

**Breaking the Gaze:
Ressentiment, Bad Faith, and the Struggle
for Individual Freedom**

by

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Abstract

Taking on a relatively unexplored topic, this thesis investigates the connection between Friedrich Nietzsche and Jean-Paul Sartre by revisiting both philosophers' focus on individual choice and freedom. To do so, it first outlines the restraints placed on the individual by the gaze of the other. From there, it lays out the necessary steps towards liberation, emphasizing individual authenticity and responsibility, and the burden attached to the constant tasks of self-becoming and self-overcoming. This subsequently leads to an analysis of creative action and aesthetics, more specifically, of music and prose-writing's ability to generate meaning. Through these discussions, this thesis aims to renew interest in Nietzsche's and Sartre's philosophies, and prove that an existential reading of their thoughts is still relevant to contemporary societies and can, therefore, offer some possible solutions to the current and ongoing issues of human rights and freedom.

Keywords: Friedrich Nietzsche; Jean-Paul Sartre; resentment; bad faith; the gaze; freedom

Dedication

To my parents,

*Who have always done their best to give my
sister and I the life they never had.*

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List of Cited Abbreviations

AC	“The Antichrist”
BG	“Beyond Good and Evil”
BN	<i>Being and Nothingness</i>
BT	“The Birth of Tragedy”
DI	<i>Discourse on Inequality</i>
EH	“Ecce Homo”
EM	<i>Existentialism is a Humanism</i>
GM	“On the Genealogy of Morals”
GS	<i>The Gay Science</i>
LN	<i>Living with Nietzsche: What the Great “Immoralist” Has to Teach Us</i>
N	<i>Nausea</i>
NE	“No Exit”
NF	“Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm”
NG	<i>Nietzsche: Great Philosophers</i>
NP	“Nietzsche, Postmodernism, and Resentment”
SC	<i>The Social Contract</i>
SJ	“Sartre, Jean-Paul”
TI	“Twilight of the Idols”
TL	“On Truth and Lie in a Nonmoral Sense”
TZ	“Thus Spoke Zarathustra”
WL	<i>What is Literature?</i>
WN	<i>Writings from Early Notebooks</i>
WP	<i>The Will to Power</i>
WR	<i>What Nietzsche Really Said</i>

Introduction

Man first exists: he materializes in the world, encounters himself,
and only afterward defines himself.
– Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*

With demonstrations like the Arab Spring, Occupy movements, and Spanish protests erupting around the globe in recent years, it is evident that the problems of repression and freedom are not dead topics of discussion. Though some critics question the reasons for and desired outcomes of these radical displays of dissatisfaction, it is generally agreed upon that these civil uprisings aim to initiate social and political reform. Not only do these protestors share a spirited rejection of human rights violations, political corruption, and social and economic inequality, they participate in what can be seen as a worldwide campaign against the established organizations that disregard their individual rights in favour of what is beneficial to the elites. The concerns of these heterogeneous groups are nothing new; however, they should not be dismissed, especially considering how the entire historical movement of modernity is but a portrait of the repressed individual whose freedom is constantly sacrificed. While premodernity is characterized by the dominance over the individual by tradition and religion, modernity's emphasis on reason and natural science has hindered the assertion of individual autonomy and, therefore, reduced the subject to a mere object. Similarly, postmodernity finds the sovereign, autonomous individual being rejected and the subject and object, the self and the other, merged together. As modernity moves from one stage to another, the individual is continuously left behind and abandoned in the name of progress and the greater good. This is precisely why Nietzsche and Sartre, and their philosophies, are still relevant today. What better way to look into this problem and question of individual autonomy, sovereignty, and freedom than to revisit Nietzsche and Sartre's firm belief in the liberation of the individual?

Without a doubt, Friedrich Nietzsche is viewed as one of the most prolific and multi-dimensional philosophers of his time. The sheer magnitude and diversity of

Nietzsche's writings are, arguably, unmatched by any other philosopher. With such pluralistic and nonsystematic thoughts and perspectives, it is not surprising that his influence can be seen throughout a number of different scholarly disciplines, such as, but not limited to, philosophy, political theory, psychology, sociology, and philology. As what David Allison calls "one of the underlying figures of our own intellectual epoch" and "a model for the tasks and decisions of the present generation," Nietzsche's profound influence can be seen in conservative philosophers such as Leo Strauss and Stanley Rosen,¹ postmodernist and poststructuralist philosophers such as Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, and existentialist philosophers such as Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre (ix). Although he inspired many philosophers and writers in a number of different schools and across a broad political spectrum, this thesis will emphasize the connection between Nietzsche and Sartre, and the former's influence on the existentialist philosophy, which is an obvious yet neglected discourse. Ironically, Nietzsche's connection to the existentialist movement is overshadowed and surpassed by misinterpretations of his philosophy: the Nazis² made selective use of Nietzsche's ideas, and the more recent and equally outrageous misinterpretation suggested that he

¹ A student of Strauss', Rosen maintains that he is "more liberal" than his teacher, referring to himself as often being "to the left of Strauss" (Bai). A self-described "liberal democrat," Rosen is "in favour" of 'liberalism' and its "support of freedom" but critical of "liberalism in the U.S. today," associating it with "a collection of attitudes" that is not "liberal in the genuine sense of the term." Even though he does not identify with Strauss' political views and constantly refers to himself as being "more to the left than Strauss," Rosen openly confesses that he is "not very far" to the left. That is, despite his 'liberalism,' Rosen also admits to being "an elitist," if "elitism" means that one "prefer[s] to be governed by intelligent people than by stupid people." This is why he identifies "teaching" as the "political function" that "fulfill[s] the political call or task of the superior people." His views on governance, then, reflect Plato's in that they both emphasize the importance of knowledge or, in Plato's terms, virtue and wisdom. It is in this sense that Rosen toes the line between conservatism and liberalism.

² On June 8th, 1981, *Der Spiegel* (The Mirror), Europe's largest and most influential weekly magazine, published its 24th issue of the year with the illustration of Nietzsche and Hitler on the cover. The image shows Hitler emerging from Nietzsche's head holding a gun with the caption "The Return of a Philosopher: Nietzsche the Thinker, Hitler the Perpetrator" running across the page, making the connection between Nietzsche and Hitler quite clear: Nietzsche is portrayed as the mastermind behind Hitler's violent plan to unify Germany under a pure master race. It did not help matters that Nietzsche's sister, Elisabeth, who was a Nazi supporter and friend of Hitler's, organized, edited, and published his collection of random notes. This collection of notes, known today as *The Will to Power*, was later adapted by the Nazis in their campaign against the Jews.

is the original rockstar.³ Other than the obvious misreading of Nietzsche's philosophy, what both of these interpretations have in common is the fact that they disregarded one of Nietzsche's key ideas: the liberation of individuals who embrace their existence and is solely responsible for the whole of their being. It was not until decades after his death that individuals such as Walter Kaufmann⁴ seek to correct the Nazi's misapprehensions of Nietzsche's work.

Nietzsche is often labelled as an "immoralist," someone who eschews morality; however, to reduce his entire philosophical career to this epithet is to ignore the "quality and breadth of ethical thinking to be found in his work" (Thompson 11). As with Nietzsche, Sartre's philosophical career also suffered similar treatments.⁵ Like Nietzsche, Sartre was constantly being attacked by his contemporaries and critics, and his philosophy was ridiculed from all sides. Alas, both philosophers' works suffered periods of being extremely unpopular, and their contributions to philosophy very nearly forgotten. This is exactly why it is important to reread both philosophers' works in order to do justice to their passionate stance against the oppressors of individual freedom. Rather than define the individual in terms of a universal human essence or nature, as many other schools of thought have done, both Nietzsche and Sartre celebrate the uniqueness of what makes an individual their own person. Considering the current social

³ In *Hey! Nietzsche! Leave Them Kids Alone!* (2009), Craig Schuftan provides a misinterpretation of Nietzsche's ideas in his attempt to uncover "the hidden roots of rock & roll in the Romantic movement of the 1800s." He claims, in an interview with Zan Rowe, "as soon as I started reading [Nietzsche], I felt like I was in the presence of a rockstar." Schuftan then proceeds to make a connection between Nietzsche and Depeche Mode's lead singer's self-destructive, irresponsible, and hedonistic lifestyle. He claims that Nietzsche, with his rejection of a "social conscience" and "the good," would have invented rock & roll in the 19th century.

⁴ In *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, Walter Kaufmann clearly lays out how the Nazis presented their misconceptions as true interpretations of Nietzsche's writing. Not only did they claim that Elisabeth's edition of *The Will to Power* was Nietzsche's *magnum opus* (40-41), they also made selective use of its passages and perverted its meaning (291). By not marking the omitted words with the customary dots and mentioning that Nietzsche put certain ones within quotation marks, the Nazis were able to successfully depict him as their philosopher and his words as their anthem (301). It did not matter that Nietzsche did not consider the Germans a master race (284); the Nazis' abuse of Nietzsche's work only reinforced the misapprehensions that already existed, the ones that arose from the aphoristic nature of his writing (9).

⁵ See Edward Said's "Diary: An Encounter with J-P Sartre" for full details.

and political displays of discontent around the world, it is clear that Nietzsche's connection to Sartre, and existentialism itself, warrants a second look.

Like Nietzsche, existentialist philosophy identifies the human subject as a free and responsible agent whose existence is determined by his or her own free will. This individual is free in that they are at liberty to live according to their own set of beliefs and values, not those prescribed by social norms and expectations. In other words, this self-determining individual is free to interpret the world and constitute its meaning. This individual is not responsible because they possess a clear conscience; instead, they are responsible in that they are held wholly accountable for what they become. Like Nietzsche's own campaign for individual liberation, existentialism, which came to prominence in Europe—particularly France—after World War II, is perhaps one of the few philosophical movements that place the individual in the forefront; yet, ironically, it is also one of the most overlooked.

Often thought of as a dark and pessimistic philosophy, existentialism was plagued with vehement criticisms during its active days, and some enthusiasts embraced its doctrines for all the wrong reasons by buying into its supposed fixation on the notions of anxiety and dread. Though existentialism certainly addresses the inherent feelings of anxiety and dread that presuppose the acceptance and subsequent celebration of one's condition in life, it is nowhere near the pessimism that it was being charged with. Rather, existentialism is a philosophy that forces the human subject to take responsibility for what they become. After having understood the darkness of existence, it is up to the individual to live with it. It is about overcoming despair, accepting life's burden, and embracing the possibilities that it brings. Existentialism is, therefore, an invigorating and affirmative philosophy that teaches how not to get crushed under the weight of what life has to offer. Not only does it recognize the fundamental condition of existence—one that is grounded in nothingness—it anticipates the consequences of disenchantment and imbues the subject with new life and vitality so that they are able to face the circumstances that they are given. The final decision, however, rests on the individual: will they let the rubble of their disillusionment destroy and bury them, or will they rise above it, accept their responsibility, and rejoice in their newfound freedom? This is the message of existentialism. Here, the power of choice is stressed and, no matter what the choice is, it is the individual who is ultimately

responsible for the decision and its outcomes. It is up to them to choose how they should live and what they should do.

During its active days in Europe in the 1940s and 1950s, existentialism suffered critiques from both external sources, such as the Frankfurt School (e.g. Theodor W. Adorno), and figures within the discipline itself, such as Martin Heidegger and Albert Camus, who were closely aligned with existentialism and considered existentialist writers but repudiated the label. It seems like the criticisms were centered on Sartre himself, who explicitly adopted the term existentialism as a self-description of his philosophy, rather than existentialism in general: Heidegger's *Letter on Humanism* is a direct response to Sartre's *Existentialism is a Humanism*, Adorno's essay "Commitment" is a response to Sartre's *What is Literature?*, and then there is the lifelong opposition to existentialism held by Camus, who saw existentialism as a destructive and life-denying mode of thought and a literary movement that reduces everything in its path to ideological abstractions. Furthermore, its ideas were typically attacked as the very antithesis of postmodernism. Ironically, existentialism is also a departure from modernism and shares the general distrust of grand theories and ideologies that is at the heart of postmodernism. What these critiques fail to notice or acknowledge is the fact that existentialism offers some valid solutions to the problems of modernity that all of these philosophers identified in their works. Even if these solutions are somewhat abstract, they nevertheless offer a sense of empowerment that can be used to combat the feelings of distress and helplessness found in contemporary societies.

At the heart of some of these critiques is existentialism's contradictory relationship with humanism.⁶ This is why some critics condemned existentialism for its

⁶ Kate Soper, in *Humanism and Anti-Humanism*, offers the following definition for the term "humanism": "[it] appeals (positively) to the notion of a core humanity or common essential features in terms of which human beings can be defined and understood, thus (negatively) to concepts ('alienation,' 'inauthenticity,' 'reification,' etc.) designating, and intended to explain, the perversion or 'loss' of this common being. Humanism takes history to be a product of human thought and action, and thus claims that the categories of 'consciousness,' 'agency,' 'choice,' 'responsibility,' 'moral value,' etc. are indispensable to its understanding" (11-12).

anti-humanistic⁷ qualities, which Sartre defends in *Existentialism is a Humanism*, while others attack it for its very humanistic qualities. Where existentialism finds itself, then, is in the middle of a philosophical debate between two camps—the humanists and the anti-humanists. This conflict can be traced back to the development of existentialism within the wider context of French humanism, which was inspired by the works of Georg Hegel, Edmund Husserl, and Martin Heidegger. These French humanists, some of whom belong to the existential movement, wanted to distance themselves and their theories from any philosophical thoughts that are based on a notion “of a universal, predetermining ‘human nature’ or ‘essence’ of humanity” (Soper 18). This is a very anti-humanistic standpoint, which puts existentialism against the humanists who do believe in a shared “essence” or common “human nature” that precedes existence. Against the anti-humanists, however, the French humanists⁸ and existentialists⁹ did not aim to replace this metaphysical approach to humanity with a more rational or scientific explanation of existence (11). Unlike the anti-humanists who, “in their concern to avoid the irrationality of religion,” place their faith in “the rationality of science” (13), the French humanists and existentialists are “anti-scientific” and extremely suspicious of positivism (14). In fact, they are very much against this notion of reason and science as the metanarratives of human existence and experiences. In this sense, the French humanists and existentialists share Nietzsche’s skepticism as they all spurn this notion of a knowable Truth—which, to them, is simply a substitute for the concept of God—that the humanists and anti-humanists claim as their own. Furthermore, the French humanists and existentialists, contra-humanism, “emphasiz[ed] the “situatedness” of the individual within society” and, therefore, “rejected the ‘isolated’ individual” (18) who the Renaissance humanists identify as being both self-determining and free of the constraints from external barriers (14); and against anti-humanism, insisted that individuals are social beings whose “actions...create the structures and institutions of

⁷ In contrast to “humanism,” Soper offers the following definition for the term “anti-humanism”: “[it] claims that humanism as outlined above is pre-scientific ‘philosophical anthropology.’ All humanism is ‘ideological;’ the ideological status of humanism is to be explained in terms of the system of thought or ‘consciousness’ produced in response to particular historical periods. Anthropology, if it is possible at all, is possible only on condition that it rejects the concept of the human subject; ‘men’ do not make history, nor find their ‘truth’ or ‘purpose’ in it; history is a process without a subject” (12).

⁸ E.g. Raymond Aron, Albert Camus, Michel Foucault, etc.

⁹ E.g. Simone De Beauvoir, Frantz Omar Fanon, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, etc.

society” and shunned the notion that human beings do not “control” the “process[es]” of their own social lives and, therefore, make history (18). It is clear that the French humanists and existentialists are not comfortable within either of these two categories, which is why they faced so many critics. Since they did not fully share the views of the humanists or the anti-humanists, the French humanists and existentialists fell somewhere in between and, as a result, suffered attacks from both camps and also shared their critics.

As with the French humanists and existentialists, Nietzsche’s work was not widely read during his active writing career, and his philosophy was also condemned by many of his contemporaries and successors. It is through the works of Heidegger and Walter Kaufmann that Nietzsche’s reception has changed. Now, there is a renewed interest in Nietzsche; however, the existential reading of his work is still neglected. Perhaps it is time for a rereading of the existentialist philosophy, especially its development from Nietzsche’s thoughts. Yes, existentialism may have its faults, but is it fair to condemn the entire school of thought based on these few critiques and disregard what it has to offer? Even today, existentialism is generally forgotten and seen as a cultural movement that belongs to the past, a philosophical campaign that is no longer relevant to the issues of contemporary societies; however, this is nowhere near the case. With the protest movements spreading around the world, existentialism is now more relevant to contemporary issues than ever before. Perhaps by re-examining the merits of the existentialist philosophy, a way out of economical, religious, and political isolation—which is characteristic of the individual’s current relationship with the society in which they belong—is made possible. In other words, by revisiting the existential notion of freedom, a possible solution to the problem of meaning will be made available for those who are struggling to make sense of their existence, both in terms of how they understand themselves and how they relate to others and the world around them.

The purpose of this thesis, then, is to discern what it means to be free in Nietzsche’s terms and in terms of Sartrean existentialism. Woven into this examination of freedom will be the discussion of the problem of meaning, more specifically, the problem of individual self-definition and self-expression. The goal is not to achieve a grand, universal meaning of existence but, rather, to uncover what it means to be free at the individual level. In this quest to define the concept of “freedom,” this thesis will

attempt to answer two questions, both of which will be the driving force of this investigation: 1) is individual freedom at all possible, especially in contemporary societies; and 2), is individual freedom a realistic goal for everyone, or is it achievable only by a select few? To answer these two research questions, this thesis will concentrate on Nietzsche's own doctrine of *ressentiment* and Sartre's closely related concept of *bad faith*. By looking into the concept of "the gaze of the other," something that is central to both *ressentiment* and *bad faith*, these two philosophers' views on individual autonomy, sovereignty, and freedom will be explicated.

Like Sartre's inauthentic man who suffers from *bad faith*, Nietzsche's slave looks to the master—the other—rather than the self as the source of understanding the values of good and evil, which opposes the value schema of the master, the one that is comprised of the opposition of good and bad. Both the inauthentic man and the slave define themselves in accordance to *the gaze of the other*, which is what both philosophers identify as a negation of freedom. While both Nietzsche and Sartre acknowledge this obstacle to human freedom, they both also set out to break free of these constraints that simply repress the individual's ability to act on the authority of their own will. According to Nietzsche and Sartre, both the slave who suffers from *ressentiment* and the man of *bad faith* possess a sense of self-worth that is very much dependent upon the perceptions of the other. This sense of self-love—what Jean-Jacques Rousseau called "amour-propre"—is both unnatural and a negative product of the attempt to define oneself based on the perceptions of others (DI 115). In a way, both take it a step further by trying to achieve something similar to "amour de soi"—a natural form of self-love that does not depend on others—in their quests for a freedom that exists beyond the mandates of society. Rather than model their life after *the gaze of the other*, Nietzsche's and Sartre's individual must be wholly independent in both thought and action in order to achieve true freedom. In other words, for individual freedom to exist, one must possess both individual autonomy and sovereignty.

It is this precise connection between Nietzsche and existentialist philosophy that will drive the argument of this thesis. What this thesis aims to do, then, is to show how Nietzsche's concept of *ressentiment* and Sartre's notion of *bad faith* diagnose this problem of meaning and question of individual freedom. In identifying the existential emphasis on the individual, this thesis will also discuss both philosophers' concepts of

self-deception, self-repression, individual pluralism, and individual responsibility and authenticity. The thesis thus aims to show how both Nietzsche and Sartre are advocates of human freedom and challengers of oppression. Even though contemporary debates surround the postmodernist reading of Nietzsche, it is this author's belief that the existentialist reading of Nietzsche's emphasis on the individual should be revived and re-evaluated in order to answer some of the questions that the postmodernists leave unaddressed. It is the hope of this author's research that existentialism will be looked at in a new way, independent of the critiques that condemned it as a life-denying, cultural movement that is based on abstract ideologies. While it is true that all ideas are, in some sense, abstract, the fact that both philosophers identify and emphasize human action as one of the crucial steps to the path towards individual freedom shows that their works can induce tangible results.

This does not mean, however, that there are no drawbacks to Nietzsche and Sartre's existential approach to the problem of meaning and individual freedom. Key issues within the ideas themselves will undoubtedly cause some critics to question whether individual freedom is at all possible, especially in contemporary societies. One has to question whether or not individual freedom can be realized under such abstract ideas. Even Nietzsche himself admits that the responsibility he places on his new philosophers—the free, honest, and creative individuals who are courageous enough to turn their backs on convention—is a heavy burden to carry. According to Nietzsche, not everyone is strong and “honest” enough to “endure” his “seriousness” and his “passion” (AC F). Under these circumstances, one has to wonder if individual freedom is a possibility at all. Even if individual freedom is an attainable goal, can the average person achieve freedom or is it only available for the select few? Are the ideals found in both philosophers' works unrealistic to the point of making it impossible for individual freedom to exist for everyone?

The thesis will thus consist of four main chapters and a conclusion in order to address these issues and answer the two research questions. The first chapter is meant to provide the thesis with its historical background and context; detailed analyses of the concepts and ideas will be left for the latter chapters. The first chapter will begin with a discussion of Nietzsche's and Sartre's philosophical developments, highlighting the key ideas that influenced and gave rise to their thoughts on *ressentiment* and *bad faith*.

Intellectual sources of both philosophers will be briefly examined, along with how their thoughts diverge from these influences. To better illustrate their philosophical connection, the influences of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Arthur Schopenhauer, and Immanuel Kant will be explored for both Nietzsche and Sartre. The purpose of tracing their influences from the same sources is to provide the reader with a better understanding of each philosopher's position, both in terms of how they relate to each other and how they compare to the tradition from which they come. Within these discussions, the problem of meaning and individual freedom will be examined in order to prepare the reader for the upcoming chapters.

On the one hand, the main objective of this first chapter is to explain why both philosophers are not commonly viewed as having *affirmative* philosophies—both are thought of as being pessimistic, life-denying thinkers: Nietzsche with his skeptical approach to absolute truths and his infamous declaration that “God is dead”; Sartre with his *nauseating* study of existence and proclamation that we are “condemned to be free.” On the other hand, the chapter will also attempt to show how the nihilistic qualities of their writings can be seen as a way to embrace life and existence, especially during a historical moment when the values of the enlightenment were being torn apart and censured.

Even though both philosophers show the stark reality of life—one that is, at its core, without comforting illusions and grounded in nothingness—their writings illustrate what existence has to offer, teaching us how to celebrate the conditions into which we are born. This chapter will be the springboard to the discussion of individual autonomy, sovereignty, and freedom—the things that we are meant to celebrate in the midst of a nihilistic and nauseating existence. The questions that will be explored in this chapter are the problem of nihilism, rationalization and disenchantment, and science and reductionism, all of which are consequences of the enlightenment. By emphasizing the aftereffects of modernity, this chapter will question the idea of progress by identifying both philosophers' critiques of the enlightenment. At the core of these discussions is the relationship between these critiques and the problem of meaning and individual freedom. The aim of this chapter is to contextualize Nietzsche's and Sartre's positions within these philosophical dialogues.

Chapter two, which will be a study of Nietzsche's conception of *ressentiment* and Sartre's conception of *bad faith*, constitutes the core of the thesis. For the most part, this chapter concentrates on a discussion of how these two philosophers diagnose the problem of meaning and individual freedom in their respective ideas. By looking at *ressentiment* and *bad faith* as being unified by an understanding of *the gaze of the other*, this chapter will illustrate how a life that is lived under these conditions result in self-repression and self-denial of one's *innate* freedom. For both philosophers, an existence that is dependent on *the gaze of the other* is one that is both stagnant and mediocre, and the only way out of such a life is to nurture one's individuality and freedom. This is precisely why Nietzsche and Sartre can be seen as advocates of individual freedom and choice. From their critiques of the *other* and *the gaze* that ends up defining who we are, both philosophers illustrate their rejection of what is absolute and concrete.

To further illustrate *the gaze of the other* and the problem of meaning and individual freedom, this chapter will also examine the literary works of both Nietzsche and Sartre. For Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* will be discussed in order to conceptualize what is at the centre of his various philosophical texts and aphorisms: nihilism and the problem of meaning, as illustrated through the image of the *last man* and the *herd*. For Sartre, *No Exit* will be looked at in order to advance the ideas presented in *Being and Nothingness*. This discussion of *No Exit* will mainly concentrate on *the gaze* and the various levels of *bad faith*, as embodied by the three characters: Garcin, Inez, and Estelle.

The third chapter will constitute an analysis of how both philosophers attempt to chart the liberation of the individual from the constraints that *ressentiment* and *bad faith* place on them. While the previous chapter discusses how these two philosophers diagnose the problem of meaning and freedom, this chapter will discuss the solutions that they have to offer. This chapter will start with a discussion of both philosophers' views on individual pluralism, which stems from their rejection of absolutism—for Nietzsche, it is perspectivism; for Sartre, it is an ever-changing human nature. This chapter will then end with a discussion of both philosophers' *message*: the need to accept one's condition in life and become what one is—for Nietzsche, it is amor fati and the revaluation of all values; for Sartre, it is the acceptance of nothingness and one's radical freedom; and for both, it is authenticity and responsibility.

Like the second chapter, their literary works: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *Nausea*, will be analyzed in this chapter as a means to shed further light on their ideas of liberation. In the discussion of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the stages from oppression to liberation will be made clear in the analysis of the tightrope metaphor and the three metamorphoses. The last stages of these two ideas—the overman and the child—will be highlighted as the epitomes of individual freedom. In the discussion of *Nausea*, the portrait of an individual facing the stark reality of his existence will be painted in order to reveal the way out of *bad faith* and, consequently, the road to authenticity.

This fourth chapter will continue where the last chapter left off with a discussion of the relationship between existential freedom and aesthetics, which is what both philosophers declare as a way to liberate the individual so that they can actively engage with the world. Art, for both Nietzsche and Sartre, is an expression of human freedom, and represents the human capacity to reveal meaning and reality—it is revelation without God and creativity without divine intervention. For Nietzsche, this expression of human freedom is epitomized through the composition of music; for Sartre, freedom and aesthetics is exemplified through the process of prose writing.

Due to the aphoristic nature of his writings, various works of Nietzsche will be examined in order to illustrate his emphasis on the creative power of music. For Sartre, one main text: *What is Literature?*, will be explicated as a means to demonstrate what is, for him, the embodiment of existential freedom and social responsibility: committed literature as seen through the act of writing with a purpose. This chapter will, therefore, discuss Nietzsche and Sartre's concept of art as it is represented not only through the visual arts, but also through the creative forces of music, literature, and drama. The goal of this chapter is to show how art, in all its forms, is a way to embrace individuality and express creativity and freedom.

The fifth and final chapter will conclude the thesis. Important points from each chapter will be summarized and the merits of existentialism will be reiterated. More importantly, this chapter will stress the idea that existentialism is not just a popular movement that belongs to the past; rather, it is a school of thought that has its place in the present and a valid philosophical attempt at solving the problems of modernity and despair. Since we are still very much living in a scientific, technological world, the

individual is still being pushed into the background. This thesis will, therefore, argue that if the existential reading of Nietzsche and existentialism itself were to be revived, we will perhaps have a model with which we can use to salvage our identity. Lastly, this conclusion will also address the research questions that are posed in the beginning of this introduction: 1) is individual freedom at all possible, especially in contemporary societies; and 2), is individual freedom a realistic goal for everyone or is it achievable only by the select few? Though a definite answer may not be given, this last chapter will try to conclude whether or not individual freedom is a possibility, and whether or not individual freedom is attainable when it is based on Nietzsche's and Sartre's high expectations for their images of the liberated individual.

Chapter 1.

Background and Context

Nothingness lies coiled in the heart of being—like a worm.
– Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*

Nietzsche is arguably one of the most controversial thinkers in the entire history of philosophy. He rejects many commonly accepted beliefs, criticizes conventional morality, challenges every traditional value, denies the existence of absolute truths and intrinsic meanings, and denounces religion, modern science, metaphysics, democracy, and socialism. As suspicious¹ of the modern idealization of rationality and its faith in the enlightenment as he is of metaphysics, religion, and morality (Roberts 13), Nietzsche is one of the first philosophers to call into question the legitimacy of objective truth (Elborough 63) and the first self-proclaimed “immoralist” to “expose the lies that have been crippling humanity” (82). It is no surprise, then, that he is still frequently viewed by some as an extremely skeptical and pessimistic philosopher whose ideas are the very embodiment of nihilism. This could not, however, be any further from the truth. Rather than being an advocate of nihilism, Nietzsche is among the first philosophers to wage war against this anti-life view of human existence.

¹ In *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, Paul Ricoeur identifies Nietzsche, along with Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud, as one of the “three great destroyers” (33) and “masters” who “dominate the school of suspicion” (32). In Nietzsche’s radical attempts to question all socially constituted prejudices, he participates in what Ricoeur identifies as the “hermeneutics of suspicion” (D’Souza 146). According to Ricoeur, “suspicion” is “contrary” to “faith” (28) and, therefore, used to “reverse the work of falsification of the man of guile” (34). By *unmasking* these “illusions of consciousness,” all three “present the most radically contrary stance to the phenomenology of the sacred and to any hermeneutics understood as the recollection of meaning and as the reminiscence of being” (35). Garrett Green points out, however, that Nietzsche’s “hermeneutics of suspicion is both more complex and more interesting than that of either Marx or Freud” (111). For Green, Nietzsche represents the “most brilliant and extreme expression” of the “suspicious imagination of the nineteenth century” (19).

As a *suspicious* thinker, Nietzsche bases his philosophical career on questioning just about everything and “brazenly transgresses modern disciplinary boundaries” in his ambitious mission to reevaluate all values (Roberts 4). As the *appraiser* of life, Nietzsche scathingly criticizes and disputes all claims to absolute truth and passionately advances the creation of new values that celebrate and enhance human existence on earth. For this reason, Nietzsche continuously rejects the religious and scientific objective of formulating statements that are “true” under all circumstances, insisting, instead, that rigid statements do not reflect the reality of our world (WR 56). Nietzsche also frequently attacks metaphysicians, often disputing their systematic attempt to state essential truths. It is with this conviction that Nietzsche sets out to trace the evolution of truths and morals, dispute the claims made by religion and modern science that they alone reveal the truth about the world and ourselves, introduce his theory of perspectivism: the rejection of absolute truths and the belief that all knowledge is created from interpretations of the world, and present his vision of the overman: the creator who stands on mountaintops, above the moral ideals of the herd, to observe the world from various vantage points.

Though Nietzsche’s fervent rejection of absolute and intrinsic truths and meaning can easily be mistaken for nihilism,² this conclusion is a clear misreading of Nietzsche because while he does claim that delusions and errors are conditions of life and human knowledge, he believes that by creating our own values, the world can have meaning (Elborough 38). If one is to read Nietzsche superficially, it is easy to call him a nihilist and a pessimist. By looking at his perspectivism, however, we can see that Nietzsche’s theory of interpretation is his campaign against nihilism, his way of overcoming

² Nihilism, as an extreme form of skepticism, is the negation of meaning, a sense of disillusionment that eventually leads to the belief that life is meaningless and, therefore, without intrinsic meaning. Nietzsche offers up two forms of this worldview: passive nihilism and active nihilism. In *The Will to Power*, passive nihilism is identified as the “decline and recession of the power of the spirit” (22) and represents “the lack of strength to posit for oneself, productively, a goal, a why, a faith” (23). As “the weary” spirit “that no longer attacks,” the passive nihilist simply accepts that all is empty and meaningless, and does nothing in response to this crisis of meaning. Active nihilism, on the other hand, represents the “increased power of the spirit” (22) that “reaches its maximum of relative strength as a violent force of destruction” (23). Here, the active spirit does not simply accept that there is no meaning in the world; instead, it takes it a step further by not “perishing” and then taking action against the “lies” that threaten human existence (15).

meaninglessness. In this sense, Nietzsche believes that “nihilism *could* be a good sign” (WP 111) because a world without absolute values is a world of open opportunities: “Everything is false! Everything is permitted!” (326). If nothing is fixed and everything is interpretable, the possibilities are endless: “Rather has the world become “infinite” for us all over again, inasmuch as we cannot reject the possibility that *it may include infinite interpretations*” (GS 336). Since absolute truths do not exist, the perpetual creation of truths is made possible by our interpretations of the world. As “a pathological transitional stage,” nihilism, then, represents, for Nietzsche, the means, the precursor, to the revaluation of values (WP 13).

On this point, Nietzsche is similar to Sartre, who claims that there is no “given and immutable human nature” (EM 29) and, therefore, man “is nothing” when he is first “thrown into existence” (22). Sartre goes on to declare that “in life, a man commits himself and draws his own portrait, outside of which there is nothing” (37). Like the endless possibilities that can be found in Nietzsche’s view of nihilism, the “nothingness” found in human existence represents, for Sartre, “the freedom of the individual subject to choose what he will be” (23). In being “what he makes of himself” (22), Sartre’s individual, like Nietzsche’s overman, is entrusted with the task of creating and instilling new values: “in creating the man each of us wills ourselves to be, there is not a single one of our actions that does not at the same time create an image of man as we think he ought to be” (24). In this sense, Sartre’s individual not only chooses himself but he, as “a legislator,” also chooses “what humanity as a whole should be” (25). It is important to note, however, that this is not Sartre’s way of positing a theory on universality; rather, he is merely emphasizing the “full and profound responsibility” that is attached to the individual’s freedom and explaining the “anguish” that is “experienced by all who have borne responsibilities” (27). As Sartre declares, “we can claim human universality exists, but it is not a given; it is in perpetual construction” (43). That is to say, “every one of us creates the absolute by the act of breathing, eating, sleeping, or by behaving in any fashion at all,” the key is to know that the universal is nothing more than a construction that reflects our individual choices. As with Nietzsche, the universal exist only as something that is created and is, therefore, not absolute.

Like Nietzsche, Sartre is also critical of religion and science, and equally as skeptical of modernity’s claims to absolute truths and knowledge. Even in his discussion

of the radical freedom that is at the very core of an individual's existence, Sartre is referring to a personal freedom that is neither metaphysical nor political; instead, he is describing a form of freedom that has to do with an individual's choice—the way in which individual freedom is actively realized. In the same way that Nietzsche's skepticism and the misinterpretations of his ideas paint him out to be a life-denying philosopher, Sartre is frequently viewed as “the anti-humanist par excellence” and his expressions: “hell is other people,” “existence precedes essence,” and “we are condemned to be free,” are widely taken out of context (EM ix). As a result, Sartre, and his branch of existentialism, suffered attacks from a diverse group of critics who fail to see the optimism in his thoughts and works: while the communists accused him of “encouraging people to remain in a state of quietism and despair” and advancing “another kind of bourgeois philosophy” (17); the Catholics condemned him “for emphasizing what is despicable about humanity, for exposing all that is sordid, suspicious, or base, while ignoring beauty and the brighter side of human nature,” “overlooking humanity's solidarity, and for considering man as an isolated being”; and the Christians reproached him “for denying the reality and validity” of God” (18). In short, Sartre, with his “gloomy” view of existence, is charged with stressing “the dark side of human life.”

In his defense of existentialism in *Existentialism is a Humanism*, Sartre responds to these very charges by declaring that, because it “offers man the possibility of individual choice,” “existentialism is a doctrine that makes human life possible” (18–20). According to Sartre, it is “the sternness of [his] optimism” (38) that “endows man with any dignity, and the only one that does not turn him into an object” (41). Unlike other “comforting theories” that are “full of hope but without any real foundation,” existentialism tells man that his “destiny lies within himself” and “hope” can be found only “in his actions” (40). Since “life has no meaning *a priori*,” man is in a situation that forces him to perpetually “invent values” in order to give “meaning” to his own existence (51). Rather than “plunge mankind into despair” with this truth about existence, existentialism's aim is to promote individual transcendence (53). In the same way that Nietzsche proposes “man is something that shall be overcome” (TZ 123), Sartre advances a “form of liberation” that enables the individual to realize what it means to be radically free and, in turn, “truly human” (EM 53).

1.1. The Influences of Rousseau, Kant, and Schopenhauer

With their skeptical approach to the values of modernity and optimistic view of the individual's capacity to create their own meanings, both Nietzsche and Sartre set themselves apart from many of their predecessors and contemporaries. Considering the parallels between their thoughts on the problem of meaning and individual freedom, it is no surprise that their ideas can be traced back to the same sources: Jean-Jacques Rousseau's social and political philosophy, Immanuel Kant's account of autonomy and heteronomy, and Arthur Schopenhauer's pessimism. Therefore, in order to fully understand Nietzsche's *ressentiment* and Sartre's *bad faith*, and both philosophers' views on individual autonomy, sovereignty, and freedom, one must first explore their sources, particularly the sources' own thoughts on these same themes.

Under the influence of Rousseau, who proposes a return to nature as a way to counteract the negative consequences of "civilized societies,"³ the development of *ressentiment* and *bad faith* can be understood through the transformation of "amour de soi"⁴ into "amour-propre"⁵ (DI 30). In the same way that *ressentiment* and *bad faith* cause the individual to be "at the other's mercy" (72), this psychological shift from independence (amour de soi) to interdependence (amour-propre) sees man beginning to value the opinions of others and, therefore, see himself through "the gaze of the rest of the world": "the savage lies within himself; the social man, outside himself, lives only in

³ In *Discourse on Inequality*, Rousseau uses man's attempt to tame animals to explain the aftereffects of man's own domestication. According to Rousseau, "in becoming sociable," man "becomes weak, fearful, and obsequious," which results in him being drained of both "strength and courage" (31). Nietzsche posits a similar position when he accuses "*culture*" of "reduc[ing]...the beast of prey...to a tame[d] and civilized animal" (GM I 11). As a "sick" and "crippled animal," "man" is "weak" and barely "half" of what he used to be (GS 352).

⁴ According to Rousseau, "amour de soi" refers to a form of self-love that exists only in the "savage man" (DI 43) and is "linked to the instinct for self-preservation" (123). This "natural sentiment...prompts" man to exist as an independent being whose self-worth is not influenced by the other (115). "Amour de soi" is, therefore, present only in those "who do not know how to appraise one another or compare themselves with one another" (116).

⁵ "Amour-propre," which is another form of self-love that Rousseau terms as "vanity," is "a relative, artificial sentiment born [only] in society" and refers to a sense of self-worth that is dependent on the opinion of others (115). "In our primitive state," Rousseau says, "vanity does not exist" simply because, "in the true state of nature," "each individual regards himself as the sole spectator by whom he is and the sole creature in the world who takes interest in him." With the transition from "the natural state to the civil state," however, man begins to live according to "the testimony of others rather than...[his] own" (83-84).

the opinion of others and it is, so to speak, from their judgment alone that he gets the sense of his own existence” (DI 84). Now that man is “dependent” (45) on the very society that tells him that his “self-preservation” is no longer a “concern” (32), he begins to moderate his sense of “self-love...and so contribut[es] to the mutual preservation of the whole species” (47). In other words, in becoming *civilized*, man’s “capacity as a free agent” is greatly diminished (34). As a result, “bonds of servitude are formed...through...mutual dependence” (53) and man’s “natural freedom”⁶ is “irretrievably” destroyed (69). This destruction of natural freedom that results from the appearance of society is later reinforced in *The Social Contract* where true freedom is identified as self-legislation, as opposed to the “transfer [of] liberty”⁷ from the individual to an external governing body (49). Here, a clear distinction is made between “natural freedom” and “civil freedom”⁸ (59), which is attained when the people, as a sovereign,⁹ willingly give up their liberty in order to attain the shared “rights of a citizen” (58). Under this social contract that governs civil freedom and equality, “only the general will can direct the powers of the state in accordance with...the common good” (63). In other words, acting as a “collectively...single entity” (93), the sovereign “does not and cannot go beyond the limits of general agreements” (70). As a citizen of the state,¹⁰ then, man is told that he “can have no self-interest” that conflicts with “the general will” (59) and

⁶ This term is referred to as the “unlimited right to anything by which [man] is tempted and can obtain” (SC 59). In this natural state, the savage man is “a free being whose heart is at peace” (DI 43), and whose “soul, perturbed by nothing, is concerned only with the sense of his current existence with no idea of the future” (35).

⁷ Since “no man has a natural authority over his fellow” (SC 49), Rousseau argues against the very idea that some individuals have the natural right to be “masters of others” (45): since “their freedom belongs to them” alone, “nobody except them has the right to dispose of it” (50). That being the case, the master only attains power because the slaves give up their freedom in exchange for “chains” (45).

⁸ This type of freedom is “limited by the general will” (59) whose “necessary goal” is to achieve the “greatest good” and “equality” for all its citizens (86). With this “universal scope,” what is “most advantageous to the whole” is maintained through the “control” of the particular (67).

⁹ The “sovereign” under discussion is “made up of individuals who under the social contract is duty-bound to follow the supreme direction of the general will” (57).

¹⁰ Nietzsche is very critical of “the state” for the very reason that it “tells lies” through the “invent[ion]” of “its own language of customs and rights” (TZ 161). While Rousseau tries to mend the rift between amour de soi and amour-propre by introducing the social contract and the general will, Nietzsche says outright that an individual voluntarily perishes when they choose to live within a community that dictates to them what their morals and values should be: “The state I call it where all drink poison, the good and the bad...where all lose themselves...where the slow suicide of all is called “life”” (162).

“common interest” of the sovereign, thereby completely replacing his “amour de soi” with “amour-propre” (SC 66).¹¹

Kant, drawing on Rousseau, later develops this alternative form of self-relation that is influenced by the other in his discussion of autonomy and heteronomy. In *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant identifies the autonomous will as a “universal legislator”¹² and “author” responsible for making its own laws: “the will is not merely subject to the law, but...must be regarded as *itself giving the law* (90). Unlike Rousseau’s concept of sovereignty, Kant’s autonomous will “belongs...to the kingdom of

¹¹ Though Rousseau’s original intention was to reconcile the conflict between these two forms of self-relation and, therefore, the dominance of amour-propre over amour de soi, his solution dictates a form of controlled freedom that ends up stifling the “particular will” in order to advance “the will of the people” (SC 97). While it is true that the social contract forces individuals to “[have] an active rather than a passive role” in the dealings of the state (xii), and prevents them from “seeking their own interests at the expense of everyone else” (xi), Rousseau’s conception of the general will does not fully respond to his question of how “each man” can “commit” his “strengths and freedom...to others without harming himself, and without neglecting the duty of care to himself” (54). In his belief that “the individual’s potential for good could be preserved in the social milieu” (xi), Rousseau credits the “social bond” (135) for directing the various, different particular wills towards a “common conservation” and “general welfare” (134) “of all the citizens of the state” (136–37). By eliminating the “tangle of contradictory interests” (134) and advancing “the constant,” general will, Rousseau claims that individuals can benefit from their citizenship and, therefore, “have freedom” (136–37). According to Rousseau, the individual’s “conformity,” in the form of “votes,” makes it possible for them, as a member of the civil society, to participate in the manifestation of the general will (138). In this sense, Rousseau’s citizen can only settle for a restricted version of freedom that opposes the type of radical freedom that Nietzsche and Sartre identify as essential to the individual who is on the path towards true liberation. Therefore, Rousseau’s general will, in its attempt to temper the opposition between amour de soi and amour-propre, requires the sacrifice of natural freedom in exchange for civil freedom, which is regulated by a will that is external to the self, i.e. the will of the other, thereby failing to fully realize its original objective to resolve the conflict. For these reasons, man, as a social being, has not succeeded in “remain[ing] as free as before” (55). As Rousseau openly admits, “under [this] ideal legislation, the individual or particular will should count for nothing” (97). When put in these terms, it is clear that Rousseau’s individual, as a citizen, will never be as free as he can and should be.

¹² This universal legislator is, according to Kant, an active participant in the making of universal laws. Though there are some clear connections between Kant’s conception of autonomy and Nietzsche’s and Sartre’s own discussions of freedom, they, Nietzsche especially, would both disagree with Kant’s notion of autonomy as something that can be shared universally by all rational beings.

ends¹³...only as [a] *sovereign*...[who] is not subject to the will of any other” (Kant 92). As a sovereign, then, the autonomous will must be “completely independent” and, therefore, only obey “those laws which he himself gives” (94). In contrast to autonomy of the will,¹⁴ which is “the basis...of every rational nature,” heteronomy of the will¹⁵ “does not give itself the law, rather the law is given by the object through its relation to the will” (98). The “object” under discussion is something that is outside of the will yet is capable of influencing the will’s ability to create its own laws, thereby diminishing its freedom. In the same way that a rational being is “subject to the laws of nature,” the heteronomous will finds itself in the position of following laws that are beyond its control (108). Kant’s concept of heteronomy, then, seems to echo Rousseau’s own account of the development of amour-propre where, using the language of *ressentiment* and *bad faith*, *the gaze of the other* is the inspiration behind the individual’s thoughts and actions and, therefore, the cause of their being *unfree*.

Unlike Kant’s account of the will as something that is linked to reason,¹⁶ Schopenhauer’s will is not bound by rationality and does not have an ultimate purpose. Contra-Kant, then, Schopenhauer suggests that humans—driven by the desire to

¹³ This term is employed by Kant to refer to “the systematic union of different rational beings through common laws” (92). Within this kingdom of ends, “private ends”—things like “personal differences”—are “combined” and rational beings are unified under “common objective laws” that view all its members as ends rather than means.

¹⁴ As “the ultimate condition” of the will’s “harmony with the universal practical reason,” autonomy is achieved when “*the will*” of the “*rational being*” gives rise to its own laws (90). According to Kant, this account of autonomy is “inseparably connected” to “the idea of freedom” because the rational being’s will is determined without any external influences (108). In *Discourse on Inequality*, Rousseau proposes an opposing view when he identifies “reason” as the “breed[er]” of “vanity” and the cause of what “turns man inwards” (47). Furthermore, it is “reflection,” Rousseau says, that nurtures and “strengthen[s]” man’s *unnatural* need to alter and mold his person in response to the other. What this seems to suggest, then, is that amour-propre is the product of the rational man. Though Nietzsche and Sartre would not approve of Rousseau’s sacrifice of individual freedom, they would both share Rousseau’s misgivings about the merits of reason.

¹⁵ Unlike autonomy, heteronomy occurs when the will “goes out of itself” to seek “universal laws” that are not “of its own dictation” (Kant 98). That is to say, the will, under the influences of external stimuli, chooses to follow laws that it in itself did not create.

¹⁶ For Schopenhauer, Kant’s categorical imperative—the idealistic notion that all rational creatures are bound by a general, universal, rational principle—is but an absurd “system of *optimism*” (33): “optimism is not only a false but also a pernicious doctrine, for it presents life as a desirable state and man’s happiness as its aim and objective” (36). Kant’s optimism, then, represents, for Schopenhauer at least, an escapist’s attempt to produce comforting illusions.

“heighten...pleasures” (4), satisfy “cravings” (23), and minimize “misery” (25)—exist in accordance to their irrational will, what he terms as the “will-to-live”¹⁷ (Schopenhauer 17). Since these desires are futile,¹⁸ “life presents itself as a problem,” “a constant struggle against wants and afflictions” (18), and “a continual deception” (23). As a “disappointment,” “life on the whole...is a task to be worked off” (10), a “contracted debt” to be paid off (31). Though “life bears so clearly the stamp of something which ought to disgust us” (24), “everyone” still “tries to get through with it and come off as well as [they] can” (18).¹⁹ This “cheerless and comfortless” view of existence, what Schopenhauer identifies as “the truth,” is at the heart of his pessimism (11). Though both Nietzsche and Sartre posit a similar worldview in their discussions of the problem of meaning and individual freedom and the importance of the work of art, they both reject Schopenhauer’s pessimism. Unlike Schopenhauer, they do see the possibilities that life has to offer and, therefore, do not sentence the human subject to an aimless existence. On this point, they resemble Kant’s optimism, though neither would share Kant’s faith in reason and aim for universality. Emerging from these two sources, then, are Nietzsche’s and Sartre’s rejection of the absolute and critique of the values of modernity, particularly of science’s aim to fill the disenchanting world with new absolute values to replace the old religious ones.

¹⁷ The term “will-to-live” is identified as something that “brings into consciousness unrest, uneasiness, and melancholy, and into the course of life misfortunes, cares, and misery” (17). Nietzsche, in his rejection of Schopenhauer’s pessimism and notion that this “blind will-to-live” exists as a “*thing-in-itself*,” develops this idea of the will in what is later known as the *will to power* (31). Contra-Schopenhauer, Nietzsche’s will is neither futile nor aimless; instead, it is the driving force in humans, the very same one that can incite greatness and transcendence.

¹⁸ Human desires are considered *futile* simply because they are “unlimited” and “inexhaustible” (23). Since “every satisfied desire gives birth to a new one,” there is “no possible satisfaction in the world [that] could suffice to still its cravings.” The impulse to “fill the bottomless pit” of desire, then, ends up “bring[ing] more misery than joy” (25).

¹⁹ According to Schopenhauer, human existence is “groundless” (30) and “nothing...is worth our exertions, our efforts, and our struggles” (24). In other words, existence itself is both “empty and fleeting.” “The world,” he says, “is just a *hell* and in it human beings are the tortured souls on the one hand, and the devils on the other” as they constantly try to satisfy the same desires that are the root cause of their miseries (11).

1.2. The Failures of Religion and Science

In their rejection of absolute values, both Nietzsche and Sartre spurn the notions of God and religion—which advocate the true meaning of life based on a mere interpretation of it—that predates the tyranny of reason. Not only is Christianity,²⁰ with its “nihilistic hatred of life,” guilty of promoting and spreading lies, it is also responsible for weakening the spirit of man (Roberts 12):

Christianity should not be beautified and embellished: it has waged deadly war against this higher type of man; it has placed all the basic instincts of this type under the ban; and out of these instincts it has distilled evil and the Evil One: the strong man as the typically reprehensible man, the “reprobate.” Christianity has sided with all that is weak and base, with all failures; it has made an ideal of whatever contradicts the instinct of the strong life to preserve itself; it has corrupted the reason even of those strongest in spirit by teaching men to consider the supreme values of the spirit as something sinful, as something that leads into error—as temptations...When one places life’s center of gravity not in life but in the “beyond”—in nothingness—one deprives life of its center of gravity altogether. The great lie of personal immortality destroys all reason, everything natural in the instincts—whatever in the instincts is beneficent and life-promoting or guarantees a future now arouses mistrust. (AC 571-72; 618)

Like a created truth that masquerades as a discovered truth, religion deceives man into thinking that its interpretation of reality is the only true interpretation. Rather than providing life with meaning, however, Christianity, the “religion of decadence” (Green 115), is responsible for causing nihilism: “it is an error to consider ‘social distress’ or ‘physiological degeneration’ or, worse, corruption, as the cause of nihilism...Rather: it is in one particular interpretation, the Christian-moral one, that nihilism is rooted” (WP 1). Any proclamation of truth, then, is nothing more than a construct that eventually leads to its own collapse: “What does nihilism mean? That the highest values devalue themselves” (2). That is to say, any claim or will to truth is self-defeating because there is no such thing as truth. According to Nietzsche, the collapse of what is “considered *the*

²⁰ On this point, both philosophers share Schopenhauer’s dislike for Christianity, which he sees as having an “essentially pessimistic spirit” (12). For Schopenhauer, Christianity presents a contradictory “view of the world,” one that is both filled with “misery and wretchedness” and “the successful work of an all-wise, all-benevolent, and moreover almighty Being.”

interpretation” only makes it seem “as if there were no meaning at all in existence, as if everything were in vain” (WP 35). For both Nietzsche and Sartre, this is not the case. Rather than let the collapse of Christianity’s truth claims destroy us, both philosophers see disenchantment as an opportunity for us to take up responsibility for our own existence and create our own meaning. Since “God does not exist,” Sartre says, “man is consequently abandoned” (EM 29) and, therefore, “must bear the full consequences of that assertion” (27) and take it upon himself to “invent values” (52). Though he “did not create himself,” man, “once cast into the world,” “is responsible for everything he does” and cannot rely on “determinism” to explain away his freedom and justify his actions (29). That is to say, since “the only universe that exists is the human one” (52), “subjectivity must be our point of departure” (20) and the “individual subject” must “choose what he will be” (23).

With the decline of religion, however, comes the rise of modernity and, therefore, religion’s successors: reason and science, as opposed to what Sartre identifies as “subjectivism.” What is modernity? It is the departure from long-established traditions and the remote past that no longer serves as the source of answers to our questions of existence. It is the rejection of values and customs that has been passed down through repetition. It is the movement towards rationality, towards an updated way of thinking. We no longer accept that things are a certain way merely because they always were. We strive to make sense of our existence in the world through rationality and empiricism. However, in this attempt to make sense of the world, we have simply renewed the crisis of meaning. For both Nietzsche and Sartre, this displacement of traditional²¹ and charismatic²² by rational-legal authority²³ only represents the tyranny of reason. Though

²¹ As one of the three forms of authority explored by Max Weber, traditional authority refers to a form of authority that is largely based on tradition and/or custom (3). Examples of this type of authority are feudalism and patriarch societies.

²² Charismatic authority refers to a form of authority held by an individual who possesses a “personal *gift of grace*” and is, therefore, considered exceptional in both thought and action, and who earns the devotion and loyalty of the ones they lead with these same qualities (4). Examples of this type of authority include “the prophet,” the “elected war lord,” and “the great demagogue” (3).

²³ This last form of authority is characteristic of the modern state where authority is based on legal order and bureaucracy, in other words, “rationally created *rules*.” By “discharging statutory obligations,” this form of “organized domination” (4) demands “obedience” rather than encourages it (3).

modernity is defined by its suppression of “the idea of God,” it still follows the same tradition in its attempt to establish a new “essence” that “precedes existence,” thereby still advancing the notion that “each man is a particular example of a universal concept” (EM 21). Since Sartre does not “believe that man can find refuge in some given sign that will guide him on earth,” the values put forth by modernity are nothing more than religious values reinvented (29).

In the same way that Sartre is critical of modernity’s production of universality, science represents, for Nietzsche, the attempts to recreate and reestablish absolute values. To Nietzsche, science and reason do not provide us with a better understanding of the world we live in. Instead of keeping the “horrors of existence at bay,” the scientific interpretation of the world and its goal to replace God only brings forth another form of danger (Elborough 37). Like Christianity, the worldview that it sets out to replace, science is just another “form of sickness” that Nietzsche is highly suspicious of (WP 32). Science, which aims to replace one system of control and dominance with another, is not “the natural antagonist of the ascetic ideal” simply because it “is not nearly self-reliant enough” to create “values” (GM III 25). With the development of modern science, we have simply found an alternative to religion and metaphysics by replacing the absolute values created by religion with the “facts” that empiricism deems indisputable (Bass 7):

As a rational being he now submits his actions to the rule of abstractions...which now stands over against the other intuitive world of first impressions as the more fixed, more universal, more familiar, more human, hence something regulatory and imperative.... Here, he concludes, as far as we can penetrate, from the heights of the telescopic to the depths of the microscopic, everything is certain, complete, infinite, law-like, without gaps; science will be able to dig into these shafts forever with success, and all its findings will harmonize and not contradict one another. (TL 31-32; 38)

Since scientific findings are based on experiments and observations, we think that their *truths* and *facts* depict a more accurate picture of the world. For Nietzsche, however, science’s claim to truth and aim to confront nihilism is really an attempt to dominate and control the world. Science, Nietzsche says, “is not different” from religion in its “faith” in “a “world of truth” that can be mastered completely and forever” with the help of reason

(EH 335). While he is impressed by science's discoveries and its ability to help us untangle ourselves from religious superstitions (WR 226), Nietzsche considers it a crudity and naiveté to suppose that an interpretation grounded in reductionism is the only justifiable interpretation of the world (NG 80). Science, like religion, is also self-annihilating when it declares itself as the only true and meaningful interpretation of life and the only intelligent and accurate account of existence (WR 209). Nietzsche is very critical of science's ability to produce meaning, truth, and knowledge, and accuses it of trying "to divest existence of its rich ambiguity" (EH 335). What both philosophers have in common is their conviction that *truth* is a product of interpretations from a particular perspective. Nietzsche calls the scientific interpretation of the world "one of the most stupid of all possible interpretations." According to Nietzsche, "an essentially mechanical world would be an essentially meaningless world."

By using proper procedures to make sense of the world, the very meaning of our own existence is called into question. In forgetting and detaching the self from the world that exists outside of science, we are essentially forgetting our own being. Human existence is not always systematic, organized, and structured.²⁴ To think or treat human existence as such is to view people like objects rather than subjects. People are not machines—emotions, instincts, and desires are as much a part of what makes us human as our own flesh and blood. To forget or ignore this fundamental aspect of human existence is to degrade the human subject to the status of a mere lifeless object. In this sense, disenchantment and the consequent rationalization of the world is the cause of dehumanization of the subject. This need to rationalize and objectify existence, then, represents the enlightenment's failed attempt to counteract the nihilistic predicament of modernity. While science and reason do offer a new form of meaning to be applied to existence, it, like its predecessor, is equally guilty of leaving the human individual behind. It is from this tradition and within this context that we see Nietzsche's and Sartre's attempt to liberate the individual in their discussion of *ressentiment* and *bad faith*.

²⁴ As will be illustrated in the upcoming chapters, both Nietzsche and Sartre are very much against this concept of existence. Against this ordered and methodical worldview, both philosophers emphasize the chaotic aspect of existence by pointing our attention to the individual's need to constantly make and remake their being—what Nietzsche identifies as a constant process of self-overcoming.

Chapter 2.

The Gaze and the Problem of Meaning and Individual Freedom

People who live in society have learned how to see themselves
in mirrors as they appear to their friends.
– Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea*

Recognizing the nihilistic reality of life and the wonderful possibilities that it entails, both Nietzsche and Sartre set out to expose the things that inhibit the individual's ability to realize their full potential in what seems like a bleak existence. Since meaning is not intrinsic and a predetermined essence does not exist, both believe that we are endowed with the ability to interpret the world and create our own meaning of existence. For Nietzsche and Sartre, the hindrances to true individual freedom lie in the manifestations of *ressentiment* and *bad faith*, respectively. Within their philosophies that celebrate an individual's "actions," *ressentiment* and *bad faith* represent "reaction" rather than what Nietzsche terms as "deeds" (GM I 10). Here, the distinction is clear: rather than simply respond to the "external stimuli"—in other words, *the gaze of the other*—"in order to act at all," the individual's actions must stem "from a triumphant affirmation of itself." Thus, for both philosophers, if an individual is to achieve self-realization and, in turn, transcend the other's gaze, they must first recognize the causes and limitations of *ressentiment* and *bad faith*.

2.1. *Ressentiment* and the Levelling of Humanity

According to Nietzsche, *ressentiment*, which represents "the oppressive instincts that thirst for reprisal," is a particular form of resentment or hostility towards what one identifies as the cause of one's frustration (GM I 11). In other words, a mode of revenge

directed against the source of one's suffering and a reassignment of the pain that accompanies a sense of inferiority onto an external scapegoat. It is a "poisonous and inimical" feeling that is "festering" within the ones who are "oppressed" (GM I 10). Unlike the English word *resentment*, which is a bitter indignation at having been treated unfairly, *ressentiment* is a psychological state that arises from suppressed feelings of envy and hatred and a sense of weakness or inferiority in the face of a superior and dominant morality. As Bernard Reginster points out, *ressentiment* is a state of "repressed vengefulness" (286), a negation of the dominant code of values (295), and a feeling of impotence (297). Nietzsche himself defines *ressentiment* as "the popular uprising" and "the revolt of the underprivileged" (WP 179), calling it "a kind of immuring out of fear" and a way for the "underprivileged and mediocre" to "defend themselves...against the stronger...and to destroy them" (296). The "revolt" to which Nietzsche refers is the "slave revolt," which arises from a *ressentiment* revaluation that negates the morals and values of the privileged part of society in favour of the "slave" or the "common man" (Reginster 289). It is not enough to simply reject and nullify the master's morality; the slave must create his own set of values, ones that highlight the same qualities that the master-morality identifies as being *bad*, thereby putting the slave, who possesses these qualities, in a more advantageous position.¹

In Nietzsche's opinion, *ressentiment* is "the instincts of decline" and "cowardice;" it is a sense of "discontent" that precedes "the drive to destroy" (WP 864) and "the regression of mankind" (GM I 11). As a despicable and poisonous state of mind, *ressentiment* not only injures the weak, it incapacitates the strong as well (NP 277–278). The "strong" being referred to are the "nobles" of the "master-morality" while the "weak" are the "men of *ressentiment*" who belong to the "slave-morality," which functions as "a social-control mechanism and device" used by the weak to "defend," "avenge," and "assert" themselves against the stronger (NF 615). The qualities that are regarded as "strong" are interpreted, by the "weak," as "evil" traits that can cause "harm" to them (WP

¹ This "moral relationship" between the master and slave is what Rousseau, in *Discourse on Inequality*, identifies as something born of civil society (43). In contrast to this form of existence, those who exist "in the state of nature...have no kind of moral relationships to...[the] other," and, as a result, there are no "recognized duties" and individuals are "neither good nor evil, and could have neither vices nor virtues." When put in these terms, Nietzsche's account of the development of values and morals seems to reflect Rousseau's.

315). It is important to note, however, that the nobles of Nietzsche's master-morality did not attain their nobility through birth; rather, they are noble by spirit, or more specifically by a sense of "free-spiritedness" (Thompson 13). These free, noble spirits are the ones who can bear the thought of the eternal recurrence and the heavy burden of freedom. Although Nietzsche uses the terms "master" and "slave" to describe the different moralities, "it is important not to oversimplify his position" by assuming that his ideas stem from a preference for the upper class who are noble by birth (14). It is the noble, free spirits that Nietzsche wants to cultivate. Since members of the ruling class are not necessarily noble by spirit, it is inaccurate to deduce that a class analysis is needed in order to understand Nietzsche's philosophy.

With the concept of *ressentiment*, a clear line is drawn between the strong nobles of the master-morality and the weak, oppressed individuals of the slave-morality. These individuals are "the men of *ressentiment*" who are "corrupted" and lack the "integrity of self," a trait that Nietzsche identifies as an essential element to the "nobility" of the master (Reginster 283). While the slave-morality—a fundamentally negative set of values—is based on "suspicion and mistrust," the master-morality is both "positive" and "self-affirming" (Thompson 14):

The "well-born" *felt* themselves to be the "happy"; they did not have to establish their happiness artificially by examining their enemies, or to persuade themselves, *deceive* themselves, that they were happy (as all men of *ressentiment* are in the habit of doing)...While the noble man lives in trust and openness with himself...the man of *ressentiment* is neither upright nor naïve nor honest and straightforward with himself. His soul *squints*; his spirit loves hiding places, secret paths and back doors, everything covert entices him...he understands how to keep silent, how not to forget, how to wait, how to be provisionally self-deprecating and humble. (GM I 10)

These "good" and "strong" qualities that Nietzsche identifies and associates with the noble masters, however, are destroyed by the "venomous eye of *ressentiment*," in other words, the "man of *ressentiment*" (GM I 11). In the slave's campaign to "shift the responsibility for their existence...on to [sic] some sort of scapegoat" (WP 765), the master's nobility, or sense of self, and strength of character is smothered and replaced with a "center of gravity" that belongs to the "mediocre" (864). Nietzsche further specifies that *ressentiment*—though it can also occur in the strong for they too find themselves in

a world that is sometimes beyond their control and not always to their liking—is only a destructive and negative force when it claims the minds of the weak (NP 280). Should it “appear in the noble man,” *ressentiment* would simply “consummate and exhaust itself in an immediate reaction, and therefore does not *poison*” (GM I 10). In the weak, however, *ressentiment* would simmer and seethe until it completely consumes (NP 279) the man of *ressentiment* and causes him to “drag” the strong nobles “down with the weight of [his] folly” (TI 5.1).

Why are the slaves capable of such destruction when the nobles are considered stronger and in possession of self-affirmation? To answer this question, one has to realize that Nietzsche’s man of *ressentiment*, though weak, is not weak willed. The man of *ressentiment* is only weak “because he does not have what it takes to realize his values, not because he lacks the will to pursue them” (Reginster 294). As Reginster points out, “his will is, on the contrary, prodigiously strong, so strong indeed that it is not even altered by his conviction that he is too weak to fulfill its demands.” With his strong will, the man of *ressentiment* sets out to invent new values, ones that negate the already existing morals and ideals (NP 280). As a response to this new and opposing form of morality, the master becomes so decadent and unsure of his existence that he allows himself to be taken in by this revaluation of values; thus, abandoning his set of morals for those of the slaves’. Although the man of *ressentiment* is clever enough to invent new values, the motives behind his revaluation and the resulting new values are both things that Nietzsche regards with disgust.

Unlike the slave, the “reactive man” who has “the invention of the ‘bad conscience’ on his conscience,” the “active” and “arrogant” master “has no need to take a false prejudiced view of the object before him,” and as a result has a “*freer* eye, a *better* conscience on his side” (GM II 11). According to Nietzsche, the master—the “stronger,” nobler, more “courageous” man of action—is “still a hundred steps closer to justice than the reactive man.” What matters most to the man of *ressentiment* is not the new values and ideals that he brings into the world, but the negation of the pre-existing and dominant ones. That is to say, what drives the weak man’s valuation is not the affirmation of new values but rather the desire to deny the old ones (Reginster 295). Rather than affirming his own existence, the man of *ressentiment* has simply destroyed the strong man’s life-affirming qualities, the same ones that should be celebrated. In

other words, the man of *ressentiment*, instead of striving for self-betterment, has only succeeded in turning his failures into virtues by making the master feel ashamed of what makes him great. The slave-morality, then, like any other traditional modes of valuation, is “contrary to the enhancement of life” (NF 615).

Unlike the nobles who are self-affirming, the man of *ressentiment* lives in accordance to *the gaze of the other*, the stronger, more dominant members of society. Rather than recognizing and asserting that his values and freedom are independent of the master’s gaze, the slave measures his worth based on the master’s assessment. In this sense, the slave’s self-definition is very much dependent on the master’s gaze. Even though he ultimately rejects the master’s valuation of his being, the slave does so not because he recognizes that he is not bound by the master’s gaze and is essentially free to make himself, but because he wants to create a new set of values that would put him at an advantage. The “slave-morality,” Nietzsche states, “says No to what is ‘outside,’ what is ‘different,’ what is ‘not itself’” (GM I 10). This is in stark contrast to the “master-morality” that “develops from a triumphant affirmation of itself.” Rather than directing his views back to himself, the man of *ressentiment* directs them “outward.” Since the slave sees himself as “irremediably weak” and his condition as “incurable,” his “will to power” becomes “sickly” and “more dangerous” (GM I 6). With his hatred for the master growing “to monstrous and uncanny proportions,” the slave aspires to make the superior noble just as weak as he is (GM I 7). This is precisely why the “slave-morality” does not provide a valuation that would “enhance” life and, instead, represents “*ressentiment* against life” itself (Reginster 297).

The new values created by the man of *ressentiment* are nothing more than “imaginings,” “lies prompted by the bad instincts of sick natures” that are “harmful in the most profound sense” (EH 256). “All the problems of politics, of social organization, and of education,” Nietzsche claims, “have been falsified through and through” by the lies of the weak. In an attempt to diminish the master’s will and eradicate his power, the man of *ressentiment* has achieved “human equality” by preaching universal and neighbourly love (Reginster 303). To Nietzsche, however, “human equality” is nothing more than a ploy “to make men more and more alike” (WP 315): “to mingle...the blood of all classes” so that the different “race[s]” of people are “no longer recognizable” (864). As a result of these lies, individuals—those who stand apart from the herd as rulers of their own lot in

life—no longer exist; instead, everything and everyone have become an indistinguishable part of the mob (WP 864). This “levelling”² (315) effect of the “slave-morality” declares that society must be “classless even while maintaining powerful class structures and differences” (NP 278). This hypocritical aspect of the “slave-morality” is precisely why “*ressentiment* revaluation” is identified throughout Nietzsche’s work as “falsification,” “lie,” “mendaciousness,” and “counterfeit” (GM I 10, 14, 15; II 11; III 19; EH P, 2–3).

How exactly does this “levelling” effect take form? The key aspect of this form of revaluation is convincing the master that, in order to be “virtuous,” they must “change their character, shed their skin and blot out their past” (WP 315). The master “should cease to be distinct” and “begin to resemble one another in their needs and demands.” In other words, they “should perish.” This “collective instinct against selection” and “privilege of all kind” soon becomes “so powerful and self-assured” that “the privileged themselves” will “soon succumb to it” (864). With the “slave-morality” comes the “mendacious slogan of *ressentiment*”: “supreme rights of the majority” (GM I 16). The “terrible and rapturous counterslogan” of the master-morality, “supreme rights for the few,” is no longer relevant and viewed as an offence against human equality and “humility” (GM I 14). As a result of this “levelling” effect, the behaviours of the majority become regulated by a “prescriptive morality” of “the herd” and individual freedom is measured by and limited to the “good of all” (Thompson 14): “...one herd! Everybody wants the same, everybody is the same [and] whoever feels differently goes voluntarily into a madhouse” (TZ 130). Humanity has become a herd where no one individual stands out among the indistinguishable mass and modernity has become a passionless age that hinders and stifles all actions that stem from an individual’s actual freedom of thought, as opposed to the freedom that is prescribed in order to maintain equality.

² In *Discourse on Inequality*, Rousseau accuses “society” of “put[ting] new shackles on the weak” while giving “new powers to the rich” (69), thereby widening the gap of inequality in nature, which is both insignificant and “scarcely noticeable” in its original state (53). Since “the worst thing that can happen to someone in the relations between one man and the other is to find oneself at the other’s mercy” (72), Rousseau sets out to *level* this imbalance in *The Social Contract* via the “general will,” which puts limits on an individual’s “civil freedom” (59) through the formation of “social bonds” (63) that promote “common interest[s]” over “private interest[s]” (66). This shift “towards equality” (63), as represented by the declaration that “all citizens” are “equal under the social contract” (129), seems to correspond with Nietzsche’s own account of the “levelling” of “human equality” (WP 315).

Rather than promote action and transcendence, this new morality, which “represents the disbelief in great human beings and an elite society,” has taught the master to be ashamed of what makes him distinct and strong, prompting him to deny his potential for greatness (WP 752). The “basic error” of this new morality, Nietzsche claims, is the fact that it “place[s] the goal in the herd and not in single individuals” (766). As a result, mediocrity has now become the face of all humanity.

Ressentiment and its devastating “levelling” effect are perhaps best captured in Nietzsche’s image of the last man and the herd or mob to which he belongs. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the last man is described as the “most despicable man” (129) who is tired of life and the very embodiment of mediocrity: “one no longer becomes poor or rich: both require too much exertion. Who still wants to rule? Who obey? Both require too much exertion” (130). The last man is someone who is merely content with his existence and too lazy to travel beyond his comfort zone. To not disturb his peace, the last man even moderates his “entertainments,” because if he is not “careful,” these pleasures can become “too harrowing” to bear. Despite the fact that he claims to have “invented happiness,” the mechanical way in which he “blinks” is the very indication of his idiocy (129). In contrast to the image of the last man, Zarathustra heralds the arrival of the overman, an idealized state of existence that man should aspire to become. The overman is the one who ventures beyond the herd—the “sums of zeros”—and represents the evolution of thought, intellectual freedom, and liberation towards a higher self-consciousness (WP 33). He is the individual among the indistinguishable members of the herd, the sea of equals, who can fully endorse the eternal recurrence. He has, within him, the ability to see faults in the old values and the strength and courage to go against these customs. Though the crowd that Zarathustra speaks to wishes to be “turn[ed]...into these last men” (TZ 130), it is the overman that represents “the meaning of...existence” (132). As “the lightning out of the dark cloud of man,” the overman is man’s key out of “the punishment called existence” and path to independence and excellence (252).

2.2. The *Belief in and Lie of Bad Faith*

Though Sartre's *bad faith* is not situated in the formation of opposing moralities, it is still deeply rooted in this idea of *the gaze of the other*. Its underlying threat to individual freedom is also just as grave. The parallels between Nietzsche's and Sartre's concerns for the problem of meaning and emphasis on the liberation of the individual signify that—even with the enlightenment, or maybe because of it—individual freedom is an ongoing predicament. Like Nietzsche, Sartre is also an advocate of human freedom, responsibility, and authenticity. Sartre's philosophy puts the spotlight back on the autonomous individual who will not crumble under *the gaze of the other* and stresses the recognition of individual freedom. Rather than adhering to social convention, Sartre's individual takes a stance against it by assuming full responsibility for their existence and nurturing their authenticity. In order to do either of these two things, the individual would have to accept their condition in life and realize the radical freedom that comes along with it. That is to say, they must free themselves of *bad faith* and, in turn, transcend the other's gaze.

Although Nietzsche is only mentioned twice in *Being and Nothingness*, hints of his influence on Sartre's concept of *bad faith* are indicated in these two brief references. Sartre alludes to Nietzsche's "illusions-of-worlds-behind-the-scene" in order to point our attention to "the being-behind-the-appearance," one of the driving forces behind his question of being and campaign for the individual's radical freedom (4). In order to understand the being-behind-the-appearance, one must first look at Sartre's concept of "being-for-itself": a being that is conscious of its own consciousness (120). Unlike being-in-itself, which lacks the ability to change and is unaware of its existence (26), being-for-itself—man—lacks a predetermined essence and is, therefore, forced to create itself from nothingness (568). Instead of simply "being...what it is," as the being-in-itself does, man, as a being-for-itself, must "choose" and "make" his own being (28). In his constant attempt to make himself, man has created for himself different roles and appearances in order to interact with the external world. This is where the being-behind-the-appearance comes in, representing the internal self: an existence that is separate from one's social roles, which are formal projections, "representations," and "images" of a self that one

wants to “play” “for others” (BN 102–03).³ These representations of the self, then, are responses to the presence and, therefore, *gaze of the other*. Since man is not a being-in-itself, he can only become aware of himself when he is confronted with the gaze of another: “I recognize that I *am* as the Other sees me...the Other has not only revealed to me what I was; he has established me in a new type of being which can support new qualifications...but at the same time I need the Other in order to realize fully all the structures of my being” (302–03). Even if man tries to resist or negate the Other’s definition of his being, he is still basing his negation on the Other’s gaze and, therefore, on the Other’s definition of his existence—no matter what he does, man cannot escape *the gaze of the other* (SJ 813). For man, then, the Other is a “center of reference” to which the “meanings” of his being “refer” (BN 654). The extent of the Other’s gaze, however, does not stop here. Not only does *the gaze of the other* define who man is, the words and actions of past and present Others also define the way man sees the world: “I, by whom meanings come to things, I find myself engaged in an *already meaningful* world which reflects to me meanings which I have not put into it” (655). In other words, man is born into a world where things and words are already defined for him.

Since he cannot be free of the Other’s gaze, man must remember that the Other’s definition of his being is neither concrete nor final. Though one is never free of one’s “situation,” one is always free to deny or negate that situation and try to change it (812). That is to say, the self is not a “fixed personality”; rather, it is a constant “process of becoming” (Thompson 17) that is able to perpetually recreate itself (BN 100). With this freedom comes the ability to “envision new possibilities, to reform ourselves and to reinterpret our facticity in light of new projects and ambitions” (SJ 813). Man, Sartre says, is “never any one of [his] attitudes, any one of [his] actions” (BN 103). Inasmuch as man cannot hold onto any one attitude or action, no one attitude or action can be equated with the whole of his existence. This is easier said than done, however, since the “mere appearance of the Other” puts the self “in the position of passing judgment on

³ Nietzsche outlines a similar phenomenon in his critique of communal existence, which has only succeeded in creating inauthentic citizens who have stripped themselves of their identity in order to adhere to the customs and laws of society: “Now consider the way “moral man” is dressed up, how he is veiled behind moral formulas and concepts of decency—the way our actions are benevolently concealed by the concepts of duty, virtue, sense of community, honourableness, self-denial” (GS 352).

[it]self as on an object, for it is as an object that [the self] appear[s] to the Other” (BN 302). By existing as an object, however, man is “being...what [he] is not” rather than “what [he] is,” a subject who is “ontologically” free to choose his own facticity (113). If man attempts to “recover” his being “by assimilating or absorbing the other” (Bell 294) and “forgets” that he is a “self-determining” being then he is in *bad faith* (SJ 813). *Bad faith*, then, is “a method of thinking” that imagines “a truth” to believe in, even if that “truth” is based on a lie (BN 113). Man is, therefore, in *bad faith* as a being-for-others when he identifies himself wholly with the way the Other defines him and refuses to admit to his full freedom (Martin 70).

In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre declares that “if man is what he is, *bad faith* is forever impossible and candour ceases to be his ideal and becomes instead his being” (101). “But is man what he is,” Sartre asks, if he “exists as consciousness of being”? Since “consciousness can be produced only in and through the existence of the Other,” man can only become aware of himself when he is confronted with the “gaze” of another (363). If man is only aware of himself through *the gaze of the other*, “how can he *be* what he is” (101)? Unless *the gaze of the other* always produces an accurate interpretation of the one being looked at, man can only exist as a “representation for others and for [him]self” (102). In order to fully understand why man—as a representation—is never what he is, one can look at Sartre’s discussion of the waiter in the café:

Let us consider this waiter in the café. His movement is quick and forward, a little too precise, a little too rapid. He comes toward the patrons with a step a little too quick. He bends forward a little too eagerly; his voice, his eyes express an interest a little too solicitous for the order of the customer. Finally there he returns, trying to imitate in his walk the inflexible stiffness of some kind of automaton.... All his behaviour seems to us a game. He applies himself to chaining his movements as if they were mechanisms...his gestures and even his voice seem to be mechanisms.... (101)

It is clear from this passage that the waiter is merely “playing at *being* a waiter in a café,” “amusing himself” in order to “*realize*” “his condition” (102). None of his attitudes and actions come naturally; rather, they seem forced and exaggerated. If he *is* a waiter in a café, there will be no need to *play* at being what he is. Since “playing at *being* a waiter” is just a representation, it is “in vain” that the waiter tries to “fulfill the functions of a café

waiter” (BN 102–03). Furthermore, Sartre describes the waiter as an “automaton” and his movements as “mechanisms” in order to stress his “object-ness” and inability to be who he is. In being viewed as an object, the waiter—a being-for-itself—has now become a being-in-itself. If he has become a being-in-itself, it is obvious that he is not what he is: a being-for-itself. Contrary to what D. Z. Phillips suggests, the waiter is *not* “in danger of becoming a caricature of a waiter”; rather, his “too precise” and “too rapid” movements seem to emphasize the waiter’s over-identification with his role as a waiter (23). Since his being is always a representation in the eyes of the Other, man is never what he is; this can only mean that the danger of *bad faith* is very possible. Interestingly, Sartre’s image of the café waiter seems to echo Nietzsche’s thirty-eighth aphorism in “Maxims and Arrows.” Here he asks, “Are you genuine? or an actor? A representation? or that itself which is represented? – Finally you are no more than an imitation of an actor...*Second* question of conscience” (37). It is unclear whether or not Sartre borrowed this idea directly from Nietzsche; however, the similarities between the waiter and the actor are too telling to dismiss the possibility.

What exactly is *bad faith* and why does it opposed to individual freedom? “The true problem” of *bad faith*, Sartre says, “stems evidently from the fact that...[it] is faith” and, therefore, a “belief” (BN 112). Why is being a *belief* a bad thing if Sartre himself defines it as something that stems from our ability to “question” our “own being” (114)? The answer lies in the fact that *bad faith* “does not succeed in believing what it wishes to believe” (115). Since *belief* “can realize itself only in its destruction, which can manifest itself to itself only by denying itself,” “to believe,” according to Sartre, “is not-to-believe” (114). To put it simply, the very act of *believing* in something is an indication of not *believing*, of not *knowing* that that something is true: “Every belief is a belief that falls short; one never wholly believes what one believes.... At the moment when I wish to believe myself courageous I *know* that I am a coward. But this certainty would come to destroy my belief” (115). As a *belief*, then, *bad faith* can be defined as a particular form of self-denial that arises from a “lie to oneself” (88). It is also the denial that we are responsible for our actions and, therefore, responsible for ourselves (Thompson 16). In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre distinguishes between two different types of lies: the ones told by someone who “is in complete possession of the truth which he’s hiding” and the ones told “to oneself, not to the other” (89). Unlike the liar who lies in general, the liar

of *bad faith* believes in his own lies and does not lie knowingly. As Sartre puts it, the lie of *bad faith* is neither a “cynical lie nor [a] knowing preparation for deceitful concepts” (BN 115). *Bad faith*, then, is “a lie without a liar” (92). What is this *lie* that one tells oneself? It is a lie that involves the denial of our own radical freedom: “the idea that, although we are surrounded by social...constraints, each of us...remains a free agent in the sense that we not only can choose, we have to choose” (Thompson 16).

Since the majority of us do not live up to the challenge of radical freedom, we choose to deny this freedom and instead, choose to “erroneously” believe that we are “something fixed and settled” (SJ 813). No matter what we do, however, we cannot escape this condition of our existence: in choosing to deny our freedom we are, in effect, positing the very same thing that we trying to negate.⁴ To deny that one is radically free, then, is to lie to oneself in *bad faith*. As Solomon points out, “to be human, to be conscious, is to be free to imagine, free to choose, and [be] responsible for one’s lot in life” (812). By denying one’s freedom, and the responsibility attached to it, one is essentially denying one’s own humanity.⁵ As long as one exists, one is sentenced to a life of radical freedom. Since freedom “is the foundation of all essences,” it is not something that we can eradicate from our existence by simply negating it (BN 566). Sartre goes on to say that “we are [both] perpetually *threatened* by the nihilation of our actual choice and perpetually threatened with choosing ourselves—and consequently with becoming—other than we are” (598). We do not want to take up the responsibility of being our own person but, at the same time, we do not want to have our freedom of choice taken away from us. This is why we live in *bad faith*—by convincing ourselves that we do not have a choice, we eliminate the need to choose ourselves. If we are not able to *make* ourselves, we are not pressured into being responsible for who we are. As Sartre says, “the goal of *bad faith*...is to put oneself out of reach; it is an escape” from the condition of our being (110). This escape, however, is not successful for, though the

⁴ In his explanation of the “difference[s] between man and beast,” Rousseau makes a similar claim about an individual’s choice being both the result and indication of their freedom: “The beast chooses or rejects by instinct, man by free action...Nature commands every animal, and the beast obeys. Man experiences the same implusion, but he recognizes that he is free to comply or resist” (DI 32-33). As a “free agent,” then, man “contributes to his own” “activities” by performing “free action[s].”

⁵ Rousseau shares this view when he says “to renounce our freedom is to renounce our character as men, the rights, and even the duties, of humanity” (SC 50).

“first act” of *bad faith* is “to flee what it is,” it is in vain that it tries “to flee what it can not [sic] flee” (BN 115).

To make clear the repercussions of *bad faith*, Sartre offers his depiction of characters that, even in death, display varying levels of self-denial and dependence on *the gaze of the other* in *No Exit*. From the very first scene, the theme of the play: *bad faith* and *the gaze of the other*, is clearly illustrated in the drawing-room that contains no windows or mirrors and Valet’s “beastly” and “paralyzed...eyelids” (NE 4–5). Since this *torture chamber* has no windows or mirrors, the three characters: Garcin, Inez, and Estelle, are stuck in an enclosed space that compels them to face the other’s gaze in order to see themselves. Like Valet’s constant, unblinking gaze, the characters are to *live* with their “eyes open all the time,” thereby forcing them to both gaze at the other and be subjected to the other’s gaze (6). Stuck in this unconventional version of *hell*, all three characters exist solely under *the gaze of the other*, and their suffering and misery are caused purely by the extent of their *bad faith*. Similarly to how they lived their lives, all three characters deceive, manipulate, and lie to each other while, at the same time, trying to gain recognition from the other characters in the room.

Estelle, who is guilty of deceit and murder, is the one who is most tortured by the fact that there are no mirrors in the room. Due to her inability to see her own reflection, she tries desperately to seek recognition from Garcin and relies heavily on Inez’s descriptions of her appearance. She claims that if she “can’t see” herself, she “begin[s] to wonder if [she] really and truly exist” at all (19). Obsessed with being able to “see” herself “properly,” Estelle accepts Inez’s offer to be her “looking-glass” even while knowing that Inez’s words cannot be trusted (20). Inez sums up Estelle’s situation perfectly when she declares that she is Estelle’s “lark-mirror” and predicts that there is no way she can “escape” her gaze (21). The extent to which Estelle goes to see her reflection is precisely the reason why she belongs in the room. Though she claims to not have “the foggiest” idea why she is there and wonders if it is “some ghastly mistake” that she is placed in the room, the fact that she measures her worth exclusively on her *reflection* proves that it is no mistake that she, as a being-for-others, is placed in the company of Garcin and Inez, who, like her, also suffer from *bad faith* (15).

Like Estelle, Garcin, who is guilty of heartlessness and cowardice, also suffers from self-denial and wishes “to be able to see [himself] in a glass” (28). In the same way that Estelle refuses to admit that she belongs in the room, Garcin fabricates the circumstances of his death and the devotion of his wife. Ironically, he is the one who tells Estelle to “stop posing” because they “have nothing to lose” now that they are all dead (23). Against his own advice, Garcin is just as reluctant as Estelle when it comes to confessing his misdeeds. It is important to note, however, that this does not mean that either Estelle or Garcin are ashamed of their crimes. In fact, they willingly admit that they do not regret what they have done; rather, they simply are ashamed of admitting to their crimes and having the others judge them based on what they have done. This alone is a clear indication of their *bad faith*.

Garcin, more so than the others, is the one who is most in *bad faith* as he cannot even decide for himself whether or not he is a coward, going as far as asking Estelle to decide for him. When Estelle refuses to “put [herself] in [his] skin” and told him to “decide for [himself],” Garcin turns to Inez instead because he could not make up his own mind (37). Because Inez, who freely admits to being “cruel,” understands the meaning of his crimes, Garcin seeks redemption through her hands, believing that if she thought that he was not a coward, salvation was possible for him: “It’s you who matter; who hate me. If you’ll have faith in me I’m saved” (43). Despite the fact that he claims to have “made his choice deliberately” and declares that “a man is what he wills himself to be,” it is evident that Garcin is the one who is most steeped in *bad faith*. Though he repeatedly claims that he wants to leave the room, when the door finally opens, he chooses to stay instead, hoping to convince Inez that he is not a coward, thereby emphasizing the importance of the other’s opinions and verifying his existence as a being-for-others.

Of all three characters, Inez is, to a certain extent, most honest with herself and the others who share her fate. As the one who is most “conscious of [herself]” (19), Inez is the first to advise the others to stop their “play-acting” since all three are “tarred with the same brush” (16). She is also the one to recognize Garcin’s “utterly absurd” suggestion that they try “to forget the others” (22). This does not mean, however, that she is free of *bad faith*; in fact, her *bad faith* manifests itself in the very way in which she uses her gaze to torture Garcin and Estelle. Inez, whose crimes are deception and manipulation, uses her words to turn the other two characters against each other and,

being the only one to admit that she is “rotten to the core,” tortures Garcin and Estelle by reminding them of their own wickedness (29). In this sense, Inez is just as guilty as the other two characters for not being able to exist without the recognition of the other: “I can’t get on without making people suffer. Like a live coal...in others’ hearts. When I’m alone I flicker out” (26). By manipulating other people, she is able to creep “inside [their] skin” and make them see “the world through [her] eyes,” thereby existing only through the other characters. As a being-for-others, she, like Garcin and Estelle, is but an object that is at the “mercy” of the other: “just look at me, see how weak I am, a mere breath on the air, a gaze observing you, a formless thought that thinks you” (44).

In this study of the different ways in which *bad faith* manifests itself, the need to urgently take action is communicated through the three characters’ inability to act:

- Inez: Prove it. Prove it was no dream. It’s what one does, and nothing else, that shows the stuff one’s made of.
- Garcin: I died too soon. I wasn’t allowed time to—to do my deeds.
- Inez: One always dies too soon—or too late. And yet one’s whole life is complete at that moment, with a line drawn neatly under it, ready for the summing up. You are—your life, and nothing else. (43)

No Exit, then, serves as Sartre’s cautionary tale, warning his readers of the dangers of *bad faith*. Near the end of *Being and Nothingness*, it is clear that this sense of urgency stems from the inevitability of death. Insofar as our freedom is limited to our mortal existence, death will unavoidably eliminate our freedom of choice. Unlike Garcin, Inez, and Estelle, those who are still alive are the only ones who can act and free themselves of *bad faith*. As Garcin puts it, to die is to leave one’s “fate in [the other’s] hands” (39). For the reason that “the very existence of *death* alienates us wholly in our own life to the advantage of the Other,” we must embrace our freedom and exert it now when we still have a say in how the Other views us (BN 695). Since “the *fact of death*” gives “the final victory to the point of view of the Other” and since “to die is to exist only through the Other,” we must realize and embrace our radical freedom while we still can (696). Although we are not free in death, we are “free mortal[s]” of this world (700). It is only

with death that we become “prey for the living”; until that happens, we can “escape” the Other’s gaze by making ourselves “be what [we are]” (695).⁶

⁶ In *Being and Time*, which greatly influenced Sartre’s own *Being and Nothingness*, Martin Heidegger proposes a similar position in his discussion of “being-toward-death,” a state of being that creates authentic individuality. According to Heidegger, to be a “being-toward-death” is to understand that one’s “insuperable” death is “nonrelational” and one’s “ownmost” (50: 241). That is to say, one’s death is both inevitable and entirely one’s own. By taking ownership of one’s own death and recognizing it as a possibility, one is separating oneself from the “they.” Therefore, this awareness of the possibility of one’s own death reveals one’s authentic self, a self that “is related to *itself*” (51: 242). However, an inauthentic form of “being-toward-death” exists if, in “idle talk,” one tries to “flee” from the meaning of one’s own death and its “definiteness” (52: 248) by reintroducing the “they” back into the discussion: “Dying, which is essentially and irreplaceably mine, is distorted into a publicly occurring event which the they encounters” (51: 243). In “idle talk,” “death is understood as an indeterminate something” that only “strikes the they” as it “is *not yet present* for oneself, and is thus no threat.” Though dying “does concern Dasein,” everyday Dasein engaging in “idle talk” believes that death “belongs to no one in particular.” For Heidegger, “such ambiguity” is the precise reason why Dasein runs the risk “of losing itself in the they with regard to an eminent potentiality-of-being that belongs to its own self.” It is the everyday “evasion of death” that makes Dasein “an *inauthentic* being toward it” (52: 249). In this sense, both Heidegger’s Dasein and Sartre’s individual, as beings-toward-death, need to eliminate the “they” and the “Other,” respectively, from the self in order to achieve authenticity—to do otherwise is to exist inauthentically.

Chapter 3.

The Liberation of the Individual

*What does your conscience say?—
“You shall become the person you are.”
– Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science**

Knowing the limitations of *ressentiment* and *bad faith* is only the first step to achieving freedom. It is not enough to simply realize the danger of the other’s gaze and accept our status as a free agent; we must actively dig ourselves out of our self-imposed prison and willingly embark on the lonely journey towards liberation. Individual responsibility and authenticity are achieved only when we fully commit ourselves to becoming who we are and who we are meant to be. The emphasis, here, is on the process of becoming and self-overcoming, the perpetual need to make and remake ourselves. This is precisely why the path to freedom is not an easy one to take; it is a constant struggle that requires dedication and determination. Not only must we accept that the world is without intrinsic meaning, which means that there is no safety net for us to fall back on, we must rejoice in this fact and set out to create our own meaning. It is in this nihilistic aspect of their writings that Nietzsche and Sartre see the possibilities of individual freedom. That is to say, because there are no absolute truths and fixed essences, we are wholly free to interpret and reinterpret the world and our place in it without being limited by any form of determinism.

3.1. The Origin of Truth and the Creation of Knowledge

For Nietzsche, specifically, the only truth and meaning that do exist are those created by interpretations from diverse perspectives. In other words, though absolute truth may not exist, interpretive claims to truth do. Truth and meaning, then, are mere reflections of our interpretations of the world and of our existence in relation to that

world. Since truth and meaning are products of constant acts of interpretation, conducted from a particular perspective, any claim to absolute or intrinsic truth is an outright lie. That is to say, given that truth is created by man and can have more than just one meaning, it is neither intrinsic nor absolute. As we evaluate things, however, we come to a conclusion and assume that our search has led us to the discovery of truths. Through the process of evaluation and conclusion, we egotistically think that we have found an absolute and intrinsic truth when, in reality, we have merely created it: “what is henceforth to count as ‘truth’ is now fixed, that is, a uniformly valid and binding designation of things is invented, and the legislation of language likewise yields the first laws of truth” (TL 23). It is only “after long use” that we view the created truths “as fixed, canonical, and binding” (29–30).¹ By deluding ourselves into believing that these man-made truths are unconditional and infallible, we are merely spreading the “sickness” that will poison the lives and minds of men: “truth as an absolute duty is hostile and destructive towards the world” (WN 175). What Nietzsche is identifying here, then, is a fallacious origin. From the very beginning, these so called “truths” were created based on lies:

For here a distinction is drawn for the first time between truth and lie: the liar uses valid designations—words—to make the unreal appear real; he says, for instance, “I am rich,” precisely when the proper designation for his condition would be “poor.” He misuses fixed conventions by various substitutions or even inversions of names. (TL 23)

In this passage, truth is described as being created for the creator’s own advantage and is not based on anything that is authentic or accurate. One man’s truth, then, becomes the universal truth: “a seeker views the entire world as bound to man, as the infinitely splintered echo of a primal sound, that of man, or as the reduplicated copy of a primal image, that of man” (35). Since these truths are created, they are nothing more than

¹ In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche makes a similar argument in his discussion of Greek myth and religion: “it is the fate of every myth to creep by degrees into the narrow limits of some alleged historical reality, and to be treated by some later generation as a unique fact with historical claims...the mythical premises of a religion are systematized as a sum total of historical events...the feeling for myth perishes, and its place is taken by the claim of religion to historical foundations” (10).

“manufactured ideals” that “stink of so many lies” (GM I 14). All claims to truth are, therefore, “produced fictions” (Elborough 49).

Since truths and meanings are created rather than found, it is only logic to suppose that they are not absolute. The truth for one person may not be the truth for another; one set of values may be moral to one group of people but not to another. It is only after these truths and meanings have been created that man then forgets that they were created in the first place and views them as being absolute and fixed. There is no such thing as an idea or a truth that does not come from someone or from some particular time and place (LN 38). In being created, these truths cannot exist independently of their creators. In “On Truth and Lies in an Extra-Moral Sense,” Nietzsche identifies “forgetfulness” as the reason why we have “come to imagine” that we have discovered truth when, in reality, we have merely created it (24). As a “mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, [and] anthropomorphisms,” truth is fluid and, therefore, not fixed (29). Over time and after prolonged use, however, we forget “that the original metaphors of intuition were metaphors and take them as the things themselves” (35). Furthermore, not only does man forget that truth is created, he also forgets that he himself is the creator of this truth. “Only by man’s forgetting himself as...an artistically creative subject,” Nietzsche says, “does he live with some degree of peace, security, and consistency” (36). Insofar as we have access to absolute and intrinsic truth, there is a certain amount of comfort in knowing that our existence in this world is meaningful. To unravel the mysteries of existence, take “something strange” and reduce it “to something familiar,” and establish “rule[s]” in which we can follow is to make ourselves “feel at home” in the world (GS 300). There is also a certain amount of security in knowing that we are not living an unguided, aimless existence. To rely on the absolute, however, is to simply deny our responsibility. If we exist according to a predetermined set of ideals and values, there is no need to exert ourselves, no need to be responsible for our own essence. This is precisely why we turn to religion and science as means of achieving knowledge of the world and of our existence in that world. We do not want to believe that the world is in a constant and uncontrollable flux and that absolute knowledge is unattainable and beyond our grasp. It is critical to know that this compulsive need to make sense of our existence and secure knowledge is not something that Nietzsche would directly object to. After all, it is this need that drives us to constantly interpret the

world according to our various perspectives. It is only when we deceive ourselves into believing that our investigations have led to the discovery of absolute and intrinsic truths that we are “polluting life” (Fink 117).

Truth and knowledge, then, are “not” things to “be found or discovered,” rather they are things “that must be created” (WP 298). How exactly is knowledge created? The formula is simple: since knowledge is not based on facts, as there are no such things as facts, it is logical to deduce that knowledge is reflective of our perspectives of the world. “Against positivism” (267) and “such contradictory concepts as “pure reason,” “absolute spirituality,” [and] “knowledge in itself,”” Nietzsche declares that, with the “active...forces” of interpretation, “there is only a perspective seeing” and, therefore “a perspective “knowing”” (GM III 12). He insists that there is no absolute knowledge that transcends all possible perspectives (WR 35–36), and that all doctrines and opinions are only partial and limited by a particular point of view (LN 21). Perspective is “the basic condition of all life” (BG 193) and the human being is “an organism that invariably and necessarily interprets” (Green 186). For Nietzsche, there is no truth in itself and knowledge is always constrained by one’s perspective: “it is our needs that interpret the world; our drives...each one has its perspective” (WP 267).

3.1.1. Perspectivism and the Stages of Liberation

This ability to generate meaning from our interpretation of the world and our existence within it is what Nietzsche terms “perspectivism.” By accepting Nietzsche’s “perspectivism,” we are, in turn, able to give up the “dogmatism” of philosophy, religion, and science (Young 416). Every “fanaticism,” for Nietzsche, represents “a sign of a weak and timid will that lacks the courage to live in a world of uncertainty” (440). Perspectivism, then, represents a realm of open possibilities that embraces contingency and allows for the revaluation of values (WR 199). Insofar as there is “no meaning” behind existence, “but countless meanings” (WP 267), the possibilities are endless:

As long as the horizon appears free to us again, even if it should not be bright; as long as our ships may venture out again, venture out to face any danger; all the daring of the lover of knowledge is permitted again; the sea, our sea, lies open again; perhaps there has never yet been such an “open sea.” (GS 280)

At each moment there are new interpretations, new worlds that come into being. For Nietzsche, the “horizon” and the “open sea” represent new and different opportunities and possibilities. Since everything is permitted, we are no longer controlled and restrained by the absolute values of the “old god” (GS 280). With this new outlook on life, we are able to embrace ambiguity and differences. There is always more than one approach to any given discipline, more than one valid perspective. According to Nietzsche, such diversity would be necessary to the “vitality” of each and every field of study (WR 224). Julian Young explains Nietzsche’s emphasis on diversity the best in his map analogy:

Maps, that is to say, represent only an aspect of the world they map; one represents the roads, another the contours of hills and valleys, another the types and distribution of vegetation, another the geological make-up of the terrain, another the ethnic diversity of the population, another its religious diversity, and so on. To move towards a ‘complete’ knowledge of the terrain one needs to possess all these maps and more. In principle there is no limit to the number of world-representations, ‘maps’ of different types one might assemble, so that although one can acquire more ‘complete’ knowledge of the world one can never acquire absolutely complete knowledge. (475)

By seeing “many lands and many people,” by collecting all the pieces of the puzzle, we are able to get a clearer, more complete picture of how the world is (TZ 170). As “a thinker who thrives on polarities, on starkly opposed pairs of concepts” (Green 116), Nietzsche believes that the more perspectives we have command of, the more knowledgeable we become (Young 476): “the *more* affects we allow to speak about one thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our “concept” of this thing, our “objectivity,” be” (GM III 12). This is why we must continue to interpret and reinterpret the world, and to accumulate various different perspectives; to permanently stick with one perspective is to revert back to the very tradition that we are trying to leave behind.

As the antithesis of the last man—who is too lazy and weak to take up the challenge of perspectivism—Zarathustra’s overman is the quintessential creative subject who is strong enough to take on the constant task of interpreting and reinterpreting the world. The overman, then, is the last and ideal stage in the path to individual freedom that we should all aspire to become. To explain the steps needed for man to evolve into

this ideal state of being, Zarathustra offers his three metamorphoses of the spirit and the tightrope metaphor, which must be examined in order to map out the stages from oppression to liberation. Though these two ideas do not appear together in the same section, they can be understood as being equivalent to each other and, therefore, representing the evolution from man to higher man, and from higher man to overman. As should soon be clear, each of the metamorphoses represents one stage in the evolution of man: the camel represents man, the lion represents the higher man, and the child represents the overman.

As the first stage of liberation, man is represented by the camel, which is a domesticated, herd animal. As part of the herd, the camel travels in large numbers and will live and feed as a part of its group. If separated, the single camel will not likely survive by itself. As a domesticated animal, the camel is controlled and supervised by the authority figure—the shepherd—and usually depends on that figure for guidance and survival. The camel represents man simply because it lacks individuality. Like the camel, Zarathustra's man, with his herd instinct, can only think and act as part of a group and lacks the ability to think and act as an individual. Like the camel, which is used as a saddle animal and a vehicle for carrying cargo, man, in his lack of power and intelligence, will only carry the weight that is dumped on him: "man is a grave burden for himself...he carries on his shoulders too much that is alien to him. Like a camel, he kneels down and lets himself be loaded" (TZ 305). As a member of the herd, "where every zero has "equal rights," where it is virtuous to be zero," man is taught to no longer believe in himself (WP 53). With his absolute values, customs, and truths, man is domesticated and will never be more than just "a beast that has been taught to dance by blows and a few meager morsels" (TZ 132). Instead of doing what he wants, man can only do what he *has been taught* to do, what *has been dictated* to him.

To stand out in the herd, the camel must take control and break free from its reins. When this is achieved, the camel will transform into the lion. The higher man, as the lion, is an animal of great power, courage, and importance. This individual, who has "conquer[ed] his freedom," is the "master [of] his own desert," not merely one of the indistinguishable members of the herd being led through it (138). Unlike the camel, the lion is free-roaming and, therefore, not contained. As the lion, the higher man, is able to think for himself and make his own decisions. This individual has the ability to see the

faults in the old values and has the strength and courage to go against the customs that claim to be absolute. In doing so, “he seeks out his last master” and says *no* to the *you will* in order to say *I will* (TZ 138). However, it is not enough to be the lion—in order to move to the next and last stage of the metamorphoses, the higher man must “*learn to laugh*”² (408). It is the laughing lion, accompanied by the flock of doves,³ that Zarathustra identifies as a sign that his “children are near” (439).

In becoming the overman, the laughing lion will evolve into the child, who represents rebirth and a new beginning: “what can the child do that even the lion could not do? Why must the preying lion still become the child? The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement...the spirit now wills his own will” (139). As the “awakened one...among the sleepers” (123) who is “the meaning of the earth...[and] existence,” the child will be able to break the old tablets and create new ones (125). By starting afresh, the overman can create new values and customs in his attempts to interpret the world with his new “eyes” (GM III 12). Since a child is regarded as a product or result of particular agencies, the overman is considered the child of the higher man. As the descendent and new generation of the higher man, or laughing lion, the child is the only animal that possesses self-consciousness and is, therefore, aware of his own person and the world that is around him. In knowing that he

² Identified by Nietzsche as something that is “holy,” laughter is used in this context to illustrate the superiority of the higher man when compared to the members of the herd (TZ 408). In the same way that “the ape” is considered “a laughing stock or a painful embarrassment” to man, man represents the same for the overman (124). This comparison between the two stages of the metamorphoses is reflected in the image of the overman as someone who stands on the highest mountaintop and looks down on everything that is beneath him.

³ It is the laughing lion and the flock of doves that will be able to “kill the spirit of gravity” (TZ 153). Here, the spirit of gravity can be understood in two different ways: 1) as something of extreme or alarming importance—a serious or solemn manner and 2) as a force that pulls the body towards a centre. In these two instances, laughter, as the antithesis of seriousness, is used to kill the spirit of gravity and the flock of doves represent the act of defying gravity, which, in turns, symbolizes the liberation from limits and the higher man rising above a situation. Since gravity, through which “all things fall,” is beyond the body and has the ability to pull it down, killing gravity meant releasing the body from the pressure and weight that presses it down. Because Zarathustra emphasizes worldly experiences, he places great importance on the body and it is only when the spirit of gravity is destroyed can the higher man, with his laughter, rise to become the overman. Along these same lines, laughter can also be seen as the antithesis of *ressentiment*, which, like the spirit of gravity, causes a similar sense of *heaviness* that represses and weighs down the individual’s potential for greatness and transcendence.

exists, the child is able to question his own existence. It is this awareness that makes the overman so special. As the descendent of the higher man, the child shares his predecessor's suspicion of the old values, but is able to take it a step further by being able to create new values in place of the ones that no longer ring true. In becoming the child, the overman restarts life in a state of complete innocence, uncorrupted by the educational system and untainted by the evils of the old values and customs.

3.2. Nothingness, Responsibility, and Authenticity

Though Sartre does not address the issue of nihilism per se, he shares Nietzsche's conviction that the world is without absolute and intrinsic meaning and, like Nietzsche, sees the possibilities that come with this realization. More specifically, he advances the notion that the world and the human subject exist in a state of nothingness. Not only is nothingness the "foundation for [our] freedom," but it is also from this nothingness that we can make and remake our essences (BN 71). In the same way that nihilism represents, for Nietzsche, the precursor to the revaluation of values, nothingness condemns us to freedom and forces us "to choose what [we] will be" (EM 23). Since "existence...precede[s] essence," we are "solely responsible for [our] own existence" and, therefore, must determine our essence by creating our own values. Though a daunting idea, nothingness, like nihilism, represents a clean slate from which the individual can embark on their journey towards liberation. In this sense, Sartre's account of liberation is similar to Nietzsche's, and both projects can be traced back to both philosophers' rejection of absolutes and emphasis on the individual's ability to create themselves from, and because of, this nihilistic state of nothingness.

To fully grasp the radical freedom that results from nothingness, we must first understand what Sartre means by "nothingness" being "at the heart of man" (BN 568). Here, nothingness refers to the state in which we are thrown into existence. Since existence precedes essence, there is no predetermined essence that decides our course in life; that is to say, there are no absolute values or fixed customs with which to guide our actions. In this state of nothingness, we are "entirely abandoned" and, consequently, entrusted with the responsibility of "making [ourselves]...down to the slightest detail" (569) without relying on any pre-existing truths to justify our choices: "my freedom is the

unique foundation of values and that *nothing*, absolutely nothing justifies me in adopting this or that particular value...As a being by whom values exist, I am unjustifiable” (BN 76). What does it mean to be “without justification” (78)? It means that we are wholly responsible for our “decision[s],” and, therefore, “without excuses.” To make excuses is to deny our existential condition and prescribe to determinism, which is “reassuring because [it] constitute[s] a permanent game of *excuses*” (79). As a “process of distraction,” determinism “denies” us the possibility of “transcendence.” To “take refuge in...determinism,” then, is to choose to deny our radical freedom and give up our chances of liberation (82).

Like existence, “human freedom” also “precedes essence...and makes it possible” (60) for us to “transform” ourselves into whatever we want to be, thereby making us “the origin of [our own] acts” (81). That is to say, “the essence of [our] being is suspended in [our] freedom” and, therefore, to exist is to be free (60). As Sartre declares, “man does not exist *first* in order to be free *subsequently*; there is no difference between the being of man and his *being-free*.” Inasmuch as “man can not [sic] be sometimes slave and sometimes free,” “he is wholly and forever free” (569) and there are “no limits” to his freedom (567). Though this radical approach to freedom is an exhilarating way of looking at existence, it is also understandable why some, if not most, of us find ourselves in anguish when faced with the depth of our responsibility: we are forever bound to our freedom and, in order to be free of *bad faith* and live authentically, must continually make and remake our being. As Sartre proclaims, “freedom...is characterized by a constantly renewed obligation to remake the *Self*” (72). Insofar as we are “condemned to be free,” we are “condemned to exist forever beyond [our] essence” (567): “man is free because he is not himself but presence to himself. The being which is what it is can not [sic] be free. Freedom is precisely the nothingness which *is made-to-be* at the heart of man and which forces human-reality *to make itself* instead of *to be*. As we have seen, for human reality, to be is to *choose oneself*” and to never exist in one’s essence because to do so is to live within a fixed self (568). This is precisely why “the human being” exists as both “a *facticity* and a *transcendence*” in this never-ending task of becoming and overcoming who they are and who they could be (98).

Seeing as we are, at the very core, nothingness, we must, therefore, perpetually create and recreate our identity without ever being what we are: in being something, we

are not being *nothing*, but since we are *nothing*, we can never be something other than what we are. Since “no law of being can assign an *a priori* number to the different projects” that we can make ourselves become (BN 618), our “freedom [is] perpetually on trial” (644) and we must, therefore, “always nihilate [sic]” the “first project” in order to move on to the next (618). This is what Sartre means when he says that “we are perpetually *threatened* by the nihilation of our actual choice and perpetually threatened with choosing ourselves—and consequently with becoming—other than we are” (598). In this sense, Sartre’s notion of radical freedom correlates with Nietzsche’s own concepts of perspectivism, becoming, and self-overcoming as both philosophers see freedom as a strenuous project that requires the individual to ceaselessly interpret and transform themselves according to their interpretation.

3.2.1. The Liberation from *Bad Faith*

While it might seem as though the path out of *bad faith* is made possible by adopting *good faith*, this could not be further from the truth. As Sartre says, *bad faith* “believes itself and does not believe itself” in either *bad faith* or *good faith*, and “is resigned in advance...to not being persuaded and transformed into *good faith* (113). Like *bad faith*, *good faith* is a *belief* and, so, suffers from the same problem and represents a similar form of self-deception. While *bad faith* “apprehends evidence” but chooses “in advance to not being fulfilled by this evidence,” *good faith* “determines itself to be not quite convinced in order to convince itself...to believe...without any self-evident intuition”: “I *believe it*; that is, I allow myself to give in to all impulses to trust it; I decide to believe in it, and to maintain myself in this decision; I conduct myself, finally, as if I were certain of it” (113–14). Sartre goes on to point out that “the ideal of *good faith* (to believe what one believes) is, like that of sincerity (to be what one is), an ideal of being-in-itself” (115). Since man is not a being-in-itself, as discussed in the previous chapter, this *belief*, like the *belief* of *bad faith*, is “self-destructi[ve]” as it “force[s] itself in decisions to adhere to uncertain truths” (113). Here, a key difference between these two forms of faith is made clear: while the liar of *bad faith* does not knowingly lie and is unaware of themselves as the liar, the individual in *good faith* persuades themselves to believe even while knowing that doubt exists. In this sense, *good faith* is a step closer to being “sincerity” in its

awareness of itself as a *belief* while “the idea of sincerity” will forever be “the antithesis of *bad faith*,” which is not aware of itself as belief and, therefore, a lie (BN 100).

This does not mean, however, that the individual should abandon *bad faith* in exchange for *good faith* in their quest for authenticity for *good faith* is still guilty of self-denial and self-deception in its very decision to conform to truths that it does not fully believe in, that it has to convince itself to believe in. In this sense, both *good faith* and *bad faith*, as *beliefs*, whether they are self-aware or not, cannot be “certain[ies]” (112). Insofar as we cannot “hide from [ourselves] that [we] believe in order not to believe and...[to] not believe *in order to believe*,” the problem of *belief*, as discussed in the previous chapter, can never be solved, and both forms of faith will forever pose a threat to an individual’s authenticity (115). For these reasons, *good faith* cannot be the alternative to *bad faith*, one that will induce an individual to assume full responsibility for the making of their being and, as a result, achieve true authenticity. How, then, does one become free of *bad faith* in order to embark on this journey towards liberation? Given that *bad faith* is identified as a “permanent risk” to *being*, can one ever be fully and truly free of it (116)? As Sartre says, once the manifestation of *bad faith* is complete, “it is...difficult to get out of it” for it “is a type of being in the world...which by itself tends to perpetuate itself” (113). Once out of *bad faith*, the risk of falling back into it is a very real one. In order to be liberated from *bad faith*, then, the individual is required to be constantly aware of its “immediate...threat” while engaging in the continuous acts of making and remaking their being (116). To do this, the individual must never forget the nothingness that both defines their existence and allows for freedom to be possible.

This way out of *bad faith* and onto the path of liberation is perhaps best encapsulated in the character of Antoine Roquentin who, in *Nausea*, constantly suffers from what he identifies as nausea every time he is faced with the stark reality of his existence. As a character just beginning to emerge out of *bad faith*, Roquentin starts to recognize its threat to his being when he laments how he has looked at himself for too long in the mirror. Here, the act of looking at oneself in the mirror is symbolic of seeing oneself as a *reflection* of the other’s gaze. That being the case, after having looked at himself through the other’s eyes for a long period of time, Roquentin sees that he is slowly losing his subjectivity: “I must have looked at myself even longer than that: what I see is well below the monkey, on the fringe of the vegetable world, at the level of

jellyfish" (N 17). Knowing that, if he goes on as he does, his *bad faith* is going to completely consume him: "I am going to outlive myself. Eat, sleep, sleep, eat. Exist slowly, softly, like these trees, like a puddle of water, like the red bench in the streetcar" (157), Roquentin begins to question his existence and his role in the making of his essence: "I am beginning to believe that nothing can ever be proved. These are honest hypotheses which take the facts into account: but I sense so definitely that they come from me, and that they are simply a way of unifying my own knowledge" (13).

In recognizing his own *bad faith*, Roquentin begins to see how others suffer from the very same sense of self-denial. This is most evident in his encounter with the doctor who chooses "to hide" from "the stark reality" of his own existence (69). In order to escape from the fact "that he is alone" and "without a past," the doctor, "with an intelligence [that] is clouded," deludes himself into thinking that "he is making progress." Roquentin, however, recognizes the truth and knows that they both "appeared by chance" (84) and "without reason" (133). In seeing "contingency" as "the perfect free gift," Roquentin is able set himself apart from the doctor who is trying to "overcome...contingency" by viewing himself as "a necessary, causal being" (131). Unlike the doctor, Roquentin does not hide from the fact that he is "alone and free" (157), and accepts that "things are entirely what they appear to be" (96), all the while acknowledging that he is "horrified" by his "frightful" existence (100), which "weigh[s] heavily on [his] heart like a great motionless beast" (132).

As the novel progresses, we see how Roquentin slowly realizes and accepts the condition into which he is born. In the beginning of the novel, we see an individual who, overwhelmed by his anguish, no longer has the "taste for his work" and "can do nothing more except wait for night" (18). But as he gradually comes to term with the source of his nausea, Roquentin begins to see that he is "the one who [can pull himself] from the nothingness to which [he] aspire" (100). It is with this recognition that he sets out to create "a work of pure imagination" (13), abandoning his biography of the Marquis de Rollebon after having realized that he "can never justify [his] existence" by studying "what has existed" (178). Rather than give in to his nausea and allow it to completely destroy him, Roquentin accepts his responsibility and asserts his freedom by committing himself to the creation of his own essence through the act of writing a novel.

Coming to terms with the condition of our existence, then, affords us the possibility of self-overcoming, which in turn, requires us to live both responsibly and authentically. According to Sartre, in order to behave authentically, we must act without relying on the self-deceptions of *bad faith*; in order to behave responsibly, we must not use our supposed “fixed personality or nature” to explain or justify our actions (Thompson 16–17). For Sartre, “absolute responsibility...is simply the logical requirement of the consequences of our freedom” (BN 708); since radical freedom is the condition of our existence, we are wholly responsible “without being able...to tear [ourselves] away from this responsibility for an instant” (710):

What happens to me happens through me...everything which happens to me is *mine*...I shall carry the entire responsibility for it...because it is the image of my free choice of myself, and everything which it presents to me is *mine* in that this represents me and symbolizes me...Thus there are no *accidents* in a life...I did not have any excuse...the peculiar character of human-reality is that it is without excuse. (708–09)

Since we are responsible for every one of our actions, we are also responsible for all the consequences that arise out of our decision to act a certain way. For example, not only is it not possible for wars to start spontaneously on their own but they cannot continue for no apparent reason; instead, wars are products of our own choices and we therefore must take full responsibility for them: “the war is *mine*...by the sole fact that it arises in a situation which I cause to be and that I can discover it there only by engaging myself for or against it...If it is going to be four empty years, then it is I who wear the responsibility for this” (709). Though he deviated from this voluntarist position in his later writings, in an interview a few years before his death, Sartre still believed that “in the end one is always responsible for what is made of one” (SJ 812).

3.2.2. Nietzschean Responsibility

Like Sartre, Nietzsche is also an adamant believer in freedom—the will to affirm life—and individual responsibility, that is, “the will to self-responsibility” (TI 9.38). It is important to note, however, that while Sartre believes in a radical freedom that exists behind every human choice, Nietzsche rejects the “superlative metaphysical” concept of freedom (Ridley 206–07). Though he is in agreement with Sartre that human freedom

has “seriously diminished, if not entirely eliminated” by such things as “one’s history” and the “conventions of one’s society,” Nietzsche does not go as far as Sartre to suggest the existence of radical freedom (Ridley 206); rather, he offers an account of freedom that is “in contradistinction to the ‘ascetic’ or ‘slavish’ ways of the past” (Guay 302). While Nietzsche does speak positively of freedom and the freedom of the will, he does not do so in order to advance a “metaphysical thesis” of freedom; instead, his thoughts on freedom are meant to draw attention to a kind of “self-relation” (Ridley 208) that enables us to venture beyond “fixed notions of what is good and what is bad” (Thompson 13). What both of their thoughts on freedom have in common, however, is the concept of transcendence: while Sartre’s man of *bad faith* has to embrace his freedom of choice in order to transcend the social roles that he plays, Nietzsche’s man of *ressentiment* has to move beyond the morality of the herd in order to become an “emancipated individual” who has learned how to speak the “language of non-repressed subjectivity” (Bergoffen 68). This is why freedom, for Nietzsche, is characterized as being “purely subjective determination” (Guay 302)—“a self-correcting enterprise of self-invention that is coincident with self-discovery” (313).

In Nietzsche’s terms, responsibility, like freedom, is a “noble” (WP 944) trait that only belongs to the “highest men” (975). The weak, the man of *ressentiment*, would only “collapse under” the “heavy responsibilities” that the strong “instinctively seeks” (944). Not only is the man of *ressentiment* unable to “bear” (975) the weight of this noble characteristic, his morality based on “equality” also “diminishes” the strong man’s “will to self-responsibility,” which in turn, causes a “decline [in] autonomy” (936). Unlike the higher men, the man of *ressentiment* does not want to be responsible for his condition and instead, places blame on an external factor—namely, the other—in order to make his own existence bearable:

The cry of the slaves, the underprivileged, places blame on the other rather than the self for their condition: “It is a crime to be born in to be born in favourable circumstances; for thus one has disinherited the others, pushed them aside, condemned them to vice, even to *work*—How can I help it that I am wretched! But somebody must be responsible, *otherwise it would be unbearable!*” (WP 765)

Since the man of *ressentiment* refuses to be responsible for his existence, he can never truly be free. In order to account for this “lack” in his character, the weak man then chooses to think of himself as being “unfree” (Ridley 206–07). Similarly, Sartre’s man of *bad faith* also over-identifies with the social categorization of his formal identity and convinces himself that his lack of freedom prevents him from transcending the formal projection of his person.

3.3. The Burden of Freedom

Responsibility and authenticity, however, are not easy things to come by. In fact, both Nietzsche and Sartre—after having identified the source of the individual’s repression and charted the necessary path out of it—are in agreement that freedom is a heavy burden to carry: while Nietzsche called for individuals who are strong enough to endure the task of overcoming, Sartre proclaimed more than once that humans are condemned to be free. It is this capability to bear one’s freedom that both philosophers highlight as the requirement for achieving transcendence. In order to test this ability, Nietzsche offered his concept of the eternal recurrence:

The greatest weight.— What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you in your loneliest loneliness and say to you: “This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and every sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence...Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: “You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine.” If this thought gained possession of you, it would change you as you are or perhaps crush you. The question in each and every thing...would lie upon your actions as the greatest weight. Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life *to crave nothing more fervently* than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal? (GS 341)

Since life repeats itself infinitely, the individual is stuck in a situation that requires them to continually exert their freedom, to make sense of the world and their existential role in it. As it turns out, freedom is not something one simply accepts, for with acceptance comes the constant process of becoming—the perpetual need to have many perspectives and

reinterpret one's facticity. It is in this sense that Nietzsche refers to "man" as "a rope, tied between beast and overman" (TZ 126). As "a rope over an abyss," "man" must make "danger [his] vocation" (132) and constantly "*conquer* [his] fear[s]" (400). To willingly take the dangerous "road" of self-overcoming is to be the "highest men" (WP 975); to do otherwise is to be the last man who, in his quest for "warmth," "have left regions where it was hard to live" behind (TZ 129). Here, the difference between the two is clear: while the highest men embrace their existence and, consequently, their freedom, the last man, too comfortable in his barren state, is too fearful to venture beyond the herd.

Since both philosophers reject the notion of absolutes, to settle within a fixed identity is to adhere to the same thing one believes to be false. This is why they both stress the individual's need to endlessly make and remake their identity autonomously. Nietzsche's eternal recurrence, then, is a mental exercise that tests the individual's attitude towards life and measures their strength of will. If the individual can rejoice in the concept of the eternal recurrence and learn to love their fate, they can withstand the full burden of freedom. To rejoice in the eternal recurrence is to accept life for what it is; to love one's fate—what Nietzsche refers to as *amor fati*—is to want "nothing to be different, not forward, not backward, not in all eternity" (EH 258). To put it another way: to "not merely bear what is necessary...but [to] love it."

Why exactly is freedom such a burden? The answer is simple: there is no escaping it and, as Sartre puts it, "we are not free to cease being free" (BN 567). Though it is our freedom that compels us to make choices, "we [did] not choose to be free" (623), nor can we choose "not to be free" (625). Freedom "is not a quality added on or a *property* of [our] nature"; rather, it is the "very...stuff of [our] being" (566). Since our freedom is very much a part of us, there is no way we can get rid of it without first doing away with our existence. Our freedom is ours and "there is no place, no purpose, no meaning, on which we can shift the responsibility for our being" (WP 765); we "carry the weight of the world...alone without anything or any person being able to lighten it" (BN 710). Freedom "forces" us to "make" and "choose" ourselves, even if we make that choice in *bad faith* (568). This is because "man is always the same, confronting a situation that is forever changing, while choice always remain a choice in any situation" (EM 47). Since we are "condemned to be free," we end up carrying "the weight of the whole world on [our] shoulders" (BN 707). Sartre goes on to say that "in this

sense...responsibility...is overwhelming since [we are] the one[s] by whom it happens that *there is* a world.” That is to say, everything in this world is a result of our choices, a projection of our thoughts, and a consequence of our actions. Even when we try to flee from our responsibilities, make ourselves “passive in the world,” and “refuse to act upon things and upon Others,” we are still choosing ourselves (710): “freedom is the freedom of choosing but not the freedom of not choosing. Not to choose is, in fact, to choose not to choose” (618–19).

For both philosophers, to truly exist is to be an active and engaged being in the world, as opposed to merely living life and getting by. In other words, to embrace our individuality, we must actively shape and cultivate our character, make our own choices, and have the strength to carry them through. For Sartre, it is through our choices and actions that we “learn” how to be free (566). Seeing how “reality exists only in action,” we are, therefore, “nothing more than the sum of [our] actions” (EM 37). As Roquentin puts it, “the world of explanations and reason is not the world of experience” (N 129). Nietzsche would agree as he passionately declares that it is through “deeds,” “not words,” “that one constantly contradicts the great majority” and cultivates one’s

individuality (WP 944). Since we are responsible for our own history⁴ and biography, we must act authentically as historical agents⁵ in order to produce life and endlessly give birth to new systems of values.

⁴ This position is reiterated in Nietzsche's *The Use and Abuse of History*. In this critique of history, human responsibility and action are highlighted in order to arrive at a "fruitful" way of using history to benefit the present (12). According to Nietzsche, "every man and nation needs a certain knowledge of the past" but draws the line if our fascination with the past "weaken[s] the present or undermine[s] a living future" (22). If we only follow what history has provided for us, we are nothing but "passive" and "retrospective" "servants" who blindly follow what we inherit from the past (49). Instead of blindly following and merely inheriting history, we must create our own. It is from these "fighters against history" that true greatness in humanity can be seen (54). These different attempts at making sense of the past are made clear in the following three methods of studying history: monumental, antiquarian, and critical. According to Nietzsche, monumental history is a way to repeat, recreate, and rebuild history, using *monuments* to show "extreme admiration" for the past and hoping that they would reproduce historical greatness (14–17). Nietzsche is critical of this method because, to him, history cannot be repeated. Also, by selectively recreating the greatness of past generations, we are forgetting their errors and crimes (21). In this process of resurrecting the past, we are actually neglecting and degenerating life in the present. Or as Nietzsche puts it, we are "let[ting] the dead bury the—living" (17). Unlike monumental history, antiquarian history stresses the preservation of the past through inheritance. This type of history is an agent in the degeneration of life because "it hinders the mighty impulse to a new deed and paralyzes the doer" (20). In other words, this need to "preserve" the past ends up "mummify[ing]" the present and preventing it from going "against history," and as a result, disabling man's ability to create new cultures and history. Both methods deal with the act of tracing backwards in history instead of moving forward, which is essential to the creation of new history. By using the ideas that are "second-hand," these two methods ignore the "immediate contact with life" (67). Therefore, by clinging to the past, we are actually forgetting the present. Since the first two methods of looking into the past prove to be insufficient, the third method of looking at history is needed. According to Nietzsche, the critical method is a way for man to judge and annihilate the past. Only with this method can man create new history and culture: "for everything that is born is *worthy* of being destroyed" (21). Only from this destruction can the new foundation of history and culture be built, which in turn, gives life to the present. In the same way that the "overman" rejects the absolute and constantly reevaluates values, the "great man," who does not depend on his historical inheritance, follows his own path of becoming: "the time will come when we shall wisely keep away from all constructions of the world-process, or even of the history or man—a time when we shall no more look at masses but at individuals who form a sort of bridge over the wan stream of becoming" (59).

⁵ Sartre provides a similar approach to history and human actions in *Search for a Method*, where he highlights individual actions as a part of the making of history. Drawing on Marx's "historical materialism," Sartre wants to redirect our attention back to the importance of individual "praxis"—the practical human activities that cause social changes and developments (21). To Sartre, historical materialism is the reality of history in that it provides an accurate account of historical events. Like Engels, however, Sartre believes that history is made by the power of man since "without living men, there is no history" (133). Because we are responsible for the making of history, we must act authentically in order to make our own history, rather than a history that is influenced by *the gaze of the other*.

Chapter 4.

Existential Freedom and Aesthetics

It is only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* that existence
and the world are eternally justified.
– Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*

What does it mean to be an active and engaged being? Or more importantly, how does one become active and engaged enough to give rise to new values? For Nietzsche and Sartre, this path to freedom is ultimately achieved via our creativity because while they abhor any and all notions of an absolute, they openly celebrate the potential that is at the core of the human need to generate meaning. The key here is to remember that the meanings that emerge from our attempts to make sense of the world are only *our* interpretations of reality and products of *our* imagination, not the definitive answers to existence itself. Any attempts at universality result in losing sight of the individual, the one thing that both philosophers constantly want to draw our attention to. This is precisely why they both scoff at truth claims and regularly encourage individuals to contribute to their own system of values. Rather than take “refuge in some given sign” or blindly adopt pre-existing laws and principles as truths, individuals should constantly assess the world “as [they] please” and develop their own set of values based on these appraisals (EM 29). These individuals, according to Nietzsche, are the “immoralists”¹ who are capable enough to “conquer and come to power even without truth” (WP 749). As “the strongest of the strong,” they have no need for “allies” yet are capable of inciting change. These immoralists are not bound by any prevalent notions of good and evil and have no desire to replace the old system of morals with a new one, even if it stems from

¹ As a self-identified “immoralist,” Nietzsche uses this term to refer to individuals who possess an “*indifference* to good and evil” (WP 850). This term does not refer to those who, due to a flaw of character, choose to not follow the dictations of morality, which is the more commonly used definition.

their revaluation of the world. In other words, they embrace the process of overcoming rather than fixate on the establishment of new absolutes.

4.1. The Work of Art and the Universality of Music

Philosophy,² what Nietzsche singles out “as the greatest nonsensicality of man,” and the sciences,³ then, are clearly not ideal modes of valuation simply because their very aim is to universalize abstract theories and empirical findings as conclusive facts of life (WP 1046). For both philosophers, these worldviews merely want to occupy the void that disenchantment has left behind. It is no surprise, then, that they choose to highlight individual interpretations through the arts,⁴ more specifically, through music and literature. It is through the arts that individuals can become creative participants in either the artistic act or the analysis of it. Here, it is apparent that the artist is not the only one who possesses an imagination and is, therefore, capable of generating meaning: “his interpretation of a formula at least is personal, even if he does not create a formula: as

² This is in reference to the philosophical practices that Nietzsche and Sartre are critical of: the ones that recycle old ideas and repackage them as new absolutes. Though they are critical of their predecessors and contemporaries, they both want to pave the way for a new generation of philosophers, a group that is made up of liberated individuals who not only embrace the harsh reality of their existence but also willingly and perpetually participate in the acts of self-discovery and self-overcoming.

³ Schopenhauer is also weary of the scientific worldview, mainly because, to him, it “can never find an ultimate goal or complete satisfaction” in its attempts to make sense of the world (87). This is in contrast to “art,” which finds “its goal” in all things and all places. Unlike science, art, as “a fleeting image,” does not wish to produce and promote “a permanent universal knowledge” (97); instead, its purpose is to “work...towards [a] solution [to] the problem of existence.” Given that human wants are insatiable and inexhaustible, science’s efforts to reach “a complete and final” solution to this same problem of existence will amount to nothing (98). This is why, according to Schopenhauer, art is superior to science: since the work of art “always give[s] only a fragment, an example instead of the rule, not the whole,” it is capable of providing humanity with the “temporary...satisfaction” needed to momentarily fulfill its desires. On the other hand, if “a work of art...aims at describing something definite” and “distinct,” it is, like science, “always ungentle [sic]” (101). Even at its worst, however, “art reveals more to us than any science can” (110).

⁴ Like Nietzsche and Sartre, Schopenhauer also sees “art” as “the work of genius” (87) that “endeavours to show us life and things as they are in reality” (98) and, therefore, unearths “a much deeper insight into the essence of man” (110). As the “immediate and adequate objectivity...of the will,” art is “the thing-in-itself” that allows the human subject to comprehend “eternal Ideas” through the process of “pure contemplation” (87).

an interpreter he is still creative” (WP 767).⁵ The artwork, then, as the product of one individual’s ingenuity and the object of another individual’s interpretation, is representative of both individuals’ active engagement with and perception of the world around them and, therefore, the consequence of their existential freedom.

What is it about art that makes it the superior form of valuation? In contrast to “religion, morality, and philosophy,” which “are decadent forms of man,” art is a “*countermovement*” (794) that “works tonically” to “increase strength [and] inflame desires” (809). Against these “*moral* interpretation[s]” that make “the world unbearable” for the human subject (845), art is “the only superior counterforce” that makes “life possible” again (853 II). That is to say, it reinvigorates and reaffirms what the other forms of valuation have made sickly. It breathes life back into the human spirit, teaches it how to embrace all that existence has to offer—both the good and the bad—and encourages human transcendence. This is why, according to Nietzsche, “the artist belongs to a still stronger race” (812) and “the *scientific* man is actually a sign of a certain damming-up and lowering of the level of life” (816). Unlike the “man of knowledge, who leaves everything as it is,” artists “are productive, to the extent that they actually alter and transform” the things of this world (585 A). Not having “lost the scent of life,” as scientists and philosophers have, artists are not “tormented by a puritanical conscience” and can, therefore, “transfigure” both existence and themselves (820). For these reasons, Nietzsche declares art as “the great stimulant of life, an intoxication with life, [and] a will to life” (851). While the “nonsensuality of philosophy” (1046) has caused us to lose “*faith* in life” and diminished our “confidence” in ourselves (853 I), art, what Nietzsche identifies as “an anti-metaphysical view of the world” (1048), has allowed us to “build under the most unfavourable conditions” (1046).

Even though the artist might choose to illustrate the “terrible and questionable things” in life, their artwork does not “serve pessimism” and by no means “teach” the human subject “resignation” (821). Just because existence is not as ideal as we are led

⁵ Schopenhauer also describes a similar creative relationship between the artist and their spectator in “On the Inner Nature of Art”: “Therefore everyone who reads the poem or contemplate the work of art must of course contribute from his own resources towards bringing that wisdom to light...the very best of art...must be born in the beholder’s imagination, thought it must be begotten by the work of art” (98–99).

to believe, it does not mean that humanity is doomed and we should, therefore, endorse a pessimistic worldview and throw out all hope for the future. In knowing that the world is flawed, we can begin to come to terms with that harsh reality and learn to dig ourselves out from under the rubble. Hence, in freely choosing to depict the miseries of life, the artist is actually demonstrating a lack of fear and “an instinct for power and magnificence” (WP 821). In contrast, artists who choose to “take *refuge* in the *beauty of form*” and, therefore, only depict “those *select* things in which nature has become perfect” are the ones “who fundamentally have a *nihilistic* attitude toward life” (852). In their restricted portrayals of existence, these “artists of decadence” embody the very “*inability*” to “*see*” and “*create* the beautiful.” Like the overman who attains his many perspectives by looking down upon the world from his mountaintop, the artist must also possess a complete understanding of existence in order to construct meaning. As Zarathustra aptly puts it, “one must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star” (TZ 129). The desire for comfort and security only belongs to the escapists who are weary of existence and only want to get by rather than actually *live* life. This is why the artist, in their full appreciation for and intention to reaffirm existence, is the quintessential free agent and their works of art are ideal outlets for the expression of their liberty.

As the “conception of the great human being” and “freedom from moral narrowness and corner-perspectives,” art and its redemptive qualities are best realized, in Nietzsche’s opinion, through music (WP 823). Though he praises art in general, music is particularly highlighted as something that adds meaning to existence.⁶ To put it bluntly, “without music, life would be a mistake” (TI 1.33).⁷ What is it about music that makes its absence something to be missed? If all forms of art have the potential to effectively

⁶ Like Nietzsche, Schopenhauer also “consider[s] music the genuine art” (xix) that discloses “the authentic condition of life” (viii). It is “through [our] interpretation of music” that we “obtain the proper meaning” of “the world” (120) and, therefore, “a clear and profound knowledge of the Idea of humanity itself” (109). This is why music, with its ability to extract “the innermost nature of all life and existence” (98), is explicitly identified as “the most powerful of all the arts” (121).

⁷ This statement, made by Nietzsche in “Maxims and Arrows,” should not be taken too seriously. In no way does he mean that life is not worth living without the sound of music. To say this would be to contradict one of the main ideas in his writing: life is always worth living and that we must strive to enhance and affirm our existence even in the worst of situations.

channel the individual's creativity, why is music not replaceable? For Nietzsche, music is superior in the very fact that it is "an expression of the world" and, therefore, "the highest degree of universal language"⁸ (BT 16).⁹ Here, the ambiguity of music is used to replace the rigid and concise language used by writers,¹⁰ whose words will forever fail to adequately "express" and "disclose" what "lie[s] hidden in the vast universality [of] music" (6). As an ambiguous system, music does not have definable relationships: one note can have more than one meaning and can be understood in more than one way. Since it "resembles geometrical figures and numbers" in its signs and symbols, music and its "infinite number of possible melodies" can convey "all that goes on in the heart of man" (16). Unlike the man of words who is "sterile" (TZ 402), "musicians," who are not bound by any "laws" of "aesthetic," are much freer to interpret the world and express their views of it (WP 838). Being boundless, music is, therefore, the ultimate expression of freedom because not only are there no restraints to what it can achieve, it is also not held down by any absolute "principles." As the superior form of creative action, music, like a created truth, is an indication of the individual's engagement, which, in turn, represents their attempts at making sense of and interpreting their existence. Not only does the artist illustrate their freedom through the creative process and resulting work of art, they have also succeeded in continuously constructing new values for a world that is otherwise devoid of meaning.

⁸ This too must not be taken out of context. Here, the term "universal" does not correspond to an attempt at universality. In using this term, Nietzsche is really referring to music's ambiguity and ability to reach a wider audience without the need of translation, which is in contrast to the written word. Since language changes through time and meanings vary among cultures, the translation may deviate from the original, losing its initial value. Since music is not written in words, it does not fall into the traps of translation. In this sense, music is beyond language and is universally recognized and understood.

⁹ Schopenhauer refers to music in an identical manner when he declares it "the true universal language which is everywhere understood; and so it is constantly spoken in all countries and throughout the centuries" (119). Furthermore, since it does not "speak of...things, but simply of weal and woe," music "says so much to the heart, whereas to the head it has nothing *direct* to say," which seems to imply that the emphasis, here, is on instinct and intuition rather than reason.

¹⁰ Like Nietzsche, Schopenhauer is also very critical of language and the written work, which he identifies as "cold" and "dispassionate" forms of "communicat[ion]" (100).

4.2. The Art of Writing and the Committed Prose-Writer

Along these same lines, Sartre offers a very similar outlook on the creative qualities of art; however, against Nietzsche, Sartre replaces music with literature as the ultimate expression of individual authenticity, responsibility, and freedom. Like Nietzsche, Sartre believes that the birthplace of meaning is the “human consciousness” and it is with the aid of the artwork that this meaning is realized (Rau 139). For Sartre, however, music is not the manifestation of creativity par excellence; this title belongs to the art of writing alone. While both philosophers agree that art for art’s sake amounts to nothing in the end, they disagree when it comes to identifying which form of art prevails (TI 9.24; WL 21). In the same way that Nietzsche counts the merits of music, Sartre is also very critical of literature’s futile attempts to create meaning, but maintains that the act of writing itself, when done properly, surpasses all other forms of art in its ability to “provoke the indignation [and] the political enthusiasm of the reader” and, in turn, encourage them to act upon these emotions (WL 13). While painters are “mute” in their illustrations, writers are able to “guide” (4) their audience by choosing to communicate with words, which are far superior to “colour[s] and sound[s]” (2).

Since writers “express significations,” which is an indication of their engagement, they will always be above painters who merely “*represent*” these significations on canvas (8). That is to say, by expressing significations, writers have a much more personal attachment to their work and their literature is equivalent to their cognition, as oppose to a likeness to an idea or theme, which is the relationship that painters have with their illustrations. When on canvas, a painter’s image is only an object, and the reader is “free to see in it what [they] like” (4). The writer’s prose, however, can “arouse” the reader’s “feelings” (39) and “provoke” their “indignation” if they choose to make their work a “symbol of social injustice” (4). Consequently, literature can represent “a path of transcendence” if, and only if, it can “guide” the reader “beyond” what is written on the page and prompt them into action (39). This is precisely why Roquentin, in *Nausea*, decided to abandon his biographical work in order to devote himself to the act of writing a novel, which is capable of stirring up the type of emotions that will inspire action in its readers. In choosing to write a work of fiction, Roquentin, therefore, assumes full responsibility for his freedom and the making of his essence, rendering him more

authentic in his decision to give up biography writing, which is nowhere nearly as creative as novel writing.

Though Sartre emphasizes writing as the exemplary mode of valuation, he evidently does not think that all forms of literature are equal in every way. Instead, he makes a very clear distinction between the prose-writer and the poet, the one who is responsible for the “crisis of language” in the 20th century (WL 10). In using words to create “verbal image[s]” (8), the poet, like the painter, is only representing significations and, therefore, not able to incite “anger, social indignation, and political hatred” (12). Like in other forms of art (i.e. painting, sculpture, and music), the poet is always “absent” because, in their poems, “nobody is questioned [and] nobody is questioning.” With neither a *voice* nor a target audience, the poet will never be able to “deliver” the necessary “messages” to initiate social and political change (26). The prose-writer, on the other hand, makes it obvious that they are the speaker and since to “speak is to act,” they demonstrate in their writing their “very intention” to “change” the situation that they write about (16):

He knows that to reveal is to change and that one can reveal only by planning to change...He knows that words...are “loaded pistols.” If he speaks, he fires. He may be silent, but since he has chosen to fire, he must do it like a man, aiming at targets, and not like a child, at random, by shutting his eyes and firing merely for the pleasure of hearing the shot go off. (18)

By way of “disclosure,” the writer is essentially choosing “a certain method of secondary action” in order to ensure “that nobody can be ignorant of the world.” Once the reader is made aware of the situation, they are forced to either ignore what they have read or choose to do something about it. Either way, the choice is in their hands and their decision, no matter what it is, indicates their authenticity and responsibility, or the lack thereof. In summation, writing is creative action, even if it is only secondary, while “reading is directed creation” in the very fact that the reader is left with the task of changing what the writer has revealed (39): “to write is thus both to disclose the world and to offer it as a task...of the reader” (54). For these reasons, the prose-writer is, for Sartre, the ideal creator whose work of art wills both their freedom and the freedom of others: “the freedom of writing implies the freedom of the citizen. One does not write for

slaves. The art of prose is bound up with the only regime in which prose has meaning, democracy. When one is threatened, the other is too" (WL 59).

In choosing to "review" and "reveal" reality, the writer not only displays their engagement but also calls upon their readers "to assume full responsibility before the object which has been...laid bare" (18). Since the "writer appeals to the reader's freedom to collaborate in the production of [their] work," they must also "entrust" the reader with "the job of carrying out what [they have] begun" (40). Inasmuch as they are both responsible "for the universe," the writer is obligated to "compromise" the reader and encourage them "to *create*" and, in their creation, destroy the "unjust world" (55). Only when the reader "become[s] what they would have been if they had not spent their lives hiding their freedom from themselves" will the writer successfully transform the reader's "passivity" into "action" (45). Seeing that both the author and the reader are "steeped in the same history," they must "likewise contribute to its making" (64). That is to say, they must, as a unit, "upset" the "conservative forces" that have declared war against human subjectivity (75). Hence, this "pact" (49), this "conjoint effort of the author and the reader" (37) is what completes the writer's work, thereby bringing about a "permanent revolution" (153) by way of a "total renewal of the world" (51).

Since "the more we experience our freedom, the more we recognize that of the other," a writer who hides from their freedom will never be able to achieve anything near that of a committed prose-writer (45). If the writer removes their "personal experience" from their work and makes it a "reflection" of societal ideals (87), they cease to be creators and, instead, become "propagandist[s]" (92). Thus, in order to maintain their "liberating function" (101), the writer must be "independent of any sort of ideology" (115). To be otherwise is to forget that "man makes himself" and is, therefore, not shackled to any particular "morality" (EM 46). Rather than "take refuse behind...some deterministic theory," the writer is required to remain on course in their "quest of freedom itself" (47). That is, they have to embrace the nothingness that defines their very existence in order to be free of *bad faith* and achieve true brilliance (WL 124). Similarly, if a writer thinks themselves "above all responsibilities" and, in their work, destroys without any thought of reconstruction, they cease to be "revolutionar[ies]" and, instead, become "rebel[s]" (128–29). To steer clear of this "nihilistic" trend (130), the writer ought to remember that they do not write for themselves or "for God" and must, as a result, "assume responsibility for

the public” by challenging the ruling power’s “right to govern” (WL 117) and “struggl[ing] against history (148). In other words, the writer is required to raise questions and, with the help of the reader, demolish and rebuild whatever it is that compels them to ask these questions in the first place.

Despite their opposing views on the creative potential of music and literature, both Nietzsche and Sartre agree that art is the discipline that allows the individual to actively enrich existence with their own meaning. As Jonathan Loesberg accurately points out, Nietzsche insists that it is the work of art that supplies us with “the essence of existence,” implying that meaning is not intrinsic to existence but is something that needs to be added after (133). When put in these terms, Nietzsche’s aesthetic seems to echo Sartre’s view that existence precedes essence, which further indicates that both philosophers write from the same perspective. Like Sartre, Nietzsche also teaches his individual to not only “participate” in life but to do it with passion and dedication (132). In the same way that Nietzsche stresses that the individual achieves self-discovery by utilizing their creative freedom, Sartre proclaims that the writer only has a full grasp of their identity when they put themselves in their narratives (Erfani 5). In short, Nietzsche’s musician and Sartre’s prose-writer carry out their creativity with the game goal in mind, even if they choose to achieve this goal through different means. That is, both artists set out to redefine existence with their actions, thereby asserting their existential freedom upon the world.

Conclusion

Independence is for the very few; it is a privilege of the strong.
– Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

Though they wrote in two different traditions, the similarities of their ideas to each other are signs of Nietzsche's influence on Sartre's writings. In spite of the fact that Sartre never publically identified Nietzsche as one of his philosophical sources,¹ the Nietzschean themes that resonate throughout his writings, shown in this thesis, are indicative of Nietzsche's immense impact. Despite the parallels between their works, Nietzsche's influence on Sartre's thought is an uncommon and, often times, vague topic of discussion, barely warranting more than a few brief sentences. Other than some fleeting references here and there, a full-length discussion is somewhat of a rarity. Though this thesis does not aim to fill this void, it is undoubtedly motivated by it. As stated from the very beginning, what this thesis aspires to do is renew interest and motivate dialogue. If successful, this revival might bring about a possible solution to the current and increasingly more pronounced issues of human rights and freedom, the same ones that have prompted individuals in varying circumstances to band together and challenge their ruling powers.

As illustrated by these social movements, it is clear that these individuals are refusing to settle for a restricted form of freedom that is being prescribed to them by their external governing body. In voicing their frustration and demanding resolution, they are, in fact, exhibiting a strong desire to take up responsibility for their own freedom and, therefore, actively participate in its making, which is something that both Nietzsche and

¹ As explained in Chapter 2, Nietzsche is only referred to by name twice in *Being and Nothingness*: on page 4, where Sartre refers to Nietzsche's "illusion of worlds-behind-the-scene" in his discussion of "the being-behind-the-appearance," and on page 692, where Nietzsche's description of Pascal's "soul" as being "magnificent and bitter" is briefly mentioned. In both instances, though it is clear that Sartre has read Nietzsche, Nietzsche's ideas were not explained in much detail and influence not acknowledged fully.

Sartre would approve of. What these individuals are embarking on, then, is a path towards authenticity and liberation, one that is motivated by their refusal to consent to predetermined values and customs, thereby conveying their existential engagement with the circumstances that are thrust upon them and their drive to transcend their current situation. Not only do their radical displays of discontent demonstrate a growing awareness of social and political issues, they also illustrate that true and complete freedom is still beyond our grasp and, therefore, an ongoing concern that requires our immediate attention, showing how Nietzsche, Sartre, and their philosophies are still relevant in contemporary societies. Given this *situation*, using Sartre's terminology, now is as good a time as any to revisit sources that make the human subject their focus and individual freedom their goal.

A good place to start is Sartre's "anti-essentialist" discussion of individual freedom, where he maintains that freedom is a real and "ongoing achievement" (Erfani 5). This, of course, corresponds to Nietzsche's premise that the individual must perpetually change their perspective in order to adopt a point of view that represents their existence in a given moment of time. For both philosophers, before true freedom can be within grasp, one must first go through a process of "tremendous self-examination," which results in one "becoming conscious of oneself, not as individuals but as mankind" (WP 585). It is clear that an awareness of one's shared existence and condition is the first step to knowing oneself as an individual, but while Sartre takes this connection a step further in his discussion of the committed prose-writer and their responsibility to the public and relationship with the reader, Nietzsche leaves it behind in order to advance his image of the overman, the isolated individual who leaves the comfort of the herd to venture on his own path towards freedom. Though Sartre also identifies isolation and solitariness as the unavoidable condition of the authentic man, his individual is not quite as removed as Nietzsche's. This is most evident when he identifies democracy as something that is vital to a prose-writer's ability to construct meaning: as a *free* artist writing for a *free* reader, the author's responsibility extends to their audience as well. While Nietzsche does evaluate meaning based on how it enhances existence as a whole, his individual does not necessarily make it their task to include their spectators in their acts of creation. In fact, the process of creativity starts when individuals detach themselves from the masses. Though it is a possibility that Nietzsche is only referring to

this act of self-exile metaphorically, his work suggests that he writes for the individual who exists despite society and societal relations, which is in contrast to Sartre who seems to write for the individual who exists within society by making social revolution his political objective.

Green is correct, then, to declare Nietzsche the “the great champion” of the “isolated individual” (90) because, while Sartre speaks to the public through his individual, Nietzsche, whose “mind [and] longing are directed towards the few” (TZ 401), only wants to write for those who he can call *his* “readers” (AC 569) and *his* “kind of philosopher[s]” (WP 464). To Nietzsche, “the mob does not know what is great...and honest” and so will never understand him (TZ 401). Unlike Sartre who identifies a connection between his “*subject*” and his “*public*” and believes in a “classless society” (WL 150), Nietzsche chooses to address only his “companions,” “not to the people” in general (TZ 135). With no desire to “become the shepherd and dog of a herd,” Nietzsche’s individual opts to stand alone rather than “in the market place” (398). For Nietzsche and his musician, to “[speak] to all” is to “[speak] to none.” Sartre and his author, on the other hand, write “for everybody and with everybody” (WL 224) in their attempts to “simultaneously enclose, specify, and surpass” their shared “situation” (144). If one is to also concur with Alexander Nehamas’ notion that Nietzsche’s body of work is autobiographical and that Nietzsche himself is the one who embodies the ideals represented by the image of overman, then Nietzsche’s intended audience is even more limited than we think, going from a select few to only one: himself.

With this in mind, it might seem as though Nietzsche’s literary model is a far more difficult one to follow simply because it is intended for only a small number of individuals. But if, in fact, Nietzsche is only writing for himself, does this mean that individual freedom is not at all possible for anyone else? If this is the case, what lies ahead seems rather bleak indeed. To make such a conclusion, however, is to adopt what Nietzsche would consider a pessimistic and nihilistic attitude towards existence. After all, his perspective is only one among many, and who is to say that we cannot interpret his meaning in another way? In doing so, are we not being active participants in the making of our essence? Regardless of his intended audience, it is clear that there is something substantial that we can get out of his philosophy: freedom *is* possible if we remain honest to ourselves, authentic in our actions, and unwavering to the never-

ending task of becoming and overcoming who we are. When put in these terms, freedom is a very real possibility, even if it is a rather demanding endeavour to devote our lives to. This does not mean, however, that Sartre's criteria are, in any way, less challenging to fulfil. Though he speaks to a broader audience, the steps he lays out are just as difficult and require just as much dedication, especially when one is to consider that the author's responsibility has to extend beyond his own being. Since both philosophers stress the burden of freedom throughout their writings, it should be clear that freedom, at least in their terms, is not something that requires little effort and no work. Rather, it is a lifelong mission that demands us to ceaselessly create, destroy, and recreate our identity and the values we attribute to it. As Zarathustra passionately declares, we "must wish to [be] consume[d]" by our "own flames" and "become ashes" before we can "become new" (176). If we cannot commit to these terms, though we might learn to be content with what we have, we will never know what it means to reach our full potential.

Notwithstanding these drawbacks, Nietzsche's influence on and connection to Sartre's philosophy clearly have a great deal to offer. By looking at their respective concepts, not only can one deduce that Nietzsche's notion of *ressentiment* was a model for Sartre's own idea of *bad faith*, one can also confidently conclude that both Nietzsche and Sartre have provided the groundwork for challenging oppression. In their campaign for human freedom, both philosophers set out to liberate the individual from the social constraints that weigh down their will to act. For both Nietzsche and Sartre, freedom amounts to the ability to choose what one does and how one thinks. Though external influences are unavoidable, both philosophers are in agreement that one should never let these *foreign factors* guide one's existence and entirely define who one is as an individual. It is the individual and their actions that both philosophers place in the forefront. Both are also adamant in their declaration that, in order to live an honest and authentic life, the individual must be an active and responsible participant in their own existence. For individual freedom to be within reach, this individual must be both free of external control and have the strength for self-governing. This individual not only has to define who they are in accordance to their own standards and nobody else's, they must also realize this freedom by having full control of their lot in life. Considering the current crisis of identity and both philosophers' focus on the individual, it is a wonder why their contributions are not brought up more often and discussed in more detail. If one is to

take Farhang Erfani seriously and, therefore, agree that individual autonomy is more difficult to attain now than ever before, then perhaps it is vital that we look elsewhere for possible solutions to the individual's struggle for recognition and freedom (141). To put it in Nietzsche's terms, now might be the time to test a new and different *perspective*.

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