

History and Existentialism in Sartre by Leonard Krloger
(in THE CRITICAL SPIRIT)

EXISTENTIALISM
his - mind
reality & creation

p.239 Existentialism poses both subj. & obj. problems for his. As subjects, existentialists espouse positions that are often antithetical to the his. dimension; as objects, they have exhibited ideas & activities that are often opaque to his. knowledge. In S both kinds of problems are joined, & in what follows, thru him a joint solution will be essayed.

p.240 takes up "adjectival and substantive" stages of intell. movements.

p.241: "It is a matter of distinguishing bet. the stage in which a TENDENCY develops as part & in the shelter of an already est'd. set of ideas & the stage it sets itself up as an ind. doctrine or phil. on its own. In its (existentialism) adjectival stage it goes back at least to H's (PHEN)... In its substantive stage it becomes an autonomous & characteristic 20th c. phil., with Husserl its main forbear & Jaspers, Heidegger & S its primary exponents..... "Externally, the rel. bet. exis. & his. mindedness is one of rival siblings..."

Riparian
in H's
philosophy
of his
existence

p.243 ambiguities in rel. bet. existentialism & historicism in S "not idiosyncratic but reflective of a fundamental dilemma in a characteristic intell. movement of OUR age. Uniqueness of S is not only rigor of his thought & responsiveness to world but "in his dev. he has traversed the whole spectrum of possibilities from the anti- to the pro-his. postures of existentialism."

ambiguities in rel. bet. exis. & historicism

...if we can discover an his. logic in his dev. the prospect of uncovering the function of his. in contemporary thinking. For S's dev. involves a shift that is large: than the change in his evaluation of his. & the growing centrality of his. is the key to it."

growing
central
role
of his
existence

pp.244-45 deals with Nausea & p.246 with (both) aesthetic dimension & L'Imaginaire for it is "imaginary consciousness" makes man able "to posit reality as a SYNTHETIC WHOLE."

p.249: "His (S's) inability to demonstrate the movement FROM his. perception TO his. synthesis moreover was irremediable so long as he associated his. knowledge with aesthetic imagination. For he generalized this incompatibility bet. what the real analogue is & what it represents into an 'inherent contradiction' and 'ambiguity' of all images."

Problem
to be
reconciled
with
his. existence

p.250: "It was this tendency of S's art & imagination to slide over into reality that explains his tenuous attraction to the his. he denied. It was to resolve the general problem of RELATING REALITY & CREATION that he rounded out his 1st stage with the writing of B/N in which he articulated the doctrine of his. appropriate to this 1st stage."

2nd problem then of synthesis & integration, of what S calls "TOTALITY" dominates the 2nd stage.

supplement
TOTALITY
B/N

p.251: "He overcame, in B/N, the problem of discontinuity & in the service of this measure of integration, est'd. the ELEMENTAL BASIS FOR HIS. But he remained, in this wk. within the framework of individuality. It was the INTERNAL DRIVE to overcome this limitation upon unity that PUSHED him finally into the 2nd stage as his thought in search of a supra-indiv. totality & it was in the process of this search that his. became central to him."

re B/N, p.251: "as the most profound, systematic & coherent exposition of S's phil., it is crucial for the revelation of the INESCAPABLE LIMITS & problems of that thought--limits & problems which created intell. NEEDS that his. was later brought in to fill. MOREOVER, since S has NEVER departed from the main foundations of his thought, B/N also sets forth the assumptions which molded the subsequent form of his historical doctrine."

p.252: "The theme is rel. of existence & consciousness for the particular kind of being which S calls 'human reality.' These 2 sub-types of being manifest a radical rift in the heart of human being as such. This rift manifests a radical rift in the heart of human being as such. This rift manifests in the striving of consciousness to create a GROUND, A REASON FOR BEING, & to rejoin existence in a unitary, or, in S's term, 'totalized' being whose contingency would now be replaced by meaning."

p.252: "S had to bring consciousness to terms with all dimensions of human reality. Yet the HISTORICAL DIMENSION of p.253: this reality; obvious as it is, get SHORT SHRIFT, & S's orientation of his theme against detached knowledge as an activity & detached particulars as objects--both the stock-in-trade of historians--makes it clear that this was no mere oversight."

LK then cites 6 of S's pre-historical propositions--that is, propositions--that is, propositions of TIME & SOCIETY the 2 main constituents of the historical dimension--in the form of a cumulative argument: (1) Neither consciousness nor existence are in time."

(2) "The 3 dimensions of time corresponds to the 3 facets of the creative act of consciousness... The past then is the 'factivity', the 'given', the 'contingent', the 'essence' & 'substance' of what we are. It is the unalterable, irremediable, factual necessity that 'haunts' consciousness; it is the world that consciousness determines itself to transcend." B/N, 83-4, 118-9

(3) "Consciousness must be both its own past--since the past is by definition the substance of what anything is--and at the same time it must deny, negate 'nihilate' this very past, for this is its consciousness' very reason for being." (B/N, 145-7, MAC) JPS: "All my past is there, pressing, urgent, imperious, but its meanings & the orders which it gives me I choose by the very project of my end."

p.254: "As a matter of fact, if not of logic, S did break thru the paradox, but he did it now by deciding for the present over the future & the past... but he paid for it ambiguity." p.50 JPS: "We choose our past in the light of a certain, but from then on it imposes itself upon us & devours us."

(4) LK shows however that past is still not history here since it is "my past", "my consciousness". "The 'event' that is 'a condition for all history'--that has the effect of 'making his. possible'--is the 'fact', abs., contingent, inexplicable of the birth of SOCIAL consciousness out of indiv. consciousness--S's terms, the 'Upsurge' of 'BEING*FOR*OTHERS' OUT OF 'BEING*FOR*ITSELF'." p.255: "For the S of B/N his. has no autonomous status whatsoever."

LK says S refused to distinguish 2 sense of his. (1) as reality & the deliberate ambiguity" had a tendency... to make historians like any past-creating individuals. Thus when S recalled his. situations it was to seduce in each an (his. act.) assessing his own past in the manner of an historian as an ex. of a larger analysis of INDIV. CHOICE."

p.256: (5) "Behind S's inability to people the his. arena which he defined was his more fundamental -- this time admitted-- failure to go beyond the indiv. & to constitute the society that was to inhabit it."

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