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SARTRE'S ATHEISTIC EXISTENTIALISM IN THE NEXUS OF DESCARTES' THEISTIC METAPHYSICS

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ABSTRACT

Intellectual legacy of Descartes is still inexhaustible and one may find in it the meanings and concepts that may heuristically serve as tools to deal with the contemporary philosophies. This essay offers some reflections on the impact of Descartes on Sartre's existentialism by focusing both similarities and differences between these two sets of philosophical themes. As a major exponent of an important twentieth-century philosophical trend, Sartrean brand of existentialism established itself as a model for the communication of ideas in several spheres of human intellect. Sharing the optimism of the age regarding the potential of existentialist philosophy, Sartre explicitly dictated the mobilization of opinions and propagation of thoughts with a variety of themes – everyday life, literature, art, religion, culture, ethics etc. Our aim in this essay is to make a small contribution to the interpretation of Sartre's atheism in the nexus of the Cartesian theism, which is obviously not an unexplored territory; but still our analysis is important in that it draws least on Husserl's and Heidegger's brands of phenomenology which are more popular as philosophical frameworks to interpret Sartre.

The most pertinent background elements in studying Sartre's existentialism are Husserl's phenomenology, Heidegger's phenomenological hermeneutics and Descartes' ontological dualism. Although the focus of this paper is the latter one being the major nexus of illustrating Sartre's existentialism it does refer to the former ones as well where it requires. So to be on the right track throughout this study of Sartre's, this work does not attempt to deny the legitimacy or to belittle the importance of this philosophical nexus namely the Husserlian and the Heideggerian versions of phenomenology and it's other well known originals.

Among the many ways in which the main tenets of Sartre's existentialism can be illustrated in proportion, the nexus of Descartes' ontological dualism deserves special attention. The

Cogito argument namely "*Cogito ergo sum*", if it is taken in phenomenological terms, manifests that consciousness is a substantial reality with an essentiality of thinking. World is also substantial as it exists its own being essentially extended. In contrast, Sartre's notion of '*être pour-soi*' (being for-itself) refers to consciousness which does not subsist its own rather it's being is relative to the world that is a being in itself (*être en-soi*). That is to say, for Sartre, world is *something* being a being-in-itself whereas consciousness is detached from the world being *not something* or nothing.

Sartre's Phenomenological Ontology in the Cartesian Perspective

The phrase 'the Cartesian perspective' does not mean the way of Descartes' to interpret Sartre's existentialism rather what I mean by this phrase is Descartes' ontological dualism that is taken here to be a perspective for the illustration of Sartre's phenomenological ontology. In this essay I shall take Principles of Philosophy as well as Meditations on First Philosophy by Descartes as references throughout, submitting their relevant principal notions to the illustration of Sartre. One may apparently find a sort of opposition between Descartes' dualism and Sartre's monistic approach to substantiality, but beyond that there is some mutual belonging, which I here intend to make explicit.

The most fundamental of the principles[1] Descartes sets down in his philosophical works is the principle concerning the existence of human mind. According to Descartes, man being 'a seeker after truth' must 'doubt everything as far as it is possible.' Man begins life as infant, and during the course of his growing up he makes 'various judgments concerning the things' he perceives by the senses before he has 'the full use' of his reason, there are many preconceived opinions that keep him 'from the knowledge of the truth.' So doubting of all these judgments is the only way for Descartes of freeing man from those preconceived opinions about everything he perceives. This doubt concerning the objects of sense-perception can be taken as the first step of the elaborate Cartesian method of making efforts directed to 'the search for truth.' He further elaborates his methodic doubt applying it to those matters that man normally regards 'as most certain' like 'the demonstrations of mathematics' and even the principles one considers 'to be self-evident' like the belief in the existence of God. So this all-encompassing overwhelming doubt leads man to supposing that 'there is no God and no heaven, and that there are no bodies, and even that we ourselves have no hands or feet, or indeed any body at all.' Out of this scheme of imagining everything to be false one thing remains certain which man cannot suppose to be false that one who is having such an all-encompassing thought of doubt is 'nothing.' For, it is contradictory to say that that which thinks (doubts) does not exist at the very moment of time when it is thinking (doubting). Accordingly, this certain 'piece of knowledge – I am thinking, therefore I exist [Cogito ergo sum] – is the first and most certain of all' principles to be known philosophically.[2]

At this juncture of his argumentation, Descartes defines thought as 'understanding everything which' one is 'aware of as happening within' oneself, in so far as one has awareness of it. This definition of thought reflects

the phenomenological connotation of the meaning of consciousness as expounded by contemporary phenomenologist. The difference lies in their metaphysical groundings: Descartes believes in the multitude of substantial beings or existents while phenomenologist like Sartre believes in the substantial reality of one namely the world.

Descartes discovers that consciousness is not a non-being rather it has an incorporeal substantial abode namely Cogito; furthermore he relates this substance on the one hand to God and on the other to the corporeal world. Man's body, being a part of the corporeal world, may have various bodily sensations like seeing and hearing. These sensational acts remain dubitable as acts of cognition, as one may find oneself having such sensations in one's dreams. But these sensations can be taken as certain acts of cognition if one is able to relate these acts to one's mind, which is to say, if one takes these sensations as forms of thought or consciousness.[3] Thereby consciousness (an incorporeal substance) and world (a corporeal substance) are by definition independent ontologically from one another, though acts of consciousness and bodily sensations are found as correlates in the practice of the lifeworld. This incorporeal-corporeal interdependency is a two way phenomenon, i.e., it is not only sensation that is certainly cognized as an act of true knowledge but consciousness assures that there is a substantial abode for it like mind while relating itself to the corporeal object as something extended in space. Descartes makes us understand this mutual belonging of mind and world through the example of wax. If a piece of wax is taken freshly from the honeycomb; it may be distinctly perceived by all of five senses: one may taste the sweetness of honey in it as it is freshly taken from the honeycomb; it may have not lost the aroma of flowers from which the honey was collected; one may find it tangible as an object of a particular size, shape and colour; it may produce sound if one raps it with one's knuckle. When one puts this piece of wax by the fire, one will find that the set of all those qualities that one was to perceive in the wax through five senses is lost. But one is certain that after having lost all perceptible qualities the remnant, now a liquefied material in different shape and form is the same wax. This distinct and clear judgment of man's mind that with all flexibility and changeability it is the same wax with different form is not an act of sensation or imagination but rather of human reason.[4] Thus, in the nexus of this example one not only grasps that corporeal objects are essentially extended but one also finds that incorporeal mind is essentially intellect.

This duality of substantiality comprising of subjective human mind and objective world including man's body requires for the existence the third pole of reality namely God. Descartes remains absolutely unable to think of a mind that can think truly by its own and since thinking for him implies existing therefore it remains unlikely in the Cartesian philosophy that mind can exist in its own.[5] So there is necessarily a complex Cartesian ontological fold that contains multitude of substantial beings from amongst them the real substance is God, as it is the only substance to that the definition of substance fully and perfectly applied. And one requires some modification in the definition of

substance if one attempts to define as substance the other two poles of reality namely human mind and world.
By substance Descartes understands 'nothing other than a thing which exists in such a way as to depend on no other thing for its existence.'[6] He further judges:

"…there is only one substance which can be understood to depend on no other thing whatsoever, namely God. In case of all other substances, we perceive that they can exist only with the help of God's concurrence."[7]

Descartes basically conceives of a substance as a bearer of attributes. One directly perceives of things In terms of their attributes and qualities, and further one thinks that these attributes are to qualify something rather than nothing. So it is substance on which attributes depend to exist as its characteristics, but not the vice versa. A substance in that sense is an independent entity which is cognized as an abode of attributes, and there is always a major attribute, which Descartes calls 'principal property,' that 'constitutes its nature and essence.'[8] In case of the incorporeal mind that major attribute is thinking whereas in case of the corporeal world it is extension. Although the term substance univocally applies to both mind and world there is still one thing which threatens their substantiality namely that they can exist only with the help of God's concurrence. Thus God remains the only substance that depends on no other extraneous thing to exist but its own.

On account of his argumentation Descartes comes to be known as a theist philosopher whose thought is pivoted with the concept of God. Although he apparently deduces the idea of God as an infinite and perfect being from the first principle of philosophy namely the idea of mind as a finite and imperfect thinking substance, an overview of his Meditations and Principles shows that it is the concept of God that determines the orientation of his philosophy. This aspect of his philosophy defines the point of departure between his metaphysics and the phenomenological ontology that Sartre expounds.

In order to think of human consciousness, for Descartes, as a finite thinking substance, there requires an ontological a priori of infinite substance, God. For, human mind cannot think of itself as an imperfect, erroneous, finite thinking substance unless it has an a priori idea of perfect, un-erroneous, infinite substance, God.[9] So human consciousness on this-worldly-level is a being-in-itself for Descartes, but on-that-worldly-level it requires, to exist as a substance, the help of God's concurrence. This Cartesian element of a priori of God's existence is an assertion that Sartre has negated in his philosophy insistently.

Sartre's phenomenological ontology is characterized by the denial of the multitude of substantiality. The more general part of his existentialist programme is concerned with an analysis of the nature and scope of human existence, with a view to provide argument with firm foundation, and to defending the claim that the substantiality is neither attributed to consciousness nor to God against the counter-claims of Descartes'. But his

more specific interest, unlike that of Descartes, is to demonstrate conclusively the two points in aberrance with traditional philosophy – namely, that there is no God, and existence precedes essence. This interest seems to make Sartre primarily an atheist existentialist, and he aligns himself as such along with Heidegger and other French existentialists.[10]

The argument concerning Sartre's atheistic existentialism begins with drawing an analogy of God with a 'supernal artisan' who, while creating man, 'knows precisely what he is creating' like a craftsman who knows precisely what artifact he is creating while he creates it. So 'the conception of man in the mind of God is comparable to' that of the artifact in the mind of the craftsman. When God creates man he concretizes his conception of human being in the form of actual man, and that concretization is necessarily preceded by a definition or essentiality of man dwelling in the divine intellect. Thus, the essential characteristic of man as intellectual entity precedes what man is as an existent on the experiential front, which is simply to say, man's essence precedes his existence. This is something exactly opposite to the so called by Sartre the first principle of existentialism, that is, '[m]an is nothing else but that which he makes of himself.' Sartre is not content to fall back on the substantiality of the existence of God to assure men of the reality of their existence. He feels that it is necessary to lay firm foundation for the reality of human existence, in order to stem the tide of the Cartesian theism and further he is convinced that it is possible to so construe. The possibility of construing this lies in the Nietzschean proclamation that God is dead. 'If God does not exist,' says Sartre, 'there is at least one being whose existence comes before its essence, a being which exists before it can be defined by any conception of it. That being is man.'[11] That is to say, if there is no God to conceive of man before creating him, man's existence will precede his essence. The phrase – existence precedes essence – reflects the first principle of existentialism in that if man first exists, he will really be encountering himself and surging up in the life world, and then afterwards he will be able to conceive of himself as what he is by definition. So whatever he will be finding of himself to define as something essentially, it is possible in the later stage of his life when he has made something of himself. Thus if one compares between the first principles of philosophy as expounded in Descartes' rationalism and Sartre's existentialism, one may find it explicit that the former truly asserts that mind is essentially thinking – namely, essence precedes existence whereas the latter makes it sure that as far as man's reality is concerned existence precedes essence.

Descartes has argued that the notion of mind (thinking substance) and world (extended substance) stand or fall together, since both depend on God's concurrence to exist in themselves. Sartre, on the contrary, holds that we being consciousness can get along perfectly well without the notion of God, but not without the notion of world; for he too supposes that consciousness cannot exist without depending upon the world. That is to say, the substantiality is truly pertinent only to the concrete world, and it does not pertain to consciousness and God. If in fact one has some sort of meaningful notion of oneself as experiential consciousness, however, then it would seem required

for one to have a meaningful notion of world to be experienced as well, provided that there is no substantial reality they depend upon to exist. Being of consciousness or cogito cannot be explained in pertinence to the being of perfect mind, God; it can only be interpreted as a being-in-the-nexus-of-the-world. So Sartre believes in only two 'regions' of being - namely, being-for-itself (l'être-pour-soi) of consciousness as 'transphenomenon' and being-in-itself (l'être-en-soi) of world as 'phenomenon.' As regards these two regions of being the substantiality belongs to only the latter one.

As regards his exploration of the man-world relation, Sartre offers an illuminating context for the ontico-ethical aspect of human existence: Heidegger's notion of In-der-Welt-sein (Being-in-the-world). The Cartesian dualism privileges the status of the human mind as a thinking knower whose relationship to the extended world as something known remains indirect, as both are substantially-essentially distinct and so they in order to exist require the extraneous original, God not only ontico-ontologically but also epistemologically and ethically. Thereby instead of Descartes Sartre takes his cue from Heidegger's argument that man cannot be substantially taken being discarded from the world, rather man is always dwelling in the nexus of the lifeworld. Sartre examines man's relationship to the world against the backdrop of Heidegger's approach by taking 'man-in-the-world' as a structured 'totality'.[12] In this man-world structured totality there are two regions of being - namely being-in-itself comprising of the objects in the external world that are not conscious and being-for-itself comprising of human beings who possess consciousness of their own selves as well as of the objects around. But there is always a difference between the way man is conscious of the things in the world and the way he is conscious of himself. Descartes' mind is privileged to possess a position of the substantially thinking knower; Sartre denies this positional consciousness of the Cartesian type giving rise to the so called 'non-positional consciousness' of his own. When Descartes was to conceive of consciousness being Cogito, 'he,' judges Sartre, 'fell into the error of substance.'[13] Sartre argues that 'the first condition of all reflection is a 'pre-reflective cogito.' This cogito, to be sure, does not posit an object [whereby it is non-positional]; it remains within consciousness.'[14] But this non-reflective cogito is to be necessarily seen by itself, so it corresponds to the reflective cogito which is positional. Leo Fretz, while commenting on Sartre's The Transcendence of the Ego, illustrates this point with the heuristic structure of consciousness in the forms of its various levels – namely, first, second and third degree consciousness. 'First-degree consciousness is a non-positional consciousness of itself' being 'an entirely impersonal self-consciousness, containing no I-structure whatsoever' [example: 'I see a tree']; 'second-degree consciousness is, likewise, a non-positional consciousness of itself' being 'a personal self-consciousness underlying the formation of the I' [example: 'I am conscious of seeing a tree']; finally, 'third-degree consciousness is a positional consciousness of itself' being 'a personal self-consciousness, in which now the I is explicitly thematised and posited as an object' [example: 'I am conscious of myself as the one who sees the tree'].[15] It shows that the intention in one's consciousness is always directed towards its object which is in the extraneous world; but in turn it is constitutive of one's perceptive consciousness itself,

which is to say, 'every positional consciousness of an object is at the same time a non-positional consciousness of itself.'[16] If again one compares this Sartrean notion with that of Descartes' one may judge that primacy neither belongs to reflecting cogito over reflection nor the vice versa; rather primacy belongs to the pre-reflective cogito being 'the condition of the Cartesian cogito' and 'it is the non-reflective consciousness which renders the reflection possible.'[17]

Fretz's illustration, following Sartre's suggestion, reflects that at each level human consciousness is always a consciousness of something. On account of this structure of consciousness there remains always a 'gap' or void between consciousness and object of consciousness. This gap or void or emptiness that the being-for-itself experiences while coming across the being-in-itself is to make the former distinguish itself as Nothing from the latter which is Something. The inside of the being-for-itself therefore joins those other meanings – void, emptiness and nothingness – to form a relatively diminished structure of consciousness being non-substantial. For, it on the one hand discards itself from the real substance, God being the original of its substantiality; and on the other it only acts within the framework of the being-in-itself, making use primarily of elements from the phenomenal world and adding a reminder of its being condemned to be free from the supreme will of the Divine. Thereby, rather than simply interpret this diminished structure of the for-itself, Sartre insists on the continued yet ever-changing and ever-broadening sphere of the consciousness as a projection by constantly imbedding into the discourse elements of the phenomenal world as the being-in-itself. Thereby he defines consciousness as consciousness of something other than itself, as when consciousness is consciousness of something 'it is confronted with a concrete and full presence which is not consciousness,' whereby consciousness without its object will become an 'absence.' Husserl, in contrast, when defines consciousness as consciousness of something, takes this concrete full presence of the world as noema being merely a correlate of noesis which is immanently the active pole of the pure consciousness or transcendental subjectivity. In the Husserlian paradigm, it is the transcendental subjectivity or consciousness that constitutes the Lebenswelt whatsoever immanently within itself; and so the world cannot be in any way taken as a being-in-itself extraneously found outside the consciousness. This is not simply the case, for Sartre, of the consciousness-world relationship. If consciousness, according to Sartre, is a 'real subjectivity' and so it receives 'impressions' as 'subjective plenitude' through perception of the things in the external world, this 'subjectivity cannot go out of itself to posit a transcendent object in such a way that the impressions are objectified into qualities of the things.'[18] For, in case of endowing a transcendent object with a plenitude of impression one is to make the being of phenomenal world 'depend on consciousness,' and in doing so the phenomenal 'object must be distinguished from consciousness not by its presence but by its absence, not by its plenitude, but by its nothingness.'[19] In order to cope with this problem Sartre construes so called 'the ontological proof' by redefining the Husserlian definition of consciousness as consciousness of something. When one defines consciousness as consciousness of something, according to Sartre, one

ascribes the meaning of transcendence to 'the constitutive structure of consciousness' by making consciousness bear support from 'a being which is not itself.' This ontological proof implies that consciousness as consciousness of something does not only 'reveal' that of which it is consciousness, but it is also 'revealed' to itself being a consciousness of consciousness of something. In this nexus consciousness 'must be present to itself, not as a thing but as an operative intention which can exist only as the revealing-revealed (révélante-révélée).'[20] It means that it is only 'within the apprehension of transcendence' that one can define 'immanence' – namely consciousness 'constitutes itself in constituting the objetive' phenomenon without which it is only a void or emptiness. Thereby it is evident that 'the phenomena of inner sense imply the existence of objective spatial phenomena, but that consciousness implies in its being a non-conscious and transphenomenal being.'[21] Sartre thus construes being of consciousness as something 'the nature of which is to be conscious of the nothingness of its being.'

Bad Faith, Act and Freedom: The Descartes – Sartre Affinity

But the being of human consciousness does not only disclose negation (négatités) with respect to the world, it also shows negative attitude towards itself. Such an attitude of consciousness is essentially belongs to the human reality, and in this essential human attitude 'consciousness instead of directing its negation outward turns it toward itself.' This attitude of consciousness is what Sartre calls 'bad faith (muavaise foi).'[22] It is an attitude of mine in which I lie to myself, I deceive myself – namely, in bad faith I deliberate to find my consciousness containing something as true which in fact I cognize to be false. This is an attempt of lying to oneself or hiding truth from one's own in such a way that 'the liar is in complete possession of the truth he is hiding.' It is, according to Sartre, like a 'cynical' attempt of consciousness of the liar in which he affirms truth within himself, denying it in his words, and denying that negation as such.'[23] Owing to the mutuality of the truth and the falsehood in the unity of consciousness (being simultaneously the deceiver and the deceived), Sartre conceives of bad faith as a paradoxical existential phenomenon. And it is ambiguity that facilitates consciousness to have bad faith as a paradoxical structure of the truth-falsehood complementarity. This ambiguity may take various forms[24] in the structure of bad faith, and one of them is the ambiguity of being-in-itself and being-for-itself in consciousness. Sartre judges that human beings are beings-for-themselves not beings-in-themselves, and we can play with this ambiguity of in-itself and for-itself whenever we face a situation. Sartre gives example of a homosexual who denies his homosexuality as a being-in-itself in order to avoid the painful facts about his being homosexual for-himself. He plays with these ambiguities of in-itself and for-itself in bad faith, as he says he is not in-himself a homosexual at the same time he is aware of the fact, which may be painful to accept in a situation, that he is for-himself a homosexual. This self-awareness of the homosexual is obviously painful or 'anguished' but he may be able to release himself of this anguish if he in good faith accepts that he is for-himself a homosexual in his 'facticity (facticité) or in his existence at present, but he is able to transcend this for-itself through his further projection of himself as not

a homosexual. Thus, if one is ashamed of being conscious of being-for-oneself a homosexual it may be inescapable virtually to be in bad faith while denying that one is not in-oneself a homosexual. But one can recover from this bad faith by escape to good faith, if one can tell oneself with some degree of plausibility that though one is now a homosexual for-oneself one being a free self can project oneself by abandoning homosexuality through transcendence. So good faith makes man realize that he should experience facticity and transcendence in proportion, as 'these two aspects of human reality are and ought to be capable of a valid coordination.' But bad faith invalidates the facticity-transcendence synthesis and seeks to preserve the difference between these two aspects by playing with the ambiguities of meanings. That is to say, bad faith 'must affirm facticity as being transcendence and transcendence as being facticity, in such a way that at the instant when a person apprehends the one, he can find himself abruptly faced with the other.'[25] Sartre in this regard gives example of the title of a work by Jacques Chardonne, Love Is Much More than Love (L' amour, e' est beaucoup plus que l' amour). This title reflects 'how unity is established between…love in its facticity' – "the contact of two skins" at sensuous level, Proust's mechanism of jealousy, Adler's battle of the sexes etc. – and love as transcendence – Mauriac's "river of fire," the longing for the infinite, Plato's eros, Lawrence's deep cosmic intuition etc.'[26] As regards this mutuality of two levels of love-experience, one while experiencing the former (love qua facticity) at present abruptly transcends this factualness of love and one's corresponding psychical feel to get to the heart of metaphysic of love, love qua transcendence). In the face of this inevitable and inescapable structure of bad faith, Sartre believes in man's ability to get himself rid of the existential entrapment of bad faith, and this self recovery of a free individual's being suffered from bad faith is what he calls authenticity.

What matters most for Sartre is not the metaphysic[27] (substantiality) of man rather the act of his being-for-itself. Man projects himself as 'a subjective life,' and this act of subjective projection is an expression of freedom. The Sartrean notion of freedom is especial and original and so it remains disproportionate if taken in the classical nexus of the determinism-free will contrast. Sartre, in order to illuminate the human freedom, refers to the Cartesian context of conceiving freedom as belonging to God. When Sartre conceives of freedom in the Cartesian paradigm, he distinguishes between freedom as autonomy of thinking and 'the creative freedom,' freedom as will to act ex nihilo. The former belongs to man while the latter to God. Sartre's man as a being-for-itself is not a free will that is attributed only by autonomy of practicing 'independent thinking' rather man is free like God who can produce 'a creative act.' The freedom which Descartes was to attribute to God Sartre is ascribing to man. The Sartrean man-qua-being-for-itself is the only creative being in the nexus of the world-qua-being-in-itself in that he through his acts creates his essence on the one hand and on the other gives meanings to the objects in the world. Man as an existential subject is like the Cartesian God neither subject to any moral principles nor to any identity, as he creates his own morality on existential plane as well as his essence whatsoever following his creative acts ex nihilo. Referring to Descartes' 'rigorous' philosophic

approach to the divine, Sartre explicitly proclaims that '[t]he free man is alone on the face of an absolutely free God.'[28]

Sartre, while bringing the absolute freedom of the divine to terms with the human freedom, ascribes to man's being-for-itself the absolute individuality. Man as an individual is to make of himself whatever he wills to be, which is to say that man's being is what he 'chooses to be.' Making this choice, man is helped neither by his inner essence, as he has none nor by any extraneous source like God, as he has already become himself God. This existential destitution of inner essence and outer help is to make man find himself 'abandoned to the intolerable necessity of making himself whatever it be,' and it is the sense in which Sartre judges that man is 'condemned to be free.'[29] This means that 'no limits to' man's 'freedom can be found except freedom itself,' or in other words man is 'not free to cease being free.' This is the perpetual state of man's being-for-itself that it remains so destitute of meanings that may inspire him from within or without. This meaning of void, emptiness or destitute of help makes man's freedom 'nothingness of being'-for-itself[30] and so human freedom appears to be identical with human existence. It is by virtue of this meaning of nothingness that human act as an expression of freedom is related to two other co-relates namely, motive and end. Sartre conceives of these three co-relates – namely, motive, act and end as 'a continuum' or 'a plenum.' There is always an 'ensemble' of my 'desires, emotions and passions' that urges me to accomplish an act; and so every act becomes intentional and it thus posits an end. That is to say, every act being an expression of freedom along with its two co-relates – namely, motive (cause) and end forms a temporal continuum of past, present and future. One should here be cautious that for Sartre past being a 'factual state' of affairs cannot be the cause of human act.[31] Rather consciousness has 'the permanent possibility of effecting a rupture with its own past, of wrenching itself away from its past so as to be able to consider it in the light of a non-being and so as to be able to confer on it the meaning which it has in terms of the project of a meaning which it does not have.' Further Sartre necessarily relates this negative power of consciousness with respect to the world and itself to freedom of human act. He says:

"… as soon as one attributes to consciousness this negative power with respect to the world and itself, as soon as the nihilation forms an integral part of the positing of an end, we must recognize that the indispensable and fundamental condition of all action is the freedom of the acting being."[32]

The intentional structure of human act necessitates its cause as motivation that is not 'thematically conceived' by one who intends to accomplish that act rather existentially experienced by one. It means that one qua being-for-itself while doing an act 'must confer on it its value as cause or motive.' In this regard, the motive of an act 'is understood by the end.' For instance, if an employee accepts an unreasonably low salary offered by his employer, he does so under the yoke of 'fear,' and that fear is a motive of continuing with his job with that salary. But the fear is 'of dying from starvation,' which is to say, 'this fear has meaning only outside itself in an end ideally posited, which is

the preservation of a life which I apprehend as "in danger."'[33] Human reality or the Heideggerian Dasein (Sartre normally takes the former as the latter) is always ready to move ahead of its facticity to achieve the transcendent ends. Dasein as being-for-itself is always 'passionate' or 'willing' to make efforts in its upsurge to attain the defining character of its being in terms of the posited ends; and Dasein's so positing the ends is what Sartre calls 'thrust of the freedom.' He elaborates:

"Freedom is nothing but the existence of our will or of our passions in so far as this existence is the nihilation of facticity; that is, the existence of a being which is its being in the mode of having to be it.… the will is determined within the compass of motives and ends already posited by the for-itself in a transcendent projection of itself toward its possible."[34]

CONCLUSION

Through an examination of Sartre's atheistic existentialism in the nexus of Descartes' theistic metaphysics this paper has shown the latter as an alternative perspective for the account of the former that is formally situated in the tradition of phenomenology. The Cartesian account of the human consciousness being substantial along with the substantiality of the world provides with a contrasting perspective for the illustration of Sartre's conception of consciousness as unsubstantial without denying the duality of being. Indeed, recognition of the plausibility of the Cartesian account is in large part dependent upon Sartre's half-hearted acceptance of dualism challenging the validities of the Cartesian multitude of substances. This challenge equally applies to the notion of human freedom which has, according to Sartre, contributed to the false encumbering of the self necessarily leads it towards being an unfree consciousness situated in the world. Instead, the divine freedom as conceived by Descartes is more plausible to practice in order to lead an authentic life on the existential plane of existence.

NOTES

[1] In his letter to the French translator of his book which serves as a preface to not only the French version but also to the English version that I refer in this study, Descartes explains that he takes the existence of human mind 'as [his] first principle, and from it' he deduces 'very clearly' the remaining principles. See Rene Descartes, The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Volume I, tr. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff & Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 184

[2] Ibid., pp. 193-5

[3] Ibid., p. 195

[4] Rene Descartes, The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Volume II, tr. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff & Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 20-2

[5] Descartes says: "…whether I possess some power enabling me to bring it about that I who now exist a little while from now. For since I am

nothing but a thinking thing – or at least since I am now concerned only and precisely with that part of me which is a thinking thing – if there were such a power in me , I should undoubtedly be aware of it. But I experience no such power, and this very fact makes me recognize most clearly that I depend on some being distinct from myself." See Ibid., pp. 33-4

[6] Op. Cit., Descartes, Volume I, p. 210

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] In the Third and Fifth Meditations, Descartes offers proofs for the existence of God. In the Third Meditation, he offers the First Cause Argument and the Argument of Most Objective Reality of God's Idea, whereas in the Fifth Meditation, he offers the Ontological Argument for the existence of God. I did not discuss these arguments in this text as the discussion is out of scope of this study. On this issue one may see Op. Cit., Descartes, Volume II, pp. 24-36 & pp. 44-49

[10] Jean-Paul Sartre, Existentialism and Humanism, in Richard Kearney and Mara Rainwater (Eds.), The Continental Philosophy Reader (New York, Routledge, 1996), p. 66

[11] Ibid., p. 67

[12] Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, tr. Hazel E. Barnes (London, Methuen, 1972), p. 4

[13] Ibid., p. 73

[14] Ibid., p. 74

[15] Leo Fretz, Individuality in Sartre's Philosophy, in Christina Howells (Ed.), The Cambridge Companion to Sartre (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 76-9. Joseph Mahon's review of Fretz's analysis of Sartre is also very important, on which see Joseph Mahon, The Legacy of Jean-Paul Sartre, in History of European Ideas, Vol. 21 No. 3 (Pergamon, Oxford, 1995), pp. 401-410

[16] Op. Cit., Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. xxix

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., p. xxxvi

[19] Ibid.

[20] Sartre owes debt to Heidegger for the expression, revealing-revealed (révélante-révélée). See Ibid., p. xxix

[21] Ibid., p. xxxviii

[22] Ibid., p. 47-48

[23] Ibid., p. 48

[24] David Detmer analyses the issue of bad faith as a 'paradoxical' existential phenomenon, and he finds various forms of ambiguities of meanings concerned while discussing what Sartre conceives of it. There are various forms of mutuality of meanings that are at issue here like in-itself, for-itself; pre-reflective, reflective consciousness; facticity, transcendence; and emphasis, omission etc. On this see David Detmer, Sartre Explained: From Bad Faith to Authenticity (Chicago, Open Court, 2008), pp. 75-89

[25] Op. Cit., Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 56

[26] Ibid.

[27] In Introduction to the English version of Being and Nothingness, Mary Warnock, while commenting on the arguments and expositions of the book, says: "It has been said that Sartre does not indulge in metaphysics, but only in ontology, and this may be right." And for Sartre metaphysics differs from ontology in that the latter is defined by him in phenomenological nexus. He says: "…ontology will be the description of the phenomenon of being as it manifests itself." See Ibid., p. ix and p. xxiv

[28] Sartre lopsidedly insists that Descartes, in his 'description of divine freedom,' 'ends by rejoining and explicating his primary intuition of his own freedom.' He further deliberates to proclaim that '[i]t matters little to us that he [Descartes] was forced by the age in which he lived, as well as by his point of departure, to reduce the human free will to merely negative power to deny itself until it finally yields and abandons itself to the divine solicitude. It matters little that he hypostasized in God the original and constituent freedom whose infinite existence he recognized by means of the cogito itself….It took two centuries of crisis – a crisis of Faith and a crisis of Science – for man to regain the creative freedom that Descartes placed in God, and for anyone finally to suspect the following truth, which is an essential basis of humanism: man is the being as a result of whose appearance a world exists. But we shall not reproach Descartes with having given to God that which reverts to us in our right. Rather, we shall admire him for having, in a dictatorial age, laid the groundwork of democracy, for having followed to the very end the demands of the idea of autonomy and for having understood, long before the Heidegger of Vom Wesem des Grundes, that the sole foundation of being is freedom.' See Jean-Paul Sartre, Literary and Philosophic Essays, tr. by Annette Michelson (London, Hutchinson, 1968), pp. 169-184

[29] Op. Cit., Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 439

[30] Ibid., p. 441

[31] Sartre categorically asserts: "No factual state whatever it may be (the political and economic structure of society, the psychological "state," etc.) is capable by itself of motivating any act whatsoever. For an act is a projection of the for-itself toward what is not, and what is can in no way determine by itself what is not…. No factual state can determine consciousness to define it and to circumscribe it…. Under no circumstances can the past in any way by itself produce an act." On this see Ibid., p. 435-436. Sartre here seems to disagree with Gadamer's notion of 'effective historical consciousness.' This notion justifies the inevitable evolvement of consciousness with respect to the past in terms of a specific tradition. The tradition is not a dead past, instead, it is a living continuity, a flow of 'effective-history' which encompasses not only the past but also the relevant present. It is the 'effective-historical consciousness' that gives rise to the human thought and act as well as to the social structure whatsoever as it exists. Consciousness always finds itself in the nexus of a 'hermeneutical

situation,' that is, a situation in which consciousness finds itself 'with regard to the tradition' that it is a product of as well as it is trying to understand it. On this see Hans-Georg Gadamer, Wahrheit und Methode (Truth and Method) tr. G. Barden and W. G. Doerpel (New York, Crossroad, 1975), pp. 268-269

[32] Op. Cit., Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 436

[33] Ibid., p. 437

[34] Ibid., p. 444