centres them. This reveals the tendency to model the inside on the outside, or more

precisely to model a complex network of inseparable relations on single, non-composite entities.

One way an individual tries to learn about himself and define himself is through consulting the ascriptions made about his behaviour and character by other persons. He assumes that if he collects enough character-ascriptions and interpretations from persons occupying different perspectives, or reliable character-ascriptions from only a few well-chosen acquaintances, he can distil from them a number of essential properties, and arrive at a true picture of himself.

This no doubt is an important method, and it is a necessary condition for many kinds of self-knowledge: the other person is a kind of mirror who sees us from an external perspective which by necessity we cannot occupy except by imaginative -- and often distorting -- extension. We learn about ourselves through the other, or more precisely, in relation with the other.

> One's feelings and actions, the number of recurrences of an action or a feeling -- it is the Other who knows them. I cannot grasp this psychology myself. Someone tells me 'You are like that,' enabling me to realize that it may be true. But it is the Other who tells me. One can only have complete self-knowledge starting from that. If the Other does not tell you what you are for him, you cannot attain self-knowledge.... One always remains a little ignorant of oneself concerning the knowledge that others give us. If someone says: 'You have an inquiring mind, you are ambitious, et cetera,' one accepts that if the examples are specific, but often one does not unravel it. This is the kind of knowledge that one would find if one were to read a book about oneself once one is dead.[68]

But the other person is not an objective mirror who reflects back a perfectly clear image.[69] Relying upon the other's

character-ascriptions and psychological insights is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for the attainment of one kind of self-knowledge. There are three reasons for this.

First, many of the character predicates used by others (e.g. tempermental, generous, balanced), as well as the more specific (and method-dependent) terms found in interpretations offered by trained observers of the human scene (e.g. 'neurotic', 'manic-depressive'), are not entirely reliable in providing accurate and unbiased clues to one's character. Many terms are over-simplistic and undiscriminating, in so far as they overlook differences and resemblances in mental states, and reflect only a limited vocabulary of the emotions and behaviour (cf. Chapter Two). In many cases, crude or over-simplistic character ascriptions are made by others not so much for their descriptive accuracy and informative content as their manipulative power. This is the use of words and labels as weapons: 'You are a thief!', 'You are the family idiot!' 'You are the meanest person alive!'[70]

Another obvious drawback of character-ascriptions is their susceptibility to potentially large discrepancies. This is the result of differences of opinion and belief amongst the different observers, as well as the different personal relations they have with him, and the different psychological vocabularies or methods they might employ.[71] A convergence of opinion in the long run between the various perspectives is logically and empirically possible in the case of simple and relatively uncontroversial character-ascriptions; but in the case of complex and deeper interpretations (e.g. about a person's way of life), it is not empirically probable, and to wait upon a convergence in the long

run would be futile.

The most serious limitation of relying upon character ascriptions for defining oneself and learning about oneself is an *a priori* limitation: viz. the fact that the character ascriptions and interpretations of others are 'unrealizable', or un-internalizable: 'I cannot live them as my own realities.' (*BN* p.274) This is a variation of the problem of belongingness that was mentioned in the previous chapters, and which counted against the transformation of certain kinds of objective knowledge about oneself into personal self-knowledge. An individual, Sartre argues, is free to *apply* character predicates to himself on an inductive basis, after observing others who are described in these terms; what he cannot do is actually *live* them, or make them his *own*.

> For-myself I am not a professor or a waiter in a cafe, nor am I handsome or ugly, Jew or Aryan, spiritual, vulgar or distinguished.... If I am told that I am *vulgar*, for example, I have often grasped by intuition as regards others the nature of vulgarity; thus I can apply the word 'vulgar' to my person. But I cannot join the meaning of this word to my person.
>
> (*BN* p.527)

This does not mean that there is no such thing as character, or that character-ascriptions are in principle illusory. Seeing others in terms of character predicates -- as generous, scattered, deep, neurotic -- is an essential element of inter-subjective relations, even if it does not represent genuine I-Thou or face to face encounters.[72] Sartre's argument is not against the level of generality or specificity of the predicates and psychological terms involved in character ascriptions and self-ascriptions. His argument is that these predicates, as well as the various

descriptive terms that are found in psychology, psycho-therapy, psychiatry and biography,[73] are of a fundamentally different nature from ordinary pre-reflective experience (cf. BN p.51); they represent a person's outside, how he is for others,or how he has been in the past. They cannot be 'put on all fours' with how he is for himself -- an 'incomparable monster preferable to all' (Malraux), a perspective on the future.[74] Even a very highly sophisticated and refined vocabulary for the character-ascriptions and inner states does not carry with it the guarantee that it connects with the first-person perspective.

Character is essentially for others: consciousness does not know its own character, unless it does so reflectively, from another's point of view; 'it exists its character in pure indistinction non-thematically and non-thetically....' (BN p.349) Thus introspection, as practised by M.Simonnot, fails to yield character, or the 'granite-like mass' of one's tastes, desires, feelings, etc.

> I am unable to bring about any relation between what I am in the intimacy of the For-Itself, without distance, without recoil, without perspective, and this unjustifiable being-in-itself which I am for the Other. There is no standard here, no table of correlation.
> (BN p.222)

The same problem of belongingness, of making knowledge self-knowledge, was seen to apply to the possession of knowledge of a more general and objective sort (e.g. biological, physiological, psychological, psycho-analytical, sociological knowledge). General scientific perspectives may reveal me to myself under a general theory, and explain in general, causally-couched explanations why I am as I am, and what moves me to action; they

reveal how I have been made, on the basis of certain factical conditions (e.g., genetic and biological inheritance, and class, social and linguistic conditioning). But they fail to reveal how I *am for myself*, how I *define myself* on the basis of these conditions. Inevitably, then, they fall short in providing me with the deeper and more personal kind of self-knowledge that is necessary to work out the fundamental practical questions. Sartre explains this peculiarity -- the fact that knowledge is not enough -- in ontological rather than epistemological terms, in terms of the *being* of the knower, and not in terms of the generality or specificity of his *knowledge*: what always escapes these methods of objective investigation is how I am *for myself*. There is an incompatibility between these two orders (cf. *BN* p.571; cf. also pp.303-4).

*

13. Self-Reflection and the Bounds of Experience

Until now most of the attention has been focussed upon how self-apprehension, and particularly epistemic modes of apprehension such as deliberating, observing oneself, criticizing and acquiring knowledge, are *limited* by the very nature of experience, and by the transcendental nature of radical choice. But the attempts made by an individual to reflect upon and examine his life in its entirety, to get a deep and comprehensive sense of who he *is*, and to work out the fundamental practical questions, are not only limited by the nature of his experience and his self-definition:

they are also susceptible to distortion in a number of ways. This is because the limits of experience and self-definition are not always observed and acknowledged. Sartre, like Hume and Kant, maintains that man has a natural tendency to go beyond these limits, beyond as it were the bounds of experience. In introspection and impure self-reflection, the prospective self-knower ignores difference, alterity, incompleteness and complexity in favour of identity, presence, totality and simplicity. Instead of recognizing the intrinsic limits that restrict self-apprehension, he compensates by inventing the very thing that seems to elude him: the Self.

Sartre is adept at revealing the variety of distortions to which self-examination and self-reflection are susceptible -- perhaps more adept at showing the distortions and pitfalls than at showing what they can, within limits, achieve, and the importance their successful application can have for morality and the achievement of practical wisdom (e.g. his silence about 'purifying reflection'). Still, if Sartre has comparatively little in the way of a theory of the positive ends of self-knowledge, Hampshire by contrast does not bring out as clearly the limits and distortions to which stepping back from oneself, watching oneself, deliberating about life-possibilities and criticizing oneself are subject. He does not, for instance, draw as sharp a distinction as Sartre does between 'good' and 'bad' forms of self-reflection.

Like Kierkegaard, Sartre is critical of the idea that a spectator's view on one's life will ensure accuracy and comprehensiveness in self-examination. We cannot step back from the onrush of events and view our lives (viz. our radical choice

and fundamental project) from the outside, from an historically-neutral perspective: 'one can't take a point of view on one's life while one's living it: it comes on you from behind, and you find yourself up to your neck.'[75] Life is lived 'close-up', and the sense of belongingness or engagement that connects us to our lives is primitive and irreducible; no continuum, no 'table of correlation', can be found that enables this primitive sense to be fully captured by knowledge.

Still, this limit is frequently ignored; we often do attempt to view our lives from the outside, as if our participation in them is a relatively inessential feature. But going beyond the bounds of experience in this way is not a purely intellectual fallacy; it has practical consequences. Stepping back, deliberating and studying oneself tends to make experience appear neat, orderly and unilinear; the basically temporal perspective from which we live and act is therefore distorted. The appearance of the ego, which is a false synthetic construct, is one of the characteristic results of trying to adopt the reflective spectator's view on oneself.

*

14. The Ego as Synthetic Construct

Not finding in his own experience something with the 'load' and recalcitrance of an object (as M.Simmonot apparently does); not finding in himself the properties picked out by the character-ascriptions of others; not finding that he can take a point of

view on his life while living; and not finding that he can *know* the fundamental project as he *lives* it -- an individual typically resorts to inventing stratagems designed to allow him to do precisely these things. The ego is precisely one such compensatory device, as are the retrospective illusion and *le survol*. Sartre's biographies are to a large extent built upon the analysis of how these stratagems are invoked (in self-deception) to compensate for the peculiar emptiness, elusiveness, malleability and insubstantiality of the inner life -- the lack of a self. Sartre for example describes Baudelaire as failing to apprehend his nature, to recover his being, and to see himself as others do:

> Could he feel that he was spiritual or vulgar or distinguished? Could he even measure the breadth and vivacity of his own intelligence? His intelligence had no limit beyond itself; and except when some drug heightened the tempo of his thoughts for a moment, so used was he to their rhythm and so completely lacking in any terms of comparison, that he was incapable of appreciating the speed at which they moved. ...He was full of himself to overflowing, but this 'self' was nothing but a vapid glassy mood without consistency or resistance which he could neither judge nor observe, which had neither light nor shade -- a garrulous consciousness which declared that it was itself in an unending murmur which could never be quickened.[76]

Naturally we are not always ineffaceably transparent, 'nothing but vapid glassy moods without consistency or resistance', which we can neither judge nor observe. We talk about our feelings and wants, tell stories about our past, refer to ourselves with the term 'I', make self-ascriptions of varying complexity, and write autobiographies with the ostensible purpose of 'having it out with ourselves'. Sartre is not committed to denying the validity of

any of these activities in denying the existence of the substantial inner self, the transcendent ego or hidden psychic agency. But what his theory of the ego does take issue with -- as does Hume's -- is both the naive (M.Simonnot's) and philosophical (Husserl's) realism that typically infects such activities. This is the belief that talking about ourselves, saying 'I', telling stories or making self-ascriptions are really disguised ways of talking about our Self, or our inner nature, as if this were something real, substantial and self-identical -- something standing at the centre of the complex and always-changing network of mental states and experiences.

The ego or self that we think lies at the centre of our experience as the source of its unity and identity over time; that we take as the object of introspection, or the object that is revealed by stepping back from ourselves; that we think is the cause or owner of our actions, emotions and beliefs; that we uncritically assume is the object of deep self-knowledge; and with respect to which we frequently explain and justify our actions (e.g. 'That's just how I am', 'I couldn't help it, it was in my nature') -- this ego or self (Sartre argues) is really an <u>imaginary</u> synthetic construct which appears <u>only</u> in our reflective attempts to step back and take a point of view on ourselves. It is not <u>discovered</u> or found.

The ego is an object <u>for</u> consciousness, and not an object in or co-extensive with it. It is not what deep self-knowledge is about, even if it convincingly passes itself off as such. The ego's appearance in reflection distorts naive unreflected experience by conferring on it a certain neatness, stability and

centripetality which it does not in fact possess.[77] Yet such is the elusive nature of inner experience, and man's passion for certainty and finality in self-definition, that the ego acquires the quasi-permanence of a second nature. A mere image becomes a reality. This is one way that self-definition leads to a self-alteration that has no moral or practical benefits. The I is an other.

*

15. Criticism

Earlier it was mentioned that Sartre's use of transcendental concepts (choice, projection, meaning-conferring) cuts across both human reality in its most general aspect, and the reality of the concrete, historical individual. This results in some confusion of the transcendental and the empirical order.

Qua individual, the for-itself is a meaning-conferring being. It is the source of its own values, and its upsurge into the world takes the form of a fundamental project which accounts for such apparently heterogeneous phenomena as an individual's tastes, likes, purposes and emotions. Most importantly, the fundamental project is ontologically prior to causality (BN pp.447-458)), in the sense that it is that in terms of which certain causes are effective. Factors which are ordinarily construed causally, in terms of a horizontal or vertical determinism (e.g. biological and genetic factors, childhood conditioning, social conditions, class, etc.) affect the individual not for what they are in themselves,

but for what they mean to him and what he makes of them. He does not submit to an external mechanist scheme of causation (the 'billiard ball' model of causation), but defines himself by his project beyond it.

Qua human reality, the for-itself is also a meaning-conferring being. Its upsurge into the world is responsible for the fact that the world is articulated as it is (cf BN p.461); it is the source of such general objective structures as time, causality and the order of instruments (a 'hodological field') -- transcendental structures which are basic to any experience whatever. Sartre intends this as a kind of transcendental account of the most general aspects of the relation between man and world.

But the precise differences between these two kinds of for-itself -- or two aspects of the for-itself -- are never spelled out very clearly by Sartre, and the confusion and explanatory 'sliding' that occasionally results between the order of the concrete individual and the order of human reality raises a number of questions. Who, or what, projects meaning and builds up an intelligible world -- the individual or human reality, or both in some kind of pre-established harmony? Are there two kinds of causation, one appropriate to individuals, the other to human reality as a whole? If causality is individual-specific, then how is it also a universally-recognized feature of the inter-subjectively shared world? Is it simply a massive coincidence that individuals recognize the same causal network in nature? Again, are there two kinds of upsurge into the world? Is the for-itself's upsurge into the world qua individual the same as its physical birth? If so, how is it also a transcendental event that

is so deep-rooted and autonomous that 'it does not imply any other meaning, and...refers only to itself'? (BN p.457) Just what is the relation between the transcendental and the empirical here? Individual-specificity in application to transcendental concepts such as causality and meaning-conferring appears to weaken the transcendental -- and, particularly, the concept of transcendental necessity.

One of the interesting problems resulting from some of these confusions concerns the problem of life-change, and the 'architecture' of a life. The transcendental distinction that Sartre employs in his theory of self-definition between the radical choice, the original upsurge of the for-itself and the fundamental project on the one hand, and the experience which they make possible and define on the other, does not commit him to the Kantian idea that the transcendental structures of experience are fixed and unchanging. All that it establishes is that at any one time it is necessary that there is a fundamental and total framework by means of which a person understands and defines himself. But the framework itself is not wholly static; it is subject to alterations.

It is a matter of fact, and not transcendental necessity, that this particular framework and not any other is relatively constant across a person's life-history -- just as it is a matter of fact that absolute presuppositions and conceptual bedrock in our conceptual scheme are relatively constant and widely shared. But once it is admitted that the fundamental project is liable to change, and that its alterability is a contingent, and not a necessary, fact, it may seem plausible to suppose that it is

capable of being adopted and abandoned arbitrarily, or wilfully, or with psychological 'engineering' (e.g. according to a 'technology of the self'). Naturally Sartre wishes to deny this, for it would mean that the very framework by which an individual defines himself amounts to no more than an empirical choice of a high order (a 'super-choice'), and not a radical choice that cannot be explained by anything else. If it were only an empirical choice, the project would be malleable in the wrong sense: a person would be 'free to wish anything whatsoever at any moment whatsoever' (BN p.452); he could define himself at will.

In denying the efficacy of voluntative, deliberative, or 'engineered' change, how does Sartre's transcendental account of self-definition explain the many different (empirical) forms of development and life-change that occur across an individual's life-history (e.g. personality re-formation, psychic breakdown or entropy, psycho-therapeutic change, changes in life-plan, values and belief)? How are the most basic formulations by means of which he understands himself and his life subject to change? Is change in the overall trajectory and understanding of his life a slow and piecemeal business, or instantaneous and global?

Again, is the life-change emanating from a choice in an extreme situation between two fundamentally different ways of life a rational change? Is there some standard available to a person that cuts across different, and conflicting, basic formulations, frameworks or life-projects -- a standard that enables a non-partial (or non-circular) evaluation (e.g. in retrospective survey at the end of one's life), and a rational resolution of the deep-lying conflicts (e.g. in decision-making involving a prospective

choice between different ways of life)? Is the question 'What is best for me?' rationally decidable between conflicting life-projects and frameworks?[78]

Questions of a similar nature can be directed to the problem of theory-change, and change in the bedrock of our language game, paradigm or conceptual scheme. Wittgenstein, Kuhn and Feyerabend for instance argue that the alteration of our most fundamental principles, beliefs or presuppositions about nature is ultimately an unjustifiable and non-rational process. This contrasts with the view that theory change is a gradual, cumulative and rational process of adding findings to an edifice of knowledge whose foundations remain untouched -- as if all the basic laws of nature are now known, and all that remains is to fill in the details.

Wittgenstein, Kuhn and Feyerabend argue that conceptual change at the deepest of levels is a revolutionary transformation bringing with it changes in the entire framework. Conflicts between different frameworks, conceptual schemes or scientific paradigms are conflicts between whole ways of seeing nature, between the very substrata that give form to our ways of seeing. Even the meanings of words and fundamental concepts are subject to change. The strongest version of this idea (e.g. Feyerabend's) is that the conflicts are ultimate, representing as it were <u>incommensurable</u> differences of perception, interpretation, criteria-formation and standards of rationality. Between frameworks there is no logically neutral space allowing for the rational and impartial adjudication of views. Theory-change or schema-change therefore cannot be brought about by being convinced of the correctness of the framework as a whole;[79] a number of non-

theoretical and non-rational factors enter into the process.

Barring the obvious differences in subject-matter, Sartre's view of change is as extreme as Wittgenstein's, Kuhn's and Feyerabend's: changes in life-plan, fundamental project and original choice are revolutionary and total. Sartre calls them radical conversions. Large-scale life-changes, like large-scale changes in scientific paradigms or conceptual frameworks, are discontinuous and ultimately unjustifiable; reasoning, deliberating and searching for justification do not carry a person across the divide between different projects and frameworks, because the very criteria (or 'yardsticks') for rational evaluation, justification and comparison are internal to the projects being evaluated, justified and compared.[80]

Thus the conflicts between the different frameworks or basic formulations by means of which a person understands himself and defines himself are ultimate and unresolvable;[81] they are conflicts between the very substrata that give form to his way of seeing himself. Because the fundamental project is so autonomous that it 'does not imply any other meaning...and refers only to itself' (BN p.457); because it derives from nothing else; and because of the internality of reasons with respect to the project, there is no possibility of finding a logically neutral 'space' between frameworks, ways of life or projects that would allow for their rational and impartial adjudication, or for the implementation of a rational decision procedure. The conflicts between different life-projects and frameworks represent incommensurable differences of standards of rationality and meaning. Thus large-scale life-changes are not brought about by

being convinced of the correctness of a framework as a whole.

This view has a certain appeal, for it seems to account for the fact that after deep-lying and total changes in a way of life, life-conception or life-plan, the old way of life or life-plan appears (from within the new one) to belong to a different person. But radical conversion and total change are not the only kind of life-change (or self-formation). The basic problem with Sartre's view is that it cannot satisfactorily account for the gradual and long-term changes that occur across a person's life-history; nor for piecemeal and small-scale changes; nor for self-willed life-changes. It can account only for life-changes that are global -- instantaneous 'flip-flops' from one framework to another. This results in a kind of 'local' determinism -- viz. determinism by the fundamental project -- not too dissimilar in its consequences from Hospers's determinism by character. Once accepted or chosen, an individual is a virtual prisoner of his project and way of life: the very efforts spent in trying to change the basic structures of the life-project are conditioned by them, and meaningful only in terms of them. Thus he can exert very little effective voluntary and rational control. When he deliberates and reflects about life-changes, criticizes his past self, feels regretful about lost opportunities, and envisages his future self, the 'chips are down'; everything refers back to his project and radical choice. He can only hope for a radical conversion of his project; but even this hoping presupposes his current project.

Life-change therefore can only involve a total break with the past project and way of life. New projects, life-plans or frameworks do not 'grow' from the previous ones, as if they were

articulations of some given, underlying, self-same reality.[82] Nor do they develop gradually and slowly as a result of prolonged reflection, deliberation and self-criticism.

> 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 outine, 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. (BN p.476)

The problems with this view of life-change are obvious: it is too extreme, and results in what Sartre later called a 'revolutionary and discontinuous catastrophism'.[83] The architecture of a life is at once too rigid and too fragile; there is no middle ground between the alterability of a life and its constancy, its openness to change and its internal coherence. The integration of life stands precariously balanced over its distintegration.[84] The fact that Sartre's theory can only account for life-changes that are radical and global is a problem intrinsic to a theory that refuses to allow a smooth continuum between knowledge and experience.

Sartre was aware of the problems affecting radical conversion:

> I was often told that the past drives us forward, but I was convinced that I was being drawn by the future. I would have hated to feel quiet forces at work within me, the slow development of my natural aptitudes....I subordinated the past to the present and the present to the future; I transformed a quiet evolutionism into a revolutionary and discontinuous catastrophism. A few years ago, someone pointed out to me that the characters in my plays and novels make their decisions abruptly and in a state of crisis, that, for example, in The Flies, a moment is enough for Orestes to effect his conversion. Of course! Because I create them in my own image; not as

> I am, but as I wanted to be.[85]
>
> [One] gets rid of a neurosis, one doesn't get cured of one's self. Though they are worn out, blurred, humiliated, thrust aside, ignored, all of the child's traits are still to be found in the quinquagenarian. Most of the time they lie low, they bide their time; at the first moment of inattention they rise up and emerge, disguised....[86]

Sartre's early view of life-change suffers from more than architectural imbalances. Because reasoning, deliberating and searching for justification do not carry a person across the divide between different projects and frameworks; and because the interpretations and explanations of life-change which he may formulate after the fact are meaningful only in terms of the current project, life-change is an ultimately unintelligible and non-rational event. Large-scale conversions, like (revolutionary) changes in the conceptual bedrock of our paradigm or framework, are just brute facts.[87] An individual cannot find any final reason why his life takes the form and trajectory that it does; why his experience is defined by this particular framework and not any other; and why certain life-changes occur and others do not: he must accept these facts as ultimately inexplicable. But this seems to defeat the purpose of the idea that man is self-defining and self-forming.

One interpretation Sartre does not consider -- and cannot consider given the basic premisses from which he works -- is that the ultimate unintelligibility of life-change, and the overall trajectory of a life, reveals the deep-lying passivity and receptivity of subjectivity, and therefore the limits of constituting activity in self-definition. Sartre's radicalized use of the concept of constituting activity and meaning-conferring

to explain self-definition and self-formation is notable for its neglect of the passive, non-constitutive and receptive side of subjectivity (i.e. subjectivity in the original, etymological sense as subject, or subject to all). Similarly, his account of self-apprehension is notable for its neglect of such receptive and passive events as contemplating, praying, suffering, attending to dreams, waiting for insight and being responsible for others.

Gabriel Marcel, Emmanuel Levinas and other critics in the Christian and Judaic philosophical traditions have argued that the roots of this neglect are to be found in the Kantian vision of man as essentially active and self-defining; in its most extreme form, this leads to the view that 'everything that is in the subject, even the subject itself, devolves from a position due to this very subject' (Levinas)[88] Marcel argues that 'because Kant and some of his followers conceived the spirit in terms of constructive activity, they tended to make a confusion between receiving and suffering and to ascribe receptivity exclusively to matter.'[89] Marcel notes that one of the consequences of the neglect of the passive, receptive side of subjectivity is the neglect of the sense of the mystery of being. The ultimate unintelligibility of life-change might equally well point to this sense:[90] viz. the mystery that I have this life and not another, or none at all; that of all the numberless possible ways of being alive and of being a person, I am, and have to be, myself.[91]

It may be the case that the unintelligibility of life-change is apparent, and reflects only the narrowness of subjective reality with respect to a greater, external, infinite framework of meaning. It may be that the basic architecture and trajectory of

a person's life is open and receptive; instead of referring only to itself (BN p.457), and deriving from the subject's sovereign constituting activity, it answers to and is defined by something other than it -- to (for instance) God, the Good, or the Other. This introduces an entirely different sense of transcendental framework.

*

Critics of the view that man is self-defining and self-forming argue that the absence of objective constraints or grounds -- something to which self-knowledge must answer, something in terms of which self-definition and self-formation are perfectible and finalizable -- condemns man to forever inventing himself anew in light of systems of knowledge, belief and value which have no ultimate grounding or transhistorical justification. An endless proliferation of models of man then ensues. Man is free only at the cost of being divided against himself, fallible, incomplete and not wholly at home with himself.

This is a far cry from the self-presence, self-certainty, unity and simplicity which were the hallmarks of the metaphysics of the self. The foundations and centres (e.g. the cogito, the essential Self, the I-am-I, the soul, human nature) once held in place by the metaphysics of the self are displaced, with the general result that a void is opened up: in the depths of his being man experiences a frightening groundlessness. This way, the critics argue, leads crisis. Pushed to its logical conclusion, it ends in an anarchic confusion -- a modern-day Babel -- of self-definitions and self-conceptions.

Scheler, Cassirer, Heidegger, Husserl and others have noted the crisis in contemporary man's self-understanding.[92] Scheler viewed the proliferation of man's self-interpretations as a decentring and loss of identity rather than a liberating form of self-definition and a source of freedom.

> In no other period has man become more problematic to himself than in our own days. We have a scientific, a philosophical, and a theological anthropology that know nothing of each other. Therefore we no longer possess any clear and consistent idea of man. The ever-growing multiplicity of the particular sciences that are engaged in the study of man has much more confused and obscured than elucidated our concept of man.[93]

Like Scheler, Iris Murdoch argues that there is a crisis in man's self-knowledge which has resulted from his being deprived of a comprehensive truth about himself.

> For many reasons, the chief of which is that science has altered our societies and our key concepts with a dreadful speed, it seems now impossible for us either to live unreflectively or to express a view of what we are in any systematic terms which will satisfy the mind. We can no longer formulate a general truth about ourselves which shall encompass us like a house....But what we hold in common, whatever our solution, is a sense of a broken totality, a divided being.[94]

In Murdoch's The Sovereignty of Good, both Anglo-American analytical philosophy and existential philosophy are considered as part of the same broad tradition of post-Kantian anti-realism which is responsible for creating a crisis in man's identity and self-knowledge. Murdoch classes together as existentialist philosophers like Sartre who accept the title, and philosophers like Hampshire (as well as Ayer, Hare, and Wittgenstein) who do not. Characterizing both is the identification of the true person

> with the empty choosing will, and the corresponding emphasis upon the idea of movement rather than vision. This emphasis will go with the anti-naturalistic bias of existentialism. ...What may be called the Kantian wing and the Surrealist wing of existentialism may be distinguished by the degree of their interest in reasons for action, which diminishes to nothing at the Surrealist end.[95]

Murdoch argues that the conception of man as self-defining and self-forming is an amalgam of behaviourist, existentialist and utilitarian concepts. Behind it lies Kant's emphasis on the return to self, constitution, and the concern with the purity of the solitary will -- favourite themes, Murdoch argues, of all brands of existentialism. 'Here I stand alone, in total responsibility and freedom, and can only properly and responsibly do what is intelligible to me, what I can do with a clear intention.'[96] This view of man

> is behaviourist in its connection of the meaning and being of action with the publicly observable, it is existentialist in its elimination of the substantial self and its emphasis on the solitary omnipotent will, and it is utilitarian in its assumption that morality is and can only be concerned with public acts....This position represents, to put it in another way, a happy and fruitful marriage of Kantian liberalism with Wittgensteinian logic solemnized by Freud.[97]

The strength attributed by Sartre and Hampshire to the complementary concepts of constituting activity and empirical under-determination suggests that man is infinitely constructable and infinitely malleable: nothing holds down his activity of self-forming ('man is nothing but what he makes of himself'). Murdoch argues that the depth of personal being is removed; personal being is nothing but the movement of an overtly choosing will.[98] Self-definition and self-formation at the deepest levels do not

answer to anything which might justify them and situate them within a larger, external framework -- God, the Good, the Other, or moral prescriptives; nor do they answer to anything determinate and given 'inside' -- a transcendental ego, an essential Self, an human nature, or introspectabilia.

Murdoch argues that Sartre and Hampshire consider a person to be nothing but his actions and projects, which are public and externalized; he is a radically finite being. His self-knowledge, moreover, is an eminently practical and non-contemplative activity; it is something which shows overtly, in action. What I am subjectively, or for myself, Murdoch says, is 'a foot-loose, solitary, substanceless will; personality dwindles to a point of pure will.'[99] Inward activity is merely the shadow of outward activity; it is hazy, elusive or absent.

Murdoch argues that versions of Hampshire and Sartre's 'ideal' person are to be found lurking in contemporary moral philosophy, politics, psycho-therapy and literature. 'The merits of linguistic analytical man are freedom (i.e. detachment), responsibility, self-awareness, sincerity, and utilitarian common sense.'[100] He is the successful man of action.[101]

Murdoch's alternative vision of man cannot be examined here, although it remains in outline form behind her wide-ranging criticism. She rejects the existential and linguistic-analytical view that the goal of morality, and the ideal of wisdom, is freedom through self-definition and self-formation -- the ability, for instance, to choose for oneself who one will be; to step back from and transcend one's narrow habits of thought or way of being; and to be aware of the revisability and ultimate groundlessness of

all objective yardsticks. This purely negative freedom neglects the passive, non-constitutive and receptive side of subjectivity; it has no sense of the depth and constraints of personal reality, no sense of the possibility of deepening oneself; nor does it allow for such passive and receptive events as 'attending' to oneself, or 'obeying' something that is given and infinitely perfectible.[102] Replacing the concepts of depth and deepening oneself in a single direction, are the concepts of dynamic self-expansion and self-multiplication. Freedom as Sartre and Hampshire conceive it is merely a horizontal proliferation, a deracinated and directionless expansion outwards: it is change that answers to nothing, self-formation for the sake of change.[103]

Like Marcel and Levinas, Murdoch sees subjectivity and life-change as characterized by a profound passivity and receptivity. Life-change is not a matter of the self-dirempting and self-altering movement of radical conversion, or the acquisition of reflexive knowledge and the possession of 'crystal-clear intentions'. It is a self-coinciding movement, a long-term struggle, 'and the progress is something more obscure, more historically conditioned, and usually less conscious.'[104] It does not necessarily have its issue in action. It is 'progressive, something infinitely perfectible...an endless task'[105] by which a person 'grows by looking', rather than by acting and choosing:

> our freedom is a small piecemeal business which goes on all the time and not a grandiose leaping about unimpeded at important moments. The moral life, on this view, is something that goes on continually, not something that is switched off in between the occurrence of explicit moral choices.[106]

Murdoch argues that the rejection of the concept of an inner,

simple, substantial reality -- a reality that would be open to introspection and contemplation, and of which a person could achieve an increasingly deep, guided and perfectible knowledge -- is responsible for creating an ethical void, and a crisis in man's self-understanding. Unable to find any foundations or a priori ethical principles for judging the rightness or wrongness of his actions, an individual is compelled to invent them for himself. The explanatory weight that was once carried by the concept of an unchanging inner reality, or by the concept of receptiveness to a sovereign, external, infinite reality (e.g. God or the Other), is shifted entirely to the concepts of individual choice, self-definition, constituting activity, and the exercise of the unfettered, atheistic will. Thrown upon his own finite and fallible resources, man becomes the source of his own good.

Goodness then becomes a function of the will, or a function of the authentic choice of the atheistic, finite, isolated agent. As an existential Robinson Crusoe, the individual is forced to legislate his own good, and to choose in a vacuum without reference to objective standards.[107] This has the consequence of making the concept of the Good dependent upon and inferior to the concept of individual freedom: 'Good must be thought of, not as part of the world, but as a movable label affixed to the world; for only so can the agent be pictured as responsible and free.'[108] In Levinassian terms -- and here Murdoch's arguments against existential man bear an interesting resemblance to Levinas's[109] -- justice is subordinated to freedom, ethics is subordinated to ontology, and the other person is subordinated to the self-defining self.

CHAPTER VII

Concluding Remarks

The central thesis that has been explored and defended in this work is that a person is a self-defining and self-forming being; fundamental changes in how he conceives, chooses, evaluates or interprets his way of life, his life-history, his experience, his emotions, his final ends, his death, etc. -- particularly in light of fundamental practical questions about the meaning and ends of life -- occasion changes in what he is. Man changes himself from the inside. He is not wholly defined from the outside, by social conditioning or genetic inheritance; nor is he wholly defined by an unchanging human nature, an essential Self or a 'blueprint' for his personal identity. There is no such thing as how a person is independently of how he defines himself and knows himself; that is, what he is at any one moment in his life is partly constituted by his self-definition and self-knowledge.

If per impossibile there were a determinate human nature, or an essential Self, in terms of which a person is wholly defined, then the historical changes in his self-knowledge and self-understanding would be as irrelevant to that nature or essence as are the theoretical changes in the natural sciences to physical nature. They would either conform to reality or fail to conform, without in any way actively 'inter-twining' with it. But if a person is self-defining and self-forming, then the historical changes in his self-knowledge and self-understanding must necessarily affect his personal being.

To account for the complex and dynamic inter-twining of self-understanding and inner reality, and therefore the possibility of self-formation, a general (and broadly Kantian) theory of the subject's activity of constitution was developed and explored. The idea that in self-knowledge the knower is the known, and is active with respect to the known (viz. himself), was seen to introduce a number of reflexive peculiarities, and to challenge some of the claims of realism, empiricism and the correspondence theory of truth in their application to the problematic of self-knowledge. Personal experience, it was seen, is both malleable (or under-determined) and constructable; it is not given with labels on it, but requires the subject's active intervention and reworking. But this means that self-knowledge is not a matter of the strict conformity of ideas, beliefs, conceptions or interpretations to an independent and determinate reality (e.g. the Self); nor is it a matter of the agreement, mirroring or matching of the former with the latter. In Kantian terms, the object of self-knowledge somehow conforms to the conditions of knowledge.

The concept of man's active (spiritual) self-formation, like the concept of defining and setting bounds to human experience, and the concept of meaning-conferring (i.e. Sinngebung), enjoy distinguished philosophical histories; they grow from the soil of eighteenth-century German philosophy and literature (e.g. the concept of Bildung), which in turn spring from the return to the self, and to interiority, which was inaugurated by Descartes. The definition, formation and unfolding of the self (or mind, subject, consciousness, being-for-itself or transcendental ego, etc.) by

that same self (or by the same mind, subject, etc.) is a movement reproduced in different guises by Cartesian doubt, Kantian critique, Fichtean positing, Hegelian totalization, Kierkegaardian self-examination and Husserlian transcendental description. Essentially, it is a recuperative, integrative and self-coinciding movement -- from the self to the self by the self. So pervasive is this return to self in modern philosophy, as well as in literature, the plastic arts and the human sciences, that reflexivity -- the self, mind, subjectivity, consciousness, etc. actively turning back upon itself to find within itself its own law or principle of activity, and to fix its own limits -- is considered one of the distinguishing marks of the modern condition.

There are differing interpretations of the basic modus operandi that are involved in self-definition and self-formation; that is, the 'matter' upon which reflexivity operates, the form this recuperative and self-coinciding movement takes, and the level (transcendental or empirical) in which it encounters its own law or principle of activity. The two contemporary philosophers that have been studied here as illustrations of the thesis that man is self-defining represent conflicting views, which in turn reflect conflicting meta-philosophical views on the place of epistemology and ontology. It was seen how Hampshire, situated in a rationalist tradition that is traceable to Spinoza, argues that self-definition and self-knowledge involve the use of reason and the acquisition of knowledge. A person's experience is rendered more definite, integrated and richly differentiated the more he knows about its causes, and the more he refines and specifies his

vocabulary for inner states, moods and emotions. It was then seen how Sartre, who is critical of the primacy accorded to knowledge and the use of reason, argues that self-definition involves a deep-lying choice which embraces reason and knowledge, but which is not itself based upon reason or knowledge. Radical choice, occurring at the very 'zero-point' of a person's 'upsurge' or projection into the world, and reproduced accross life-history in the form of a fundamental project, is a transcendental event that is not explained by anything else. Other contemporary philosophers, who have not been studied here, maintain that self-definition and self-knowledge involve radical evaluation (Taylor), the creation of a narrative life-history (Marcel, MacIntyre), and rational volition (Tugendhat).

*

The thesis that a person is self-defining and self-forming by virtue of his self-knowledge and self-understanding has a number of far-reaching consequences and applications outside the scope of this study: e.g. the impossibility of 'hard' prediction in human -- and personal -- history; the philosophical critique of the many contemporary psychologies and psycho-therapies that purport to deliver man to his 'true self'; and the complication of the metaphysical basis of the concepts of definition and determination.

This penultimate consequence points to one of the more interesting applications -- and also one of the more concrete of testing-grounds -- of the thesis that man is self-defining and

self-forming. In a future study the differences and similarities between Sartre's existentialist and Hampshire's Spinozist theories of self-knowledge and self-definition could be focussed and brought out clearly by considering how they would serve as background principles for psycho-therapies.[1] How, for instance, would these different philosophical approaches guide and inform psycho-therapeutic aetiology, symptomatology, nosology and healing? How would they structure the therapist-patient relationship? How would the patient's self-knowledge and insight differ after undergoing these different courses of therapy, and after encountering the different interpretations offered by the analysts? An ideal but obviously impossible test case would be to treat the same person with both therapies at the same time, and then compare results.[2]

Again, one of the interesting speculative and metaphysical consequences of the thesis that a person is a self-defining and self-forming being has a bearing on the general concepts of definition and determination. Etymologically, the term 'to define' is fairly clear: to define something is to determine its boundaries; to set its limits; to make it definite; to fix or decide upon it; to explain its essential nature; to give a character to it; and to make it what it is.[3] It is to give a certain form and structure to something that previously was unclear, lacking in form, indeterminate or under-determined. Ordinarily, definition is thought to apply to words in a natural language: we call for the definition of words when we need to know what they mean, what distinguishes them from other words, and the objects or events to which they refer. Ostensive definition

-- pointing to the relevant thing or event -- is a common means of definition; so too is repetition and variation of the word in different sentences and contexts of behaviour.

However, the act of defining or determining something does not apply solely to words in a natural language. As it has been argued throughout this work, it applies equally well to the self, to the development of an individual's life-history, and to his sense of identity as a person. In defining himself, a person makes what is initially inchoate, ill-defined or under-determined -- his experience and mental states, his tastes, desires, moods, the meaning of his past, his ends, etc. -- more definite, more singular and more clearly bounded. This process may be likened to physiognomic definition.

The movement from formlessness and inchoateness to form, definiteness and well-boundedness is reproduced in the development of human physiognomy: over the course of a lifetime a person's face gradually acquires a certain sharpness, singularity and definiteness. In contrast with the infant's face, the adult's face is well-defined, clear, expressive, definite and singular. An infant's face, rounded and unfocussed, and reflecting a state of immediacy with the environment, has only the merest hint of definite and specific features; a range of possible physiognomic forms, and paths of refinement and articulation, are open to it. Its subsequent development into a singular and easily-recognizable adult face -- a face articulated by meaningful lines, contours and angles, and expressive of both very specific emotions and a very general attitude to the world -- is a complex process: the plastic, or pre-differentiated, physiognomic 'material' of the

new-born is slowly articulated and refined over the course of many years, becoming eventually a richly expressive, concentrated and highly-specific network of features with a very definite character and range. Physiognomic definition is an integrative and singularizing process.

And yet physiognomic definition is also an exclusionary and delimiting process: in acquiring a certain sharpness, singularity and definiteness over the course of a life-time, other physiognomic features, existing in outline only in the malleable physiognomic material of the infant's face, have been lost, left out or suppressed. In the adult face, certain forms of facial expression and facial motility are closed-off, just as certain basic muscular and osseus facial structures are refined and developed only by having become more restricted in their range. An infinitely plastic face -- a face that reflected everything in the environment, and that expressed everything -- would not be recognizable as a human face.

The peculiarities of physiognomic definition reveal something about the general -- or metaphysical -- nature of definition: viz. the unavoidable duality of realizing and restricting, revealing and concealing, or integrating and excluding, which characterizes the process of definition and determination. To define something -- to determine its boundaries; to set its limits; to make it definite; to decide upon it -- is also to restrict it, delimit it, repress certain aspects of it, exclude from it other things, or narrow it down. This is not a contingent or accidental characteristic: a thing is defined, specified and developed only by becoming more restricted in its range, and more

concentrated. Determination and specification involve an element of negation; they are not wholly positive, revelatory and active.

With respect to self-definition, this peculiar revelatory-restrictive (or inclusive-exclusionary) structure may at first sight seem implausible: the basic structure of reflexivity -- the self, mind, subjectivity, consciousness, etc. actively turning back upon itself to find within itself its own law or principle of activity -- appears to allow only the most revelatory, unitary and positive of activities. Nothing it seems could be more direct, unmediated and positive than self-definition and self-formation; nothing it seems could be lost, restricted, repressed or negated in the self-coinciding movement that proceeds <u>from</u> the self <u>to</u> the self <u>by</u> the self. This movement appears to describe an unqualified realization.

But like other forms of definition or determination, self-definition involves an exclusionary or negative aspect. A person becomes more definite, determinate and singular as a person only by becoming more restricted in his range of experience and way of being. Malleable, confused or under-determined experience is articulated, refined and rendered determinate by the subject's own activity; But the process of becoming definite, specific and highly-integrated is not possible without a corresponding concealing, restricting, closing-off, repressing or excluding of other experiences, and other forms of experience and ways of life. The determination or definition of wants, desires, emotions, moods, and inner states -- and more generally whole ways of life, life-projects, frameworks, or ways of being -- involves a deep-lying negation.[4]

In this idea can be recognized a version of the Spinozist (and, later, Hegelian) principle omnis determinatio est negatio. In it too can be recognized a version of the Kantian idea that located in the depths of the human soul, at the very well-spring of human experience, lies a mysterious and fertile activity of schematizing by means of which experience is both realized as experience, and restricted as human experience, and by means of which certain things (objects, the empirical self) are revealed, and other things (things-in-themselves, the noumenal self) are concealed: the categories -- the very framework of experience -- acquire their objective meaning from sensibility, 'which realises the understanding in the very process of restricting it.'[5]

Notes

PREFACE

1. It is arguable on anthropological grounds that every human society that has had a place for the concept of the person or the self -- from ancient Chinese society to contemporary Western society -- also has a place marked out for the fundamental practical questions. Cf. Paul Gauguin's painting 'D'ou Venons Nous? Que Sommes Nous? Ou Allons Nous?' (1897, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), which depicts a group of Polynesian tribespeople, arms raised skywards, seeking an answer to their deepest questions.

2. L.Tolstoy, Confession, pp.34-35.

3. F.P. Ramsey, The Foundations of Mathematics and Other Logical Essays, ed. by R.B.Braithwaite (Oxford, 1931), p.289.

4. A.Maslow, Religions, Values and Peak Experiences (New York: Viking, 1970) p.82.

5. Psychological studies of out-of-body and near-death experiences have also revealed how individuals on the brink of death catch synoptic glimpses of their lives. This, however, does not necessarily mean that they have faced the truth about their lives.

6. In Pablo Neruda: Selected Poems, ed. by J.Franco, trans. by A. Kerrigan, W.S. Merwin, A. Reid, and N. Tarn (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975) p.22.

7. G. di Lampedusa, The Leopard, trans. by A. Colquhoun (London: Fontana, 1961) pp.201-203.

8. L. Tolstoy, The Death of Ivan Ilyich, trans. by R.Edmonds (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960) p.152.

9. Ibid. p.157. Cf. also Tolstoy's description in the closing pages of Anna Karenina of Levin's insight into the nature of things and his place in the world.

10. L. Tolstoy, Confession, trans. by D.Patterson (New York: Norton, 1983) p.26.

11. Cf. Richard Strauss's Four Last Songs, which are his musical farewell to a life of wandering, and a final summing-up of his life.

12. G. Marcel, Mystery of Being, Vol.1, p.169

13. Ibid. p.167.

*

CHAPTER I

1. Kant's use of the term 'Copernican revolution' in likening his epistemology to the work of the great astronomer is not altogether clear. Instead of turning the knower around the world, as Copernicus turned the earth around the sun, Kant turns the world around the knower; he decenters the object with respect to man.

2. Kant, Critique of Pure Reason B1.

3. Cf. D.Davidson, 'On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme', in Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation, p.20.

4. Cf. H. Pietersma, 'Truth and the Search for It', University of Toronto Quarterly, Vol.52 No.3 (1983) pp.221-34.

5. A foundationalist would maintain that knowledge must be directly and securely grounded in thought-independent reality if it is to be certain. Without such a ground the entire edifice of knowledge would be liable to collapse. Wittgenstein characterizes the extra-theoretic entities the foundationalist seeks as absolutely hard and stable -- like bedrock. They are made 'of the purest crystal...the hardest thing there is.' (Philosophical Investigations, 97.)

6. Cf. Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, Bxvi.

7. Kant, Critique of Pure Reason B XII-XIII.

8. M.Grene, The Knower and the Known, p.153.

9. A version of this principle is also found in Hume, for whom the concept of causality and the concept of the self involved much more than what could be found in experience.

10. Cf. W.H.Walsh, 'Categories', in Kant: A Collection of Critical Essays, pp.54-70.

11. Gilles Deleuze argues that Kant's discovery that the faculty of knowledge is legislative means that the 'first thing that the Copernican Revolution teaches us is that it is we who are giving the orders. There is here an inversion of the ancient conception of Wisdom: the sage was defined partly by his own

submission, partly by his final accord with Nature. Kant sets up the critical image in opposition to wisdom: we are the legislators of Nature.' (Kant's Critical Philosophy p.14.)

12. Kant, Critique of Pure Reason B XIII.

13. Cf. J.-G. Fichte's The Science of Knowledge (1794). Fichte went to great lengths in rejecting the Kantian concept of the thing-in-itself, while trying to 'square it' with the concept of constitution. In giving primacy of place to the self-active subject, he came to view the natural world as the expression of the ungrounded spontaneous activity of spirit. Cf. also P. Gardiner 'Fichte and German Idealism', in Idealism Past and Present, ed. by G.Vesey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) pp.111-126.

14. Cf. also Davidson's characterization of conceptual schemes in 'On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme', in Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation.

15. An analogous circularity is to be found in the study of neurophysiology. The mathematician John von Neumann argues that because man has only his own brain with which to try to understand his own brain, the goal of an exhaustive and essential neurophysiological knowledge may prove logically impossible. Cf. 'The General and Logical Theory of Automata', in Collected Works, Vol. 5, (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1963) pp.288-328).

16. Cf. Hegel Phenomenology of Spirit, pp.46-47. Cf. also the Lesser Logic in Hegel's Logic, Being Part One of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences, para.11. Cf. also Lectures on the History of Philosophy, iii, p.428.

17. E.Cassirer, An Essay on Man, p.25.

18. Nietzsche's Twilight of the Gods, for instance, contains a section entitled 'How the 'True World' Finally Became a Fable'.

19. Nietzsche, The Will to Power, 481.

20. Nietzsche, Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality, #117 and 438.

21. N.Goodman, Ways of Worldmaking, pp.6-7.

22. W.V.O. Quine, From a Logical Point of View, p.79.

23. Cf. T.Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, p.206.

24. R.Rorty, Consequences of Pragmatism, p.163. It is important to distinguish Rorty from the other philosophers mentioned here, because his argument that knowledge is not a 'mirror of nature' is also directed against the very distinctions (viz. scheme and content, activity and receptivity, constituting activity and given) that dominate post-Kantian philosophy. Rorty rejects the idea that man is a self-defining animal tells us anything 'Philosophically' important about man: 'The sense in which human beings alter themselves by redescribing themselves is no more metaphysically exciting than the sense in which they alter themselves by changing their diet, their sexual partners, or their habitation.' (Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, p.351.)

25. Cf. Wittgenstein, On Certainty, #130.

26. W.V.O.Quine, From a Logical Point of View, pp.42-43.

*

CHAPTER II

1. Cf. Polanyi, Personal Knowledge, pp.3-6 and pp.15-16.

2. Cf. Husserl, The Crisis of European Sciences, for a critique of how the mathematization of nature has led man to forget the Lifeworld from which it originates.

3. Sartre, Critique of Dialectical Reason, p.26.

4. This assertion must be qualified: while neglect of the problematic of personal self-knowledge is most noticeable in contemporary Anglo-American analytical epistemology, which tends to reject it out of hand as part and parcel of the Cartesian and introspectionist-psychologistic paradigm, it has not always been so badly neglected (e.g. James, Mead). Furthermore, there are exceptions to the rule (e.g. D.W. Hamlyn, A. Quinton, R. Harre, B.Williams, T.Nagel).

5. The spectacles analogy that is used here has a very simple empirical application, viz. observing oneself in the mirror wearing darkly-tinted sunglasses, with a view to determining the precise colour of the lens while seeing through it.

6. Gadamer, Truth and Method, p.1Ø.

7. Cf. C. Taylor 'Interpretation and the Sciences of Man', Review of Metaphysics (1971) pp.48-49. Taylor argues that this is one reason why the model of hard prediction in the physical sciences is impossible in the human sciences.

8. Taylor, C. 'Responsibility for Self', in The Identities of Persons, ed. by A.O.Rorty, pp.294-95.

9. Cf. Heidegger, Being and Time pp.164-5, p.222 and p.368 on the 'levelling down' caused by 'idle talk'.

1Ø. Nietzsche, F. Daybreak, pp.115-16, no.115.

11. 'Nothing too much' is the Delphic inscription accompanying 'Know Thyself'.

12. This conclusion has been reached in different ways by Collingwood, Wittgenstein, Polanyi and Kuhn.

13. The analogy here, between the basic terms in which a person understands himself, and the fundamental presuppositions that underlie our dealings with external and independent reality, is not a perfect one. They are similar in so far as they give form to our way of looking at things. But the former terms have a much deeper role than this, because they actually form or constitute reality. That is, they also make the facts in giving form to our way of looking at them.

14. Cf. D.Davidson 'On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme', for a version of the correspondence theory of truth which does not rely on the equivocal concept of picturing or mirroring.

15. William James writes: 'Consciousness does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. Such words as 'chain' or 'train' do not describe it fitly as it presents itself in the first instance. It is nothing jointed; it flows. A 'river' or a 'stream' are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described.' (Principles of Psychology Vol.1, p.239)

16. Here it may be necessary to think, like Hegel and the later Sartre, in dialectical rather than analytical terms -- in terms of the opposition, inter-penetration and synthesis of opposites. This question, however, is too large to be addressed here.

17. Cf. E.Fackenheim, Metaphysics and Historicity, on man's self-creative spiritual activity. Cf. also Rorty, R. Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, Part 3.

18. Polanyi, The Study of Man, pp.11-12.

19. Cf. Ryle, The Concept of Mind, pp.186-89.

20. Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, B155.

21. Cf. my 'Anti-Psychiatry in Sartre's The Family Idiot' (Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry), for a criticism of Sartre's 'interpretative over-compensation' in the context of biography.

22. A sophisticated awareness of method and its proper application is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for facilitating

the acquisition of insight. Even if a repeatable and highly-controlled method such as psycho-analysis is used to guide self-examination, it is always logically possible that there are stages where, from the well-informed and method-conscious subject's perspective, explicitness and specifiability break down in the acquisition of insight.

23. Cf. Hampshire, Morality and Conflict pp.108-111 on the identification of rationality in thinking about conflicting moral claims with the ideal of explicitness. Cf. also Polanyi, 'Knowing and Being' (1961), and The Tacit Dimension.

24. This distinction vaguely resembles Ricoeur's distinction between the 'hermeneutics of suspicion' and the 'hermeneutics of faith'.

25. Cf. Marcel, 'My Life' in The Mystery of Being.

26. Cf. B.A.Farrell, The Standing of Psycho-Analysis, pp.126-27.

*

CHAPTER III

1. The terms 'subjective' and 'objective' will not be used here, except for the section on Kierkegaard; the layers of meaning each term has acquired across the history of modern philosophy assures that they mean all things to all people.

2. Cf. E. Levinas, Existence and Existents, pp.24-25. Cf. also Levinas, 'De l'evasion' (Recherches Philosophiques, V (1936-36) pp.373-92.

3. The irrevocability of this contract can be brought out by contrasting it with playing at games, which are conducted in such a way that they can be interrupted, repeated, rehearsed and reconstructed without altering the original conditions. In life, however, there are no 'time-outs' or rehearsals; everything we do is done with our life, in such a way that we cannot 'take our moves back'.

4. Cf. M. Heidegger, Being and Time: 'We are ourselves the entities to be analysed. The Being of any such entity is in each case mine (die Jemeinigkeit).' (ibid. pp.67-68) The relation of 'mineness' also applies to the relation Dasein has to its death: 'No one can take the Other's dying away from him....By its very essence, death is in each case mine.' (ibid. p.284; cf. also Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p.150).

5. E.Tugendhat, Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination, p.157.

6. Nineteenth-century biological science conceives life-struggle as the prototype of the relationship of an existent to its existence (cf. Levinas, Existence and Existent, p.23). But there is an even deeper level here: over and above what an already existing being may do to preserve and prolong its continued life, there is a distinct operation by which it takes over and assumes its existence.

7. Cf. M. Heidegger, Being and Time pp.67-71: the being of Dasein is to be in question in its being.

8. Cf. Levinas, Existence and Existents, p.28.

9. Cf. S. de Beauvoir, Tous les hommes sont mortels. The main character, who is immortal, is stripped of all historicity, and is

therefore removed from all irrevocability. None of the events that comprise his life actually mark his life: none can be branded irrevocable, singular or absolute, since they are all susceptible of being cancelled, redone or balanced-out by contrary events. He has before him not only his own future but the entire future: by this very fact the future, the fact that he has to be, no longer impends.

10. Sartre, War Diaries p.76. Cf. also Sartre, 'Writing for One's Age', Appendix to What is Literature? pp.233-34 for a description of how the events comprising experience are absolute and irrevocable. Cf. also E.Levinas, Totality and Infinity, for his rejection of the atheist-historicist view. Levinas argues that there must be a dimension beyond history if history is to have any meaning. Our lives are not significant only in terms of what occurs between birth and death in the form of observable and chronologically-dated events. Life is 'a leave of absence from history', a 'postponement': 'mortal existence unfolds in a dimension that does not run parallel to the time of history and is not situated with respect to this time as to an absolute.' (Ibid. p.56)

11. G.Bataille, 'Hegel, la mort et le sacrifice' Deucalion 5, (Neuchatel, 1955) pp.32-33, my translation. Dilthey also argues that totalization is possible only at the very moment of death.

12. Cf. also T.Nagel, Mortal Questions, pp.204-5. Stepping back to an observer's perspective may ultimately lead to the supreme virtue of magnificence (Aristotle), or nobility (Spinoza) -- viz. the rational disdain of particular interests and small worldly concerns and calculations.

13. On this interpretation, Ivan Ilyich's momentous deathbed insights can be explained as terrified reactions to a pressing situation. The extremity of his situation should lead us to doubt the accuracy of his last-minute utterances in the same way that we should doubt the accuracy of the utterances of a victim of torture.

14. This can be rephrased in Spinozist terms: man is always liable to fall into error, and to become subject to illusion, when he uncritically isolates from the enormous complexity of reality some single idea as a comprehensive explanatory principle. When he examines his life he will typically try to isolate as the cause or the essential issue or the insight what is in fact only one small element of a complex multifactorial explanation. His view of himself expresses only a minutely small and oversimplified perspective on a large, complex and multifaceted reality.

15. This is Nagel's dire conclusion in The View from Nowhere. By

contrast, Polanyi argues that the aspiration to see ourselves objectively and impersonally, in the 'true perspective' of time and space, and as detached as possible from our human perspective, would lead to absurdity (cf. Personal Knowledge p.3).

16. Cf. P.Strawson, 'Freedom and Resentment', on the intrinsic undesirability of the massive alteration in our thinking about ourselves that is proposed by a 'revisionary metaphysician'.

17. Spinoza, Correspondence, Letter LVIII.

18. Hampshire writes of Spinoza: 'the philosopher whom I am expounding called therefore for a radical and difficult conversion in men's inner life through this new understanding of the mind-body relation....' (FM p.221)

19. Cf. R. Scruton, Spinoza (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986): 'For Spinoza the other is at best a link in the chain of causes that leads to my idea of him, and in no sense the real matter (the ideatum) of my emotion.' (Ibid. p.84)

2Ø. The map metaphor is Kierkegaard's, who criticized metaphysical systems on the ground that trying to inform one's conduct according to their prescriptions would be like trying to find one's way around Copenhagen using a map of the world on which Denmark is the size of a pinhead. The real world becomes invisible from the dizzying altitude of the 'aerial' point of view.

21. 'A Kind of Materialism', in FM pp.213-214.

22. Hampshire, 'Spinoza's Theory of Human Freedom', The Monist LV (1971) p.562. Thought explains thought, and the physical processes which are identical to the thoughts are explained by physicalistic explanations; they are two aspects of the same thing.

23. 'A Kind of Materialism,' in FM p.213.

24. Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p.viii (cf. also p.7Ø, p.94). Cf. also Husserl's criticism of the naturalization of the psychic in The Crisis of European Sciences.

25. Cf. D.Mackey, 'Scientific Beliefs about Oneself', in The Proper Study.

26. Cf. P. Strawson, 'Freedom and Resentment'. Strawson argues that even if general deterministic explanations of human behaviour are demonstrably true, they neither undermine nor externally justify the agent's 'participant attitudes'.

27. L. Tolstoy, Confession, pp.36-37. Cf. also Dostoyevsky's Notes from Underground.

28. Sartre, Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions, p.16.

29. Cf. Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, pp.95-96.

30. Sartre, Search for a Method pp.167-68.

31. Sartre, Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions, pp.23-24.

32. Cited in Gadamer, Truth and Method p.196.

33. Cf. Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p.103.

34. Kierkegaard's famous statement that life must be lived forwards, and can only be understood backwards, is recapitulated in Heidegger's claim that the question of existence never gets straightened out except through existing (Being and Time, p.33). However, there is an important difference in the reasoning leading to Heidegger's conclusion: it is not because knowledge and existence are radically heterogeneous; it is because the theoretical objective attitude, and epistemic attitudes in general, are not original characteristics of Dasein's relation to itself and to the world.

35. Sartre, 'Kierkegaard: The Singular Universal', in Between Existentialism and Marxism, p.145.

36. Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p.281.

37. Cf. Kierkegaard's The Sickness Unto Death (Introduction) on the self-relation.

38. Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.279.

39. Kierkegaard, ibid. p.178.

40. Ibid p.170.

41. Ibid. p.314.

42. Ibid. p.55; cf. also p.279.

43. Ibid. p.271.

44. Ibid p.315. Cf. also Strawson, 'Freedom and Resentment'. Strawson argues that sustained objectivity and detachment, and the human isolation which it would entail, is not something of which human beings would be capable, 'even if some general truth were a theoretical ground for it.'

45. Ibid. p.279.

46. Ibid. p.293.

47. Ibid. p.268.

48. Cf. also R.D.Laing, The Divided Self.

49. A conclusion also reached by Tugendhat. Tugendhat's version of the relational model of man does attempt to find a middle way between these perspectives (i.e. between existential choice and the demands of reason and objectivity).

*

CHAPTER IV

1. In the Introduction to BN Sartre writes that if every metaphysics presupposes a theory of knowledge, every theory of knowledge presupposes a metaphysics: 'we must abandon the primacy of knowledge if we wish to establish that knowledge....consciousness can know and know itself. But it is in itself something other than a knowledge turned back upon itself.' (BN p.xxvii)

2. Cf. D. Dilworth and H.Silverman, 'A Cross-Cultural Approach to the De-Ontological Self Paradigm,' Monist Vol.61 (1978) pp.82-95.

3. Hegel, Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Vol.3, p.217.

4. Fichte, The Science of Knowledge, p.6.

5. Fichte, The Vocation of Man, p.85.

6. Cf. e.g. Derrida, Speech and Phenomena for a sustained attack on the Husserlian concept of consciousness; Foucault, The Order of Things for an attack on the Kantian 'empirico-transcendental doublet'; and Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus for an attack on the centered, integral subject. Levinas' philosophy is also a sustained critique of the foundational status given in Western philosophy to the connection between reflexivity and the self, and to the associated ideas of self-coincidence, original unity, rest and self-sameness. Philosophy, he writes, is an egology.

7. Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, p.300.

8. Hume, ibid. pp.300-01.

9. Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, ed. by N.Kemp Smith (New York: Bobbs-Merrill) p.159.

10. Another powerful line of criticism has focussed on the tendency of the Cartesian model to incline towards solipsism, because of its picture of man as enjoying a privileged access to a private sphere of interiority (e.g. a 'ghost in a machine'). Cf. Ryle, The Concept of Mind.

11. Cf. S. Shoemaker, Self-Knowledge and Self-Identity for a discussion of the debate triggered by Hume's concept of the self.

12. Wittgensteinians accuse introspectionists of conflating the

first-person self-ascription of conscious states (e.g. 'I am in pain') with the ascription of perceptible predicates to material objects (e.g. 'The chair is red'). The culprit is grammar. Wittgenstein argues that 'if we construe the grammar of the expression of sensation on the model of 'object and name', the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant.'

13. W.H. Walsh Reason and Experience, p.13.

14. The two editions of the Critique represent different views on the question of whether all our representations are in fact related to the 'I think', or whether they merely must be able to be related to it.

15. Hegel, Lectures on the History of Philosophy, iii, p.447.

16. Kant, Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, in The Moral Law, p.119.

17. Cf. my 'Kant and Sartre on Self-Knowledge' Man and World, for a discussion of this idea of a split or discord that is located at the very heart of human being.

18. A point strongly emphasized by Gilles Deleuze. Deleuze summarizes the effects of Kant's Copernican revolution on the concept of the self by citing Rimbaud's phrase 'I is an other'. Form of interiority means not only that time is internal to us, 'but that our interiority constantly divides us from ourselves, splits us in two: a splitting in two which never runs its course, since time has no end. A giddiness, an oscillation which constitutes time.' (Kant's Critical Philosophy, pp.viii-ix.)

19. The schema of the category substance is the permanence of the real in time, and that of causality is 'the real which, whenever posited, is always followed by something else' (B183/A144; cf. also B176/A137, and B150-52).

20. Cf. W.H.Walsh, Reason and Experience, p.116.

21. Cf. Heidegger, Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics. Heidegger argues that had Kant plumbed the depths of self-activity, and the productive imagination, he might have come to a fuller grasp of what the individual is who makes experience fit his categories. Frightened by his own insight, Kant turned back from the hidden to the safer elaboration of his system (cf. also Heidegger's Marburg lectures of 1927, The Basic Problems of Phenomenology, trans. by A. Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982)).

Marjorie Grene makes a similar observation: the Schematism, 'with its theme of imagination ordering time, and experience in general, can provide a clue of unique philosophical significance for a twentieth-century philosopher....We are the upsurge of time, and creative imagination, which moulds the present and even the vision of the past out of futurity, out of its projection of what we long to be, of what we believe we ought to be -- creative imagination through which we shape the time that we are: this is our most essential gift.'(The Knower and the Known, p.143.)

The place of time also forms an important part of Kant's Critique of Practical Reason. If man's existence is subject to time conditions, then his actions must be considered part of the system of nature, and subject to causality. 'But the very same subject, being on the other hand conscious of himself as a thing in itself, considers his existence also in so far as it is not subject to time-conditions, and he regards himself as determinable only through laws which he gives himself through reason.' (Critique of Practical Reason, 175)

22. Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, Preface, p.1Ø.

23. Hegel, ibid.

24. A version of the relational model of man is to be found in Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844. Cf. also F.Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra ('man is a bridge').

25. Cf. Plato, Sophist, 263e4 and 264a9.

26. Levinas, Existence and Existents, p.22.

27. In addition to Hampshire and Sartre's theories, the modus operandi of self-definition and self-alteration can be conceived in a number of ways: e.g. as 'second-order' desiring (Frankfurt), rational deliberative choice (Tugendhat), and radical re-evaluation (Taylor).

28. Cf. my 'Anti-Psychiatry in Sartre's The Family Idiot' (Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry) for a discussion of Sartre's last version of the concept of freedom.

29. Sartre, Between Existentialism and Marxism, pp.34-35.

3Ø. J.S.Mill, Logic of Moral Sciences (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merill, 1967) p.14.

CHAPTER V

1. Frequently cited essays from Freedom of Mind will be designated numerically, followed by the page number (e.g., FM i, p.22): i: 'Freedom of Mind'; ii: 'Spinoza and the Idea of Freedom'; iii: 'A Kind of Materialism'; iv: 'Sincerity and Single-Mindedness'.

2. It is important to point out that Hampshire's views on self-definition and self-alteration changed significantly from Thought and Action to Freedom of Mind. In the former work, the impetus behind moral improvement is grounded in the agent's development of alternative systems of classification. In Freedom of Mind, on the other hand, the impetus is placed much more squarely on the agent's acquisition of a more complete and sophisticated knowledge of the causal explanation of his mental states. Nevertheless, Hampshire construes the concept of cause very widely.

3. Hampshire, Morality and Conflict, p.155.

4. Cf. H.Frankfurt, 'Freedom of the Will and the Concept of the Person' for a similar formulation of the self-relation.

5. Cf. Freedom and Knowledge p.89.

6. J.Hospers, 'What Means This Freedom?', in Determinism and Freedom in the Age of Modern Science, ed. by S.Hook, p.114.

7. Hospers, ibid. p.117.

8. Hampshire, The Philosophy of Mind, p.5.

9. If per impossibile it were a simple causal relation, an explanation would somehow have to be given of how a non-existent state of affairs caused an existent state to change.

10. Hampshire, 'Spinoza's Theory of Human Freedom', The Monist, LV (1971), p.565.

11. The effectiveness of the alteration is evident in some of the more complex cases of psychopathology (e.g. with children, whose understanding is under-developed). Cf. Erik Erikson's case-

history of the little boy suffering from a pregnancy fantasy, in Childhood and Society (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965) p.5Ø.

12. Cf. Nietzsche, Daybreak, 116.

13. Cf. Taylor, C. 'Interpretation and the Sciences of Man' p.15. Cf. also A. Quinton, 'The Inner Life'. In early European novels the inner life of the main characters is often described by simple and crude descriptions picking out simple emotions. In Don Quixote 'the life of the mind is reduced to a very rudimentary keyboard of emotional notes....Amazement, astonishment, fury -- the emotions are intense and vivid, but they are very thin and, as it were, impersonal states anyone might be in under the circumstances, the common condition of a crowd, not the distinguishing possession of a crowd.' (Quinton, Ibid. p.24)

14. A philosophically interesting example is to be found in Stendhal's The Charterhouse of Parma, one of the most memorable lines of which is Mosca's comment: 'If the word 'love' ever comes to be spoken between them, I am lost'. Commenting on this passage, Sartre writes: 'Words are devastating when they come to name that which was lived without being named.' (L'Idiot de la famille, Vol.1, p.783)

15. Hampshire, 'Spinoza's Theory of Human Freedom', ibid. p.565.

16. Cf. J. Bennett, A Study of Spinoza's Ethics for a criticism of Hampshire's Spinoza on this and other points.

17. Sartre's concept of the pre-reflexive cogito is an explicit rejection of this formulation.

18. Cf. Hampshire, 'The Explanation of Thought', Psychiatry and the Humanities, Vol.2, p.8.

19. Cf. also C. Taylor, 'Self-Responsibility', in Philosophical Papers, p.297, on the problem of the starting-point of radical re-evaluation.

2Ø. An entire section of Thought and Action is devoted to criticism and regret.

21. Naturally not every sentiment of regret triggers self-examination. In some cases it may amount to no more than idealized fantasizing about the past.

22. There is a complex counter-factual conditional judgement at work in the sentiment of regret: in looking back, a man thinks that his experience would have been wider if he had been aware of the limits of his narrow habits of thinking. He reviews his past in light of the commonly-used counter-factual qualifiers 'What if...' and 'If only....' Cf. Hampshire, 'Subjunctive Conditionals' in FM pp.21-27.

23. Hampshire, 'The Explanation of Thought', p.3.

24. Cf. also P.Strawson, 'Freedom and Resentment'.

25. Hampshire, 'Freedom and Knowledge', p. 89.

26. There is a similarity here to Dostoyevsky's 'underground man' (Notes from Underground), who claims that his very awareness of the laws of nature and the predictions of the scientists puts him one step ahead, and out of the range of their predictions.

27. This distinguishes Hampshire from Spinoza, whose metaphysical determinism and monism allows no breaks or ambiguities in the totality of nature. For Spinoza, freedom is compatible with rigid determinism: that thing is free whose causal determination is internal, such that it makes itself what it essentially is.

28. The explanation the agent entertains is not necessarily rigorous and explicit: it is enough that he know that his state of mind is caused by something of which he was previously unaware, without specifying in detailed and contextualized terms the nature of the cause.

29. This is one of the characteristics of 'opaque' intentional states.

30. Freud, 'Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis' (Rat Man), 1909, Standard Edition, Vol.X, p.40.

31. Freud, 'Constructions in Analysis', in Theory and Technique, ed. by P.Rieff (New York: Collier, 1963), p.282. For a discussion of this difficult problem see B.A.Farrell 'The Validity of Psychotherapy' (Inquiry 15 (1972) pp.146-70); E.Glover 'The Therapeutic Effect of Inexact Interpretations: A Contribution to the Theory of Suggestion' (International Journal of Psychoanalysis 12 (1931) pp.397-411).

32. Freud, 'From the History of an Infantile Neurosis', in Three

Case Histories, ed. by P.Rieff (New York: Collier, 1963) p.239.

33. Cf. J.Neu, Emotion, Thought and Therapy, pp.107-112.

34. J.Malcolm, Psychoanalysis: The Impossible Profession (London: Picador, 1980) p.108.

35. Cf. my 'Sartre's Anti-Psychiatry and Philosophical Anthropology', Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology (1987) for a discussion of the power relationship between analyst and analysand.

36. According to the theory of the placebo effect, a patient may get better when, unknown to him, he is given a treatment that is of no real help at all. Other factors explain his improvement (e.g. the therapist likes his patient); as these factors are not specific to the treatment, they indicate the analysand's suggestibility, but not the truth of the interpretations and underlying theory. Cf. Farrell, The Standing of Psychoanalysis pp.94-100.

The dynamics of offering psychoanalytic interpretations is exceedingly complex. If the analysand's acceptance of it does not depend solely on its truth-value, the question is then raised of how much of the interpretation is the analyst's imposition of a theoretical creation on a confused patient who lacks the conceptual resources to think for himself, and who accepts it only because it provides a set of terms that enables him to integrate otherwise alien or confusing experiences. Cf. Freud, An Outline of Psychoanalysis (1940), trans. by J.Strachey (New York: Norton, 1963) pp.71-77.

37. Naturally there are many such 'soft', 'narrativist' or 'non-cognitive' interpretations of psycho-analysis. Roy Schafer argues that 'psychoanalysis does not discover truth understood as correspondence between acts of the past and propositions in the form of interpretations concerning the past. Rather it constructs truth in the service of self-coherence for the present and for the future' (Language and Insight (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978) p.66). Cf. also S.Charmé, Meaning and Myth in the Study of Lives, pp.82-86.

38. Lévi-Strauss argues that psycho-analysis is a kind of modern mythology, and likens it to shamanism. It is the sheer power of naming what is hitherto unnamed and not fully meaningful that explains the effectiveness of the shamanistic -- and, by implication, psycho-analytic -- practices; the truth-value of the underlying theory is irrelevant. What is crucial for effecting therapeutic change is not the truth of an explanation but its meaningfulness, coherence and acceptance by a community. Cf.

Lévi-Strauss, 'The Sorcerer and His Magic' and 'The Effectiveness of Symbols,' in Structural Anthropology (New York: Basic Books, 1963) pp.195-97; cf. also J.Neu, Emotion, Thought and Therapy.

39. Cf. Hampshire, Morality and Conflict, p.5, pp.119-120, pp.148-54 for an account of the concept of a 'way of life'.

40. Cf. I. Murdoch Sartre: Romantic Realist on the widely differing kinds of examples called upon by Sartre and Ryle to illustrate their arguments. Cf. also A. MacIntyre, After Virtue, p.190, for a criticism of the narrowness of subject-matter allowed by analytical method.

41. Hampshire, Spinoza, pp.165-66.

42. Freud, New Introductory Lectures (1933), trans. by W.H.J. Sprott (New York: Norton, 1933) p.108.

43. Freud himself acknowledged the influence of Spinoza's psychology; cf. his private correspondence with Dr.L.Bickel and S.Hessing (reprinted in Speculum Spinozana); cf. also Hampshire, Spinoza, pp.141-44.

44. P. Rieff, Freud: The Mind of the Moralist (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, Doubleday, 1961) p.368.

45. Freud, An Outline of Psycho-Analysis, p.65

46. Ibid. p.70.

47. Ibid. p.76.

48. Freud, 'Future Prospects of Psycho-Analytic Therapy' (1910), Standard Edition Vol.XI, p.148. In the New Introductory Lectures Freud says that psychoanalytic therapy aims to 'strengthen the ego...widen its field of vision, and so to extend its organization that it can take over new portions of the id. Where id was there ego shall be.' 'Much will be gained is we succeed in transforming your hysterical misery into common unhappiness. With a mental life that has been restored to health you will be better armed against that unhappiness' (Studies on Hysteria (1895), Standard Edition Vol.II, p.305).

49. Sartre, Search for a Method, pp.10-12.

50. Sartre's position is that even if this is true, it does not necessarily follow that he is not responsible for what he has been made to be. Cf. my 'Anti-Psychiatry in Sartre's The Family Idiot' for a discussion of this.

51. Freud, 'The Unconscious' (1915), Standard Edition, Vol.XIV, p. 175.

52. Freud, ''Wild' Psycho-Analysis' Standard Edition, Vol. XI (1910) p.225.

53. Pears, (ed.) Freedom and the Will p.101.

54. The connection between reflexivity and the proliferation of forms of self-understanding is an dominant characteristic of the post-modern condition.

55. With the 'triumph of the therapeutic' over the moral vision of the ends of man, a whole (epistemologically uncritical) psycho-technology of self-realization has sprung up in the West.

56. Cf. Kierkegaard on the equanimity of thought and reflection, and the case of Buridan's ass.

57. Cf. Tolstoy's Confession pp.36-37.

58. Cf. Sartre's 'Kierkegaard: The Singular Universal' for a discussion of this problem.

59. Phenomenology of Perception p.viii.

60. Cf. T.Nagel, The View from Nowhere pp.127-28 on the blind spot in knowledge.

61. There are close connections between this idea and Polanyi's distinction between focal and subsidiary awareness, and his concept of tacit and personal knowledge as that which accounts for man's capacity to acquire knowledge even though he cannot at the same time fully specify the grounds of his knowing. Polanyi argues that 'an unbridled lucidity can destroy our understanding of complex matters.' (The Tacit Dimension, p.18; cf. also Personal Knowledge, Chapter 4)

1. Sartre, Existentialism and Human Emotions, p.15. Cf. also Sartre, Saint Genet: Genet 'defined and created himself, for he is that and that alone.' (p.168)

2. Sartre, Between Existentialism and Marxism, p.41.

3. Heidegger, Being and Time, p.90; cf. also pp.172-79, p.246, pp.408-15. Cf. Gadamer, Truth and Method, 'The Overcoming of the Epistemological Problem Through Phenomenological Research', pp.214-34 for a discussion of the history of this critique of knowledge.

Ryle argues against this in his review of Heidegger's Being and Time (first published in Mind, Vol. 38, 1928). Heidegger he argues confuses the anthropologically primitive with the logically primitive: the most primitive attitudes, moods and ways of being of Dasein really involve knowledge, which knowledge, Ryle argues, necessitates universals and categories upon which the analysis of Dasein throws no light. Ryle argues that the presence of knowledge of reality, though not explicitly recognised, is surreptitiously imported into such terms as 'understanding' and 'illumination', as well as into countless other terms with which Heidegger tries to build up a new philosophical vocabulary. Cf. 'Heidegger's Sein und Zeit,' in Collected Papers, p.212; cf. also p.176).

4. Sartre, Between Existentialism and Marxism, pp.30-31.

5. Sartre, ibid. p.35.

6. Cf. BN p.18 for Sartre's criticism of Heidegger for his failure to identify the negativity and non-coincidence that characterizes the self-relation.

7. Cf. BN p.565; cf. also p.75 on 'troubled belief', and p.101 on thirst.

8. Cf. BN p.74 for Sartre's argument that the principle of identity (in formal logic) is incompatible with a relational view of human reality.

9. Cf. Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p.426, for a description of the 'explosion or dehiscence' of the present towards a future as 'the archetype of the relationship of self to self', as that which 'traces out an interiority or ipseity'.

10. Sartre, Search for a Method, p.91.

11. Ibid. pp.150-51.

12. The concept of time is dominant in existentialism and phenomenology. Cf. Merleau-Ponty Phenomenology of Perception p.382; cf. also A.Kojève, Introduction to the Reading of Hegel (trans. by J.Nichols, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969) p.9): 'man is nothing but his becoming, his existence in space is his existence in time, or as time.' The centrality accorded to the concept of time has not gone without criticism: cf. Levi-Strauss, The Savage Mind, 'History and Dialectic'.

13. The concept of meaning is neglected by the human sciences which model themselves on the physical sciences. Sartre's Saint Genet is directed against positivist criminology and psychiatry, which attempt to explain Genet's criminality and psyche by reducing them to cause-governed physical processes that are not intrinsically different from natural processes. But the causal explanation of a crime fails to elucidate its human meaning (ibid. p.493): 'You can try to reduce his [Genet's] vice to a physiological defect, but even if you establish the fact that there is something wrong with his secretions, you would not attain that absolute consciousness which approves of itself and chooses itself.' (ibid. p.588) Cf. my paper 'Sartre's Anti-Psychiatry and Philosophical Anthropology' for a discussion of these issues.

14. Between Existentialism and Marxism, p.160.

15. In one of the few references to Kant's concept of Sinnegebung Sartre writes: 'Because the conscious self [sic] [conscience] derives its law from itself, it must regard itself in Kant's words as the legislator of the city of ends. It must accept complete responsibility and create its own values, must give meaning to the world and to its life....with the conscious self something comes into being which did not exist before -- meaning.' (Baudelaire pp.42-43)

16. Cf. Aristotle, Physics, VIII, 5: 'Activity is not formative with respect to its source.'

17. Cf. P.F. Strawson, Individuals (London, Methuen, 1959) pp.34-38 on revisionary metaphysics.

18. Cf. A.MacIntyre, After Virtue, p.190. Sartre attributes this atomistic way of thinking to what he calls in the Critique of Dialectical Reason 'analytical rationality'.

19. Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, pp.406-07.

20. Cf. E.Husserl, 'The Origin of Geometry', in The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology, Appendix VI, pp.353-378 for such terms as 'primordial founding act', 'primordial positing', 'original sense-bestowing production' and 'primal instituting accomplishment'.

21. Cf. Husserl, 'The Origin of Geometry'. Husserl speaks of the original meaning of geometry that was first glimpsed by the protogeometer, and the necessity of returning to this original sense.

22. One of the peculiarities of Kant's theory of experience is the tension between the empirical and the transcendental: empirical experience as we know it is coherent, structured, rich and discursive, but the transcendental level that makes experience possible in this way is itself characterized by discord and conflict between faculties.

23. Cf. Critique of Pure Reason B283.

24. Sartre, The Family Idiot, p.ix.

25. Cf. also Sartre's description of the spiral of personalization in L'Idiot de la famille, Vol.1, pp.653-58.

26. Cf. Taylor, C. 'Self-Responsibility', in Philosophical Papers, for a challenge to this.

27. There are certain similarities here between radical choice as an ungrounded upsurge, and Fichte's concept of the self-positing ego. The latter, however, is a full-blown Idealist concept: the self posits its own existence. Sartre on the other hand sees the self as 'thrown' into a situation, and only later defining itself: its existence is a brute factical given.

28. Wittgenstein, L. Philosophical Investigations, #97.

29. Cf. Wittgenstein, L. On Certainty, #95-99, 110.

30. Cf. Collingwood, An Essay on Metaphysics (Oxford, 1962).

31. Cf. T.Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.

32. Cf. R. Carnap, 'Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology', in Meaning and Necessity (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1956).

33. Wittgenstein, On Certainty, #96-99.

34. Wittgenstein, ibid. #205.

35. Ibid. #359.

36. Ibid. #559.

37. Ibid. #110.

38. Another version of this general principle is Plato's concept of the Good, which is the source of the existence of all things, including the Forms, and yet itself is 'beyond being'. Levinas's entire philosophy is directed against the idea that 'everything that is in the subject, even the subject himself, devolves from a position due to this very subject' ('Humanism and An-Archy', in Collected Papers, p.134). His concept of the revelation of the other is designed to show that the self-defining activity of the individual is not total and fundamental; it pulls up short, and must answer to something external to it, viz. the other person.

39. Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p.xv.

40. Cf. Sartre, 'An Interview with Jean-Paul Sartre', in The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre, ed. by P.Schilpp, pp.22-23, 36-37.

41. Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, Bxiii.

42. Kant, ibid., Axx.

43. Pre-ontological comprehension is a rich source of primitive, immediate, accurate awareness. We have a pre-ontological comprehension of being (BN p.17), of non-being (p.7), of the futility of sincerity (p.63), of the criteria of truth (p.156), of the existence of the Other (p.251), of human reality (p.561), of the human person (p.568), and of one's fundamental project (p.570) In L'Idiot he calls it 'a familiarity of the subjective enterprise with itself', and 'a spontaneous appreciation without intellection.' (L'Idiot de la famille Vol.2, p.1546)

44. Cf. Heidegger, Being and Time, pp.32-35, p.67, p.317, and pp.414-15 for the concept of pre-understanding.

45. Cf. Sartre's description of the advent of self-consciousness, in Baudelaire (pp.19-20).

46. Sartre, Between Existentialism and Marxism, p.40.

47. Sartre, ibid.

48. Sartre, ibid., p.41.

49. Cf. BN p.463 on the relation between the problem and the solution of existence.

50. Tugendhat, Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination, p.19.

51. Tugendhat, ibid., p.265.

52. Tugendhat, ibid., p.217.

53. Tugendhat, ibid., p.265.

54. Tugendhat, ibid., p.217.

55. Cf. Sartre's 'Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology'. Cf. also War Diaries, pp.138-39, on his 'horror' of private diaries, and pp.272-73 on the 'tireless spotlights' he shines on his feelings.

56. Sartre, The Words, pp.89-90. Cf. also BN p.63 for Sartre's description of introspection.

57. Naturally this has invited the criticism that Sartre's phenomenological ontology is nothing but the rather eccentric personal vision of one phenomenologist writ large, and dressed up with a technical vocabulary.

58. Cf. Sartre, Nausea, p.39, on the elusiveness of adventure.

59. M. Polanyi, Personal Knowledge p.56.

60. Sartre is critical of Husserl for not having fully exercised the phenomenological reduction (cf. TE pp.102-3).

61. In The Transcendence of the Ego (1936) Sartre conceives pre-reflective conscious experience as non-egoic and radically impersonal, a field without a center. This view had changed by the time of Being and Nothingness (1943): pre-reflective experience is still non-egoic, but it is now characterized by a certain 'selfness' (BN p.102), ipseity or personal structure. The actual turning point between these two non-egological conceptions of consciousness is to be found in his War Diaries (cf. pp.324-25).

62. The grammatical structure of the term 'non-positional self-consciousness' may suggest that what accompanies all ordinary experience is the awareness of a self. But this is incorrect, and Sartre took pains to point this out with his formulation 'conscience (de) conscience'. The correlate of non-focal self-awareness is not the self but experience.

63. Sartre, War Diaries, p.34.

64. Cf. Sartre, Saint Genet, p.39: 'A thief cannot have an intuition of himself as thief.'

65. Ryle, The Concept of Mind, p.186.

66. Cf. BN p.xxix. Sartre even cites empirical tests by Piaget which ostensibly show that action does not presuppose knowledge.

67. Cf. Merleau-Ponty, Sense and Non-Sense, trans. by H. and P.Dreyfus (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p.73, for a criticism of the starkly antithetical nature of Being and Nothingness.

68. 'An Interview with Jean-Paul Sartre' (1975), in The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre, ed. by P.Schilpp, pp.47-48.

69. Cf. Sartre's play No Exit for an implicit criticism of the idea that the other is a pure reflecting medium.

70. Cf. Sartre, Saint Genet, pp.17-23 on the 'dizzying word' that transformed Genet into a thief. Cf. also L'Idiot de la famille:

'"You will be the family idiot". If one day the child [Flaubert] wants to find a way out of this, he must accept the sentence. Whatever his chance of success, he has no hope of altering it.' (Vol. 1, p.383, my translation)

71. Cf. B. Farrell The Standing of Psychoanalysis, pp.126-27, for a discussion of the problem of the method-dependence of psychoanalytic insight.

72. Cf. Levinas, Totality and Infinity.

73. And, arguably, astrology, tarot readings, handwriting analysis and other approaches to the study of character.

74. Cf. Sartre, Saint Genet, pp.32-33 on the uninternalizable ascriptions of others.

75. Sartre, War Diaries, p.76.

76. Sartre, Baudelaire, p.24.

77. Cf. 'An Interview with Jean-Paul Sartre' (1976) in Jean-Paul Sartre: Contemporary Approaches to his Philosophy, pp.230-31.

78. Cf. E. Tugendhat Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination p.213, p.265 for a discussion of this question; cf. also Hampshire, Morality and Conflict, for a discussion of the ultimate moral conflicts arising between different ways of life.

79. Cf. Wittgenstein, On Certainty #609-612: 'At the end of reasons comes persuasion.'

80. Sartre does not discuss the issue of shared criteria (e.g. the same criteria of rationality and meaning in two or more projects).

81. Cf. R.M.Hare, The Language of Morals (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964) p.69. Hare argues that justification comes to an end when a person is confronted with the decision of accepting a way of life. Justification is based on the way of life.

82. Cf. C. Taylor 'Responsibility for Self' on radical re-evaluation.

83. Cf BN p.464 on the case of the hiker.

84. The 'architecture' of a life in Sartre's later work is more balanced. Cf. L'Idiot de la famille Vol.1 pp.656-58 for Sartre's account of the 'spiral of personalization'.

85. Sartre, The Words, p.238.

86. Sartre, ibid. p.254.

87. William James uses the metaphor of the flights of birds to describe the trajectory of life: changes in life-plan, final purposes and life-projects are like the random flights and perches of birds, which flit from tree to tree without an overall pattern or summum bonum directing their movements.

88. Levinas, 'Humanism and An-archy', in Collected Papers, p.134, fn.14. Cf. also Totality and Infinity, p.51., pp.123-25. Cf. also Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence Chapter 4 for Levinas' account of subjectivity as subjection.

89. G. Marcel, 'Existence and Human Freedom', in The Philosophy of Existentialism, p.83.

90. Cf. G. Marcel, 'On the Ontological Mystery', in The Philosophy of Existentialism pp.9-46.

91. Cf. T. Nagel, The View from Nowhere, pp.54-58, pp.208-14. Nagel fails to see in this any sense of the mystery of being alive.

92. Cf. E.Cassirer, An Essay on Man, p.22. There is a close etymological and conceptual connection between the term 'critique' (in the Kantian sense) and the term 'crisis'.

93. M. Scheler, Man's Place in Nature, Introduction.

94. I.Murdoch, Sartre: Romantic Realist, p.55.

95. I.Murdoch, The Sovereignty of Good, p.35.

96. Murdoch, Ibid. pp.30-31; cf. also p.48.

97. Ibid. p.9.

98. Ibid. p.8.

99. Ibid. p.16.

100. Ibid. p.48

101. Cf. M. Blanchot, L'Ecriture du désastre (Paris: Gallimard, 1981) on the Levinassian critique of the man of action.

102. Murdoch, ibid. pp.28-31, pp.36-7.

103. Richard Rorty by contrast fails to see in this proliferation any sign of a crisis in man's self-understanding. Self-description, self-reconception and self-experimentation, and the pluralistic proliferation of new self-images, is one of the most noble of human activities: 'the only sin is limitation' (Emerson). Cf. Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature pp.358-59, p.362, p.367, p.378.

104. Murdoch, ibid. p.38.

105. Ibid. p.23

106. Ibid. p.37.

107. Cf. Tugendhat, Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination p.213 for a similar criticism of Heidegger.

108. Murdoch, ibid. pp.3-4.

109. Levinas is particularly critical of the Heideggerean philosophy of finitude, and the concept of being-towards-death. These create an heroic and self-sufficient subject who braves anxiety, resolutely accepts death, and above all tries to remain free in the face of alterity. 'Heideggerean philosophy precisely marks the apogee of a thought in which the finite does not refer to the infinite,...in which every deficiency is but weakness, and every fault committed against oneself -- the outcome of a long tradition of pride, heroism, domination and cruelty.' ('Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity', in Collected Papers, p.52).

CHAPTER VII

1. Existential psycho-therapy and psycho-analysis is already a well-established and diversified approach: its practitioners include L.Binswanger, E.Minkowski, M.Boss, R.May, R.D.Laing, E.Fromm, V.Frankl and A.Maslow. Similarly, a rationalist or 'cognitive' form of psycho-therapy is now a well-established approach to Freud.

2. In considering how to show psycho-analysis as therapeutically effective, Freud is reported to have said jokingly 'that the best control is to treat the same person twice -- once with analysis and once without, and then compare results.' Cited in Farrell, The Standing of Psycho-Analysis, p.101.

3. These definitions of 'definition' are from A New English Dictionary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908).

4. Cf. Hampshire, Morality and Conflict, p.155: 'A person hesitates between two contrasting ways of life, and sets of virtues, and he has to make a very definite, and even final, determination between them. This determination is a negation, and normally the agent will feel that the choice has killed, or repressed, some part of him.'

5. Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, B187.

Bibliography

Aristotle Ethica Nicomachea, trans. by W.D.Ross, in The Works of Aristotle, Vol.IX (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925).

Barnes, H. Sartre and Flaubert (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

---------- 'Sartre's Concept of the Self', Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry, Vol.XVII, No.1, (1980-81) pp.41-65.

Bennett, J. 'Hampshire's Spinoza' in A Study of Spinoza's Ethics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

Bernard, W. 'Psychotherapeutic Principles in Spinoza's Ethics', in Speculum Spinozanum 1677-1977, ed. by Hessing, pp.63-80.

de Boer, Th. 'An Ethical Transcendental Philosophy', in Face to Face with Levinas, ed. by R. Kearney, (New York: SUNY Press, 1986) pp.83-117.

Carrithers, Collins, Lukes (ed.) The Category of the Person (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

Cassirer, E. An Essay on Man (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944).

Charmé, S. Meaning and Myth in the Study of Lives: A Sartrean Perspective (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984).

Danto, A. Sartre (Glasgow: Fontana, 1975).

Davidson, D. 'On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme', in Inquiries into Truth and Intepretation (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).

Deleuze, G. Kant's Critical Philosophy, trans. by H.Tomlinson and B.Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

Descartes, R. Discourse on Method; The Meditations, (1637, 1641) trans. by F.E.Sutcliffe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968).

Fackenheim, E. Metaphysics and Historicity (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1961).

Farrell, B.A. The Standing of Psychoanalysis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

Fell, J. Emotion in the Thought of Sartre (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965).

-------- 'Sartre's Words: An Existential Self-Analysis', The Psychoanalytic Review, 55, no.3 (1968), pp.426-41.

Fichte, J.G. The Science of Knowledge (1794) trans. by P.Heath and J.Lachs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

---------- The Vocation of Man (1800) trans. by R.Chisholm (New York: MacMillan, 1985).

Franck, I. 'Spinoza, Freud and Hampshire on Psychic Freedom', in Psychiatry and the Humanities, Vol.2, ed. by J.H. Smith (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1977) pp. 257-309.

Frankfurt, H. 'Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person', in Journal of Philosophy LXVII, No.1 (Jan. 1971), pp.5-20.

---------- 'Identification and Externality' in The Identities of Persons, ed. by A.Rorty, pp.239-251.

Freud, S. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, ed. by J.Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961).

Gadamer, H.-G. Truth and Method, trans. anon. (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975).

Gardiner, P. 'Error, Faith and Self-Deception', in The Philosophy of Mind, ed. by J.Glover, pp.35-52.

---------- 'Sartre on Character and Self-Knowledge', in New Literary History, Vol.9, (1978) pp.65-81.

Glover, J. (ed.) The Philosophy of Mind (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976).

Goodman, N. Ways of Worldmaking (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1978).

Grene, M. The Knower and the Known (London: Faber and Faber, 1966).

Hamlyn, D.W. 'Self-Knowledge', in The Self: Psychological and Philosophical Issues, ed. by T.Mischel, pp.170-200.

Hampshire, S. 'The Explanation of Thought', in Psychiatry and the Humanities, Vol. 2., ed. by J.H.Smith (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1977).

---------- Freedom of the Individual (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965).

---------- Freedom of Mind and Other Essays (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

---------- Morality and Conflict (Oxford: Blackwells, 1983).

---------- (ed.) The Philosophy of Mind (New York: Harper and Row, 1966).

---------- 'Self-Knowledge and the Will' Revue International de Philosophie, Vol.7 (1953) pp.230-45.

---------- Spinoza (London: Faber and Faber, 1956).

---------- 'Spinoza's Theory of Human Freedom', The Monist LV, (1971), pp.554-66.

---------- Thought and Action (1959) (London: Chatto and Windus, 1982).

Hegel, G.W.F. Hegel's Logic, Being Part One of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences, trans. by W.Wallace (Oxford, 1978).

---------- Lectures on the History of Philosophy, trans. by E.H.Haldane and F.H.Simpson (London, 1974).

---------- Phenomenology of Spirit (1807), trans. by A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

Heidegger, M. Being and Time (1926), trans. by J.Macquarrie and E. Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962).

---------- Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, (1929) trans. by J.Churchill (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962).

Hessing, S.(ed.) Speculum Spinozanum 1677-1977 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978).

Horden, P.(ed.) The Novelist as Philosopher: Modern Fiction and the History of Ideas, The Chichele Lectures, 1982 (Oxford: All Soul's College, 1983).

Hospers, J. 'What Means This Freedom?', in Determinism and Freedom in the Age of Modern Science, ed. by S.Hook (New York: Collier, 1961).

Howells, C. Sartre's Theory of Literature (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 1979).

---------- 'Sartre and Freud', French Studies Vol.33, (1979) pp.157-176.

Hume, D. A Treatise of Human Nature, ed. by L.A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1888).

Husserl, E. The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology (1937), trans. by D.Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

James, W. Principles of Psychology (London: Macmillan, 1890).

Jopling, D. 'Anti-Psychiatry in Sartre's The Family Idiot', in Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry, Vol.19, No.2-3, (1988) pp.161-187.

---------- 'The Ethics of Totalization: Sartre and Levinas', ms presented to the inaugural meeting of the Sartre Society, New York, 1985.

---------- 'Kant and Sartre on Self-Knowledge', Man and World Vol.19, no.1 (1986) pp.73-93.

---------- 'Sartre's Anti-Psychiatry and Philosophical Anthropology', Journal for the British Society of Phenomenology, Vol.18, No.1, (1987) pp.6-13.

Kant, I. Critique of Pure Reason (1781/1787), trans. by N.Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1929).

-------- Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics (1783), trans. by L.White Beck (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 195Ø).

-------- The Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals, in The Moral Law, ed. by H.J.Paton (London: Hutchison, 1964).

Kierkegaard, S. Concluding Unscientific Postscript (1846), trans. by D.Swenson and W.Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941).

---------- Either/Or trans. by D. Swenson and W. Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959).

Laing, R.D. and Cooper, D.G. Reason and Violence (London: Tavistock, 1964).

Levinas, E. Existence and Existents (1947), trans. by A.Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978).

---------- Collected Philosophical Papers, trans. by A.Lingis (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987).

---------- Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence (1974), trans. by A.Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981).

---------- Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority (1961) trans. by A. Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979).

Levi-Strauss, C. 'The Sorcerer and His Magic' and 'The Effectiveness of Symbols', in Structural Anthropology (New York: Basic Books, 1963).

Locke, J. Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1688) ed. by J.Yolton (London: Dent, 1961).

MacIntyre, A. After Virtue (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1981).

Mackay, D. 'Scientific Beliefs about Oneself', in The Proper Study (London: St.Martin's Press, 1971) pp.48-63.

Macquarrie, J. Martin Heidegger (Atlanta: John Knox, 1968).

---------- In Search of Humanity (New York: CrossRoad, 1985).

---------- Existentialism (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976).

Marcel, G. The Mystery of Being, trans. by G. Fraser (Indiana: Gateway, 1950).

---------- The Philosophy of Existentialism, trans. by M.Harari (New Jersey: Citadel, 1956).

Merleau-Ponty, M. Phenomenology of Perception (1945), trans. by C.Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962).

Mischel, T. (ed.) The Self: Psychological and Philosophical Issues (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977).

Montefiore, A. (ed.) Philosophy and Personal Relations (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973).

---------- 'Philosophy as Fiction', in The Novelist as Philosopher, ed. by P.Horden.

Morris, P. Sartre's Concept of a Person (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1976).

Murdoch, I. The Sovereignty of Good (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970).

---------- Sartre: Romantic Realist (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1980).

Nagel, T. Mortal Questions (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979)

--------- The View from Nowhere (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

Neu, J. Emotion, Thought and Therapy (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977).

Nietzsche, F. Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality, trans. by R. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

Parfit, D. 'Personal Identity', in The Philosophy of Mind, ed. by J.Glover, pp.142-162.

Pears, D.F. 'Freedom and Knowledge', dialogue with I. Murdoch, S. Hampshire, P.L. Gardiner and D.F. Pears. In Freedom and the Will (New York: St.Martin's Press, 1963).

Pietersma, H. 'Marcel's Notion of the Meta-Problematical', in Man and World 14 (1981) pp.411-421.

---------- 'Truth and the Search for It' University of Toronto Quarterly, Vol.52, No.3 (1983) pp.221-34.

Plato Phaedrus, trans. by W.Helmbold and W.Rabinowitz (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956).

Polanyi, M. 'Knowing and Being', in Knowing and Being: Essays by Michael Polanyi, ed. by M.Grene (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969).

---------- Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958).

---------- The Study of Man (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959).

---------- The Tacit Dimension (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966).

Priest, S. (ed.) Hegel's Critique of Kant (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

Quine, W.V.O. 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism' in From a Logical Point of View (New York: Harper and Row, 1953).

---------- Ontological Relativity and Other Essays (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969).

Quinton, A. 'Has Man an Essence?', in Nature and Conduct, ed. by R.S.Peters (London: MacMillan, 1975) pp.14-35.

---------- 'The Inner Life', in The Novelist as Philosopher, ed. P.Horden, pp.20-36.

---------- 'The Soul', Journal of Philosophy, 59, No. 15, (July, 1962), pp.393-409.

---------- 'Two Conceptions of Personality', Revue International de Philosophie (1968) pp.387-402.

Rorty, A. The Identities of Persons (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

Rorty, R. Consequences of Pragmatism (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982).

--------- Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature (Oxford: Blackwell 1980).

Ryle, G. Collected Papers, Vol.1-2 (London: Hutchison, 1971).

------- The Concept of Mind (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1949).

Sartre, J.-P. Baudelaire (1946), trans. by M.Turnell (New York: New Directions, 1950).

---------- Being and Nothingness (1943), trans. by H. Barnes (London: Methuen, 1969).

---------- Between Existentialism and Marxism, trans. by J. Matthews (London: New Left Books, 1974).

---------- Critique of Dialectical Reason (1960), trans. by A.Sheridan-Smith (London: New Left Books, 1976).

---------- L'Idiot de la famille Vols.1-3 (Paris: Gallimard, 1971-72).

---------- 'Make Illness a Weapon' (1972) trans. by D.Jopling Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology Vol.18, No.1, (1987) pp.3-5.

---------- Saint Genet: Actor and Martyr (1952), trans. by B. Frechtman (New York: New American Library, 1963).

---------- Search for a Method (1957) trans. by H.Barnes (New York: Random House, 1968).

---------- Situations I-X (Paris: Gallimard, 1947 - 1976).

---------- Situations (1964), trans. by B.Eisler (New York: Fawcett, 1966).

---------- Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions (1939), trans. by P.Mairet (London: Methuen, 1962).

---------- The Transcendence of the Ego (1936), trans. by F. Williams and R. Kirkpatrick (New York: Noonday Press, 1957).

---------- War Diaries: Notebooks from a Phoney War, 1939-1940, trans. by Q.Hoare (London: Verso, 1984).

Schilpp, P.A. (ed.) The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre (Illinois: Open Court, 1981).

Shoemaker, S. Self-Knowledge and Self-Identity (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963).

Silverman, H. and Elliston, F. (ed.) The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre: Contemporary Approaches to His Philosophy (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1980).

Spinoza, B. The Correspondence of Spinoza, ed. by A .Wolf (London: Allen and Unwin, 1929).

---------- Ethics, ed. by J.Gutman, trans. by W.H.White (1883) and A.H.Stirling (1899) (New York: Hafner, 1949).

---------- On the Improvement of the Understanding, ed. by J. Gutman, trans. by R.H.Elwes (1884) (New York: Hafner, 1949).

Strawson, P.F. 'Freedom and Resentment' in Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays (London: Methuen, 1974).

Taylor, C. 'Interpretation and the Sciences of Man', Review of Metaphysics 25, (1971).

---------- 'The Person', in The Category of the Person, ed. by Carrithers, Collins and Lukes, pp. 257-281.

---------- Philosophical Papers Vols.1-2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

---------- 'Responsibility for Self', in Rorty, The Identities of Persons.

---------- 'Review of Tugendhat's Selbstbewusstein und Selbstbestimmung', in Journal of Philosophy Vol.LXXIX, No. 4, 1982, pp.218-222.

---------- 'What is Human Agency?', in The Self: Psychological and Philosophical Issues, ed. by T.Mischel, pp.103-139.

Todes, S. 'Knowledge and the Ego: Kant's Three Stages of Self-Evidence', in Kant: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by R.P.Wolff, pp.156-171.

Tugendhat, E. Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination (1979), trans. by P.Stern (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1986).

Walsh, W.H. Reason and Experience (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947)

---------- 'Categories', in Kant: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by R.P.Wolff, pp.54-70.

Warnock, M. Existentialism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970).

---------- (ed.) Sartre: A Collection of Critical Essays (New York: Doubleday, 1971).

Watson, G. (ed.) Free Will (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982)

Williams, B.A.O. Problems of the Self (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

Wittgenstein, L. On Certainty (1951), trans. by D.Paul and G.E.M.Anscombe (New York: Harper and Row, 1970).

---------- Philosophical Investigations (1945), trans. by G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blalckwell, 1968).

Wolff, R.P. (ed.) Kant: A Collection of Critical Essays (New York: Doubleday, 1967).

Wollheim, R. 'The Examined Life' in The Thread of Life (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).