



THE ONTOLOGY OF SARTRE: DUALISM AND BEING AS A WHOLE

A Ontologia de Sartre: Dualismo e Ser Todo

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La ontología de Sartre: dualismo y "ser todo"

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Abstract: The intention of this study is to demonstrate how Sartre formulates and solves the question of dualism in the work *Being and Nothingness* (1943)¹. This question arose mainly from the criticisms of Alphonse de Waelhens and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. These criticisms were summarized in the preface to Merleau-Ponty's work entitled *La Structure du Comportement*. This discussion became very important because it was a kind of categorization of sartrian existentialism, a mistake that was persistently considered to be the truth about Sartre's thought. To correct this mistake and regain the real face of sartrian philosophy, it is important to hear Sartre's voice. It is indispensable to return to the Conclusion of *Being and Nothingness* to relearn the basis of sartrian ontology which will provide the opportunity to restore the true face of Sarte, based on the facts.

Keywords: Ontology. Dualism. Dialectic.

Resumo: A intenção deste estudo é demonstrar como Sartre formula e soluciona a questão do dualismo na obra *O Ser e o Nada*. Tal questão surgiu sobretudo a partir das críticas de Alphonse de Waelhens e Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Essas críticas foram sintetizadas no prefácio da obra de Merleau-Ponty intitulada *La Structure du Comportement*. Essa temática se torna muito importante porque o suposto dualismo tornou-se uma ideia comum, um erro que foi persistentemente considerado como verdade. Para corrigir esse erro e recobrar a real face da filosofia sartriana, é importante ouvir a voz de Sartre. É indispensável o retorno ao que ele escreveu na Conclusão de *O Ser e o Nada*, para reaprender as bases de sua ontologia e para restaurar a verdade dos fatos.

Palavras-Chave: Ontologia. Dualismo. Dialética.

Resumen: Es común identificar la acusación de dualismo en las obras de los críticos de la filosofía de Sartre, especialmente en las obras de Merleau-Ponty y sus discípulos; así como la acusación del idealismo. El aumento del interés público en las obras de Sartre, con el advenimiento del existencialismo, terminó popularizando una mera caricatura de sus ideales, deconstruidos por el trabajo de estos críticos, con respecto, especialmente, a la cuestión de los conceptos de libertad y mala fe. Por lo tanto, la intención de este estudio es demostrar cómo Sartre formula y responde a la cuestión del dualismo, revisando sus obras y recuperando los conceptos inicialmente formulados por el autor. Esta pregunta surgió principalmente de las críticas de Alphonse de Waelhens y Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Estas críticas se resumieron en el prefacio del trabajo de Merleau-Ponty titulado *La Structure du Comportement*

Palabras clave: Ontologia Dualismo. Dialética.

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Introduction

The intention of this study is to demonstrate how Sartre formulates and solves the question of dualism in the work *Being and Nothingness* (1943/1975). It is very common to identify the accusation of dualism in the works of critics who apparently study Sartre's philosophy. This accusation is evident in the works of Merleau-Ponty and his followers. This attack was accompanied by another: idealism. It is common to find these ideas in analyses of sartrian ontology, politics and literature. It is possible to surmise that the first elaboration of this argumentation was made by Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945/1962). After the end of the Second World War, *Being and Nothingness* became an important work of French philosophy. Sartrian literature aroused public interest because of existentialism, and this interest drew the attention of scholars and philosophers to Sartre's philosophy. However, this interest was motivated by a strong intent to deconstruct his arguments rather than to pursue serious analyses. What resulted was a caricature. Marxists, Spiritualists and Phenomenologists made this deconstruction, and the words "dualism" and "idealism" were insistently repeated.

This discussion became very important because it was a kind of categorization of sartrian existentialism, a mistake that was persistently considered to be the truth about Sartre's thought. The caricature became the real face. Even in the later period of sartrian existentialism, with *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (Sartre, 1960/1976), the same arguments were repeated by Merleau-Ponty, Levi-Strass, Claude Lefort, Camus, Aron, Foucault, Barthes, Althusser and other philosophers.

To correct this mistake and regain the real face of sartrian philosophy, it is important to hear Sartre's voice. It is indispensable to return to the Conclusion of *Being and Nothingness* to relearn the basis of sartrian ontology which will provide the opportunity to restore the true face of Sartre, based on the facts. It is important primarily to clarify the relation between freedom and bad faith, sartrian concepts that were the basis of existentialism. Dualism and idealism became the keywords that destroyed Sartre's philosophy of freedom. To recover the facts requires revisiting the debate about the freedom of human beings. When humanity has become the last frontier, the last step to post-humanism, it is important to discuss whether freedom is a dream of metaphysics or our insurmountable reality.

Dualism and idealism in Sartre's thought.

Alphonse De Waelhens says in the essay entitled "The Philosophy of the Ambiguous", published in the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1967) *The Structure of behavior*, that the sartrian concepts of the in-itself and the for-itself reveal "absolute duality" and "that this duality compromises being-in-the-world". M. C. Dillon (1988), in the study *Merleau-Ponty's ontology*, says: "Sartre's philosophy rests on a radical ontological dualism". Merleau-Ponty in several studies says that Sartre's thought is dualistic and idealistic (Merleau-Ponty, 1955/1979).

"Dualistic" and "Idealistic" are words commonly used to define Sartre, his philosophy, ethics and politics. Since the middle of the twentieth century, Marxists and phenomenologists have made these accusations. It is possible to demonstrate that Merleau-Ponty is a central figure in this picture. In 1945, with *Phenomenology of Perception*, phenomenologists settled on a kind of method to demonstrate these ideas. The last part of this book reveals the synthesis of this interpretation. The present article aims to demonstrate that critics, Alphonse de Waelhens and M. C. Dillon, repeat Merleau-Ponty's arguments. It is important to say that Jean Beaufret and Heidegger are other sources of these critics, but the present study aims to focus on Merleau-Ponty's thought and the considerations of Alphonse de Waelhens. It is important to reveal the articulation between these analyses.

Two works of Merleau-Ponty make a synthesis of the arguments: *The Structure of behavior* and *Phenomenology of Perception*. The former is important because, in a later edition, Merleau-Ponty added the essay of Alphonse de Waelhens named "A Philosophy of the Ambiguous". This essay became the manifest against Sartre's dualism. It is important to make a synthesis of this exposition.

The essay's title states the first central idea, ambiguity being the key concept of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. This signifies that there is not a previous dualism in the world because the concept of "being-in-the-world" has an undifferentiated background. The ontology of Sartre, on the other hand, with the two beings in-itself and for-itself, makes a break in the relationship between consciousness and the world. Thus, Merleau-Ponty becomes the philosopher of ambiguity and Sartre the philosopher of duality. The analysis of Sartre's ontology is the beginning of the interpretation. This ontology, according Waelhens, establishes the irreconcilable opposition, not dialectic, between in-itself and for-itself, representing the classical Cartesian dualism *pensée* and *étendue*. Such ontology does not grasp *perception* and *body* because there is not a world that sustains the beings. If for-itself is nothing and in-itself is the object, this formulation does not propose correspondence between these beings. Therefore, we can see the ligation between idealism and dualism in Sartre's thought, in the critic's opinion. The great difficulty emerges with the conception of body, much different from Merleau-Ponty's view. Because Sartre does not begin with perception and body, metaphysics became a very important aspect of sartrian existentialism. De Waelhens says:



In Sartre, the metaphysician, the diverse views of the same object succeed each other only because consciousness had decided it in that way, in conformity with an arbitrarily invoked necessity of its own structure; this partiality, this successive and ambiguous character of perception, does not follow from the nature itself of the contact which puts consciousness and the thing at grips with each other (Merleau-Ponty, 1967, p. xxi).

Sartrean metaphysics is an important aspect to consider because this argument draws upon such philosophy in the eighteenth century and is perhaps more idealistic than Kant. The conscience can conceive the object without connection to the real world. If the separation is absolute, there is only the voice of for-itself that says what the world is; the in-itself is an abstraction. De Waelhens says that “not possessing being in itself, the for-itself can only exist as the nihilation of a facticity” (Merleau-Ponty, 1967, p. xxii). This aspect tries to demonstrate that there is not a dialectical relationship but only the simple negation of the abstract in-itself. If it is only possible to see the separation or isolation, the negation never will be dialectic.

The problem of a dialectical existence relationship in Sartre’s thought is relevant. If conscience and object are isolated, if they exist as different regions without communication, the negation of for-itself never will be dialectical because contradiction needs relationship, a contradictory relationship. If Sartre’s ontology establishes such a radical isolation, it is impossible to think about a dialectical relation between conscience and world. This demonstrates the importance of this subject for Sartre’s philosophy because dualism annihilates dialectical relationship. It is possible to see the same argument repeated in *Les Aventures de la dialectique*¹ and *Le Visible et l’invisible*². The accusation of dualism mortally affects the philosophy of Sartre.

De Waelhens, repeating Merleau-Ponty, affirms:

Sartre recognizes a dialectic of perception, not because this dialectic would be inherent in the very grasp which we can have on things, but because there would be no life of consciousness without it. But it can be seen that this life is not assured in principle; it is invoked and posited rather than included in the phenomenon of perception itself (Merleau-Ponty, 1967, p. xii).

The key argument is that because Sartre does not begin the ontological reflection with perception, with the ingenuous world without separation, like paradise before original sin, the solution for relation between beings is a great mistake. This mistake will be insoluble. According to De Waelhens, “this ontology precisely underscores with an unrelenting tenacity the opposition – no longer dialectical this time, but radically irreconcilable – between the in-itself and the for-itself” (Merleau-Ponty, 1967, p. xix).

There is a consequence for this dualism: there is not commitment or engagement. The for-itself can never be involved in the world because it is not the same nature. The precept of coexistence establishes a primeval indifferenciation between man and the world. In this case, engagement is possible because man and the world live in inseparable connection to each other, they live on the same level, not in opposition but in harmony. In the beginning, previously and ingenuously, there is established harmony. Only after can we see disconnection and negation. This is their reason for rejecting Sartre’s ontology. Merleau-Ponty and Sartre establish different starting points. The former is harmony; the latter is conflict. In this way, commenting on Sartre’s ontology, De Waelhens says:

Consciousness is not in the world because it is not involved in what it perceives and does not collaborate in its perception. But precisely this collaboration and this involvement are what give to sensible knowledge a character of constant and intrinsic incompleteness, a necessity of being perspectival and of being accomplished from a point of view —all traits which Sartre, the phenomenologist, has very clearly seen, but which his metaphysics does not justify (Merleau-Ponty, 1967, p. xxi).

It is possible to see the precept of perception guiding the reflection and refusal. Sartre never considers perception a kind of starting point for phenomenology and ontology. If we think about *L’Imagination* (Sartre, 1936) and *L’Imaginaire* (Sartre, 1940), his studies about the consciousness of image and the world of imagination, it is clear that there is a distinction between perception and imagination. The central idea is that hallucination does not need perception to exist. So, if perception is the starting point of Merleau-Ponty, consciousness is the starting point of Sartre’s philosophy. And the questions emerge: Is perception the precept of phenomenology? Is perception the fundament of emotions and imagination? Is perception the basis of commitment? These questions are profound and require another reflection that is impossible to be developed in this essay. It is possible to say, however, that many critics of Sartre’s thought have used the same argumentation to accuse the existentialist of voluntarism or idealism. When Claude Lefort says that Sartre’s Marxism is a kind of voluntarism, he is repeating Merleau-Ponty, because the

¹ In the last chapter “Sartre et l’ultra-bolchevisme”.

² In the chapter “Interrogation et dialectic”.



French C. P. is the consciousness and the people are the object, the same dualism claimed against Sartre's ontology.

For De Waelhens and Merleau-Ponty, commitment and engagement are impossible in Sartre's ontology and politics. If Sartre tries to approach history and politics using the Marxists' ideas of alienation, praxis and contradiction, the ontology that establishes for-itself and in-itself would contaminate such an attempt. For Merleau-Ponty, only philosophy that begins with man in the world, without distinction, can find real commitment, because coexistence is the fundamental premise.

Merleau-Ponty presupposes that Sartre does not grasp Marx because separation between in-itself and for-itself can never find real contradiction in the world. If man in the world is the premise of history and historic action, sartrian dualism will never understand the historical dialectic of Marx. Sartre situates his thought before Marx and Hegel, and his dualism leads to ingenuous idealism. But this idealism is worse than Descartes and Kant because it is a simple intuitionism, as seen in De Waelhens description. If ontology remains idealistic, sartrian politics does as well. The debate around communism in France exposed these antagonisms. This debate between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty became more radical with the publication of *Materialisme et Révolution* (Sartre, 1949) and *Les Communistes et la paix* (Sartre, 1964). But it is possible to see the radicalization of Sartre's thought with the beginning of *Les Temps Modernes*. The comparison between the last section of *Phenomenology of Perception* and the "Presentation" of *Les Temps Modernes* exposes the growing antagonism. Initially, Merleau-Ponty believed that Sartre was trying to formulate his left-wing politics without a communist orientation, but he saw an increasing penchant for communist theses in Sartre's writings. With this alteration, Merleau-Ponty began his detachment from sartrian thought. It is possible to say that Sartre did not entirely refuse communist ideology, though he did not agree completely with the French C. P., unlike Merleau-Ponty who absolutely refused the move towards leftist thought. The article of Claude Lefort about sartrian Marxism exposes Merleau-Ponty's arguments. Sartre's answer was received as an unacceptable attack. From this point, accusations were expressed, and reconciliation was impossible. Philosophical differences became political and personal divergences.

Sartrian dualism, in Merleau-Ponty's point of view, affected the conception of freedom expressed in *Being and Nothingness*. It is what De Waelhens says, commenting on the ontology of in-itself and for-itself:

We will conclude therefore that this duality compromises being-in-the-world, or at least that it confers a meaning upon it which is inadequate in relation to the description. The same impoverishment or, if you wish, the same weakness would be noted, moreover, with respect to the Sartrian notion of freedom—at least at the level of explicitation to which the author has developed it in his published works (Merleau-Ponty, 1967, p. xxiv).

This conclusion is a repetition of Merleau-Ponty's ideas exposed in the last section of *Phenomenology of Perception*, named "Freedom". These arguments aim to annul the freedom philosophy constructed by Sartre. It is impossible to summarize this major work of Merleau-Ponty. But it is possible to repeat the ideas of De Waelhens about this subject. In this way, it is important to remember that "the *Phénoménologie de la perception* establishes itself without hesitation on the plane of natural and ingenuous experience which the Husserl of the final period had already described" (Merleau-Ponty, 1967, p. xxv). Why can we see a relationship between this central idea and the negation of Sartre's freedom philosophy?

The last section of *Phenomenology of Perception* is a severe reprobation of Sartre's philosophy. The idea of freedom is portrayed as the great mistake of *Being and Nothingness*. Merleau-Ponty says that Sartre's conception of freedom is absolutely impossible³. This conclusion was based on the central idea of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy: the concept of *coexistence*. De Waelhens connects this idea with the "natural and ingenuous experience". Because Sartre does not begin his ontology with the couple conscience-world, *Being and Nothingness* suffers from a related sickness: dualism, idealism, etc. The concept of freedom remains, in same way, in error.

To summarize the critics of Sartre's dualism, it is possible to say that for-itself and in-itself are grasped as irreversible separation, with a clear determination of consciousness like an idealist projection without basis in reality (being-in-the-world). This separation is annihilation of possibility of action because there is not the same level of reality between these two beings. The consequences are annihilation of the contradiction relationship and the impossibility of real freedom and commitment. This picture enabled Merleau-Ponty and his followers to classify Sartre's philosophy as an idealism that is situated earlier than Kant's critical philosophy but distant from Descartes where this duality is more radical.

Since 1945, with the publication of *Phenomenology of Perception*, the assessment of Sartre's ontology and philosophy has suffered serious problems due to these analyses. As previously mentioned, an incre-

³ Merleau-Ponty says: "The choice would seem to lie between scientism's conception of causality, which is incompatible with the consciousness which we have of ourselves, and the assertion of an absolute freedom divorced from the outside. It is impossible to decide beyond which point things cease to be. Either they all lie within our power, or none does. The result, however, of this first reflection on freedom would appear to be to rule it out altogether. If indeed it is the case that our freedom is the same in all our actions, and even in our passions, if it is not to be measured in terms of our conduct, and if the slave displays freedom as much by living in fear as by breaking his chains, then it cannot be held that there is such a thing as *free action*, freedom being anterior to all actions. In any case it will not be possible to declare: 'Here freedom makes its appearance' (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1962, p. 388).



asing support of Marxism, since the end of the Second World War led to similar criticism. If ontology is idealistic, the politics will be as well for very same reasons. With the irreconcilable break since the question of Claude Lefort, Merleau-Ponty wrote several essays about Sartre stressing these arguments. With the publication of *Signes*, Merleau-Ponty (1960) created a sort of documentation of this period and the conclusion was bitter to Sartre.

It is important to understand this period to clarify Merleau-Ponty's evaluation and, on the other hand, Sartre's arguments. As clearly shown by François Dosse (1991) with his *Histoire du Structuralisme*, since the middle of the 1950s, Sartre's thought was severely criticized by Structuralists, Marxists and Phenomenologists. Several discussions repeat the argumentation of Merleau-Ponty. Words like voluntarism, idealism, dualism, nihilism, intuitionism and others, are insistently used.

To clarify several points of this discussion, it is necessary to return to Sartre's words, at the beginning of this discussion, to the words of *Being and Nothingness*. It is not the aim of this study to reconstruct Sartre's ontology. The argumentation will try to reveal that Sartre asks about the possibility of dualism in *Being and Nothingness* and that question is debated in the Conclusion of the same work. It is indispensable to demonstrate that Sartre addresses these issues and tries to resolve the problem. It is very common for the critics to simply ignore the Conclusion of *Being and Nothingness*, disregarding the fundamental ideas of Sartre's philosophy. It is imperative to expose how Sartre approaches the question of relationship between in-itself and for-itself.

Sartre's answers.

This study will now explore the arguments that respond to the supposed dualism in Sartre's ontology. The distinction between in-itself (*en-soi*) and for-itself (*pour-soi*) is adequately understood. What is important to expose is Sartre's approach to the question. This discussion emerges in the Conclusion of *Being and Nothingness*. It is timely to remember the basic thesis enunciated in the same work. Sartre, in the Introduction of *Being and Nothingness*, sets out the problem: "If idealism and realism both fail to explain the relations which *in fact* unite these regions which in theory are without communication, what other solution can we find for this problem?" (Sartre, 1943/1975, p. LXVII). This question indicates that Sartre is aware of the problem. It is very important to highlight the clear formulation of the question, exposing idealism and realism as unacceptable solutions. It is obvious that Sartre knows the husserlian lesson about the disadvantages of these philosophies. Although the word "realism" appears in the essay *Une idée fondamentale de la phénoménologie de Husserl: l'intentionnalité*, Sartre (1947) views phenomenology as a better philosophy in order to avoid new kantianism. It is evident that Sartre's ontology tries to avoid idealistic and materialistic solutions to ontology. That is what this article will try to expose.

In order to identify the perspectives of this problem, it is important to remember how Sartre presents some characteristics of the in-itself: this being is isolated and it does not enter into any connection with what is not itself. This being is not yet what it will be. In short, it is what it is. This means that by in-itself it cannot even be what it is not. It can encompass no negation. It is full positivity. It never posits itself as *other-than-another-being*; it can support no connections with the other. It is not subject to temporality. But being itself does not exist as a lack there where it was. It was and at present other beings are: that is all.

In exposing that phenomenological ontology, several issues evolve. At the end of the introduction, Sartre formulates a number of questions:

What is the ultimate meaning of these two types of being? For what reasons do they both belong to being in general? What is the meaning of that being which includes within itself these two radically separated regions of being? If idealism and realism both fail to explain the relations which *in fact* unite these regions which in theory are without communication, what other solution can we find for this problem? And how can the being of the phenomenon be transphenomenal? *It is to attempt to reply to these questions that I have written the present work* (Sartre, 1943/1975, p. LXVII).

From these initial questions, it is evident that the relationship between these beings is problematic for Sartre, but it will be addressed as the subject of his ontology. The answers to these questions appear in the Conclusion of *Being and Nothingness*. Sartre summarizes the problem as follows:

If the in-itself and the for-itself are two modalities of being, is there not an hiatus at the very core of the idea of being? And is its comprehension not severed into two incommunicable parts by the very fact that its extension is constituted by two radically heterogenous classes? What is there in common between the being which *is* what it is, and the being which *is* what it is not and which is not what it is? What can help us here, however, is the conclusion of our preceding inquiry (Sartre, 1943/1975, p. 621).

It is possible to see clearly here that Sartre understands the relation between these two modalities of being as problematic, but dualism is not his solution; his intent is to overcome such a mistake. What he insists upon is that these two types of being are ontologically distinct. It is possible to speak about ontological



difference in Sartre's philosophy, but it represents distinctions in the lived world, in historical existences. In-itself and for-itself are modalities of being living in the same world, because only one world, the lived world, exists. It is impossible to say, like Merleau-Ponty, that consciousness and world are the same thing because to live in the world is to try to expose the differences between humankind and objects. If there is the Pursuit of being, this represents a constant work of differentiation from consciousness, in the way that gestaltists explain figure and background. The relationship is a constant relation of distinction. For consciousness, to live in the world is not to be other beings.

Sartre stresses such distinction in saying:

We have just shown in fact that the in-itself and the for-itself are not juxtaposed. Quite the contrary, the for-itself without the in-itself is a kind of abstraction; it could not exist anymore than a color could exist without form or a sound without pitch and without timbre. A consciousness which would be consciousness of nothing would be an absolutely nothing. But if consciousness is bound to the in-itself by an internal relation, doesn't this mean that it is articulated with the in-itself so as to constitute a totality, and is it not this totality which would be given the name *being* or reality? Doubtless the for-itself is a nihilation, but as a nihilation it *is*; and it is in a priori unity with the in-itself (Sartre, 1943/1975, p. 621).

It is very important to emphasize these expressions: "the in-itself and the for-itself are not juxtaposed"; "the for-itself without the in-itself is a kind of abstraction"; "a consciousness which would be consciousness of nothing would be an absolute nothing"; "it is in a *a priori* unity with the in-itself". What do these expressions mean? They mean that Sartre does not indicate that there is total isolation between these two beings. Dualism does not exist in his ontology. There is a real difference between isolation (like De Waelhens says) and ontological differentiation. These beings are not juxtaposed because consciousness and object exist in the same world albeit by different ways of being. Only idealistic consciousness exists without the real world. To be conscious of something is to establish an effective connection with the object of consciousness. Sartre sustains the *a priori* of correlation of Husserlian's phenomenology. Consciousness and world sustain the "*a priori* unity with the in-itself". These words of Sartre are clear; in *Being and Nothingness*, he refuses the hypothesis of dualism in ontology.

To demonstrate this thesis, he speaks about the type of relation between these beings, which is a kind of totalization. To understand the relationship between the two beings, it is necessary to consider the question regarding total reality, "the total being". In short, "on this level we find again that notion of a detotalized totality which we have already met in connection with the for-itself itself and in connection with the consciousnesses of others" (Sartre, 1943/1975, p. 623). The question of dualism leads to the problem of "being as a whole". This issue highlights the concept of "synthetic organization". But another query arises: is this a new duality? Sartre says:

But if we are to consider total being as constituted by the synthetic organization of the in-itself and of the for-itself, are we not going to encounter again the difficulty which we wished to avoid? And as for that hiatus which we revealed in the concept of being, are we not going to meet it at present in the existent itself? What definition indeed are we to give to an existent which as in-itself would be what it is and as for-itself would be what it is not? (Sartre, 1943/1975, p. 622).

With the idea of "total being" emerges a concern: what is required of an existent if it is to be considered as a totality? Sartre's answer is: "it is necessary that the diversity of its structures be held within a unitary synthesis in such a way that each of them considered apart is only an abstraction. And certainly, consciousness considered apart is only an abstraction" (Sartre, 1943/1975, p. 622). But, of primary importance for the subject of this discussion is: "the in-itself has no need of the for-itself in order to be" (Sartre, 1943/1975, p. 622). What follows is that the for-itself needs the in-itself, but the contrary is not true. The in-itself is contingent. This means that only the for-itself needs a connection to the in-itself, because it is *lack, desire* and *project*. So, there is a necessary connection between these beings from the perspective of for-itself and no necessary connection from the perspective of in-itself. Sartre says:

The *phenomenon* of in itself is an abstraction without consciousness but its *being* is not an abstraction (...) If we wish to conceive of a synthetic organization such that the for-itself is inseparable from the in-itself and conversely such that the in-itself is indissolubly bound to the for-itself, we must conceive of this synthesis in such a way that the in-itself would receive its existence from the nihilation which caused there to be consciousness of it. What does this mean if not that the indissoluble totality of in-itself and for-itself is conceivable only in the form of a being which is its own "self-cause" (Sartre, 1943/1975, p. 622).

The concept of detotalized totality means that "everything happens therefore as if the in-itself and the for-itself were presented in a state of disintegration in relation to an ideal synthesis. Not that the integration has ever taken *place* but on the contrary precisely because it is always indicated and always im-



possible" (Sartre, 1943/1975, p. 623). This concept, like being as a whole, expresses the circularity between the two beings. "It is this perpetual failure (to be integration) which explains both the indissolubility of the in-itself and of the for-itself and at the same time their relative independence" (Sartre, 1943/1975, p. 623). This *indissolubility* and *relative independence* are a kind of *ambiguity* which sustain the relationship.

In conclusion, we can repeat Sartre's words:

As for the totality of the for-itself and the in-itself, this has for its characteristic the fact that the for-itself makes itself other in relation to the in-itself but that the in-itself is in no way other than the for-itself in its being; the in-itself purely and simply is. (...) If the relation of the in-itself to the for-itself were the reciprocal of the relation of the for-itself to the in-itself, we should fall into the case of being-for-others. But this is definitely not the case, (...) In the case of the internal negation for-itself-in-itself, on the contrary, the relation is not reciprocal, and I am both one of the terms of the relation and the relation itself. I apprehend being, I am the apprehension of being, I am *only* an apprehension of being. And the being which I apprehend is not posited against me so as to apprehend me in turn; it is what is apprehended. It's *being* simply does not coincide in any way with its being-apprehended. In one sense therefore I can pose the question of the totality. To be sure, I exist here as engaged in this totality, but I can be an exhaustive consciousness of it since I am at once consciousness of the being and self-consciousness (Sartre, 1943/1975, p. 623).

In short, it is this absence of reciprocity which characterizes the totality named *Olon* (*Ολον*), and it is this same argumentation that can be used to respond to the problem of dualism in Sartre's ontology. The relationship between in-itself and for-itself is not reciprocal. The first does not depend on the second, but the second cannot live without the first. The critics that call Sartre dualistic simply ignore the argumentation that we have exposed. The ideas of these philosophers have no validity if we take into account the concept of detotalized totality. The fact that De Walthens and Merleau-Ponty neglect the importance of this concept in their expositions reveals a lack of comprehension of the real ontology of Sartre. This exposition has demonstrated that these critics have no basis. Merleau-Ponty's ideas regarding Sartre's philosophy, especially about freedom, history and idealism, are much more complex. This subject deserves further study.

The exposition of Sartre's arguments about the real significance of two beings demonstrates that an effective connection between consciousness and world is not a separation, isolation, duality or any other kind of dualism. It is difficult to find an explication of this interpretation, especially if we think about Merleau-Ponty and his proximity to Sartre. It is possible to pursue some speculations. We can start by thinking about historical and political aspects, though we cannot explore these arguments in depth, but simply expose the ideas.

Sartre says in *Critique of Dialectical Reason* that Jean Wahl and concrete philosophy were very important to French philosophers. It is possible to situate *Being and Nothingness* in this picture. In 1943, during the Second World War, the idea of conflict was an obvious reality, and the ontology of conflict was the only way to express the reality of war. Only the relationship between in-itself, for-itself and for-others can express the conflict of war. Could Sartre speak about peace, love and harmony in this historical period without considering this aspect of the real world? *Being and Nothingness* expresses the ontology of conflict: the human conflict lived by the people of France, Germany, Belgium, Poland, etc. It is important to stress that *Phenomenology of Perception* was published in 1945, when France was free. But it is necessary to explore the argument that indicates the political differences between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty.

After the first publication of *Les Temps Modernes*, Sartre began a radical defense of political liberation against the Cold War and in favor of the liberation of French colonies. This represented Sartre's left-wing political shift and his gradual move towards the French C.P. Merleau-Ponty, on the other hand, was distancing himself from communist politics. It is possible to think that these different political philosophies demonstrate their irremediable positions.

If we consider the idea of freedom, it is clear that the philosophical positions of these two thinkers are very distinct. Merleau-Ponty simply denies Sartre's freedom theory. As we have seen, the basis of this argument was dualistic opposition. Merleau-Ponty rejects any kind of philosophy of conflict; his starting point is harmony and indifferenciation. Sartre, on the other hand, starts from conflict between consciousnesses, and he rejects the WE principle. For him, the conflict is the fundament of human being. It is possible to say that this ontology of conflict is the basis of *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. The rupture with Camus can be understood in the same terms.

This discussion inserts the problem of method. We can repeat the analysis of François Dosse and situate Sartre as the last philosopher who tried to develop the phenomenology-marxism link. After 1945, structuralism began a slow and steady march towards the annihilation of Sartre's thought. And, like Dosse says, we will find Merleau-Ponty in this work. He was a great encourager of Levi-Strauss and structuralism. It is possible to see the conversion from phenomenology to structuralism in the works of Merleau-Ponty, for example, in the exaltation of Suassure in the Inaugural Class in Collège de France. The final part of *La Pensée Sauvage* (Lévi-Strauss, 1962), with the most violent attack on Sartre's philosophy,



was the culmination of the work of Merleau-Ponty. It is possible to establish a link of continuity between *Phenomenology of Perception* and *La Pensée sauvage*, coincidentally in the conclusion, saying that Sartre was the primary object of reprobation. To Merleau-Ponty, the theoretical mistake of *Being and Nothingness* was repeated in *Critique of Dialectical Reason*: there is not dialectical relation in the human world if in-itself is separated from for-itself. If we can expose the failure of these considerations, we can prove that Sartre is not a dualist.

Conclusion

To conclude this study, it is important, firstly, to summarize the arguments that attempt to demonstrate that Sartre's philosophy is dualistic and, on the other hand, to expose the answer that reveals the inconsistencies in this interpretation.

Merleau-Ponty's ideas exposed in *Phenomenology of Perception*, mainly in the last part, named "Being-for-Itself and Being-in-the-World", try to annul Sartre's philosophy of freedom. This attack was founded on the idea that if human beings lose their freedom, they will never be free again. If there are actions that produce the alienation of freedom, humankind never will be free, so, the conclusion is: human beings are either free or not free. In this context, it is possible to say that the concept of bad faith, for example, is a kind of negation of freedom that produces a radical annihilation of freedom. This argumentation enforces the central idea of Merleau-Ponty: the philosophy of Sartre is idealism. Because consciousness is the nothing and object is the being action becomes an idealistic possibility. This action is impossible because these two beings do not exist in the same world. If there is a radical ontological separation, opposition between for-itself and in-itself, the world is separated in two regions that never will be united. This dualism confirms idealism. If for-itself does not exist in the same form as in-itself, it never acts in the real world. The world becomes a kind of ideal projection of for-itself.

De Waelhens repeats this argumentation, stressing the dualism. For him, it is important to dismantle the real relationship between these two beings in order to invalidate the dialectical relation of negation that exists between for-itself, in-itself and for-others. This argumentation is later utilized by Merleau-Ponty in the book *Les Aventures de la dialectique* to attack the dialectical method in Sartre's philosophy.

It is very amusing to see Sartre anticipate the formulation of these arguments in the Conclusion of *Being and Nothingness*. Either these critics read the discussion and ignored the answer, or ignored the Conclusion. Sartre establishes that the kind of relationship between for-itself and in-itself is not symmetric. The for-itself needs the in-itself to exist, but the second does not need the first; the contingency of the in-itself enforces this situation. But, this kind of relation is based on negation. The for-itself is lack, project and desire, so it exists in a different way. This being is what in-itself is not. But, to be in the world, for-itself needs to operate the negation of it-self, so there is a necessary relation between these beings. To exist in the world, for-itself needs to negate the in-itself because this being exists like inertia. On the other hand, the negation of this inertia is necessary for For-itself to exist. But, this negation became a real contradiction with the relationship to another for-itself. Like Hegel, for Sartre, the slave and master relationship is the kind of contradiction established in this case. The for-itself sees the other for-itself as a danger to its own freedom. So, the real contradiction, or dialectics, exists in the world when human relationship is constituted.

Critics neglected Sartre's answer. Since 1945, Sartre has become an idealistic philosopher who does not need to be a good Cartesian. This represented to posterity the transformation of Sartre into a nineteenth-century philosopher, such as Foucault, or, perhaps, a sixteenth-century pre-Cartesian philosopher who doesn't know to separate *res cogitans* and *res extensa*.

A pupil of Merleau-Ponty, Claude Lévi-Strauss made the most violent attack on Sartre's philosophy. Structuralistic anthropology attempted the total annihilation of Sartre's humanism. This anthropology, based on Saussure's linguistics, destroyed Sartre's conception of literature commitment. The structural method became the destruction of historical dialectics. Lévi-Strauss organized the basis of attacks on Sartre's philosophy, repeated by later philosophy in France. What is important to stress is that this discussion was fundamentally a methodological debate.

Critique of Dialectical Reason was, for sixty years, Sartre's methodological answer to the accusation of idealism in his philosophy. Dialectics as the method that could understand historical action in the human world was an answer to structuralistic anthropology and philosophy. A rejection of the attack from these critics represents the preservation of Sartre's philosophy as the defense of the values of freedom and liberation.



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