COGAN, James Ennis, 1945 -
ESSAY ON PHENOMENOLOGICAL ONTOLOGY: ON
DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS.

Rice University, Ph.D., 1971
Philosophy

University Microfilms, A XEROX Company, Ann Arbor, Michigan

© 1971
JAMES ENNIS COGAN

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

THIS DISSERTATION HAS BEEN MICROFILMED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED
ESSAY ON PHENOMENOLOGICAL ONTOLOGY:
ON DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

by

JAMES ENNIS COGAN

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Thesis Director's Signature:

Houston, Texas
May, 1971
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>THE NATURE OF DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Two Kinds of Account</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accounts and Descriptions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Describing and Giving Descriptions</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Descriptions of &quot;Things&quot;</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Account vs. Description</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Word Pictures and Appearance</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Historical Description</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Remark on &quot;Explanation&quot;</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rigor, Care, Precision</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adequacy</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Necessary Features</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Accounting for&quot; and Necessary Conditions</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Accounting for&quot; and Sufficient Conditions</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analysis and Necessary and/or Sufficient Features</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Description and Sufficient Features</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>II</th>
<th>THE NATURE OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL ONTOLOGY</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phenomenological Ontology</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Relation of Sartre's Ontology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to &quot;The Concrete&quot;</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Relation of Phenomenological</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ontology to &quot;The Concrete&quot;</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>III</th>
<th>SARTRE AND &quot;THE CONCRETE&quot;</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(EXPOSITION AND ANALYSIS)</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Problem of Transcendent Non-Being</td>
<td>93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sartre's Discussion of Absence</td>
<td>97</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Evaluation</td>
<td>110</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV SARTRE AND &quot;THE CONCRETE&quot; (DIAGNOSIS)</td>
<td>132</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ontological Proof</td>
<td>132</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Problem of Absence and Sartrian Phenomenology</td>
<td>146</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V RECAPITULATION</td>
<td>165</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>173</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

This essay is about description and is about some points in the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre follows Edmund Husserl in doing phenomenology. They and other phenomenologists claim that to provide descriptions of matters in question is the only way to get at their intrinsic character. Whatever may be said on other grounds concerning such a claim, it is not obvious just what a description is and what, in virtue of its being a description, it can do. Unless we can become clear about these questions, it seems impossible to judge whether the program of phenomenology has much chance of general success. Saying we need a description is one thing; showing exactly how it helps us (and, perhaps more importantly, how it does not help us) to comprehend precisely whatever is described is something else again. Consequently, a painstaking exploration seems to offer the only hope of reaching improved results.

For example, can we do metaphysics by offering descriptions? Are there some descriptions which have a different status, which hold more weight than others when we attempt to reach conceptual clarity? Does this description tell us the way things have to be? Could it in fact? Questions of this sort must be answered before we bandy about 'description' as a
panacea for philosophical problems. That is why I have sought in the first chapter to get clear--or at least clearer--about what a description is and what, as a description, it can accomplish philosophically.

The subsequent chapters deal with some central points in the philosophy of Sartre. In one important respect Sartre seems to understand the kind of power which a description has. For he never claims that his ontology is an account or even approaches an account, which states, once and for all, the ways in which the world is to be understood. He appears to see the impossibility of attaining a metaphysic by doing phenomenology. However, though Sartre may be correct on the general questions of what a phenomenological ontology can do, problems remain with the particular ontology he offers. These difficulties, ironically enough, stem from another misconception of description, a confusion not about the relation of description to metaphysics, but still a confusion, one that places the character of his ontology in question.
CHAPTER I

THE NATURE OF DESCRIPTION

Phenomenology claims to describe what it focuses our attention upon; it neither offers to "explain" phenomena nor tries to derive results by inference, inductive or deductive, from prior facts, principles, premises, or concessions. Edmund Husserl, the founder of the recent phenomenological movement, had surprisingly little to say about the concept of description, even though description is a cardinal feature of his method. What, then, is a description? What philosophical "power" or conceptual "force" can be claimed for a description? And, just as importantly, what philosophical "power" cannot be claimed for it? The present investigation will attempt to answer these questions by determining what a description is; by comparing and contrasting it with such related concepts as "account," "analysis," and "explanation."

Two Kinds of Account

We often give historical accounts, biological accounts, metaphysical accounts, psychological accounts, mechanistic accounts, or even just plain accounts of various matters. Just what is it that we offer when we give an account of something to someone?
Let us consider a biological account of the growth of a particular human foetus. Such an account might deal with certain facts which are adduced, for example, as to how the foetus grows and what factors contribute to its well-being. If we were to ask for an account of the growth of the foetus, and not explicitly specify that we were looking for a piece of biology as an answer, we would not expect a biological account any more than we would expect a listing of certain stages in its development, such as the stage when it grows its arms and legs, and so on. We might just as well get as an answer to our question the recognized stages of its growth, rather than a report of how the development took place in more refined and scientific terms. But in addition to or in place of getting the recognized stages of the growth of the foetus, we might get an account which would account for the way it is growing or has grown. "This foetus is deformed because in the second month of pregnancy its mother took a certain drug" would be an example of the latter kind of account. Whether we call this account a biological account or just plainly an account depends on various circumstances; for it might be justifiably called either, for a number of reasons to which we shall come in due course.

Let us look at some possible accounts which could be given of, say, a particular case of human behavior. We can give an account of some behavior without offering any
particular or specialized account (psychological, biological, or otherwise) of it. For example, we might note that John was very upset at Martha, that he took her to task at the meeting for what seemed trivial and refused to consider her plaints civilly. We clearly can do this (and have in fact done so) without offering any physiological or physical facts about John—for example, that his blood-pressure was very high at the moment and his face was flushed, that he became breathless and perspiration flowed from his brow. And we might (as we have in fact done) have given an account of John's behavior toward Martha without going into any psychological facts about John, that he comes from a long line of obsessive compulsives, say. Furthermore, we may, as our account shows in fact, do this without offering any accounts designed to give reasons for or account for John's behavior at the meeting. Such accounts of this latter sort might be: (1) that John, in love with Martha, thought she was making advances toward Richard, when she stayed late to work with Richard on the payroll, and John found the situation intolerable; or (2) that John is a stickler; he is obsessed with minutiae and finds some trivialities, such as Martha's staying late when she was not supposed to, non-trivial, for he thinks that the organization, if it is to succeed, must be a tightly run ship in every quarter.
Let us look for a moment at these last accounts, these accounts which account for John's behavior. (1) and (2) might be accounts, separately or both together, of John's behavior at the meeting; that is, they might both serve to account for John's behavior. Of course, if these accounts do not consist of (alleged) facts additional to those of the original account specifying John's behavior, then these accounts could not be doing anything; they are superfluous, insofar as they do not serve to account for John's behavior, since they do not suggest anything about it different from the facts we already know.

Both (1) and (2) may be offered to account for what happened at the meeting. That is, they offer reasons, or conditions, or causes which purportedly serve in telling why the meeting was the way it was. They might be said to diagnose what happened, to say what the outburst was due to, or how it came about. We might say they give an interpretation of what happened. They explain what happened by proposing it consequent upon certain other features of the situation. Of course, they do more than just claim that there are some additional facts which ought to be known. For they relate these presumed facts to the situation of the meeting in such a way as to say why things turned out the way they did. Consequently, that there are these additional facts is not enough to establish that these facts are related in the way
proposed to the events in question at the meeting. John may very well be in love with Martha, but that may have little or nothing to do with his conduct at the meeting. Whether or not these additional facts adequately explain why John's behavior was the way it was will depend on whether there are any other possibilities which might equally illumine what he did. When we try to give an explanation of something by giving reasons for its being the way it is, we often say that we are giving an account of it. When we say that we can give no account of John's behavior, we may mean that we can find no explanation for it, that it is inscrutable, and so on.

But we have already seen that there is another use of "account." We often say that we can give no account of x's behavior when we do not know what he did, and to say this is not merely to make the remark that since we do not know what he did, we could not begin to account for it. When we note that the newspaper gave no account of the McCrocklin case, we might just as well be saying that it did not deal with the case at all, not that it did not give reasons why the case turned out as it did. "They gave no account or a meager account of the Senate hearings" might mean that nothing was reported, or that not enough was mentioned, about what was taking place in Washington, not about why the hearings were taking place but about exactly what in the hearings was actually going on. Indeed, one can give an account of what was said at the hearings
by saying what was said. This use of "account" we shall call "account - 1". Yet one can give an account of what was said by going beyond what was said. One can give reasons for or account for its being said. This use of "account" we shall refer to as "account - 2." These terms are just labels to keep our stock straight. The point so far is that there are at least two uses of "account."

**Accounts and Descriptions**

Is an "account - 1" the same thing as a description? If we ask someone to give a description of what happened, we, in general, mean the same thing as we would if we asked him to give an "account - 1" of it. But seldom if ever do we preface the word "description" with "historical," "biological," "metaphysical," as we do the word "account" used as an "account - 1." So there seems some difference. What we want to know, then, is whether there are any differences in the uses of "account" as "account - 1" and "description." We shall begin trying to answer this question by examining some uses of "description" and its cognate verb "to describe."

**Describing and Giving Descriptions**

If I describe a house as Victorian, am I thereby giving a description of the house as Victorian? Well, there are such things as one-word descriptions. One could certainly describe some straight-laced, old dowager as Victorian and could
be said to have given a proper and one-hundred per-cent description of her. But there are a variety of cases in which one might be said to have described something as Victorian and not be said to have given a description of it. The reason for this is that giving a description involves going into some detail, whereas we can describe something without there being any question of going into any detail. For example, in describing the woman as Victorian I may just be making a passing remark and so going into detail is not in question. This case can be contrasted with one in which describing the woman as Victorian is to give a one-word description of her, one which obviates going into further detail. A different case still, would be one in which describing the house as Victorian is to make some adjudicative remark, that according to my judgment the house is Victorian. The judgment that I make does not go into detail although I might be able to cite details to support the judgment. The adjective "Victorian" may apply to many details of the house, and I may need to cite any or all of them to answer the question why it is to be described as (in this case judged to be) a Victorian house. Of course, I might describe the house as Victorian and not be making any judgment about it at all. The house may be so clearly out of the Victorian era, so pervasively Victorian, that there could be no question as to why it was described as Victorian. To describe the house as Victorian in this case
would not be to make any assessment which rested on there being these and these details to support it. It might, indeed, be to give a one-word description of the house. The character of the house may be so indisputably Victorian that to describe it as Victorian will not be to give any assessment at all.

There is also the case in which I describe a house as Victorian and can adduce various details to support what I say about the house but in which I would not be supporting an assessment of the house. Here I would be simply listing the details which make the house Victorian. Whether one would say that I was giving a description of the house when I described it as Victorian in this case would depend on whether describing the house as Victorian actually counted as going into detail about the house or whether it counted as merely mentioning a specific feature, namely the Victorian character of the house. In the former case, one could say that I was giving a description. In the latter case, one would say that describing the house as Victorian either was part of giving a description, or was just a fact or feature mentioned which could in no way be taken as part of a description. In describing the house as Victorian I might just be stating it was.

If, however, my describing the house as Victorian is a "judgment call," which rests on an appeal to various details, then it will involve more than a mere description of the house. For the judgment that the house is Victorian rests on
descriptions of the house in which enough details are noted which are Victorian to say that the house is Victorian. Indeed, my judgment that the house is Victorian rests on my describing various details of the house as Victorian. However, to describe these details as Victorian will not be to make any judgment about them but will in this case just be to give a description of them, a description on which the judgment that the house is Victorian rests. For, at some point, there must be some details which are described as Victorian which are for all intents and purposes indisputably Victorian and in which case to say that they are Victorian is to make no judgment at all. To say these details are Victorian will rest on just taking a look at the details, whereas to say that the house is Victorian will rest on whether enough details of the house are Victorian to say that the house is Victorian. To describe the house as Victorian and certain of its details as Victorian, in this case, will be to do different things. Describing the house as Victorian will be to make an assessment which rests on there being enough features of the house that can be described as Victorian without making any judgment about them in order to say the house is Victorian. These details are, for the purposes of the assessment, indisputably Victorian. But, in this case, to describe certain details of the house as Victorian will be to give a description of various details which are
indisputably Victorian and which can be used to support the judgment that the house itself is Victorian. Different matters will be at issue in both cases.

We can further illustrate the difference between "describing" and "giving a description" in numerous other cases. If I describe a remark as ambiguous, I do not thereby give a description of it. If I describe the university as authoritarian or a distinction as trivial, I do not thereby offer a description. I might be making some assessment of the university, the distinction, or the remark.

Again, to describe a meeting as dull need not be to give a description of the meeting. It may be to do a number of things. It may be to give an assessment which rests on some description of the meeting. Also, it may just be to say that the meeting was dull without there being any question of my going into detail when I say it is dull. That is, to say it is dull may not be to give a one-word description of the meeting anymore than it is to make an assessment. In describing the meeting as dull, I may just say that it is dull without my saying it doing the work of a description, without there being any question that my saying that the meeting was dull is to suffice for going into detail about the meeting. If I just say that I went to a couple of dull meetings today, I am not thereby giving a description of the meetings that I went to, although someone might say of me that I described the
meetings as dull. But I may in describing a meeting as dull be giving a description of the meeting, a one-word description, for example, that characterizes the meeting perfectly. No need to say anymore. It may have bored everyone to tears. And in yet another case I may describe the meeting further to show how dull the whole affair was. Here I may be offering a description of the meeting which could be taken to support my characterization of the meeting as dull but which still does not support an assessment which I have made about the meeting. For I may have made no assessment, may have described it as simply dull and then gone on to elaborate just how dull it was, what made it so dull. And, finally, to describe the meeting as dull may be part of giving a description of the meeting, even though it may not by itself amount to giving a description of the meeting.

Description of "Things"

We have been concerned with describing and giving descriptions, up to this point. We offer descriptions of how things work, what things are, who said what, what things amount to, etc. We do not merely offer descriptions of the typical thing or object, like, say, a chair or even of things with "thing" construed in its broadest substantive sense. For example, "We'll need some description of how big the thing is so we can plan for its storage" and "His description of what happened left it doubtful as to whether the robbery could have
occurred in that length of time" and "If you do not give them a description of what you did on your vacation, they will be very disappointed" are all things which we might commonly say. Descriptions are not only given of things, even with the word "thing" used in its widest sense as a substantive. We use the words "description of" followed by clauses like "what he did" as well as followed by substantives. Is there a difference between the use of "description of" followed by substantival terms and the use followed by a clause?

When "description of" is followed by a substantival term there seems to be some characteristic questions with which we are concerned. For example, when someone gives a description of his house he is concerned to note features which characterize the house. He notes what it looks like, say, or what it is like; for example, that it is red-brick with a white roof, that it is Victorian or typically suburban, that it has a very complex sound-system with speakers and controls in every room. When someone describes his feelings he is concerned to say what he feels and/or how he feels, for instance, that he feels pain, grief, or tingling sensations, or that he feels depressed or happy. When one describes an aroma, one says what it smells like (like fresh coffee), and/or how it smells (robust). When one describes the taste of some beer one says how it tastes (sour, smooth) and/or what it tastes like (like lots of beers, like no other beers, like Schlitz, etc.). When one describes a song one mentions what it sounds like ("Home
on the Range") and/or how it sounds (melodious, cacophonous, heavy), and/or other characteristics of the song, say, what particular parts are most striking, where, perhaps, the harmony comes in, where the instrumentation drops out, etc. When one describes a person one says what the person looks like, and/or how the person looks (well, puny), and/or what the person is like (what he likes, what his habits are, etc.). When one describes a novel one says what the novel is like (a long, involved, terribly complex novel about French life in the eighteenth century) and/or what sort of novel it is (a typical Gothic novel). One notes characteristic features of the novel. When one describes today's action on the stock market one says what it was like or how it was, that trading was heavy in the morning and moderate in the afternoon, say. When one describes the touch of some material one says how the material feels (smooth) and/or what it feels like (satin). Indeed, the descriptions in the cases above are descriptions which note characteristic features of what they describe. They say what something is like; what something looks like, smells like, tastes like, feels like, sounds like, how something looks, tastes, smells, sounds, feels, what characteristics, qualities, attributes it has and so on. Indeed, when one is asked to give a description of many things it is very often understood that one is to deal with what characteristic features they have. Consequently, though there are many descriptions
which can be offered which in some way pertain to my house, offering some of these descriptions would not of itself constitute offering a description of my house. For example, descriptions of what it took to build the house, or of how easy it was to build, or of what the foundation is made of, while they might be relevant to a description of my house are not themselves descriptions of my house. It is not that I could not give a description of what the foundation is made of in giving a description of my house, but rather that if this is to be the case, a description of what the foundation is made of needs to be tied in some way to the subject of what the house is like.

There are, however, cases in which a description of something is not understood to deal with what it is like. For example, if I describe the connection between the last two remarks, I may say what the connection is between the two remarks, that they are both remarks about what it means to give a description. Of course, I may describe the connection as a conceptual connection, or as a tenuous or far-fetched connection, in which case I would be describing the manner in which the remarks were connected. I would be characterizing their connection, by noting certain features about their relation. In giving a description of the connection between the last two remarks, I could say what the connection is, as well as what the connection is like.
If I describe the results of mixing "railroad gin" and "Texas medicine," as the poet Dylan does, I may say what the results are. My description of the results would amount to saying what resulted, that "people just get uglier and I have no sense of time."¹ But I might also characterize the results as "terribly unsettling" and "hard to stomach" in which case I would be describing what the results were like. If I describe the facts I may just say what the facts are, although I may say that they are confusing, or that they form an incomplete picture of what happened. In so doing I may be characterizing the facts, saying what they are like (the strangest set of facts I've ever seen). Likewise in descriptions of, say, scientific experiments, or philosophical problems, or membership requirements, I may say what the experiments are, what the problems are, what the requirements are. Although I may say what they are like, too. So, it is apparent that in some cases a call for a description of something is not so clearly a call for a description of what it is like.

However, while descriptions of things in some cases deal with what they are like and in other cases with what they are as well, there are a number of matters which, though they may pertain to something which is described and may even be mentioned in a description of it, do not, if mentioned by themselves, constitute a description of it. Giving a description may not be understood just to be a description of what something
is like; but this does not mean that anything mentioned about some thing amounts to a description of it. We have already said that calling for a description of my house is not a calling for a description of how easy it was to build it, or what the foundation is made of, etc. Nor would calling for a description of an experiment call for a description of what effects the experiment has had on research since it was performed. A description of an experiment is not understood to deal explicitly with what effects the experiment has had on further research or even with what research went into the formulation of the experiment as such. It might go into these, of course. Going into the research which went into performing the experiment might help to show how complex the experiment really is. But a description of the experiment is not as such understood to deal with the topic of research. To give a description of the research would not be to give a description of the experiment.

Thus, there are a number of descriptions which can be given that deal with, for instance, a house, but only a description concerned with what the house is like is a description of the house. Similarly, only a description of what a certain experiment is or what a certain experiment is like is a description of the experiment, though a number of descriptions can be offered which deal with it.
Account vs. Description

It seems that the uses of "description" and "account" differ in this respect: that while a description of, say, the President is an "account - 1" of the President, an "account - 1" of the President need not be a description of him. For a description of the President is understood to be an "account - 1" of what the President looks like or what he is like as a person. The President is a big man; he appears as a strong figure. He smokes cigars and drinks sour-mash bourbon. He is a tough-minded wheeler-dealer whom one had better not cross in an important meeting. But the President does have a sensitive side to him; he likes Impressionist paintings and he reads Dylan Thomas. This description is an "account - 1" of the President. But an "account - 1" of the President, that he went home for the weekend to catch up on some rest and relaxation, to do some hunting, and to meet with some foreign diplomat is no description of the President; this is quite clear.

But the uses of "description" and "account" are similar in this respect: with clauses like "what took place," "what it is," "what it consists of," "how big it is," descriptions and "accounts - 1" seem to amount to the same. A description of what took place or what something consists of is an "account - 1" of what took place or what it consists of and vice versa. "An account of what took place" can be used
interchangeably with "a description of what took place." Likewise, "an account of what the President looks like" can be used interchangeably with "a description of what the President looks like."

A description of the President is understood to be a description of what the President looks like or what he is like. When we ask for a description of the President, we ask for a particular kind of description, a description of what he looks like or is like, a particular kind of "account - l" an "account - l" of what he looks like or is like.

But we seldom simply ask for an "account - l" of the President. We seldom simply say "Give me an account of the President." We might say this in a certain tone of voice and mean for someone to give us any "account - l" of the President. In saying this, we might be challenging our speaker to prove that he knew what he was talking about in the most minimal way; to say anything about the President at this point which was true would be better than what he has said so far. Here "Give me some account of the President" would do just as well. But we do not in general say "Give me an account of the President," for there are any number of "accounts - l" which might be given: an "account - l" of his political background, his boyhood days, his views on art, etc. To ask simply for an "account - l" of the President is not yet to specify what one wants. So we can say that there are an indefinite number of
kinds of "account - 1" that can be given of the President, "accounts - 1" of how he came to power, what he does on week-ends, what his views on certain issues are, what kind of art he likes, what he is like, what he looks like, etc. We can also say that these "accounts - 1" are descriptions of how he came to power, what he does on week-ends, what his views are on certain issues, what kind of art he likes, what he is like, what he looks like, etc. But we do not say they are all descriptions of him. We say that just the last two are descriptions of him.

Word Pictures and Appearances

The notion of giving a description is often taken to involve painting a word-picture of whatever it is that is described. We talk of giving a true picture of what happened when we speak of descriptions. Of course, metaphors like these are not troublesome unless they lead one to think that all descriptions are of things we can paint a picture of. Furthermore, when I describe what my house looks like or how it looks, I describe its appearance. But to talk of appearances may be to use a word rather heavily laden with theoretical connotations. Consider some of the ordinary ways we use the word 'appearance'. Describing what a house looks like is often referred to as describing its appearance. In this regard, to ask for a description of the appearance of something is to ask for a description of what it looks like, of its visual characteristics.
One would not ask for a description of the appearance of a song, for there is nothing to describe which could be called its appearance. This is not to say that the concept of appearance has no application to songs. A song may have the appearance of being a typically raucous number suited only for certain kinds of radio stations. A song may appear poorly composed. It may appear plaintive, melancholic. It may have the appearance of a dirge, etc. Though one does not talk of describing the appearance of songs, the notion of appearance has some application to songs. Likewise with, say, fabrics. We can say that a fabric appears like silk to the touch, or that it has the appearance of silk when one runs one's fingers across it, but when we are asked to describe the appearance of the fabric we respond with what it looks like, not how it feels. We may say, too, that the new housing bill has all the appearance of being a sop to the Southern conservatives, but we are not describing the "appearance" of the bill when we do this. The bill has no appearance to describe. Indeed, describing appearances seems to be restricted to describing what something looks like. But the concept of "appearance" does not apply just to the visual characteristics of something. We use the word "appearance" with many different things. We just do not talk of describing appearances except with regard to things that can be seen, things about which we can say how they look.
Indeed, in the discipline of phenomenology it is often difficult to tell what describing appearances amounts to. To be sure the notion of appearance is technical in phenomenological texts. So what we say about the ordinary concept of appearance may seem irrelevant to phenomenological investigation. But it may not be irrelevant at all if it can be shown, say, that the ordinary concept is misunderstood by some phenomenologists and that a certain misconception is at the root of the technical notion. Let it suffice at this moment to say that the notion of describing appearances is not ordinarily taken to apply to numerous items. It applies only to those things which have visual characteristics that can be described.

Furthermore, it is clear from what has so far been said that to give a description need not be to describe the appearance of anything. The notion of describing appearances does not exhaust the conceptual range of "description." A description may say what something is and not say how it appears. A description may say what something is like and not at all be the description of an appearance. For it may be a description of something which has no appearance, as we saw above. Finally, a description may be a description of what something consists of, how big something is, and so on, none of which is a description of an appearance.

When I say, then, that what I have been doing is describing the distinction between "account" and "description," I
need not mean that I have been describing the appearance of anything or have been describing what some things are like or what characteristic features they have, but rather that I have been describing what distinction there is between "account" used as an "account - 1" and "description." Here to give a description just means to spell out what distinction there is. Indeed, while drawing a distinction may be to describe a distinction, describing a distinction in the sense of drawing it is different from describing a car, say, as red with wire wheels. In calling both of these "giving a description," we had better be aware of what sort of description we have in mind.

**Historical Descriptions**

Given what we have just considered, it might not disturb us to see an adjective placed before "description," even though we do not usually see adjectives there. So long as one is clear about just which use of description he has in mind there will not be any confusion if we use the term "historical description." For an historical description need only be an "account - 1" of certain facts, facts which are relevant to the discipline of history.

Confusion results when someone thinks that to give an historical description is somehow to give a different way of looking at things or a different way of telling what something is or is like. When someone thinks that there might be different
ways of telling what something looks like or is like, or what something is, there are bound to be difficulties. There are not different ways of seeing flowers, although there may be different ways to take various things about flowers. The point is, that without some steady notion of what flowers are, there could not be various ways to take them. We could not poeticize about them or do anything with them for that matter, because there would be no telling what a flower is.

Indeed, taking the facts in a different way is not seeing different facts. It may distort them a bit, but of course there is no possibility of distortion if things cannot be straightened out. It seems that the most that can be made of "historical description" is that it is an historical "account - 1" that is, that it has no different use from historical "account - 1." An historian finds some facts interesting, offers certain theses about them; an economist finds others interesting and offers theses about them. In this sense, an historian may see an age differently from an economist; for both may be concerned with different issues, with different facts.

Moreover, it is perfectly possible, to use the word "account" in the sense of "account - 1" apart from any specialized or restricted field of inquiry, such as history or economics. We can give an "account - 1" of the facts in the Kendrick case just as we can give a description of them. To be sure, it must be possible to give a non-specialized
"account - l" of something if it makes sense to talk of specialized "accounts - l" like historical "accounts - l." Indeed, I must be able to give some "account - l" of Rice in order to be able to say anything of one specific interest about it, if only to say what I am talking about. Though what I say about it might be included in any of a number of special "accounts - l," it could not be the case that whenever I talk about Rice, I am making some statement with a special character about it. For example, if I am a medieval historian looking through some ancient records, and I come across a name of a man who was born in 13__? and who died in 1452, and some other facts about him (that he served as a gardener in a monastery, say), it is not the case that all I can give of this man is an historical "account - l," though any one or all of these facts might find their place in an historical "account - l." If nothing else, he is a man who appears in the records I am perusing. Likewise with description. It must be possible to give what could be called plainly a description of what the facts in the case are in order for it to be possible to give a description of certain facts which have a special status with regard to the case.

This means that a description of what the facts are need not deal with anything in particular. Trivially, it need only deal with the facts. Whereas an historical description of the facts already has its subject-matter delimited. It is an "account - l" of specific historical interest. Of course as an
historical "account - 1," it need not deal with anything historical in particular. It trivially need only deal with historical matters concerning what it is an "account - 1" of.

One more thing regarding specialized "accounts - 1" or descriptions: we do not ever say "he gave an historical "account - 1" of what the facts were" whereas we do say "he gave an "account - 1" of what the facts were." This is because to preface "account" with "historical" indicates that the "account - 1" given does not pretend to deal with all the facts, so we do not say it is "an account of what the facts were." We say rather "it is an historical 'account - 1' of the facts," for there may be other facts which another discipline, say, economics, would rather consider.

Analysis

At this point it seems appropriate to discuss the concept of analysis. Ordinarily, we mean by analysis, something which gets to basic or fundamental principles or elements of whatever we analyze. "Analysis," as currently used, denotes a number of things, many of which we may find are called "analyses" simply because the word "analysis" lends an aura of thoroughness and respectability to whatever is called by this name. But rather than appear at the outset arbitrary by ruling out certain usages from the manifold before us, we shall instead examine what the discovery of basic principles amounts to; what basic elements,
essential principles, fundamental features, etc. might be. This way we might make some headway in these matters.

If as a newsman, I give an analysis of the President's views on welfare what is it that I do? Well, I give an "account - 1" of his central position--what he dwells on most emphatically in his speeches, what he in fact does regarding his explicit statement as to what he regards as most important, what he says about what he in fact does, what the implications of his views could well be, etc. A good analysis of the President's views will get these points as correctly as possible, because the public wants to get the President's views straight, wants to know in principle how he stands on these matters. My analysis will be an "account - 1," which claims to have in its grasp the central and most important features of the President's views, given the above consideration.

If, as an art critic, I give an analysis of Picasso's work from his earliest paintings to his latest, and stress in the analysis what I take to be an aspect which illumined all his endeavors, and claim this aspect to be central to all of Picasso's work and that knowing this is central to telling a forgery from a genuine work, I should be doing nothing in principle different from the newsman. My analysis would present these central or fundamental features in Picasso, as the newsman's would present the fundamental position of the President.
It is necessary in this kind of analysis that one be able to give an adequate "account - l" or description of what one is analyzing in order to analyze it properly. For without an adequate "account - l" or description, one might be misled into thinking that certain things were basic that were not. Obviously, if I want to give a reasonably good analysis of the principles working in American constitutional law, it will probably not do to ignore the Bill of Rights or the various Supreme Court decisions handed down through the years on specific cases of constitutionality.

What an "adequate account - l" means here is not just an "account - l" that fits what I would like the analysis to say. For I could give such an "account - l" and ignore some facts that might be pertinent to the (alleged) force of the analysis. What is meant by "adequate 'account - l'" is an "account - l" which does not leave out details which would be significant to mention in fulfilling the purpose of the analysis, the purpose, say, of presenting the basic views and opinions of the President. Such an "account - l" will spell out what is emphatic in the President's speeches. It will take into consideration what the President practices as well as preaches. It will get enough detail to draw tenable implications, enough detail, in short, to show the basic trends in the President's views. An "adequate 'account - l'" is one that will support the analysis, and support it
by saying enough for it to be evident that the President has said, say, unequivocally what the analysis has represented him to say; that, if there is any equivocation, such equivocation is insignificant. Thus, if the President appears to contradict what the analysis says, an adequate "account - 1" would say enough for it to be evident that the contradiction is merely apparent.

The analysis itself will be an "account - 1" of the basic features of the President's views, the adequacy of which will depend on the stress and importance that we assign to various speeches, remarks, and actions of the President. Have we emphasized these policies sufficiently? Should we not take this speech a bit more seriously than that speech, and if we do, what significance do these other remarks assume? The analysis, then, will attempt to say enough about the basic features of the President's views to make clear how the President in principle, or in essence, regards the welfare question. Whereas the "account - 1" or "accounts - 1" which can be given to support the analysis will attempt to present his views to such an extent that questions of their basic character can be dealt with.

Exactly what is to count as an adequate description or "account - 1" will be discussed later. The point is that a description or "account - 1" of some adequacy is necessary to do an analysis. An analysis of x rests, and this is a conceptual matter, on the descriptions and "accounts - 1" given of it. If initial "accounts - 1" and descriptions are inadequate, analysis is certain to fail.
So, looking at the kind of work analyses like the above do, it can never be the case that an analysis of x takes precedence over a description of x or a description of what x is. For an analysis of x of the above sort takes its power and sustenance from the descriptions we give of x, and of what it is. Nothing in an "account - 1" of x should contradict the results of an analysis of x, if the analysis is to count as correct.

There is another more interesting kind of analysis with which philosophers are concerned. This kind is called "conceptual analysis," at least it is called this by many, and the points the analysis tries to establish are called by many "conceptual points." But what is meant by "conceptual" is what is at stake, and how conceptual analysis differs from the above-mentioned variety of analysis is what is significant.

One difference seems to consist in the "power" of the claim registered by conceptual analysis as opposed to the force of, say, the art critic's contention. It would not be inconceivable for the President to change his views or for Picasso to change not only his style but his entire working conception of painting. If the President did, there would be numerous editorials; but no one would find it unintelligible that the President could change his mind. If Picasso substantially changed, the critic would no doubt proclaim the emergence of the new Picasso. The art-world might be in an uproar, yet it
is not an impossible notion. On the other hand, conceptual analysis usually claims that it would be inconceivable for what is claimed in the analysis to be otherwise. Uproar is not even a matter for consideration.

For example, if I give a conceptual analysis of the concept of pain, as so many philosophers have done in the last twenty years, what I do is try to find characteristic features of the way in which one talks about pain. And, indeed, what could be a better start than to find out what is generally said about pain? For if one could not say what he meant by "pain" when he said he was in pain, it is difficult to imagine what would let him in on the meaning. I turn, for example, to a very common expression, "I have a pain in my foot." I may look at the verb "have" to try to figure out in what sense it is used, or what may turn out to be just as, or more, important, in what sense it is not used. I surely do not mean to say that I have a pain in the same sense that I have a penny, for I can give my penny away but not my pain. The penny which I have is mine to do what I want with. In what sense is the pain? And so on.

Now, what one has done in the above analysis is to ask just what differences are in the meaning of "have" in the two sentences: "I have a pain" and "I have a penny." If necessary, one may ask just when it would be sensible to use a sentence like, "I gave my pain away," or "I will sell my pain to the
best buyer," or some sentence in which pain is treated like a possession, as many of the things are which we are said to have. What situations are conceivable in which we could use these sentences? Clearly none. These sentences are nonsense; they are nonsense unless we used them, for example, as we would use "I'd trade my troubles for yours any day." But we should have to be clear that this was how they were used. And even here we must understand that we can sensibly trade troubles--I can let you have my business on the verge of bankruptcy for a few dollars--whereas we cannot trade pains.

To be sure, the "force" of the analysis rests on the inconceivability of a situation in which the sentences might have a legitimate sense. Thus, even an analysis of this sort never takes conceptual precedence over the ways in which we talk about pain. It, itself, is based on an everyday usage of the word "pain." It cannot be said, on the grounds of analysis, that it would be impossible to speak otherwise, since it is just this speaking which is being analyzed and which is always prior to an analysis of it. This has to be the case since no analysis would be possible if there were not something prior to the analysis to be analyzed.

Thus, when Austin writes that he does not introspect Tom's feelings and that we'd be in a pretty predicament if he did he is calling attention to a certain feature of the way in which we regard emotions. Upon some investigation, he finds it
inconceivable to affix a meaning to the words "introspecting Tom's feelings." He does not know what it could mean; indeed, we never speak in this way ordinarily. Moreover, he cannot conceive of any examples of the so-called introspection, not that there are or are not any, but that the words placed together to form the proposed locution just do not suggest anything at all. While this remark may help one see more clearly what emotions are, by stating a certain feature which is part of our understanding them, it nevertheless is a remark based upon ordinary discourse, which discourse it attempts to analyze by noting something very important to understanding emotions. The remark does not give to be understood any claim that discourse about emotions must contain this feature to be discourse about emotions. It only notes what in fact is the way emotions are talked about, and in so doing maintains the unintelligibility of saying anything different concerning them, given that it cannot be conceived what a counterexample to Austin's remark might be.

**Remark on "Explanation"**

We have discussed distinctions between 'account' used as "account - 1" and "account - 2"; we noted some major differences in the use of "account" as "account - 1" and "description," and we have taken a look at what an analysis is. Another word in common currency is "explanation."
When someone offers us an explanation, he may be doing a number of things. For indeed "explanation" is often seen doing the work of an "account - 1" an "account - 2," or an analysis. Sometimes it is not clear just what someone is doing when he claims to explain something, because he is not himself clear on the varied meanings of the word. In an explanation of what I said, I might explain what I said by going into greater detail. Or I might offer a condensation of what I said: "All that I said really amounted to..." Or I might say, "I did not mean to put it that way, but I had this on my mind and it just came out that way."

In an explanation of the growth of an elm tree, I might give a detailed account of the life of an elm tree. I might try to simplify the growth into a general pattern; I might give an analysis to aid my botany class. Or I might attempt to account for an elm tree's growth in terms of its cellular make-up.

It is important to see this. "Explanation" is often used as synonymous with "account" used as an "account - 2." However, this use of "explanation" is usually accompanied by the preposition "for"--not always, but usually. When we say there is no explanation for something, we never mean that there is no analysis of it or that no one has given an adequate description or "account - 1" of it. We mean that we cannot account for it. Yet we do use "explanation of" interchangeably
with "explanation for" on some occasions. "Science has given us no explanation of this phenomenon" is a perfectly acceptable way to say that it has come up with no explanation or has not accounted for the phenomenon. So, when we use "explanation for" it will be clear that we are talking about an account which accounts for something: an "account - 2." But when we use the words "explanation of" we shall be careful to specify whether we mean by them an "account - 1," an "account - 2," or an analysis.

**Rigor, Care, Precision**

Having got a few ideas about what descriptions, accounts, analyses, and explanations are, let us turn back to "accounts - 1" and descriptions. A rigorous, or a careful, or a precise description is not going to be full of errors. Nor is a careless or imprecise description going to be called "correct." A careless description will be correct in some matters, in some of what it says. It will be just sloppy, not flatly wrong. Likewise, with an imprecise description; it will not be flatly wrong. Also, a rigorous, or a careful, or a precise description, for all its rigor, care, or precision, might be, even in some important respects, mistaken and hence not called "correct."

That a description is rigorous does not mean that it is a correct description, although it does mean that it is not shot
through with errors, so that it does mean that it is correct to some significant degree. But that a description is rigorous does not mean that it is properly called "a correct description."

For to make a remark about the rigor with which a description is given is not to remark about its being correct, although, obviously, a rigorous description is not going to go completely wrong, just as a precise or well-wrought instrument of measurement is not going to miss the mark very much, much less than by a large order of magnitude.

A correct description is not going to be a careless one. But to say that a description is correct is not to make a remark about its being a careful description. Although some degree of care, precision, and rigor is required for it to be correct, to say this is to make a trivial claim. For this amounts to saying no more than that a correct description squares with what is described, and that it must have been careful, precise, and rigorous enough to so square with what is described. So when one says that a description is correct, one is not referring to its rigor, or to the care or precision with which it is given. Thus, one might give a correct description without giving a notably rigorous, or careful, or precise description.

One might also give a rigorous, or careful, or precise description without giving a notably correct one. For given that one is not being tempted to prevaricate, one cannot be concerned to give a correct description, whereas one certainly can
be concerned to give a rigorous, careful, and precise description. How could one not be concerned to give a correct description? Given that one is not worried about withholding the truth, the whole idea of giving a description involves saying what one takes to be correct. Thus, when we say a description is exact we often do not mean that it is rigorous. That is, an exact description of what took place may tell exactly what happened. But, then, we might say a description of what happened was exact and mean that its language was exact or very precise, or that it was done rigorously and not mean that what was said to have happened was exactly what happened. If we say that his description was exact or very exact we could be talking about the precision with which the description is made. With "accurate" however the case is different. To talk of the accuracy of the description is to discuss the truth of what it says, not the precision with which it is given. Generally, the word "accurate" is used when discussing the truth or correctness of what has been said, whereas the word "exact" can be used to discuss the truth or precision of what has been said.

Adequacy

This brings us to a third issue which we discuss with regard to descriptions, namely, the issue of the adequacy or sufficiency of a description. We have already said that to
remark about the rigor of a description is not to remark about its truth. Well, to remark about the adequacy of a description is not to remark about its truth either.

When I ask for a description of what happened at my place of business while I was away on vacation, there are certain things I should like to know, some in greater detail than others. As I discuss the matters with some of my colleagues, when they fall short of saying what I would like to know, I specify (more clearly) what I want to know. If they do not know, I ask someone else. If they are about to give me some information which I find trivial, I politely cut them off by saying it is not necessary to go any further or by changing the subject to ask something of greater interest to me. When I am through I may be satisfied with what I have heard, that is, I may be satisfied that I have heard enough, or that there is nothing else significant to hear, that everything of importance has been covered. That is, the descriptions given me I may regard as sufficiently answering my questions. Of course, I may not be happy with a few things said. There may be some doubt in some matters as to whether there is not more to say, and I might think that I ought to "pump" so-and-so for more information, etc.

In all this I do not question the truth of what is said unless I get conflicting or incredible reports, or unless someone seems to be lying or covering for someone else. I am not
at this moment trying to substantiate the truth of any testimony. I may be concerned with its credibility if it sounds strange, or if I have received conflicting reports from others whom I trust. But in point of fact, I am not checking the truth or accuracy of the reports, when I ask for information and assess the adequacy of that information given me. If someone offers a description of especial interest, or a description which performs its task with notable success, I may remark about how good his description is, how well it handles the various incidents, etc.

These considerations are not considerations of rigor, care or precision, either. I may get an adequate but yet vague description, a description which is not very precise, indeed, in some matters imprecise, but which is nonetheless adequate in presenting the salient features of what I am concerned with. It may be vague insofar as it is notably sketchy or rough, yet it may still do an adequate job. It might be given carelessly or confusedly. I may have to really quiz someone to get him to say enough, and he may still be saying it carelessly and confusedly at the end of our conversation.

To be sure, if there is no reason to doubt what is said, I may not attempt to substantiate the descriptions. I may take them in good faith as being true. If I get a description, which appears, by all counts, adequate, in which everything said seems to be in order, then I will not find it necessary to attempt to
corroborate the descriptions given me. I may say I know that such and such is the case on the basis of them. And given the reliability of my colleagues, that they are intelligent and honest men, I may not be wrong to say I know that such is the case on the basis of what they said. But the question of the accuracy, the correctness, and the exactitude of their descriptions has not been raised. I have not determined that their descriptions are correct, accurate, or exact, for there is not any need to.

Of course if I do check the descriptions and if very much of what they said turns out to be false, it will not be right to call their descriptions adequate. But the fact that what they said was true does not make it adequate either. What they said might be true as far as it goes but be downright misleading. They might have misrepresented the situation and still have told the truth. But the whole truth? Here is where the question of adequacy comes in. Did they tell enough of the truth for me to get a good idea of what went on? Etc. Etc. Whether they said enough and whether what they said was true are two distinct questions. The question of adequacy is not settled in terms of the truth of what is said but by whether what is said tells me enough of what I want to know.

So, if we have been concerned to check the accuracy of what is said in a description, we are not going to say a description is adequate if very much of what it says is not true. If most of what it says is false, there is no question of
adequacy. But, indeed, it is not the truth or falsity of what is said in a description which makes it adequate or inadequate. The question of adequacy rests on whether the description says enough to give us the information we seek. Indeed, a description may be adequate enough though not everything it says is true. And a description may be correct in what it says but not entirely adequate.

Correct Descriptions

We are not going to say of a description that it is a correct description if it does not deal with relevant matters and does not deal enough with them. So as well as truth, adequacy is involved in the notion of a correct description. To say that we have a correct description of a situation is not just to say that we have a number of established facts concerning it. It is to say that we have a number of established facts which represent the situation as it is. This takes more than a number of true statements. It requires as well statements which do not mislead, which mention the right details, which give us the right picture, so to speak. To say that a description is a correct description is to say that it not only is correct in what it says or as it stands, but that what it says is adequate for the purposes of the description. The same sort of thing holds for accurate and exact descriptions. Though what someone says may be accurate or
exact, it does not follow that he has given an exact or an
accurate description of matters in question.

Let us look more closely at what goes into a description.
Certain things may be pertinent to giving one description of
some particular thing though they may not be pertinent to
giving another. Discussing a football game with one person,
I might not describe the same things that I would when talking
to someone else. Furthermore, I might have described some
things to Paul Christian which I would not have described to
either of the others. They are interested in certain things
and not in others. Whether I say one thing or another, depends
on what their interests are and how deeply they pursue them.
Now I might be tempted to say that dealing with, say, these
kinds of matters is a necessary condition for giving a des-
scription of a football game to someone like Paul Christian;
whereas dealing with such kinds of matters is not a necessary
condition for giving a description of the game to someone else.
I might say that, given that these kinds of matters are per-
tinent for the purposes of this description, dealing with them
is a necessary condition for giving a description with these
purposes.

But this might be misleading. That dealing with them is
necessary could only mean that if the one to whom I give the
description understands my description to be a play-by-play
account, then insofar as I give the description to him I must
give a play-by-play account, and it is necessary that in
giving the play-by-play account I give an account of the game--
play by play. However, that such kinds of matters are
necessary, that is, that it is necessary to mention such kinds
of matters is a trivial consideration. That it is necessary
that my description be a play-by-play account is trivial;
insofar as it is understood to be a play-by-play account, it
must so be a description of the game play by play.

Indeed, it makes no sense other than trivial to speak
of there being certain sorts of matters necessary to mention
in giving such and such a description. For it is not necessary
to describe anything in any particular way, unless some speci-
fication be given or tacitly understood as to what the des-
cription is especially concerned with. But appealing to this
latter kind of necessity is insignificant. For as it is under-
stood, for the purposes of the description, that I am to give
a play-by-play account, I must give a play-by-play account;
but that my play-by-play account must itself be given in any
particular way is not the case. That is, insofar as the
bounds of adequacy, if one will, of the description are speci-
fied or understood (to be a play-by-play account), trivially
it is necessary to be within those bounds of adequacy (to be
a play-by-play account), but is not necessary to say anything
of a particular sort within those bounds of adequacy which is
the point of necessity in question. The phrase "bounds of
adequacy" is used to refer to the fact that if the description of the game, for instance, were not an account of the game, play by play, as it was understood to be, there could be no question whether it did an adequate job. To be a play-by-play account, good, bad, adequate, or otherwise, the description must at least be an account of the game, play by play. If it is not, we do not say how it performed its task. We do not say that it performed its task at all.

Given that the direction the description is to go is established, given that the bounds of adequacy are clearly defined, it is not necessary in a description to mention any specific details. Certain kinds of detail may be required in the trivial sense mentioned above, given the purposes of the description, but no specific details are necessary in giving the description. Any number of things may be said. For within the established purposes of the description it is always possible to construct other purposes which could serve to specialize the description, keep it within a more limited and defined region. A description of man with explicit regard for his anatomy might be further restricted to dealing with what his anatomy is like in certain respects. And no doubt anatomists could write dissertations on one of these certain respects. So no particular details need be mentioned, since it is possible to construct within the purpose of the description, other purposes which could rule out mentioning any one specific detail.
The idea of there being detail to go into when one gives a description involves there being an open question as to what ground is going to be covered. Giving a description is not like going to catechism. When one is asked to give a description, it is understood that there is not a specific answer which is required. He may be asked to give a certain kind of description, but in giving that description, he has a field of details open to him. It is not necessary to deal with certain kinds of matters in a description save those kinds of matters which the description is understood in its intent to be dealing with. This is, again, in the trivial point about necessity.

Now that I might give a play-by-play account which was sufficient for the general viewer, but insufficient for a more seasoned buff, or that even two seasoned game-watchers might be interested in two different kinds of personal battles taking place on field is quite possible. That a personal battle was taking place between a certain corner-back and a certain end might be a detail which some buffs found important to a play-by-play account of the game. In this case, it might be necessary to reconstruct the bounds of adequacy of the description, or, in simpler terms, to get straight just what the description was concerned with, so as or so as not to include, as generally significant, personal battles of this sort. For if the general audience were in fact largely seasoned buffs,
then a description of the game ought not be given which did not in some way include matters of the above-mentioned sort. But if it were of only minor importance to the general audience, then one might or might not mention it, depending on how crucial the battle was to the outcome of the game.

Does this mean that the buff or the coach who is interested in a certain degree of subtlety, which a game announcer is not concerned to deal with, is correct in saying that the description that the announcer offers is not a correct one? As far as he is concerned, the description does not go far enough, not just in detail but in the kinds of things considered. But the announcer does not address the description to him. He addresses it to the general viewer, who does not appreciate such subtlety. The buff, therefore, would not be right in saying that the description was not correct, since insofar as the description was performing its office, it was doing so satisfactorily.

Indeed, the notion of a correct description does not involve just saying things that are true, but saying certain kinds of things, and saying them in sufficient amount besides. And this is not a question of mere truth and falsity. The notion of a description being correct as far as it goes or in what it says and the notion of its being correct or its being a correct description are quite distinct notions. For when one says of a description that it is correct as far as it goes, or
even that it is correct in what it says, one does not give it to be understood that he holds the description to be a correct description. The former notion depends on the truth of what is said in the description, while the latter notion depends on much else.

The latter notion depends not just on whether the description is correct in what it says but on the adequacy of what is said. The adequacy of a description can only be construed in terms of the purposes of the given description. For some purposes what is said in a description may be adequate, but for others it may not be, and for still others there may be no question of adequacy with regard to it. Now, the adequacy of the description is not itself grounds for saying the description is a correct description. For a description may be adequate but not be entirely correct. It may be by and large correct and adequate and yet not be called boldly a correct description. The same holds with the notion of sufficiency. A description is sufficient when it goes deep enough into matters of interest, but it need not be correct in every matter to be sufficient. Of course, this is the case, that we do not say that someone gave a correct description unless we consider his description adequate, or sufficient.

One thing that is most important to say about the adequacy of a description is that there is certainly a difference between thinking a description is adequate and a
description's being adequate. Just because I am satisfied that a description is adequate does not mean that it is adequate. I can certainly be short-sighted, dimwitted, and dammingly dumb in what I say in my accounts and descriptions. If anyone accepts them, he is equally the same. Given that I am concerned to describe the subtlety of DuChamp's "Large Glass," I might miss a lot of it. So might all the critics. It can certainly be determined, given the purposes of my description, whether I said enough about DuChamp's work in the respects which I was to deal with it. My being satisfied, indeed, everyone's being satisfied with what I say, need not mean that my description is itself satisfactory. The critics for years thought John Donne a minor literary figure. But their thinking so did not make it so.

A closely allied issue might be worthy of mention. There are not different notions of adequacy in various disciplines. There is not a scientific adequacy which is different from adequacy in literary composition. Science is not happy with one kind of adequacy, literature with another. Either one does what he sets out to do or he does not. What he sets out to do and whether what he does measures up to it is not a matter of science, literary canon, or whatever. It might take someone well-versed in a discipline to tell just what a given work was about. It might take ample knowledge of the field to be in a position to know if everything is considered adequately.
But that a work is adequate does not depend on assessments valid only in the field or discipline in which the work is done. I can understand what is meant when a professor tells me a treatise is inadequate, even though I do not know the subject of the treatise like an expert. I understand that it did not do what it was supposed to do. I might need to know the field to discover that a work is inadequate, but to understand what adequacy is, I need not know the field at all.

Given that it is not necessary to say anything of a particular sort or to mention any particular detail in a description, it makes no sense to speak of the (one) correct description of x. Indeed, we speak of a correct description of x, not the description, for many descriptions of x can be correct. That is, a manifold of descriptions of Fondren Library could all be called correct descriptions of it. One person might be struck by the overwhelming number of the stacks, another, the structural design of the actual building, while yet another, the equipment used to facilitate keeping track of each volume and the easy access to volumes therein. And, of course, it is perfectly possible to give a variety of descriptions of just the structure of the building, or the stacks, or the methods of access to the volumes. Depending on just what one was out to describe, the building, the stacks, or the methods of access to the volumes, it could be decided which descriptions were correct and which were not.
If we were just interested in the building itself when we asked for a description of the library, then the bounds of adequacy of the description would rule out a description of the stacks and so on. That is, given that we are out to describe the building and not the stacks, it will not do to describe the stacks. But, that any number of descriptions would be correct is still obviously the case. Fix the bounds as we will, clarify what the description is to be concerned with as much as we like, it will never be necessary to describe the library in any particular way, save in the trivial sense of having to remain within those bounds. That a description of the library must be a description of the library, that a description of the library-building must be a description of the library-building in order for the descriptions to be doing their jobs is the only thing necessary for these descriptions. But to say this is merely to voice a tautology; in no significant sense is there anything necessary to say when one gives a description of anything.

Since there is nothing necessary to say, in particular or of a general sort, in a description of $x$, it is always possible that there could be given some description of $x$ completely different from any description which we have ever given of $x$ or could conceive of $x$. That is, it is not necessary that what can conceivably be said in a description of $x$ exhausts the possibilities of describing $x$. This is not to raise doubts
about the descriptions we give of x, but is only to remind us of the lack of necessity in anything we say describing x. There is always the possibility of there being different purposes in describing x and there being different details noted. Thus, in this account of descriptions, I could not claim to have the final say, since in principle it is possible to say something different.

**Necessary Features**

Is it possible to give a description of features that are necessary to something's being what it is? Could one claim to arrive at the "necessary features" of what one describes by giving a description of it? By "necessary features" I mean features without which a thing could not be what it is.

What could we make of the claim that from describing x, or from describing what x is, we have come to note that these features are necessary to x's being what it is? How could we have come to note, by giving a description, that certain features are necessary to x's being what it is? Given our view that descriptions are always given for some purpose, could there be any purpose for which by giving a description of what x is we could arrive at certain features which are necessary? This purpose cannot be to give the necessary features since the question is how we could arrive at these features. To give the purpose as the purpose of representing the necessary
features presupposes that it makes sense to arrive at these features. If it makes no sense to arrive at these features there could not very well be the purpose of representing them.

If one holds that one can arrive at the necessary features of x's being what it is, then one must hold the view that for some purpose and in some context one can give a description of what x is, which will reveal certain features which are necessary to x's being what it is. Now, then, how could such a description discover certain features that are necessary to x's being what it is? It would seem that those features, which were claimed to be necessary to x's being what it is, would have to be mentioned in the description of what x is, which (allegedly) revealed them as necessary features. For if it were not necessary to mention them, whence the grounds for their necessity to x's being what it is? For some purpose it must be necessary that a description of what x is mentions those features or it could not say, for that purpose, what x is. If it were not for some purpose necessary to mention these features, why say they were necessary for x's being what it is?

Indeed, if there are features which are necessary to x's being what it is, for some purpose and in some context, it must be necessary to mention them in a description of what x is or else one could not say what x is. For if x requires those features to be x, one must mention them or one could not be saying what x is. It must be necessary to describe x in some
particular way, for some purpose, or else there could be no claim that certain features were necessary to its being what it is. If it were not necessary in some context and for some purpose to mention them, they could not be necessary to x's being what it is.

But we have seen that it is not necessary to mention any details in particular or say anything of a general sort in a description. Therefore, that one could arrive at the necessary features of x's being what it is by a description is unintelligible.

Someone might object to this line of thought by citing an apparent counterexample. Indeed, he might ask, what does one say to the claim that a necessary feature of understanding, say, the concept "responsibility" is that one understand the concept of human action or that one understand what it means for someone to do something? Does this claim amount to saying that if I describe the ways in which we use the concept "responsibility," I will always be employing the concept of human action? Well, if in describing the ways in which the concept "responsibility" is used one always talks about human action in some manner, why say it is necessary to talk of human action when one talks of what responsibility is? It may be that we always do talk of human action when we talk about the concept of responsibility; it may be inconceivable that we not employ the concept of human action when we discuss these matters, but is this to say it is necessary that we talk in the ways we do?
Is it to say that it would be impossible for there to be a different notion? On what grounds? That we have the notion we do is not grounds for saying that it is impossible that the notion be different. If, indeed, what I offer is a description of how we talk about responsibility, or of how we employ the concept, I cannot say that it is necessary that what I describe (responsibility) be the way I describe it, if it is to be what it is (responsibility) that I describe. If I do this I take all the force out of my description. No description can say that what it describes is necessarily the way it describes it, for there could be no possibility of its misdescribing what it describes if it could say this. But if a description cannot misdescribe, it cannot describe either. Could another description describe the features in the first description as necessary to having a concept of responsibility? On what grounds? Certainly not on the grounds of describing the ways in which we employ the concept "responsibility." This repeats the immediate problem. But if not on these grounds, on what others? Indeed, any others would be arbitrary, since they would not be subject to what was described as responsibility.

Indeed, all this is not surprising. Inasmuch as there is a distinction between the description and what it describes, there must be the possibility of saying something else about what is described. But insofar as there is this possibility, any claim that a particular description must be given in a particular context is confused, since the possibilities of what one
can say in a description can never be circumscribed to make such a claim of necessity for it. That there must be this possibility is embedded in the above distinction between the description and the described, without which the notion of a description would be senseless. In short, if there were not the possibility of saying more about what is described, there would, in principle, be nothing to describe. This will be discussed at greater length in a chapter below.

"Accounting For" and Necessary Conditions

Just as it is never necessary to mention anything in giving a description, so it is never necessary to say anything in particular in giving an "account - 2." That is, if I am attempting to account for a certain event, action, state of affairs, etc., I need say nothing specifically about it. What I am doing in an "account - 2" is offering reasons for, or factors in, or conditions which precipitated, something taking place, or being said, etc. This takes the form of suggesting what seems to be the most satisfactory way of understanding why something has taken place, or was said, etc. This means that out of a field of possible "accounts - 2" one, or perhaps a few "accounts - 2" take care of the facts better than others considered. But it is in principle always possible to suggest further "accounts - 2" to account for the facts. I may come to know more about the man who did something I am concerned
with. I may come to understand his eccentricities better. I
may just come to see him differently, see him in a different
perspective.

What I do when I give an "account - 2" of a certain
situation is offer adequate reasons for its being the way it
is. But I can never offer necessary reasons, or reasons which
were necessary to explain what calls for an explanation or an
"account - 2." For, consider, one cannot infer an "account - 2"
from what is to be accounted for alone. That is, if it
followed from the fact that x, that x must have this explana-
tion, or must be accounted for in this way, then a mere
"account - 1" of x would give to be understood an "account - 2"
of it. But this is absurd, since nothing would ever stand in
need of explanation or in need of an "account - 2" on this
view. The point in asking for an "account - 2" of, say, the
U. S. involvement in Vietnam rules out giving what one has
already said in his "account - 1" of it, rules out a mere state-
ment of what one takes the involvement to be, since it is just
this involvement which one wants to give reasons for or
account for. Such an "account - 1" is not enough for what we
are after. We are looking for something additional--the
reasons for what we already have an "account - 1" of. If the
former could be inferred from the latter, the notion of an
explanation used to offer reasons for something being the case
would fall asunder.
From the foregoing it is clear that no "account - 2" could list conditions which were necessary to x's being the case. For, if it is not necessary to give any particular "account - 2," it would not be possible to list necessary conditions in an "account - 2." Indeed, it is difficult to see how the listing of necessary conditions could account for x's being the case, anyway. If it were intelligible to list necessary conditions, the most a list could do would be to account for the possibility of x's being the case, surely not its being the case in fact.

"Accounting For" and Sufficient Conditions

Taking a further look at the notion of "account - 2," is it the case that we offer sufficient rather than necessary reasons, when we give reasons for certain situations, events, etc.? We do often say that no sufficient reasons have been given for some occurrence. What do we mean by "sufficient" here? It seems that we could not mean by "sufficient" that from the "account - 2" of x set forth, that is, from the reasons for, or factors instrumental to x's being the case, it follows that x is the case. That is, we could not mean by "sufficient" "logically sufficient." Given these reasons, factors, conditions, we could not understand that x is necessitated by them. We could not mean by "sufficient" the above for the following reasons: if one were to attempt to
discover logically sufficient reasons, conditions, or factors for x's being the case, it would be necessary to postulate that x be the case in order to do this. Yet arriving at the so-called sufficient reasons, conditions, or factors, one ought to be able to say from them alone that x is the case without presupposing that x is the case. That is, if those reasons were logically sufficient for x's being the case, one ought to be able, given the reasons, etc., to say, without assuming that x is the case, that x is the case. But of course to arrive at the so-called sufficient reasons, etc., for x presupposes that x be the case. For one needs to check to see if the proposed "account - 2" does in fact account for x. This presupposes that x is the case. That the "account - 2" explains why x is the case depends on the facts pertaining to x's being the case. The facts will make or break the "account - 2" and hence can not be deduced from the "account - 2" itself. Therefore, x must be presupposed if the "account - 2" has any explanatory force.

Let someone reply to the argument, "You are confusing epistemological priority with logical priority." The point is, one could never be in a position to say these are logically sufficient conditions for x without begging the whole question that x is the case. For, it is incumbent upon him who wishes to establish the sufficiency of the proposed conditions to show that they are sufficient for (i.e., account for) this
case of x. This requires assuming that x is the case. It means assuming x is the case because it depends on the particular case of x as to whether these conditions would be sufficient for (i.e., account for) it or not. To say that an "account - 2" of x is sufficient is not to say that it adduces conditions which are logically sufficient for x. To say that it is sufficient is to say that it does account for x. But accounting for x is not producing logically sufficient reasons.

When we say that an "account - 2" or an explanation of something is sufficient, we mean only that certain reasons have been adduced for it which say why it is the case. One finds a dead man with a bullet in his chest. How did he die? Somebody shot him, one says. Yes, somebody shot him, all right, but did the shot cause his death? Well, it need not have caused his death. Some recover from being shot in the chest. It just seems reasonable to say that the bullet caused the man's death since there is nothing else in the picture which could account for it, since bullets often do kill people, and since there is no suggestion that the man was carried dead to the spot and then shot. The senator lost his bid for re-election because of the recent scandals, but he need not have. Simply given the climate of the time, the editorials in the press, etc., it seems quite reasonable and satisfactory to say that the scandals were his political
demise. Nothing more powerful than this, nothing more conceptually powerful, even if the evidence is overwhelmingly preponderant, is meant when we offer such an "account - 2."

Thinking about this in another way, we might come up with the following argument. "Sufficient factors for x" just means that given the factors in question, x follows from them. That is, it means this if we are considering the strict notion of sufficiency discussed above. But, surely, if the factors are sufficient for x, x is necessary to the factors. But we have already shown that no "account - 1" or description, here of the factors, could establish that such and such was necessary to what it was an "account - 1" of. Since nothing necessary to x can be established in an "account - 1" or a description of x, nothing sufficient for x can be established in an "account - 2" of x. For, as we could not say anything about the factors which was necessary, we could not say anything sufficient for x in an "account - 2" of x.

This is not to say that no reason can be given for anything, for that would be to say considerably more than is bargained for. This is just to say that logically sufficient reasons are not and cannot be sought when one gives an "account - 2" of something. What we mean by sufficient reasons when we talk in terms of accounting for something does not encompass the notion of logical sufficiency.
Analysis and Necessary and/or Sufficient Features

It is never necessary to give a certain analysis of something, unless what is called an analysis is really the defining of a technical concept, such as a triangle, in which case there is never any analysis going on, for the analysis defines the concept itself. But given that an analysis rests on a subject of analysis which can be identified independently of the analysis itself, and only here does a checking of the analysis to see if it is correct make sense, the analysis finds its basis in any and all descriptions that can be given of the subject. But since it is not necessary that any particular "account - 1" be given of the subject of analysis, even if the "account - 1" has some conceptual status, it is not within the purview of analysis to arrive at necessary or sufficient features of the subject of analysis.

Description and Sufficient Features

It is of equal importance to note that if I say that so and so gave a sufficient description of x, I do not mean that from his description I could strictly infer that he was talking about x. For descriptions may contradict each other in some respects and still be sufficient descriptions. Descriptions may say things which are false and still be sufficient descriptions. But it would be impossible for descriptions to
work this way if a sufficient description was a description from which it followed that it was a description of x. For, on this view, if I said something untrue of x in my description of it, it could not be a sufficient description of x. But this we know is a patent misconception.

Secondly, if one could give a description from which it followed that it was a description of x, there would be no need to check to see if what it said were true of x, since it could not follow that it was a description of x unless what it said was true of x. But this is nonsense. There could be no notion of a description fitting the facts on this view. That a description is a description of the library is not established by the description itself. One may be told what the description is of, but this is not part of the description. Indeed, that a description is a description of what it purports to be of may often be a matter for dispute. "You do not mean the Chevy, you mean the Ford." It is a matter of consideration settled by an appeal not to the description but to what the description claims to be of. If it were the case that it followed from the mere description that it was a description of the Chevy, it would not make sense to check the figures with the facts, so to say, to find out if what was said was correct.

Descriptions, "accounts - 1," "accounts - 2" and analyses may be sufficient in the sense of being adequate. The point is that they tell us enough of what we want to know.
about something, or what seems a reasonable view of some-
thing. But insofar as it is alleged that they offer necessary,
sufficient, or necessary and sufficient features or conditions
of whatever they are purported to deal with, there is bound
to be confusion over what is within their province. With
some of these ideas in mind, let us begin Chapter II and our
investigation of Sartre.
FOOTNOTES


CHAPTER II

THE NATURE OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL ONTOLOGY

Phenomenological Ontology

The subtitle to Being and Nothingness reads 'Essai d'ontologie phenomenologique'. Maurice Natanson is quite right to suggest that Sartre's book is an essay in rather than on phenomenological ontology. Sartre does not discuss very much the notion of phenomenological ontology itself. He more or less assumes that what he is doing is on the whole clear to the reader. But what is Sartre doing when he offers us his ontology? How does it, as phenomenological ontology, differ from traditional ontologies?

To say that an ontology is phenomenological would seem to imply that it is based upon description, since phenomenology is understood to consist of descriptions. If, then, an ontology is said to be founded on descriptions, what difference does it make to it as an ontology? We know from the results of the first chapter that it cannot state necessary or sufficient features of that which it claims to investigate. Such an ontology would be quite different from many ontologies of the past in that it could not be construed as an attempt to present features of the sort which are necessary or
sufficient to something's being what it is. In short, it
would be a mistake to interpret a phenomenological ontology in
this light. The following discussion of Sartre's ontology will
take this point into account, a point which, we shall see,
Sartre himself seems to grasp the importance of.

Is Sartre's ontology really phenomenological? Does
Sartre give descriptions when he does the ontology? Sartre
says that his ontology will be a description of "man-in-the-
world" or of the totality of being-in-the-world. He writes,

It is enough now to open our eyes and
question ingenuously this totality which
is man in the world. It is by des-
cription of this totality that we shall
be able to reply to these two questions.
(1) What is the synthetic relation which
we call being in the world? (2) What
must man and the world be in order for a
relation between them to be possible?

The purpose of Sartre's ontology, however, is not just in-
genuously to describe "being-in-the-world," but is in fact to
give an analysis of what it means to be in the world, or as
Sartre puts it, "to penetrate into the profound meaning of the
relation 'man-world'." Exactly what it means to do this will
be discussed below. At least this much is clear. Sartre's
ontology is to be phenomenological in that it is to be based
on descriptions of what it seeks to analyze. But his ontology
is an analysis, not simply an ordinary description of men
doing various things; for example, Sartre, by describing what
men do, will attempt to describe what it means in general to
do things, and from this he will attempt to describe what it means to be in the world, to elucidate the "profound meaning of being-in-the-world."

Since Sartre means to offer us descriptions in his ontology, let us ask some more questions. We shall draw on some of the conclusions of our first chapter when we formulate and give answers to these questions.

Given that doing phenomenology is giving descriptions, we can understand what something like social phenomenology might be, or phenomenological psychology also. Phenomenological psychology, for example, could give a description of various kinds of schizophrenia and neuroses; that is, it could describe what these disorders are and how they affect individuals troubled by them. Similarly, social phenomenology could give descriptions of what groups, crowds, mobs, nations, assemblies, societies, corporations, parties, concerts, and teams are. Such a discipline could distinguish differences in the above, going into the meaning of membership, say, where the notion of membership applies to them, and explaining why the notion of membership does not apply to all of them. Sartre himself does some of this in a later work, The Critique of Dialectical Reason.

But now, phenomenological ontology, what could this be? Nothing immediate comes to mind. A study of being-in-the-world? Exactly what is this?
At least this much is assured. There must be something independent of the descriptions given in phenomenological ontology for it to be about anything at all. Else it is not a genuine description, right or wrong, of anything. What phenomenological ontologists talk about may very well be something abstruse; nevertheless, it must be something specifiable independently of the description itself. Again, if it cannot be so specified, there is no way of telling if the ontology comprehends anything at all.

This much is assured, also. As we have said before, from what we know of descriptions, we know that regardless of what is described in the ontology, the ontology cannot lay out the necessary conditions or features of what it is a study of, since nothing in its descriptions will be necessary to mention. Nor can it, given our earlier remarks about the sufficiency or adequacy of descriptions, give sufficient features or conditions of something.

Someone might be tempted to claim that we could use phenomenology to arrive at necessary features. But how? Where from any descriptions can the grounds for conclusions about such features come? If they come from outside a description, how can we say that our ontology is phenomenological? It would undermine a phenomenology to give its conclusions the kind of weight which would be needed to establish that certain features were necessary. Phenomenology could not lead
to such conclusions. Something decisively non-phenomenological would have to be done to arrive at them.

What could be offered which would permit us to arrive at these kinds of conclusions? It follows from Chapter I that no explanation ("account - 2"), no analysis, and no "account - 1" or description could arrive at such conclusions. Does anything come to mind besides these which could perform the task? What else do we offer when we attempt to get clear on things? It is not open to us to deny that some position could be offered as to how to establish necessary features. It is suggested that it could not be. But let the position be offered, and then we shall see how it fares. It is of course not necessary in this essay to anticipate everything that might be offered and attempt to counter it in some way. Until something is offered, we must remain with what has been said so far. The central claim is that no \textit{phenomenology} (i.e., no description) and hence no phenomenological ontology could arrive at either necessary or sufficient features, conditions, etc., of what it is a study of. Sartre's ontology, as it is phenomenology, as it offers descriptions, cannot be metaphysics in the traditional sense, in which metaphysics is an attempt to offer such conditions and features which are necessary and/or sufficient.

It is up to Sartre, then, given the above considerations, to specify what the subject of his ontology is, independently
of the terms of the study itself, so we can see whether his
claims are right or wrong. It is also necessary that Sartre
avoid claiming too much, that is, avoid claiming necessity
or sufficiency for the results of his enterprise.

The Relation of Sartre's Ontology to "The Concrete"

Sartre specifies the topic of his ontology when he says
that it deals with the relation of man to the world or the
relation "man-world" or "being-in-the-world" or "man-in-the-
world." To answer the question of how man is related to the
world is what Sartre proposes to do in his ontology. Can we
make sense of this question, "How is man related to the world?"
If we cannot establish what Sartre means by it, apart from the
ontological categories he offers us, then his enterprise
would not seem to be about anything at all.

The fact that we do not use the expressions, "being-in-
the-world" or "man-in-the-world" or the "relation of man with
the world" is not necessarily troublesome. Nothing is im-
mediately or specifically suggested by them, however, since we
do not use them. So, Sartre will have to say in some fashion or
another what he means by them. Now if one looks through the
pages of Being and Nothingness, it becomes fairly clear that
Sartre is concerned to study a number of specific things: what it
means to know something, what it means to reflect, what it means
to ask questions, what having a pain is, what desiring something
amounts to, what friendship is, what performing an action is, what embarrassment, shame, pride are, what love is, what being a member of a group is, indeed, what a whole host of things amount to. All of these he wishes to get clear about, and supposes that somehow this getting clear amounts to or is in some way connected with getting clear about the relation of man with the world.

One may have legitimate objections to referring to all of these as a part of the relation 'man-world', if to do so entails from the first some sort of reduction of many things to one thing. But it is not at all clear that Sartre has any such reduction in mind. For Sartre writes,

We shall not limit ourselves to the study of a single pattern of conduct. We shall try on the contrary to describe several and, proceeding from one kind of conduct to another, attempt to penetrate into the profound meaning of the relation 'man-world'. But first of all we should choose a single pattern which can serve as a guiding thread in our inquiry.3

It must not be assumed, then, that Sartre is oversimplifying by imposing artificial categories on his material. Presumably, what is in store for us is not an a priori analysis, for we are told we are going to penetrate into the meaning of "man-world" by examining various examples of conduct, and that does not suggest that Sartre has begged the question from the beginning.

All depends on what Sartre takes "being-in-the-world"
to be. If he thinks that what he calls the "concrete," i.e., all the so-called conduct he deals with in his pages, somehow amounts to one thing, namely "being-in-the-world," then his so-called "concrete" has already some unjustified analysis built into it from the beginning. Since knowing and reflecting appear to be very different concepts, to say they both amount to the same thing or are instances of the same thing will require a good bit of analysis, to say the least. And just what further would be needed for an effective analysis will require another and major consideration. The point is that if Sartre is dealing, as he claims, with concrete examples of conduct he must not simply assume that "being-in-the-world" does the job of unifying all the cases of conduct which he is out to investigate. That conduct, if it is to be taken as concrete, should not be assumed to be fundamentally or essentially one thing. If Sartre does assume this, he will be offering us some a priori analysis, analysis for which he will have given us no means to check whether it is correct or not.

The term "being-in-the-world" is used at the beginning of Being and Nothingness where Sartre explains what he is going to do. He informs the reader that he is going to present an analysis of the "concrete"--"being-in-the-world." But what does this mean? Sartre nowhere explains his use of "being-in-the-world," never connects its use to any concrete cases. The reader is left in darkness and with the overall suspicion that
Sartre cannot clarify the use of this term.

If, on the other hand, "being-in-the-world" is not used to unify various examples of conduct, then it seems that the term is useless and possibly even misleading. Given the technical nature of the term, either it performs the unjustified function of unifying various items before the analysis begins, or it just does not do anything at all. Since the term is technical, we could not know its application without assistance. Sartre needs to tell us what falls under its extension. But telling us this would involve using language with which we are familiar and which the technical term is supposed to replace, or stand in for, etc. But if this is so, the technical term does not do anything philosophically which ordinary terms cannot. If, however, it is claimed that it can do something which the ordinary terms cannot, then how do we check to see that we are using the technical term correctly? If we are not familiar with its use, if its application cannot be specified in familiar terms, then what could using the term do for us except add confusion to our enterprise? In other words, if the term does not serve to mark off some a priori analysis, the term is useless, except as a title. We shall, therefore, try not to be misled by Sartre's use of "being-in-the-world." We shall realize its basic inutility, and assume that Sartre has no a priori analysis in mind when he uses the term.

Now Sartre is careful to establish the kind of analysis
he will do. In a pithy discussion of "abstraction," he remarks that "an abstraction is made when something not capable of existing in isolation is thought of in an isolated state." Sartre's introduction, where he has made what may seem some as yet not well-founded distinctions, is tempered by this consideration. We are told that the "concrete" is "man within the world" and that it is from the "concrete" that we draw all distinctions and that it is against the "concrete" that all distinctions must be judged. Sartre's analysis, if we are to take him at his word, will be filled with abstractions, as it is the nature of analysis to be abstract. But by recognizing that his ontological categories are abstract and only make sense in terms of what it is that they are supposed to categorize, we are in effect told to wait for a further and more complete description of "man-in-the-world" before adopting these categories as a correct analysis of "man-in-the-world." And even if we adopt these categories, we are told that it is not the fitting together of the results of analysis, i.e., it is not these categories, which constitute the relation "man-in-the-world." The results must always be seen as ways to get clear about this relation but which in principle never exhaust the relation since they are only results of analysis.

Commenting on three of his predecessors whom he sees as mistaking the philosophical weight of their analyses, Sartre
writes,

We deliberately begin with the abstract if we question 'experience' as Kant does, inquiring into the conditions of its possibility— or, if we effect a phenomenological reduction, like Husserl, who would reduce the world to the state of the noema-correlate of consciousness. But we will no more succeed in restoring the concrete by the summation or organization of the elements which we have abstracted from it than Spinoza can reach substance by the infinite summation of its modes."

Here Sartre strongly suggests how he regards his own analyses or his ontology. He gives no indication that he considers his ontology to be anything more than an abstraction, an abstraction which is always subject to the "concrete" "being-in-the-world" for whatever clarity and truth it offers.

By his own account, then, Sartre's ontology will be an analysis which will not attempt to state the necessary and/or sufficient conditions for "being-in-the-world." For Sartre, in claiming that his ontology is abstract, admits the in-exhaustibility of "being-in-the-world." In principle, no set of terms can circumscribe it. We cannot arrive at "being-in-the-world" from the results of Sartre's analysis. No set of categories could count as a set of necessary and/or sufficient conditions for it.

From Sartre, then, one should expect a description or "account - 1" of what "being-in-the-world" basically is, which we have seen cannot be assumed to be one thing. Of course, it
is not the case that "being-in-the-world" could be basically any one thing, since for various purposes and in various investigations we should be able to say any number of things about what it basically is. Moreover, within the scope of any analysis, we should be able to say a number of additional things. If Sartre were to think (it is not claimed here that he does) that he could do an analysis of what man is and come up with what man basically is, without regard for other possible analyses, he would be making a grave error.

Therefore, even though much of Sartre's initial account is in order, there is the danger that it may turn out that Sartre's "account - 1" of the "concrete," that is, his "account - 1" of what "man-in-the-world" is, cannot be given apart from his analysis. That is, since the term "man-in-the-world" is technical and since its application to concrete cases has not been clarified, it is possible that those descriptions Sartre offers of "man-in-the-world" could serve only to support whatever he wants to say in his analysis of the "profound meaning of the relation 'man-world'." In other words, since we do not know the application of the term, and since Sartre may be the only one doing the defining of it, we may not be in a position to dispute what Sartre says about "man-world," in his analysis. But in this case, to dispute Sartre would be no more than to dispute a tautology.

It is important, therefore, to see whether Sartre
describes people in the world, who act, desire, know, etc., in order to describe what "man-in-the-world" amounts to. We must be careful to see that anything in Sartre's analysis which Sartre claims as basic to understanding "man-in-the-world" is also basic for various reasons to understanding what people do and what people are. For if he is not going to offer us insights about men, it is difficult to say what he intends to offer. Since Sartre repeatedly refers to "human reality," we should expect him to be talking about men "in the world."

The Relation of Phenomenological Ontology to "the Concrete"

A few more remarks might be appropriate concerning ontology and phenomenology, or if one would rather, concerning analysis and description. An analysis of what something is is always distinct from a mere description of what it is, since an analysis claims to offer what something basically is or amounts to, whereas a mere description does not. However, an analysis is a description in this respect: it is a description of what something basically is. It is all right to call an analysis a description of what something is so long as its purpose as a description is understood. An analysis, being limited to saying what something basically is, is not often called simply a description, for this might be misleading. When one gives what is ordinarily understood as a description, no special
features are being looked for. And any kind of thing noted, be it a historical, political, basic, peripheral matter, while it may be noted in the description, would not be necessary to the description. But if it is ordained that the description is to be of things basic or fundamental, then "description" will not be a very clear way of putting what it is unless it is understood that it is to deal with the basic or fundamental. Trivially, it will be necessary to give basic features in the description, since that is what the description is to be of. This was in principle considered earlier. A "description of what x is" and a "description of what essentially x is" in this context mean two different things. For the latter description it is only necessary to describe what x is essentially. Again, this last remark is trivial. But even so, it is important to keep in mind that no description is automatically an analysis, no phenomenology ipso facto an ontology. Doing phenomenology should substantiate or destroy the Sartrian ontology. It is not consubstantial with it. If Sartre's ontology is adequate, the way to tell that it is is to take a look at some concrete cases and see.

It will be well to remember also that what was said in Chapter I about descriptions in general applies in this case. Even in a description of basic features, it is not necessary to say anything in particular. That is, it is not necessary to note anything specific in an analysis of x, for the analysis
to be a correct analysis. That the analysis has to come up with anything in particular to be an adequate and proper analysis is a pure fiction. This means that when I give an analysis I cannot thereby lay claim to being features which are necessary to that which I analyze.

It was perhaps not too difficult to see this point about description and necessity when just ordinary descriptions of various things were given. That nothing specific need be included in a description of a football game, or of an art exhibit, or of the new model cars for it to be a correct description may have seemed reasonable enough. But it might seem that when we give an analysis of an "account - l" of certain basic features of something, it would be odd to suggest that nothing specific need be included in it. This may seem particularly odd if the point we are making is a conceptual one. For example, in philosophy we often want to say that it does not make sense to think of such and such otherwise than in a particular way, and it might seem that if this is true, it would follow that that particular way would form a necessary part of any analysis of the thing in question. It might seem, in effect, that we could argue from there being conceptual points to the necessity of their being included in an analysis. Is this line of reasoning correct?

Let us look further at what a conceptual analysis does. We offer conceptual analyses of certain matters to understand
them better. Things about which we are already clear need no analysis. Now, if we are confused about x, it would not make any sense to say that a certain analysis was necessary to understanding x. We would not be in a position to say this if we were in fact confused. But if we became conceptually clear about x, the conceptual analysis of x which we have is what counts as our clarity, our understanding of x. It amounts to our understanding of x. To say that the analysis we have is necessary to understanding x seems trivial. Since it is just this analysis which is our understanding of x. To say that the analysis is necessary to, helpful in, significant in understanding x does not amount to anything, since to say that to understand x is necessary to, helpful in, or significant in understanding x is not to say anything at all. To give an adequate analysis of x is to show that one understands x. It is a trivial matter to say that one's analysis is necessary to understanding x. Similarly, the idea that a certain point is necessary to understanding x is trivial. Either it affords clarity or it does not. That is the only question.

This is not to say that for other reasons no analysis could be significant. It may be very significant if no one has thought of it before or if it convinces a number of people to change mistaken views. And it is not senseless to say that such and such an analysis is helpful in or even necessary to understanding x, if one means no more by analysis than a piece of writing, or a specific account, etc. One might say that
reading Russell and Whitehead generally helps students understand these issues. He might (in a pedagogical remark) even say that Russell and Whitehead were necessary. 'I could not teach my seminar without them', for example. But these remarks are not conceptual. To be made they presuppose that the students understand Russell and Whitehead and the issues in question.

Consequently, it makes no sense before we have done any analysis of x to say that certain points must be made in it, because if we have not done any analysis, we obviously would not be in position to say anything about it. But after we have done the analysis, in what sense can we say that what we have mentioned in it was necessary to mention? Necessary to mention in order to understand x? We have just taken care of this gambit.

Insofar as there is an analysis which gives us an understanding of x, then of course there must be points which contribute to this understanding. To be sure, whatever points an analysis makes will be necessary to it in this sense: if it had no points, there would be no point to the analysis. And if one changed some of the points, it would not be the same analysis for it would not make the same points. But if changing some of the points just means changing what is said to make the points clearer (perhaps the ten point program only amounts to eight points) then the question is meant to ask,
"Do we need to say x?" Could we not have said y and got the message across?" and this makes sense. Here we are asking something quite different. For the point or points of the analysis are already established and we are wondering what the best way to say them is.

Perhaps what has been argued above may still seem to some to miss the point. For is it the case that if it is nonsense to say that (1) this point is necessary to an analysis of x, (2) that this point is necessary to an understanding of x, and (3) this analysis is necessary to an understanding of x, then to say that this is a necessary feature of x, or this feature is necessary to x is also nonsense? Of course, if one wanted to know what x is and did an analysis to find out what x is; if there were certain features which were necessary to x's being what it is; then, as was pointed out in Chapter I, in some context and for some purpose one could not do an analysis without mentioning them. For the analysis, if it did not mention these features, could not say what x is. But since no feature is necessary to mention in an analysis of x no feature could be necessary in the sense I have mentioned to x's being what it is. That is, since the analysis need not make any particular points to say what x is, it cannot be the case that certain features are necessary to x's being what it is, since it would be necessary to mention these if there were.

Indeed, the notion of the correct analysis is, like the
notion of the correct description, a confusion. Since we need say nothing in particular in an analysis in order that we achieve conceptual clarity by it, that is, in order for it to be correct, we cannot speak of a philosopher's having the (one) correct analysis, even if there are some matters which his analysis clears up. Of course, out of a group of proposed analyses his may be the only correct one, and so we may say of his analysis as compared to the other analyses that his is the correct analysis. But this is a different matter. By this we are certainly not saying that there is one correct analysis of the matters which his analysis deals with correctly, namely his analysis.

Indeed, could we have grounds for saying that some feature of what is described or analyzed might in toto or in parte fail to be described in a description or analysis of it? Of course, we might have grounds for saying this. We might discover that a diamond when seen through a special glass in a special light had a remarkable brilliance, which we had here-tofore not noticed. Surely, however, it would be possible to include this feature in further descriptions and analyses of the diamond. But would it make sense to say that some feature might lie in principle beyond what an analysis or description could ever give? If it is in principle impossible to analyze or describe, then what are the words "analysis" and "description" doing here? And if there is some other way to
make accurate remarks about what we describe and analyze, then let him who knows lead us to the light.

All of this talk about description and analysis is of great importance when we consider some of the things said often by phenomenologists. The fact that it is not necessary to give a particular analysis of a concept in order to understand that concept is of primary significance when we consider what phenomenologists call "the description of essences" in their "rigorous" science. The preceding remarks about analysis are especially relevant since it seems that what phenomenologists are out to establish in their "description of essences" are often not just conceptual truths, truths which we could not conceive or understand to be otherwise, but rather something "stronger," essential or necessary truths. But, as my argument here and in Chapter I shows, they could not be getting to anything more than conceptual truths. Here, they, and Sartre among them, must, at best, be establishing conceptual truths.

When we cannot conceive something to be otherwise, it has often been tempting to say that from this it follows that something is necessary. Given that analysis concludes that it does not make sense to think of bodies that are not extended, philosophers have found it desirable to say that it is a necessary truth that they are extended. What we have shown, I think, is that though it may be a conceptual truth that all
bodies are extended, to proclaim that it is a necessary truth that they are is not within the realm of analysis. An analysis has its roots in the concrete. It is always an analysis of something. Whatever it is an analysis of can always be specified independently of the analysis, which independent specification cannot be included in the analysis without the analysis becoming trivial. It does not fall within the purview of the analysis to take itself into account. That it is an analysis of x requires some further statement, which cannot be part of the analysis of x itself. Because of this, there is in principle more to say about what is analyzed— that the analysis fits it, that it does not fit it, that the analysis is only a purported analysis and could not be construed even to have begun to deal adequately with what is analyzed, etc. All these are remarks about what is analyzed as well as remarks about the analysis itself. But given this, an analysis is never in a position to say what is necessary to what it analyzes, since there is always in principle more to say about it. No analysis can take into account this factor of there being more to say, and, consequently, no analysis can state the necessary features of what it is an analysis of. This seems to be exactly what Sartre himself has in mind when he says that his ontology can never exhaust its topic of investigation, "being-in-the-world." And, to be sure, phenomenology cannot either, since it is not within the purview of description to exhaust what is described.
Let me elaborate these points even further. If I describe what I do when I give a description, the description that I offer of what I do when I give the original description must be distinct from that original description whose being given I am describing in the new description. For otherwise an incredible tangle would render giving a description unintelligible. If a description could describe its own being given, then it need not describe anything except its own being given. But in order to give a description, there must be something to describe, and that could not be my giving the description, since my being able to give the description depends on there being something to describe. This is not to say that in a description there cannot be words and phrases indicative of how the description is to be taken, say. It might be clear as a bell that it was meant as an eulogy. But I cannot describe its eulogistic features unless I give a second description; namely a description of my giving the first description.

What is also not possible is to describe the description one is giving in the very description one is giving. For then it would be possible to say that a description was adequate or that it fit the facts without reference to what was said or to the facts. The adequacy or truth of a description would be contained within the description itself, and the idea of checking to see if a description was adequate or checking to see if it was true would be nonsense indeed. The description
would describe nothing if it need refer to nothing besides itself for its own truth and adequacy.

Let us get back to the giving of a description. For besides that which is described and the description I give of it, there is, as we have seen, the giving of the description which is quite distinct from these other two. To give a description is to do something. I might eulogize Lord Russell, say, or at this time eulogize him in a description. I might intimate that certain of his opponents were confused or that he himself was, for that matter. I might just state the facts of his life. However, it is not strictly our purpose to enumerate what my giving a description could be said to do. The point is, that to give a description of something is to do something, and to consider a particular description and the giving of that description is to consider essentially different matters.

These points relate directly to Sartre's discussion. Sartre's concern is phenomenological ontology, the aim of which is to come to an understanding of "being-in-the-world." This means, among other things, giving an analysis of what men do, how they relate to one another, and various other things about them. Of considerable importance it is, then, to understand the act of giving a description, or at least what bearing the act of describing has on the possibilities open to phenomenological ontology. If Sartre is to describe and
analyze what men do, one of the things men do is describe and analyze; men do phenomenological ontology.

Looking further at the act of describing, we can see how it is in principle always possible to describe something in different and new ways. For the act of describing can never be captured in the description which results from it. To do this always requires a further description. But that act which is giving the further description requires a further description to capture it, and so on. There is always the possibility of giving a further description. Such a possibility can never be circumscribed in any "account - 1," for the "account - 1" itself must be given so there is always a possible accounting which in principle lies beyond any and all conceivable "accounts - 1." Doing phenomenological ontology must needs be inexhaustible. It cannot be summed up because an additional summing up is possible beyond any and all its summations. But if the possibility of giving a description is not to be exhausted by analysis, this just means that doing phenomenological ontology is an endless enterprise. In principle, there is always something further to give a description of.

Indeed, beyond whatever descriptions and analyses can be presented, there is always a description and analysis for no analysis can be an analysis of itself, or a description a description of itself, without becoming trivial. Nor description,
nor analysis, nor "account - 2," for that matter, can take itself into account without rendering its purported enterprise insignificant.

Thus, Sartre in his essay will recognize that as his analyses and descriptions cannot state their own adequacy and truth, no analysis or description which he offers is such that there could be no possible analyses or descriptions which would add to or even substantially change his own ontology. He will allow this possibility. Consequently, with the possibility in principle of other analyses and descriptions, Sartre will not be in position to state either necessary or sufficient features of what he purports to investigate.

Secondly, because doing the ontology itself is part of "being-in-the-world" and because doing the ontology cannot be taken into account by the ontology itself, Sartre will recognize again the inexhaustibility of his subject, and his inability to state the necessary or sufficient conditions for it. Sartre will not attempt to say "all there is to say" about "being-in-the-world." Because Sartre must do phenomenological ontology when he writes his essay, his ontology will not be of the traditional sort, which attempts to state the necessary and/or sufficient conditions of its subject matter.

Thus, the Sartrian ontology will not be metaphysics, at least it ought not to be, given what has been said. For metaphysics attempts to state the necessary and/or sufficient conditions for whatever it is a metaphysics of. But this Sartre
claims cannot be done by his ontology; this is the central claim of his existentialism. It amounts to saying that the concrete, "being-in-the-world," cannot be exhausted in analysis. It cannot be pieced together; one cannot give an analysis of its being by stating the conditions of its being.
FOOTNOTES


3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., p. 3.

5. Ibid., p. 4.
CHAPTER III

SARTRE AND THE CONCRETE
(EXPOSITION AND ANALYSIS)

The Problem of Transcendent Non-being

The first few pages of Chapter I in Being and Nothingness are central to Sartre's whole procedure. He writes that he wants to find a "guiding thread" for his inquiry, that is, "a single pattern of conduct," which will serve to begin his investigation of the relation "man-world."¹ This, as we have seen in our previous Chapter, must not exhaust the concrete, i.e., what is open to investigation for phenomenological ontology.

Sartre begins by doing an analysis of questioning. The purpose of this analysis is to reveal what he calls the problem of the reality of nothingness, or the problem of transcendent non-being. A point which he seeks to establish is that whenever I ask a question I must admit, among other things, the possibility of a negative reply. For Sartre, if it is not possible for me to get a "no" answer to my question, then my question is not really a question at all.² This seems straightforwardly false. Questions like "How old are you?" "How much do you weigh?" "What does a five pound note amount to in U.S.
currency?" etc., are not questions which simply on the surface do not admit of negative replies. What would a negative reply be to "How old are you?". That I'm not of any age at all?

Of what importance is this talk of questioning to Sartre's ontology? Is the claim that every question must countenance the possibility of a negative reply central to Sartre's argument? If it is, of course there will be some major difficulties with it. But it is not clear that Sartre thinks that questioning itself constitutes the relation "man-world" or is somehow basic to it. He has taken questioning as a guiding thread only. As he says, it is not the "original relation" of man to the world, but it rather "stands within the limitation of this relation and takes it for granted."³ So, Sartre could go wrong about questioning and much of his ontology need not suffer. Besides, it is clear that he uses the analysis of questioning to make explicit a problem in understanding what he calls "transcendent non-being." And Sartre may not need to make a general claim about all forms of questioning to discuss this problem. Indeed, we do for some questions admit the possibility of a negative reply. When we ask whether there is a bull in the china shop, we admit the possibility that there might not be a bull there. If it is the possible negation in the answer to this question, and questions like it, that Sartre is going to investigate, he need not make a general remark about questioning to do so.
Sartre writes, "Thus, at the moment when I ask, 'Is there any conduct which can reveal to me the relation of man with the world?' I admit on principle the possibility of a negative reply such as, 'No, such a conduct does not exist.' This means that we admit to being faced with the transcendent fact of the non-existence of such conduct." The problem which this argument is leading up to is adumbrated in the beginning of the next paragraph:

"One will probably be tempted not to believe in the objective existence of a non-being; one will say that in this case the fact simply refers me to my subjectivity; I would learn from the transcendent being that the conduct sought is a pure fiction." Sartre replies to such a temptation, "But in the first placed, to call this conduct a pure fiction is to disguise the negation without removing it. 'To be pure fiction' is equivalent here to 'to be only a fiction'. Consequently, to destroy the reality of the negation is to cause the reality of the reply to disappear. The reply, in fact, is the very being which gives it to me; that is, reveals the negation to me. There exists then for the questioner the permanent objective possibility of a negative reply." The point in all this seems to be that the fact that I can ask whether something is the case, requires that some states of affairs might be adduced to show that it is not the case. Furthermore, there is nothing subjective in determining that x is not the case, anymore than
there is something subjective in determining that it is the case. One is pointing to reality, so to say, when one does either.

Sartre wrestles further with the apparent difficulty in according a certain status to negative judgments, or negative judgments of at least one type, i.e., of the type "x is not the case." Some have not wanted to accord the same status to, say, "Pierre is in the cafe" as "Pierre is not in the cafe." It has seemed to some that the fact that Pierre is not in the cafe does not have the same position in the world, so to say, as the fact that Pierre is in the cafe. Some have wanted to deny that the judgment, "Pierre is not in the cafe," corresponds to the facts in the same way that "Pierre is in the cafe" does. Sartre puts the question this way, "Is negation as the structure of the judicative proposition at the origin of nothingness, or on the contrary, is nothingness as the structure of the real, the origin and foundation of negation." Is it the case that Pierre's not being in the cafe is just a product, so to say, of my saying that he is not (a kind of saying makes it so), or am I really saying something about the world, about reality, when I say, "Pierre is not in the cafe?"

We can clearly see confusion in asking questions of this sort, unless they are asked for purely pedagogical reasons. For, it seems no problem at all to say, "Pierre is not in the cafe." And there is no doubt that Pierre's not being in the
cafe can be specified independently of my saying or judging that he is not there. I am either right or wrong in saying, when looking in the cafe for Pierre, that he is not in the cafe. My being right or wrong is not just a matter of saying so. To have some doubt about whether Pierre's not being in the cafe is a real fact or a real state of affairs, given that he is not in the cafe, would seem to indicate that one has a rather strange idea of what facts are.

But Sartre does not take this kind of approach in answering the objections of those who deny the reality of negative facts (if we might call what they do by this rather traditional heading). What he does is look at a case of absence--Pierre's absence from a cafe, where he (Sartre), having arrived late, is supposed to meet Pierre, who is always punctual. By finding just what absence amounts to, he believes he can show that those who object to the reality of nothingness are quite confused.

Sartre's Discussion of Absence

Sartre seems to think that the analysis of this one case will serve as an analysis central to all cases of transcendent non-being, that is, not only to all cases of absence but to all cases in which we say that such and such is not the case, or that such and such is not here, or that there are no such things as such and such, or that one has never held such a position,
and so on, indefinitely. Sartre calls these cases, cases of "transcendent non-being," insofar as they are cases of facts and facts 'transcend' the statements we make about them. That is, statements about these particular facts of non-being refer beyond themselves to the facts of non-being which they state. The example of Pierre and the cafe is examined to show that there are such transcendent non-beings, that statements about transcendent non-beings are in fact statements about the world--about reality--a view which Sartre thinks some have wanted to deny. In the following treatment of the case of Pierre and the cafe, I shall refrain from using the Sartrian ontological terms to avoid any temptation to beg the question in establishing the adequacy of the Sartrian ontology. I shall attempt to extract the phenomenology done to see how it holds up against the "concrete" but without citing Sartre's ontological terms in doing so. For, if the phenomenology is done in the terms of the ontology, it may appear that I have assumed the ontology to make the analysis, which analysis should only come as a result of careful description. Sartre, in fact, does use some terms of his ontology in characterizing the example. This does not by itself defeat him. It would do so, of course, if no genuine phenomenology had been done, if an assumed ontology was doing all the work behind the phenomenological scenes.

I shall quote two paragraphs in their entirety and there-
after attempt to make whatever phenomenological points can be
made from them.

It is certain that the cafe by itself with its patrons, its tables, its booths, its mirrors, its light, its smoky atmosphere, and the sounds of voices, rattling saucers, and footsteps which fill it--the cafe is a fullness of being. And all the intuitions of detail which I can have are filled by these odors, these sounds, these colors, all phenomena which have a trans-phenomenal being. Similarly, Pierre's actual presence in a place which I do not know is also a plentitude of being. We seem to have found fullness everywhere. But we must observe that in perception there is always the construction of a figure on a ground. No one object, no group of objects is especially designed to be organized as specifically either ground or figure; all depends on the direction of my attention. When I enter this cafe to search for Pierre, there is formed a synthetic organization of all the objects in the cafe, on the ground of which Pierre is given as about to appear. This organization of the cafe as the ground is an original nihilation. Each element of the setting, a person, a table, a
chair, attempts to isolate itself, to lift itself upon the ground constituted by the totality of the other objects, only to fall back once more into the undifferentiation of this ground; it melts into the ground. For the ground is that which is seen only in addition, that which is the object of a purely marginal attention. Thus the original nihilation of all the figures which appear and are swallowed up in the total neutrality of a ground is the necessary condition for the appearance of the principle figure, which is here the person of Pierre. This nihilation is given to my intuition; I am witness to the successive disappearance of all the objects which I look at—in particular of the faces, which detain me for an instant (Could this be Pierre?) and which as quickly decompose precisely because they 'are not' the face of Pierre. Nevertheless if I should finally discover Pierre, my intuition would be filled by a solid element, I should be suddenly arrested by his face and the whole cafe would organize itself around him as a discrete presence.
But now Pierre is not here. This does not mean that I discover his absence in some precise spot in the establishment. In fact, Pierre is absent from the whole cafe; his absence fixes the cafe in its evanescence; the cafe remains ground: it persists in offering itself as an undifferentiated totality to my only marginal attention; it slips into the background; it pursues its nihilation. Only it makes itself ground for a determined figure; it carries the figure everywhere in front of it, presents the figure everywhere to me. This figure which slips constantly between my look and the solid, real objects of the cafe is precisely a perpetual disappearance; it is Pierre raising himself on the ground of the nihilation of the cafe. So that what is offered to intuition is a flickering of nothingness; it is the nothingness of the ground, the nihilation of which summons and demands the appearance of the figure, and it is the figure—the nothingness which slips as a nothing to the surface of the ground. It serves as a foundation for the judgment—'Pierre is not here.'
It is in fact the intuitive apprehension of a double nilification. To be sure Pierre's absence supposes an original relation between me and this cafe; there is an infinity of people who are without any relation with this cafe for want of a real expectation which establishes their absence. But, to be exact, I myself expected to see Pierre, and my expectation has caused the absence of Pierre to happen as a real event concerning this cafe. It is an objective fact at present that I have discovered this absence, and it presents itself as a synthetic relation between Pierre and the setting in which I am looking for him. Pierre absent haunts this cafe and is the condition of its self-nihilating organization as ground. By contrast, judgments which I can make subsequently to amuse myself, such as, 'Wellington is not in this cafe, Paul Valery is no longer here, etc.'--these have a purely abstract meaning; they are pure applications of the principle of negation without real or efficacious foundation, and they never succeed in establishing a real relation between
the cafe and Wellington or Valery. Here the relation 'is not' is merely thought. This example is sufficient to show that non-being does not come to things by a negative judgment; it is the negative judgment, on the contrary, which is conditioned and supported by non-being.7

Sartre begins by discussing what would be understood to be the presence of Pierre, if he were in the cafe. After discussing presence, he turns to absence. The first four sentences in the first paragraph seem to be remarks of an ontological character, i.e., they in fact employ some of the ontological notions Sartre has dealt with in his introduction, notions like "fullness of being," "transphenomenal being," and "plenitude of being." We shall ignore these for the moment and attempt to dig into the phenomenology being done, the actual treatment of the concrete case. In the fifth sentence we encounter the analogy between perception and the construction of a figure on a ground. Sartre elaborates this as follows: whatever I am looking at I see as a figure against a background of other objects. This means that when I, for example, look specifically at a word in a text, I am aware of other words which I might possibly look at specifically, but which I do not look at specifically insofar as I am attending specifically to one word and not another. Looking at Tom in the chair across
the room, I see the curtains and the door behind him, the floor at his feet and so on, but I am not specifically attending to anything but Tom.

Now when I enter the cafe looking for Pierre, I am not concerned with anything except finding Pierre. The cafe as such remains in the background as long as I look for Pierre. So, I would not stop to study a waitress, unless I were momentarily distracted by her. If I were more than momentarily distracted by her, my concern would not any longer be to find Pierre; my concern would have been replaced by my attention to other and, perhaps to almost everyone else, more important matters. When Sartre says that each element of the setting attempts to isolate itself only to fall back into being the ground, he means that in my looking for Pierre, my attention will not come to rest on anything save Pierre. When he says the necessary condition for the appearance of Pierre is this falling back of everything in the cafe into ground, he just means that if I am trying to find or locate Pierre, I cannot very well be admiring a waitress, although Pierre could very well find me in such a position, and that if I were finally to find Pierre, I would have to note his appearance, an appearance which would be the center of my attention, and this would rule out anything else as the center of my attention, when I found him. To say all this is to say no more than that if Pierre is to be the center of my attention there cannot be something else which is also the
center of my attention.

Now let us turn to what Sartre has to say regarding Pierre's absence. Having discussed Pierre's presence, Sartre remarks that when Pierre is absent, the whole cafe is a mere background against which I hope to find Pierre. I scan it carefully but since I do not find Pierre, and since I continue to look for him, nothing in the cafe gets more than my mere "marginal" attention. That is, I am aware of many things in the cafe, I might even be able to say who was there, for instance. But my business, my concern, is not with anyone or anything there. Sartre calls this attention "marginal" with an idea of this sort in mind: when I am writing a sentence on a piece of notebook paper I am aware of the margin as that beyond which I cannot write, but I am not attending to the margin, nor is my attention drawn to the margin as I am writing. The possibility of my writing is circumscribed by the margins as my finding Pierre is at the moment circumscribed by the whole cafe. Insofar as I am in the cafe looking for Pierre, I am certainly aware of the chairs, tables, people, noises, of the cigarette I am smoking, and so on. But none of these is demanding my attention--none of these is a matter of consideration in my being at the cafe searching for Pierre. Likewise, the margin of my paper, the lines on which I am writing, the notebook holes, etc., are not objects of my concern in, say, copying this dissertation, though I am certainly aware of them.
That the whole cafe carries the figure of Pierre in front of it just means that I look further for Pierre as long as I do not find him. My search will not come to a halt until I find Pierre, or until I decide it is fruitless and do something else. That Pierre is "raising himself as nothingness on the ground of the nihilation of the cafe" seems to mean nothing more than this: that I have Pierre in mind in looking about the cafe, but I have him in mind as not having been found, for he is nowhere before me. Indeed, it is Pierre who, if finally becoming the object of my attention would be that which, or in this case, he who my entire stay at the cafe will be directed toward, inasmuch as I am here to join him, not anyone else, and am here not to be by myself. But that I continue to fail to find Pierre does not mean that I find anything or anyone else. As a result of my failure to find him, all that is specifically on my mind is that everywhere I look there is no Pierre, not that there are tables, chairs, other people, the cigarette I am smoking and so on. If I did indeed find someone else in the sense of "come upon" or "run into" him, Sartre would probably say that I would not find him in the same sense that I would find Pierre. For I would not just come upon, or run into, Pierre if he suddenly emerged from this entrance to keep his appointment with me. If I ran into Jacques at the care, I would not say to him "I have not been able to find you anywhere up to now" upon my finding (running into) him then.
Moreover, if I did simply run into Jacques, and if after a time of looking, I finally gave up trying to find Pierre, gave up the chance that he was actually going to come, and I sat down with Jacques to discuss old times, I would now be no longer looking for Pierre. I would not say that Pierre was absent, insofar as I would no longer be expecting, no longer waiting for him, no longer pacing about wondering where he is. I would now be surprised to see him, it being long past due for him to arrive. While it might be true for someone to say that Pierre was not in the cafe, whether I awaited him or not, I would not say that he was absent given that I no longer expected him, nor was searching for him. I might say "He did not make it" or "He never made it," if asked where Pierre was. And of course I might say "he's not here." But I would not say "he is not here" and mean by it that he ought to be here and is not. Though I might mention that I thought he ought to have been here over an hour ago. Since Pierre is punctual, it is now 'up in the air' as to whether he ought to be here or not, since it might even be the case that I misunderstood him as to when the time was, and at least it is the case that I do not know whether to expect him or not anymore, so I cannot say that he ought to be here.

Sartre continues to work with the figure-and-ground model of perception. Preceding the independent clause just discussed, he writes, "This figure which slips constantly
between my look and the solid, real objects of the cafe is precisely a perpetual disappearance." He does not exactly spell this out further in the following sentence when he says, "so what is offered to intuition is a flickering of nothingness; it is the nothingness of the ground, the nihilation which slips as a nothing to the surface of the ground." The use of a "perpetual disappearance" seems unfortunately metaphorical. Likewise with "flickering of nothingness," this seems metaphorical also. So, too, in the independent clause of the first sentence is the "figure which slips between my look and the solid, real objects of the cafe" metaphorical.

What Sartre seems to have in mind is this: insofar as nothing in the cafe will satisfy my search for Pierre, the cafe as the ground, as the place where it is possible that Pierre will appear, is not a matter of my consideration at all. It is not the object of my attention. Pierre is the object of my attention in this respect, that I am only engaged in trying to find him. The cafe is the place where I am to find him, if I am to find him at all. But once I am at the cafe, the cafe no longer matters to me. What matters is that I find Pierre. But in another respect, Pierre is not the object of my attention, for I do not see him in the cafe. Yet, nothing else in the cafe itself matters to me for I am engaged in trying to find Pierre. It seems to Sartre that due to my concern with trying to find Pierre, my preoccupation with Pierre as
about to appear, as expected to be there, but of course not there now, is what "slips between my look and the solid, real objects of the cafe." For though they are there (the objects in the cafe) and I recognize that they are, Pierre is not there, and the objects in the cafe just become background beneath my glances. I am not occupied with them, they become simply secondary in my search. Surely they are there, but so what?

When Sartre calls the figure of Pierre a "perpetual disappearance," he seems to mean only that Pierre lies beyond the immediate situation, yet to be found. It is not that Pierre is pulling a disappearing act which Sartre is talking about here. Perhaps "disappearance" is an unfortunate choice of word. That the figure of Pierre is a "perpetual disappearance" is Sartre's way of describing the effect my expectation of Pierre has on what I see when I look around the cafe. I examine every face and figure in the cafe to see if it is the face or figure of Pierre. I expect some face or figure to be the face or figure of Pierre. I look at each face and figure with anticipation. But each is a disappointment, a let-down. Each face or figure is possibly Pierre, but possibility after possibility vanishes as I continue to peruse the figures and faces in the cafe. The possibility that this and this and this man is Pierre and the fact that this and this and this man turn
out not to be Pierre constitutes the "perpetual disappearance" of Pierre, the "perpetual disappearance" which is really each vanishing possibility that Pierre is in the cafe. To say that the figure of Pierre is a "perpetual disappearance" is, in Sartre, simply to say that Pierre remains to be found and must perpetually remain so if he is to be absent.

**Critical Evaluation**

I should like to ask a few questions at this point before proceeding with the example. I will not dispute the correctness of Sartre's description of looking around the cafe. I should like instead to know what the phenomenology of perception, the description of looking around the cafe for Pierre, is supposed to contribute to an understanding of absence. Is this "perpetual disappearance" what I apprehend when I see that Pierre is absent? Is this "perpetual disappearance" which I intuit, this "double nihilation" which I am aware of in looking about the cafe, is this Pierre's absence? Is this the intuition of absence?

Sartre's analysis up to this point seems to rest on a description of looking around for and not finding Pierre. Sartre talks of searching for Pierre. He attempts to establish what it means to say that Pierre is not in the setting in which he looks for him. But of course Pierre's absence could not just amount to Sartre's looking for and not finding him. Sartre
may not find Pierre, but Pierre may still be in the cafe. This is simple enough.

Besides this consideration, other features of Sartre's account are puzzling, for the "intuitive apprehension" of a "double nihilation" Sartre also talks about as being the foundation for the judgment that Pierre is absent. Now does he mean that on the basis of not seeing Pierre in the cafe I can say "Pierre is not here?" Surely not, for it is not just on the basis of not seeing Pierre that I can say this, but on the basis that not seeing Pierre is enough to establish that Pierre is absent or is at least enough for me to say, "Pierre is not here," and not be subject to chiding by my fellow listeners for going wrong in an obvious way, i.e., if my looking for him has not been thorough enough and Pierre is right behind me. My not seeing Pierre may or may not serve as foundation for the judgment depending on whether I am in a position to see the whole cafe, whether I have looked closely, etc. On one plausible interpretation of foundation, namely that in which it is equivalent to evidence, or grounds, it would be a mistake to say that looking for thoroughly and not seeing Pierre is the foundation for saying, "Pierre is not here." If I peek into Pierre's office and do not see him, not seeing him need not be grounds at all for saying that Pierre is absent. For it may be a case in which there is no question of grounds for saying Pierre is absent. If Pierre is undoubtedly not in his office,
if there could be no question that he might be there, not seeing him in his office will not be grounds for saying he is absent. For what could count as grounds to the contrary?

Furthermore, to understand what constitutes grounds for saying Pierre is absent need not involve doing a phenomenology of my not seeing him at all. Pierre may justifiably be said to be absent in many cases which do not involve looking for and not finding or looking for and failing to see Pierre. I may take a report from a reliable source that Pierre is absent. I may have grounds for saying he is absent if I know that he has conflicting engagements and that it is highly unlikely that he could be present at this affair. Pierre may have told me that he was going to be absent, and I may have ample grounds for saying that he is absent, whether I look about for him or not.

What, then, has absence to do with perception? Indeed, what is the purpose of all this talk about one's perception of the cafe in Sartre when one discusses absence? Sartre obviously thinks that perception has a great deal to do with absence since he discusses absence in terms of perception. In one very common case in which I say so and so is absent, there may be no question of my saying something about my perceiving anything. I may look into Pierre's office and see that he is absent. I may say that he is not in his office, or that he is absent. But just because I can see by looking that Pierre is
absent does not mean that whenever I say, "Pierre is absent" I am somehow making a perceptual report about what I see or do not see. If I say, "Pierre is absent" I may not be talking about seeing or not seeing anything at all. I certainly could not always find it equally proper to say "I do not see Pierre" when it is proper to say "Pierre is absent." For, if I see that Pierre is not in his cubicle, I would not, certainly, describe the situation of his not being there by saying, "I do not see Pierre in his cubicle." Nor could I say the pompous, "Pierre is nowhere to be seen in his cubicle." In a place where Pierre could not be missed if he were there, I would not use the expression, "nowhere to be seen" just as I would not talk of not seeing Pierre. Furthermore, in a not so common case, I may say that Pierre is absent, without there being a question of grounds, as discussed above, and I may not be said to have seen or not seen anything. Pierre may be expected at a large affair and, by his mere phoning that he will be late, call attention to what was before his totally inconspicuous absence. This is a case which we would not even be tempted to describe in terms of perception.

Sartre links perception and absence in the following way. He has asked the question, "Is there an intuition of Pierre's absence or does the negation indeed enter in only with judgment?" and answers that there is an "intuitive apprehension of a double nihilation." For Sartre, this is what he is aware
of, this is what he apprehends, when in the cafe he says that Pierre is absent. What exactly is this "intuitive apprehension of the double nihilation?" The "double nihilation" is Pierre's not appearing to me on the ground of the cafe, which is not the object of my attention. Nothing in the cafe is the object of my attention. Not the cafe. Not Pierre. Here is the double nihilation. Does it make sense to say that I am aware of or that I apprehend this?

Let us first of all ask in what circumstances I could say that I am aware of seeing Pierre, or that I am aware of not seeing Pierre? The question, of course, could be asked of me, "Were you aware of seeing Pierre at the reception?" (I might have been in a glassy-eyed stupor), and I might say "No, I was not aware of seeing Pierre, although it seems that I undoubtedly did see him, for I did nod to him as Jones pointed out." One could also ask, "Were you aware of not seeing Pierre at the reception?" if one wanted to know if I had noticed that Pierre was not there. I might say in reply "No, come to think of it, I was not aware of not seeing him." That is, I did not miss him.

But what about these questions: "Are you aware of seeing Pierre? " Are you aware of not seeing Pierre?" What could they be asking? Could I say, "Well, I am seeing him, but I am not aware of it," or "I am not aware of not seeing him; but I do not see him."? Indeed, if I see (or do not see)
Pierre, could I say that I am aware or not aware of seeing (or not seeing) him?

What could "I am aware of not seeing Pierre" mean other than that I do not see Pierre? To say that I am aware of the double nilhilation or that I intuitively apprehend it must simply be to say (if it is to say anything at all) that I can offer perceptual reports about what I see and do not see. Of course it is unintelligible to suppose that I could not.

Is it, however, enough to consider first person usages here? Might it be merely an eccentricity of such usage that I cannot say of myself that I am aware of (or not aware of) seeing (or not seeing) Pierre. Could someone else say of me that I am aware of (or not aware of) seeing (or not seeing) Pierre, much as one could say of me that I believed that x but that x was not true, though I could not say this of myself? In what circumstances could I say, "He is not aware of seeing Pierre."? Well, in circumstances where there is a question of identifying Pierre. Someone might not be aware that it was Pierre he was seeing. Similarly, someone might not be aware that it was Pierre that he did not see. He might actually be seeing Pierre and not be seeing Jacques but not be aware of this if he is mixed up about Jacques and Pierre.

Now, in this respect there is an eccentricity of the first person usages which are in question: I cannot say that I am currently misidentifying someone, whereas someone can say
this of me. But is there an eccentricity in any other respects? Besides cases of identification and misidentification, could someone say of me that I was aware (or not aware) of seeing (or not seeing) Pierre? It certainly appears that if I know who Pierre is then I could not be unaware of seeing him or not seeing him. Surely it is not my not seeing whatever it is that I am not seeing that I could be unaware of. "That I am not seeing what I am not seeing" is a tautology; it does not point to anything I might or might not be aware of. Likewise, with seeing. I might or might not be aware of what I am seeing. But that I am seeing what I am seeing is not something that I might or might not be aware of. To put it another way, my seeing or not seeing is not something of which I could be aware or unaware, as I could be aware or unaware of whatever I see.

Now we have seen that the double nihilation is my not seeing Pierre on the ground of the cafe which stands in my perception as the ground for the appearance of Pierre. Could I be aware of this double nihilation? Straightforwardly no, unless there was some question of identifying Pierre involved in the example.

Could I be said to apprehend the double nihilation? If "to apprehend" means "to perceive" as one would perceive a tree, of course not. I do not perceive my not seeing Pierre in the cafe anymore than I perceive my seeing Pierre in the
cafe. That I perceive Pierre or do not perceive Pierre in the cafe is not something I could perceive. If "apprehend" is being used to mean "understand," then I might be said not to apprehend that I do not see Pierre in the cafe, if I am confused as to who Pierre is. And of course if "perceive" is being used as a stand-in for "understand," as it sometimes is, then I might not perceive the above either. But again the cases in which I might not apprehend the double nihilation are cases of possible misidentification. Yet, misidentification is not in question in Sartre's example. So it seems that I could not apprehend the double nihilation either. Indeed, what Sartre means by "intuitive apprehension of a double nihilation" should by now be in serious question.

Nevertheless, is this "double nihilation," regardless of whether I can apprehend it or not, is it, for Sartre, the same as Pierre's absence? According to Sartre, is this what I apprehend when I apprehend that Pierre is absent? Sartre says, "But now Pierre is not here. This does not mean that I discover his absence in some precise spot in the establishment." Should we construe the sentences that follow to give us an explanation of what Pierre's absence does mean? Does Sartre really think that my not seeing Pierre, as he does an analysis of it, in terms of the double nihilation, is Pierre's absence? It certainly appears that Sartre thinks so. The "double nihilation" (Sartre's high-powered way of saying what
it means not to see Pierre in the cafe which I have "negated" as ground while looking for him) seems, after doing the Sartrian phenomenology of the situation, to be what I am supposed somehow to apprehend when I see that Pierre is absent from the setting in which I look for him. The description of my perception of the cafe appears by Sartre intended to reveal the reality of absence, in that it is supposed to point to the double nihilation as that to which my statement "Pierre is not here" refers. In other words, the revelation of the double nihilation is prior to my stating that Pierre is absent and serves as the referent of my statement in Sartre's analysis. In short, for Sartre, the reality of nothingness is seen in the double nihilation. But it is obvious that the reality of Pierre's absence is not my failing to see him in the cafe, for I could fail to see him and he might not be absent.

Indeed, Sartre continues the part of his writing just discussed with the following:

But, to be exact, I myself expected to see Pierre, and my expectation has caused the absence to happen as a real event concerning this cafe. It is an objective fact that I have discovered this absence, and it presents itself as a synthetic relation between Pierre and the setting in which I am looking for him, Pierre absent haunts this cafe and is the
condition of its self-nihilating organization
as ground.
This seems to indicate that Sartre has slipped from the issue
of not seeing Pierre in the cafe to the issue of Pierre's
absence as a fact, a slipping which would lead one to think
that he thinks they are the same. For Sartre is now clearly
talking about the fact of Pierre's absence rather than talking
of his mere failure to see Pierre in the cafe where he is
looking for him.

Putting aside for the moment Sartre's example, let us
consider the notion of looking for and not seeing, and the
notion of expecting. If I expect Pierre to be at the cafe
then, cases of misidentification apart, I cannot be sitting
in front of him, nor can I be looking at him sitting across
the cafe. I cannot be looking for him if I am face to face
with him or if he is within my sight, either. Indeed, my
expecting Pierre and my looking for him both mean that I cannot
see him. Moreover, my looking for Pierre also means that I
cannot in any sense have found Pierre.

So of course if I expect Pierre, I must not see him.
It would make no sense to say that I expect Pierre if he is
right there in plain view before me. To say that I expect
Pierre, is in part to say that I do not see Pierre, or at least
do not see him where I expect him. So from the fact that I
expect Pierre to be here it surely does follow that I do not
see Pierre here. But does my expectation cause Pierre's absence to be a real event—a fact? No. Unless Pierre is in fact not in the cafe, he is not absent. I may very well expect him and not see that Pierre is in fact in the cafe. To be sure Pierre could not be absent unless he were in some sense expected to be where he is said not to be. But of course my expectation does not cause him to be absent. If Sartre is just referring to the trivial truth concerning expecting Pierre, that he could not be expecting Pierre if Pierre were face to face with him, then of course Sartre would not be talking about Pierre's being absent. He would simply be remarking what it means to expect Pierre. And part of this is that one does not see Pierre in the cafe when he expects him to be there. On this view, all of Sartre's remarks about perception could in effect amount to no more than a point about expecting Pierre. That of course I do not see Pierre when I expect him. But this is not to make a remark about what it means for Pierre to be absent in fact.

We ask again, what does the analysis of my looking around the cafe have to do with Pierre's being absent? Even if I do not expect Pierre but am just looking for Pierre thinking that he might be there, this itself does not shed light on what it means for Pierre not to be there. For as I am looking around for Pierre, I must not see him or else I could not say that I was looking for him. To be sure, looking for and not
seeing him are not grounds in themselves for saying that he is not in the cafe. They may or may not be grounds depending on the situation. (And of course I may not need grounds to say 'Pierre is not in his cubicle'. If I am looking at the empty desk through the open door to the little room I may say that Pierre is not there without offering grounds, for I do not need them. Here is a situation in which we can say 'Pierre is absent' without offering any grounds or foundation for saying so; other than pointing to the situation, there is nothing more to do.) Nor is an analysis of my failure to find Pierre in the cafe an analysis of his not being in the cafe. Of course, in this case we are not talking about Pierre's absence since he is not supposed to be where we are looking for him. Here we are just talking about his not being in the cafe as opposed to his not being there as expected--his absence.

In addition that Pierre's being absent haunts this cafe, and that it is the condition of its self-nihilating organization as ground makes sense if that just means that my whole regard for the cafe is tempered by my expecting Pierre. That is, insofar as I am looking around for Pierre I am going to be watching for opening doors and new people entering through them, where I would not be doing this if I were just there to drink a cup. The cafe, too, will not be of any interest to me for I will be looking for Pierre and will not be concerned with anything else. But this is the sum and substance of the
haunting going on. Indeed, I am the one haunted, not the cafe. Sartre, after discussing the "objective fact" of Pierre's absence has now switched back to a discussion of his expectation and his looking around the cafe for Pierre.

It is a mystery just what the analysis of perception, of not seeing Pierre, could do in the example of Pierre and the cafe. But it seems that for Sartre the intuitive apprehension of the double nilhilation is the intuition of Pierre's absence. And this double nilhilation amounts to no more than not seeing Pierre when expecting him to be there in the cafe.

If it is remarked that what Sartre has to say about the "structure" of perception in the example is at a level deeper and more primary than the mere fact of Pierre's absence, and that it is by examining perception that we get to the "real meaning" of absence, I must remark that Sartre is not entitled, having forsaken the reduction in transcendental phenomenology, to attempt to reduce Pierre's absence, by whatever means, transcendental or otherwise, to the terms of an analysis of perception. Understanding what it means for Pierre to be absent could not, in Sartre, involve understanding the "structure" of my perception of the cafe from which Pierre is absent. Indeed, admitting that he cannot do an analysis of the situation in the cafe without taking into account as primary the actual (factual) concrete situation of the cafe, Sartre is committed to the view, given what he has said in the
example, that what Pierre's absence amounts to is my failing to locate Pierre in the cafe where I expect him. For, as Sartre would have to admit, there is no ground to retreat to which is more significant or primary to his analysis than the concrete situation of Pierre's absence from the cafe. And this Sartre has attempted to come to terms with by an analysis of perception, an analysis of my perceiving Pierre's being absent from the cafe. But this analysis of perception, at the level of the concrete situation in the cafe (and this is the level Sartre's incisiveness is subject to), does not get to the quick of that situation. For in Sartre's example, the analysis of Pierre's absence completely rests on an analysis of perception, an analysis which is not sufficient to understand what it means for Pierre to be absent from the cafe.

If it is argued that Sartre's phenomenology of my perception of the cafe serves just to distinguish the case of Pierre's absence from the simple case of his not being in the cafe, then it fails. For it is the reference to expectation that does this. That is, if one takes Sartre to be assuming that Pierre is in fact not in the cafe and his purpose to be a mere elucidation of the difference between Pierre's absence and his mere not being in the cafe, this still does not find a place for the phenomenology of perception.

But in fact this could not be a proper reading of the
Sartrian text. For Sartre says he is concerned to show the reality referred to by the statement, "Pierre is not here" uttered in the context of the example. And to say that the reality referred to is the fact that Pierre is not in the cafe will not serve Sartre's avowed purpose. Sartre wants somehow to show what that fact really is and doing this cannot amount to a simple statement that Pierre is not in the cafe is a fact. Sartre's purpose is to offer a phenomenological elucidation of the fact of Pierre's absence, which he does in terms of the double nihilation. But it is of course impossible that his account of the double nihilation could represent the factual situation in the cafe. The transcendent fact of Pierre's absence cannot be grasped as a double nihilation. To be sure, as we suggested before, it is difficult to imagine what sort of elucidation of "Pierre is not here" could be offered to show the reality of nothingness. Besides pointing to the cafe without Pierre in it and saying something like, "Look, Pierre is not here," what else is there to do? If this could not do the job, it is difficult to imagine what could.

Let us hold the above considerations for a while. In the remaining part of his discussion, Sartre remarks about certain other judgments which might be made in the cafe, namely, "Wellington is not in this cafe," and "Paul Valery is no longer here." These, he says, have a "purely abstract meaning."

"They are pure applications of the principle of negation
without any real or efficacious foundation and they never succeed in establishing a real relation between the cafe and Wellington or Valery. It is not immediately clear what Sartre has in mind by this. He might be saying that "Wellington is not in the cafe" is meaningless when uttered in the cafe. Or, he might be saying that it is just out of place or pointless or purposeless when so uttered. The same might hold with Sartre's view of "Paul Valery is no longer here." Although if Valery had never been in the cafe, the sentence would be meaningless if uttered in the cafe on grounds which Sartre does not discuss, namely for the reason that if Valery had never been there it would not make sense to say that he no longer was there. Moreover, if either Wellington or Valery were dead then either sentence would be meaningless for the reason that we do not talk of dead men as being in cafes or not in cafes.

What about the sentence, "Wellington is absent from this cafe" as opposed to the sentence, "Wellington is not in this cafe."? To say that Wellington is absent gives it to be understood that in some sense Wellington is expected or anticipated. One does not say of someone who did not buy a ticket to the game, unless he ordinarily buys tickets, that he is absent from the game if he is not at the game. Whereas, one can say of a season ticket holder or of someone who regularly attends that he is absent from the game if he is not
there. For he has failed to show up where the man who never
comes, or who does not attend regularly could not fail to show
up. So the sentence, "Wellington is absent" would not just be
out of place or purposeless if Wellington is not expected.
The sentence, "Wellington is absent," would be meaningless,
would have no reference if Wellington were not expected. Of
course, in the context of Sartre's example, it makes no
difference whether one says, "Pierre is not in the cafe," or
"Pierre is absent from the cafe." Given the context, it is
clear that one is pointing to Pierre's absence, since he is
expected to be there.

Now, if Sartre is discussing what makes the sentences
"Wellington is not in the cafe," and "Paul Valery is no longer
here" meaningless as opposed to what makes the sentences,
"Pierre is not here," "Pierre is absent," and "Pierre is not
in the cafe" meaningful, what could the phenomenology of per-
ception have to do with this?

What, in the example of Pierre and the cafe, could in-
dicate that Pierre's absence might be the reference of a state-
ment uttered in the circumstance which Sartre has outlined?
What besides the fact that I expect Pierre? What in the case
of Pierre and the cafe would indicate that Pierre's absence
has a real possibility besides the fact that I expected him?
What more than my stating that I had an appointment with Pierre,
that he was supposed to meet me at such and such a time, that
he said that he would be at this cafe at this time, not
tomorrow but today, that he made the appointment sincerely or
that there was not any reason for me to doubt his sincerity?
What besides these considerations make it possible for me to
say, "Pierre is not here?" If Jacques happened to sit next
to me while I was waiting for Pierre, and I said to him "out
of the blue" that Pierre was not here, what would Jacques'
response probably be? He would probably ask, "Is he supposed
to be here?" Then having looked around to see if I had over-
looked Pierre and Pierre me, he would probably ask something
like, "When was he supposed to be here?" Then if he knew that
Pierre was always punctual, he would probably look at me
rather puzzled and say, "Are you sure that he is supposed to
be here?" Might I be mistaken, in other words? Et cetera.

Certainly it would seem rather odd to say that my per-
ception of the cafe, my looking around the cafe would make it
meaningful to say, "Pierre is not here." It is not my per-
ception which establishes my remark about Pierre's absence as
a meaningful remark. (At best looking around the cafe might
establish that Pierre's absence was a fact. Although here,
again, we have seen that an analysis of perception does not
tell us what it means for Pierre to be absent either.) It
would just not make sense at all for me to be looking for
Pierre unless it was already established that I might find him,
or unless at least it was the case that I thought I might
find him.
So if Sartre were to think (it is not obvious here that he does) that the reason why it is meaningful to say "Pierre is not in the cafe" or "Pierre is absent" is given by an analysis of my looking around the cafe for Pierre, he would be wrong. In fact, Sartre himself establishes the concrete possibility of Pierre's absence before his phenomenology of perception is even done. All one needs to do to see this is to read the paragraph introducing the phenomenology, where Sartre discusses his appointment with Pierre. So it is difficult to see what an analysis of perception could contribute to understanding why "Pierre is absent" or "Pierre is not here" is a meaningful utterance in the example which Sartre provides.

But it is equally difficult to understand how an analysis of perception would contribute to an understanding of why it is in place or not pointless to say "Pierre is not in the cafe," "Pierre is not here" and "Pierre is absent." For again the issue of its being any of these rests on the context in which the statement is made. So whether we are out to establish either that there is a reference or a reference which it would not be out of place to make, we have to look to the context of the utterance. But the context of the utterance is not elucidated by the phenomenology of perception. The context is elucidated by describing the situation in which the utterance is made. It is not elucidated by describing how I look around the cafe but by describing the context in which I am looking around the cafe.
The phenomenology of perception, then, gives no help in understanding Pierre's absence from the cafe. For it does not help us to understand what it means for Pierre to be absent in fact. Nor does it help us understand what makes the utterance "Pierre is absent" meaningful or in place.

Sartre's remarks about expectation are equally puzzling in the example. Of course it would not make sense to say, "Pierre is absent" unless Pierre is expected. If this is a point Sartre is getting at, then we agree with him. But my expecting Pierre does not cause him to be absent. It just makes it possible for me to say that Pierre is absent, if he is not in the cafe. The issue of his not being in the cafe does not rest on understanding what it means to expect him. The attempt by Sartre to understand transcendent non-being in terms of expectation fails since it is possible to talk of Pierre's not being in the cafe whether or not he is expected. Indeed, this is why in fact the statement, "Wellington is not in the cafe" is meaningful but out of place when uttered in the context discussed. For it is a fact that Wellington is not in the cafe. Wellington does not have to be expected for it to be said of him that he is not in the cafe.

Thus it appears that Sartre has not dealt adequately with absence and hence with the so-called reality of non-being. But not only has Sartre's account failed to treat satisfactorily multifarious cases of absence, there are some specific faults
in his description of the particular case he examines. We
shall try to determine the source of these faults in the next
chapter.
FOOTNOTES


CHAPTER IV

SARTRE AND THE CONCRETE

(DIAGNOSIS)

The Ontological Proof

What has caused Sartre to go wrong in his analysis of Pierre and the cafe? Sartre concludes his discussion of Pierre’s absence by saying that when we discuss absence, or any form of non-being, we are dealing with, at base, the "realm of consciousness"; that is, Sartre thinks that it is consciousness itself which makes it possible that Pierre is absent. There are, according to Sartre, numerous realities like absence which are made possible by consciousness itself. These realities differ from ordinary phenomena insofar as ordinary phenomena do not depend on consciousness for their being whereas absence and these other realities do. Sartre calls these realities negatités.

Just how does Sartre conceive of "consciousness" if he holds this view? Sartre’s remarks about consciousness may be about perception, about judgments, about knowledge, about belief, about a whole host of things. If I make a remark about seeing, knowing, thinking, planning, hating, in general, I may indeed be making a remark about consciousness. But if I
just say that I detest George, I am not talking about consciousness. If I make a remark about what it means to detest someone, George, for example, I am thereby revealing something about consciousness; for only conscious beings can detest, and to understand what detesting someone means is to understand something about consciousness.

Now why say of all these diverse things, knowing, believing, perceiving, detesting, and so on, that they reveal something about consciousness? How does introducing the notion of consciousness help to understand what these severally amount to, if it is admitted that we have to understand each diverse matter for something about consciousness to be revealed? (The same kind of question was asked earlier about "being-in-the-world.") Is there some analysis already assumed before Sartre begins his study?

One thing which Sartre has much in mind when he gives his account of consciousness is the notion of perception, for he is concerned to clear up some of the traditional problems of perception. His analysis of consciousness is supposed to get straight the distinction between what is perceived and the perceiving of it. Klaus Hartmann writes in his discussion of Sartre's preliminary treatment of the phenomenon, or the appearance, in the introduction to Being and Nothingness, that "the beings Sartre has in mind, then, are perceptual things." Sartre offers an extended discussion of what he takes to be
the Husserlian view of perception in this introduction. His major concern is to attack a position which he attributes to Husserl and to establish the ontological status of the "perceptual thing," or the thing-perceived. Sartre presents what he calls an "ontological proof" to establish the status of the object of consciousness, which is here the object of perception.¹ In giving this proof Sartre works out what he regards as the implications of the Husserlian doctrine that all consciousness is consciousness of something, i.e., is "intentional."

Now it is not within the compass of this essay to do an analysis of Husserl's Ideen, I, a book with which it would help the reader of Sartre to be familiar. Nor is it possible to argue about what all the terms used by Sartre, as a phenomenologist, mean. Husserl spent volumes attempting to elucidate the special vocabulary of "phenomenology." Any short treatment of Husserl and Sartre in this regard would be doomed to inadequacy. The best thing we can do is to examine Sartre's ontological proof to show where he thinks he differs from Husserl and why he thinks he must do so.

What is the "ontological proof"? For Sartre, as for Husserl, consciousness is consciousness of. It is senseless to discuss consciousness without acknowledging that it is consciousness of something. But what consciousness is conscious of--its object--has been misunderstood, according to Sartre,
by Husserl and others. For their accounts have not assigned
the proper ontological status to the object of consciousness.
For Sartre, the object has to be independent of consciousness,
not in the sense that consciousness is not consciousness of
it, but in the sense that it must itself already be something
for consciousness to be conscious of it. In terms of per-
ception, this means that what I perceive, the object of
consciousness, the appearance, or the phenomenon, must be
understood as already being there to be perceived. For this
reason, Sartre would argue, no account of my perceiving the
object could lay out the possibilities of its being the object
that it is, or of its being an object pure and simple. By
"laying out the possibilities" is meant stating the necessary
and/or sufficient conditions. Because consciousness requires
an object to be consciousness at all, an analysis of my
consciousness of the object cannot lay out the possibilities
of the object’s being what it is. In more traditional
language, the object of consciousness is "ontologically prior"
to consciousness of it.

For Sartre, as for Husserl, consciousness is intentional.
But Sartre shifts perspective by insisting that consciousness
is directed beyond itself toward something which it is not.
"Consciousness is born supported by a being which is not
itself."5 "To say that consciousness is consciousness of
something means that for consciousness there is no being out-
side of the precise obligation to be a revealing intuition of
something, i.e., of a transcendent being. Not only does pure subjectivity, if initially given, fail to transcend itself toward positing the objective; a 'pure' subjectivity disappears.⁶ "To say that consciousness is consciousness of something is to say that it must produce itself as a revealed-revelation of a being which is not it and which gives itself as already existing when consciousness reveals it."⁷ For Sartre, then, since consciousness must be consciousness of something which it is not, it is impossible that an analysis of consciousness could lay the foundation for the being of the object of consciousness. The object is not a part of consciousness and can in no way be reduced to the ways in which I am conscious of it.

What intentionality means for Sartre seems contained in the of in "consciousness of." That is, to say that consciousness is intentional is a technical way of noting that consciousness is consciousness of something which is distinguished from it as not being consciousness. For me to see a glass, say, there must be a glass to see. The glass is distinct from my seeing it, from the ways in which I might see the glass. The glass is something that I see; a mere account of my seeing the glass is not sufficient to understand what it means for there to be a glass for me to see. It could not be the case that the notion of the existence of the glass, what it means for the glass to be there to see, could, in
principle, be reduced by any means to the notion of my seeing the glass, for Sartre would claim that there would be nothing to see if this were so. Sartre would claim this because on his view an analysis of seeing a glass presupposes that there be a glass to see. Indeed, even in cases of self-consciousness my being conscious is distinct from and presupposes what I am conscious of. When I reflect upon myself the reflecting which I do is always distinct from what I reflect upon. If this were not so, cases of self-knowledge would be unintelligible. Being right or wrong about oneself depends on this distinction. What Sartre is reacting to is the idea, which he attributes to Husserl's transcendental reduction, that one can do an analysis of what "seeing a glass" means without presupposing the existence of any glass, and that through this one can come to understand fully what seeing a glass amounts to.

In short, Sartre sees the "functional problems" or the problems of "the constituting of the objective field of consciousness," as Husserl outlines them in the *Ideen, I*, to be based on a phenomenological mistake. For Sartre, consciousness does not "constitute" the object of which it is conscious. Consciousness does not "bring into being the consciousness of something," and a study of consciousness in the manner of transcendental phenomenology could not arrive at the conditions of there being consciousness of something. So a study of
"constitution," according to Sartre, as Husserl understands it, is mistaken, insofar as it attempts to lay the foundations for the appearance of the object. Insofar as consciousness, for Sartre, requires an object in order to be consciousness, a study of consciousness cannot set forth the conditions for the possible appearance of the object, as Sartre takes Husserl to be attempting to do in his transcendental phenomenology. In one sense, it might be possible to talk of seeing the glass without talking about the existence of the glass at all. One could certainly describe the ways in which one sees the glass without having explicitly to discuss the existence of the glass itself. Sartre, I think, would not object to this, for it would just be dealing with an abstraction. What Sartre objects to is what he takes to be the reduction of the Husserlian transcendental turn. He takes Husserl to be saying that all there is to say about the object of consciousness can be said in an analysis of my consciousness of the object, i.e., my seeing of the glass. And I insert "of" here to suggest the radical division Sartre takes Husserl to be making between consciousness and the ordinary world in which we drink from glasses everyday. That is, it is Sartre's view that Husserl wrongly thinks that whatever can be understood about the existence of the object of consciousness can be reduced in principle to something that can be understood in terms of the being of consciousness itself. Sartre writes, "We are told
Husserl defines consciousness precisely as a transcendence. In truth he does. This is what he posits. This is his essential discovery. But from the moment that he makes of the noema an unreal, a correlate of the noesis, whose esse is percipi, he is totally unfaithful to his principle."10 Whether this correctly construes Husserl is aside from the point. It is what Sartre objects to. He writes, "Consciousness is consciousness of something. This means that transcendence is the constitutive structure of consciousness; that is, that consciousness is born supported by a being which is not itself. This is what we call the ontological proof."11 Sartre claims that Husserl's transcendental analysis of consciousness must presuppose the existence of the object and hence cannot, as he takes Husserl to be trying to do, lay the foundations for the being of the object. Without the transcendentally existent object Husserl's transcendental reduction, as far as Sartre is concerned, has no point, and transcendental phenomenology rests on a mistake.

To repeat, whether or not Husserl did hold the view which Sartre attributes to him, Sartre has made clear the view he finds unacceptable and, by contrast, the position he adopts. That the object must have an independent existence from consciousness if there is to be consciousness of it at all is what Sartre establishes in the ontological proof. "Consciousness implies in its being a non-conscious and
transphenomenal being." What this means is that there must be something to be conscious of if there is to be any consciousness at all. The transphenomenality of the being of the object insures that the object cannot be reduced to the consciousness that one has of it. Indeed, there is always more to what I am conscious of than my consciousness of it. Sartre writes, "Nevertheless, the primary characteristic of the being of the existent is never to reveal itself completely to consciousness. An existent cannot be stripped of its being; being is the ever present foundation of the existent; it is everywhere in it and nowhere." The existent could not appear to consciousness unless it were founded on a being which could not be fully present to consciousness. The being of the existent is everywhere in the sense that it is the inexhaustible being of every existent, and it is nowhere, insofar as it cannot itself be a phenomenon. Phenomena can be somewhere, but the being of the phenomenon is not anywhere, for then it would be a phenomenon and would require its own being independent of the being of consciousness. Indeed, if there were not more of the object, in principle, to be conscious of there would be nothing to be conscious of, there would be no consciousness. This does not mean that the being of the object lies concealed "behind" consciousness of the object. If the being of the object were not transphenomenal, there would be nothing to be conscious of.
What Sartre thus establishes in his ontological proof is the conceptual requirement that to be consciousness, consciousness must be of an object which cannot be understood by an analysis of consciousness itself. There is nothing metaphysical in this conceptual requirement. The notable Sartrian, Wilfred Desan, goes right to the point when he says, "This transphenomenality, however, and this is an important point, is nothing hidden; the phenomenon may not be considered as the signum of some entity which is unable to manifest itself; there is no Kantian noumenon, no inside of things concealed somewhere behind their surface, no metaphysical force or "conatus" somewhere out of view but nevertheless present."\textsuperscript{14}

It must be understood that the ontological proof is not a metaphysical statement at all. Sartre claims to establish phenomenologically that consciousness must be of an object which is independent of and prior to it. In one sense, I can establish phenomenologically that it would be inconceivable to talk of perceiving things if there were not things, independent of my perception of them, to be perceived. But, for Sartre, there is also a sense in which I cannot establish phenomenologically that for any and all possible moments of consciousness I must be conscious of a being which is independent of consciousness. I cannot do a phenomenology of my present state of consciousness without passing to a new state, to a new moment, a moment in which I am now doing a phenomenology
of a state of consciousness which I am now reflecting on. And, of course, I cannot do a phenomenology of the state in which I am doing the phenomenology without passing to a further state which would require still a further state to remark about it. To say that, for any and all possible moments, consciousness is conscious of a phenomenon whose being is transphenomenal would be to do metaphysics. For consciousness is not in a position to remark about its present moment without already "negating" it into a past moment which it can do a phenomenology of. Thus, phenomenology cannot state, for any and all possible moments of consciousness, that the being of the phenomenon must be independent of consciousness. Phenomenology can just make the point that the notion of consciousness would not be intelligible if this were not so.

Now it goes without saying that one must be conscious of what he does a phenomenology of. But since what consciousness is conscious of is independent of it, what there is a phenomenology of is independent of the phenomenology of it. In saying, then, that there is a transphenomenal being, it is implied that in order to do a phenomenology, there must be something which is independent of the phenomenology. To say that there must be something independent of the phenomenology means that there must be something distinguishable from the descriptions offered in the phenomenology, and existing prior to those descriptions, that is, existing prior to phenomenology.
So in the ontological proof, Sartre is at least saying that when we give a description of something it is inconceivable that there not be something to describe independent of the description.

Indeed, this seems reasonable. Insofar as I describe how a description is related to what it describes, I can say that a description is of something which is independent of it. I can establish this by giving a description of giving descriptions. In doing this, I can say that the notion of giving a description would make no sense if there were not something independent of the description which was described. If there were not, what would I be doing when I gave a description, and what would it mean to say a description was correct? There is, however, a sense in which I cannot establish by this description of giving descriptions that for any and all possible descriptions there must be something which is independent of the description in order that it be a description. For I could not establish this with regard to the very description I was giving which was allegedly attempting to establish this point about description. I would need a second description to establish that this condition held for the description I was giving, and yet a third to establish this for the second and so on. Indeed, the most I can say is that it is inconceivable that a description not be of something independent of it. To establish this conceptual point about description, I can do a
phenomenology of giving a description. I can establish this point phenomenologically. I cannot in a description establish that there must for any and all possible descriptions be this independence of what is described from the description of it. This would be a piece of metaphysics to which phenomenology would not be entitled. Again, all that I can do, as a phenomenologist, is state the conceptual requirement for doing description, that what I describe must be independent of the description I give of it, or the notion of description makes no sense.

Desan is, then, wrong when he writes the following:

According to Sartre, the being-in-itself overflows its appearance.

One wonders why, and wonders, too, how a phenomenologist knows this?

Sartre at certain moments calls this overflowing the 'transphenomenality' of being. An equivocal term, indeed. This transphenomenality, he specifies, implies that the being which appears does not merely exist insofar as it appears. The whole problem is whether, proceeding as a phenomenologist, he can be allowed to state the existence of that which does not appear but will perhaps appear. It is entirely possible that the impression
of reality may be a mere structure of the For-itself and the phenomenon simply a facade and an illusion. Sartre's proof of the existence and the massiveness of the Being-in-itself is certainly not apodictic.\(^{15}\)

This passage goes wrong in several ways. First, the claim Sartre makes is not one of knowledge. It is simply a point about what consciousness requires to be understood as consciousness at all. The notion of consciousness would be unintelligible if the ontological proof did not hold. Second, the point can be established phenomenologically. Third, Sartre's reply to most of Desan's last paragraph would have to be something like this: It would not make sense to suppose that 'the impression of reality' might 'be a mere structure of the For-itself and the phenomenon simply a facade and an illusion'. For there could be no ground for calling the phenomenon an illusion. As Merleau-Ponty puts it in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, "For insofar as we talk about illusions it is because we have identified illusions and done so solely in the light of some perception which at the same time gave assurance of its own truth."\(^{16}\) Fourth, Sartre's ontological proof is apodictic in this respect, that phenomenology as description could not make any sense without something to describe to which the phenomenology refers.
The Problem of Absence and Sartrian
Phenomenology

Although we have defended Sartre against one set of objections, in the coming pages we shall raise others concerning the difficulties with Pierre and the cafe. We have said that for description to be possible, there must be something to describe. We have said this in addition to noting explicitly what Sartre says himself with respect to consciousness, that is, that for there to be consciousness, there must be something to be conscious of. Sartre does not explicitly discuss description itself. But the same ontological proof is, as we have shown, relevant to the notion of description. If phenomenology is to be a description of phenomena, the being of phenomena must be transphenomenal, that is, a phenomenon must be given to description as something already there to be described. Giving a correct description of a phenomenon rests on there being something independent of the description to check to see whether the description is correct.

So, let us ask this question, "Is description intentional?" If all this means is that every description is a description of something independent of the description itself, then, of course, description is intentional. "Description is description of x," states the intentionality of description on this view.

If I describe Pierre's absence or Pierre's being absent
from the cafe, is there any problem with the notion that describing is intentional? That is, if Pierre is not there in the cafe, how can I describe this, since it would appear that if Pierre is not there, he is not there for me to describe. In the cafe there is nothing to describe which would be designated as Pierre's absence. Pierre's absence is not just "sitting there" like a chair on the floor. Nor is it sitting there like Pierre in the chair, just waiting, so to say, to be described. So what is it, then, that I describe when I describe Pierre's absence. For I can describe it as costly, conspicuous, unimportant, and so on, and there are numerous facts and features which I can cite in describing it.

Is there any problem here? It is not as if I am describing something which is not there, which might tempt us to think there is a problem. But it is that I am describing the situation of someone's not being there in the cafe for an appointment with me. Is this "not-being there" there to be described? What kind of question is this? Of course, Pierre is not there. But his absence, is it there? It is a fact that he is absent. But is his absence there to be described? What would it be like if it were not there? His absence, that is? I take it, his absence is neither there nor not there. The notion of being there simply does not work with "absence." We can describe absences, but we do not describe absences which are there or are not there.
We can describe Pierre's absence as unfortunate, conspicuous, etc. We can describe how Pierre's absence appears. We can say that it appeared fortunate that Pierre was absent. Or that his absence appeared as an omen of unknown evils. We can say of Pierre's absence that it had all the appearance of a gesture meant to demean the importance of my meeting with him. But one thing we cannot do is give a description of Pierre's absence as though it were the appearance of some object that had some visual characteristics to describe. To attempt to do this clearly would be a categorical error. Nor can we talk of how Pierre's absence affects our other senses, besides sight. In short, when we describe Pierre's absence we are not doing something parallel to describing how something looks, feels, sounds, etc.

What we do do, however, when we describe Pierre's absence is to note facts about it and features of it. But the features we note are not physical properties or perceptual qualities. Nor are the facts, facts about properties and qualities of the above sort. Pierre's absence is not something there in the cafe to look at, size up, photograph, etc., although there is the fact of Pierre's absence and much can be said about it.

Now what does this do to the notion of the intentionality of description? Nothing at all, unless the notion were to have packed into it the inherent difficulty in describing things like
absences on the grounds that there is nothing to describe with regard to absence, for there is nothing called absence which is there in the cafe to be described. But this has nothing to do with whether we can describe Pierre's absence. Nor does the fact that there are not perceptual qualities which can be described with regard to absence militate against describing absence. Just because of these factors it does not follow that absence cannot be described. Absence does not have to be a "perceptual thing," as Hartmann refers to the phenomenon, to be described.

Why do we ask this question about description? Phenomenology, according to most sources, is description. If, for Sartre, what can be described is solely the phenomenon, then one wants to know just what the phenomenon is. If Sartre were to say that the phenomenon is all that can be described, and if his understanding of the phenomenon were such that certain things which we ordinarily do describe were excluded from his account of what can be described, then we should obviously have some damaging questions to ask him. His account of phenomenology could not be adequate if certain things which could be described were excluded in principle from his account.

Is Sartre committed to the view that absence cannot be described? It certainly seems that there is a difficulty for Sartre in describing Pierre's absence. For Pierre's absence cannot be described like the phenomena in the cafe. Pierre's
absence is a *nothingness*, as opposed to the phenomena in the cafe, which are a fullness, and what is it to give a description of nothing at all? For Sartre, Pierre's absence is not a phenomenon, because there is nothing specifically that one is conscious of or that one perceives when he sees that someone is absent. For Sartre says, "Is there an intuition of Pierre's absence, or does negation indeed enter in only with judgment? At first sight it seems absurd to speak here of intuition, since to be exact there could not be an intuition of nothing and since the absence of Pierre is this nothing."¹⁷ Absence is not something which for Sartre one is conscious of unless being conscious of Pierre's absence is just seeing that Pierre is absent or being aware of the fact that he is. There is not, however, a *phenomenon* of absence of which one is conscious when he is aware of Pierre's absence. Absence is a *négligence*, in Sartrian terms, a reality which does not have the being of the phenomenon but which Sartre says is supported by this being. Absence is a reality which, for Sartre, in its very meaning refers to consciousness, but which consciousness is not conscious of, in the sense in which consciousness, for Sartre, requires an object which is a phenomenon and which has the transphenomenal being of the phenomenon.

If consciousness were conscious of absence as it is conscious of the phenomena in the cafe, Sartre would not need to examine the case of absence in his essay. But the problem,
as Sartre sees it, is how to understand what absence is, given that absence cannot be understood as any particular thing which can be perceived in any particular place in the cafe. What is Pierre's absence that we can talk about it, make statements about it, yet which we cannot point to in the cafe when we discuss it? Is absence a reality? Well, for Sartre, it is a negative reality, a _negatité_, and as such it is subject to a different analysis from phenomena. Sartre says that absence is a reality which encloses within itself non-being,¹⁸ as opposed to the phenomena in the cafe which are a fullness of being, that is, whose being is transphenomenal. Pierre's absence, as a _negatité_, is itself supported by the being of the phenomenon in the cafe. Absence is "nihilated only on the foundation of being"¹⁹; on the ground of the phenomena in the cafe Pierre is absent. Only on the foundation of the being of the cafe can Pierre be absent.

So it seems that if Sartre is not committed to the view that absence is not something describable, he is at least committed to saying that if absence is describable, it is so in a totally different fashion from ordinary phenomena. For absence is a _negatité_. But if he says this, why does he attempt to understand it in terms of phenomena; why does he focus on the phenomena in the cafe if absence is admittedly not a phenomenon? Sartre seems to be manufacturing a difficulty with absence on the grounds that it cannot be dealt with like other
phenomena. Of course it cannot, if this would mean that in the cafe there had to be something, called an absence, which one can describe. There is no difficulty in describing absence, so long as one does not think that it can, or somehow ought to be described like chairs, tables, and cafes, and even odors and the like.

Though Sartre might acknowledge that to give a description of Pierre's absence is a different kind of thing from giving a description of cafes and chairs, it is not obvious that he does. His whole account seems geared to explain the reality of absence. But accounting for the reality of absence is not to give a description of it, or of what it is. Sartre seems already to have the terms in which absence ought to be explained, viz., consciousness and phenomenon. His whole treatment of absence seems to preclude giving a genuine description of what it is. For Sartre, it is a question of what consciousness is that bears upon the problem of Pierre's absence and what one is to say about it. There is the notion of the transphenomenal being of the object of consciousness, a transphenomenality of being which Pierre's absence does not have.

Now, of course, when I give a description of Pierre's absence, those facts and features which I note are independent of what I say about them in my description. Pierre's absence is independent of the descriptions I give concerning it. If I describe Pierre's absence as totally unexpected, the fact that
it is, is independent of my saying that it is. Likewise, if I say that Pierre is absent, the fact that he is is independent of my saying so. If I am aware that Pierre is absent, that Pierre is absent is independent of my being aware that he is, but Sartre does not want to say that absence has a transphenomenal being. So it seems that it is not just because something is independent of the remarks I make about it, or independent of my being aware of it, that it has a transphenomenal being. For Sartre, there must be some other factor involved in saying that such and such has a transphenomenal being. What more is needed?

Let us turn back to the example of Pierre and the café to see if there are any clues as to this factor in Sartre’s formulation and examination of it. Apparently the difficulty that Sartre feels is that absence lacks “plenitude of being.” Absence is not plenitude and positivity. Sartre’s view is that phenomena are a plenitude. For after he has finished with the example, he writes, “How could we even conceive of the negative form of judgment if all is plenitude of being and positivity?”

What exactly is this “plenitude of being” which absence lacks? Sartre employs the notion of “plenitude of being” when he deals with Husserl in the ontological proof. As we have said, Sartre understands Husserl to be denying the object of consciousness the status which Sartre gives to it. Sartre takes Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology to be saying that the
being of the object depends on consciousness rather than that it is independent of consciousness. Sartre claims that, for Husserl, consciousness is "constitutive" of its object, that the "functional problems" in the Ideen I, discussed briefly above, are an attempt by Husserl to give an analysis of the object of consciousness solely in terms of consciousness itself, an analysis which Sartre thinks makes no sense. One of the things Sartre says about Husserl's position is that Husserl attempts to understand the transcendent object of consciousness as an absence. According to Sartre, the Husserlian object is never present. For the object is never adequately presented to consciousness. That the object is a real object is, for Husserl, according to Sartre, a mere supposition, based on the continuity of a series of appearances which consciousness is conscious of. Sartre writes with respect to Husserl in this regard, "The truly objectifying intentions are empty intentions, those which aim beyond the present subjective appearance at the infinite totality of the series of appearances." Sartre no doubt has in mind a passage of Husserl's like this one:

    In principle a thing in the real world, a Being in this sense, can within the finite limits of appearance appear only 'inadequately'. Essentially connected therewith is the fact that no rational positing which rests on an appearance that presents itself so inadequately can be 'definitive', 'invincible'; that no such positing in its particularity is equivalent to the downright assertion that 'the Thing is real', but only to the assertion 'It is real', on the supposition that the advance of experience does not bring in its train 'stronger rational motives'
which exhibit the original positing as one that must be 'cancelled' in the further connection. Moreover, the positing is rationally motivated only through the appearance (the imperfectly fulfilled perceptual meaning) in and for itself, considered in its particularized detail. 24

Sartre responds to this by saying that the being of the object for Husserl is in essence an absence. For the object is never present to consciousness; it is always absent. But for Sartre, it is no more than mere "sleight of hand" 25 to attempt to found the being of the object on an absence--on non-being. The being of the object is a "plenitude being not a lack--a presence, not an absence." 26 Sartre writes, "the objective will never come out of the subjective, nor the transcendent from immanence, nor being from non-being." 27

What then is this "plenitude of being?" A thing exemplifies such a plenitude. This we know. A perceptual thing, as Hartmann calls it. And absence is not a perceptual thing. When I look around the room I do not see absences. Nor do I smell them there, nor taste them, nor touch them, nor hear them. I may be aware that Pierre is absent but it is not by perceiving anything in particular that I come to say that Pierre is absent. Absence, for Sartre, has no transphenomenal being. But there is a transphenomenality of non-being to consider with regard to it.

Absence does, according to Sartre, have a 'transphenomenality of non-being', 28 which he will try to establish
in order to show that when I say Pierre is absent, my state-
ment is a bona fide statement which has a reference beyond
itself. And when I note that Pierre is absent, I am noting
something which transcends my judgment that Pierre is absent.
The reality of Pierre's absence, as we have seen, does not lie
in my saying that he is absent. For my saying in the cafe,
"Wellington is not here" does not make it the case that
Wellington is absent.

The transphenomenality of non-being in Sartre's case
of absence is seen in the fact that in my not seeing Pierre,
I am continually looking in the cafe for a person I cannot
find. This means the cafe, its furniture, occupants, etc.,
are transcended by my looking for Pierre. My concern is not
with the cafe as it appears to me without Pierre. The cafe is
the place where Pierre is to be, but I cannot find Pierre any-
where in the cafe. So a mere description of the phenomena in
the cafe would never establish that Pierre is absent. One has
to go beyond the actual phenomena in the cafe to what is ex-
pected and being looked for and thence to the "double nihilation."
This is the transphenomenality of non-being in Pierre's absence.
In Sartre's terms, it cannot be reduced to the plenitude and
positivity of the phenomena in the cafe.

Thus, the foundation for the judgment "Pierre is not
here" cannot be found in the cafe. The transphenomenality of
non-being serves as the foundation for the judgment. When I
judge that Pierre is absent, according to Sartre, I am doing this on the basis of my "intuitive apprehension of a double nihilation" on the basis of Pierre raising himself as nothingness on the ground of the cafe. My looking for Pierre constitutes the first nihilation, for in doing this the cafe becomes ground for the appearance of Pierre. The second nihilation is in the failure of Pierre to appear; the failure of Pierre to appear which causes everything to become ground upon which nothing appears. Thus, nothing in the cafe is foundation for the judgment. The foundation is, on the contrary, beyond the cafe in the "double nihilation" which results from my expectation of Pierre, from my anticipation of his arrival.

Leaving aside the already discussed question of whether the double nihilation could serve as a foundation for the judgment in question, let us ask, for diagnostic purposes, whether Sartre's notion of consciousness is not doing some philosophical work where it ought not to? Has not Sartre presupposed some categories into which he thinks things ought to fit and which may have led him to give an incorrect analysis of the example of Pierre and the cafe? It is obvious that an analysis of not seeing Pierre is not sufficient to understand what it means for Pierre to be absent. That is, given what Sartre takes to be the workings of consciousness in the example, we have seen that not being conscious of Pierre (not
perceiving Pierre is not sufficient to establish that he is absent. But if all Sartre has to work with is consciousness and the phenomena in the cafe, and given that absence is not a phenomenon, where could an analysis of absence come from? If the situation in the cafe amounts to objects, like tables and chairs, and my being conscious of them, how can I be conscious of Pierre's absence. Am I just inventing something when I say, "Pierre is not here?" How can I account for Pierre's absence if all is plenitude and positivity—if all is tables and chairs? Well, Pierre is absent. His absence is not in the cafe to be conscious of. So Pierre's absence must have its foundation in consciousness, namely in my expectation of him, which transcends the objects in the cafe, for it cannot be one of the objects of perception in the cafe. "How could it be otherwise?" asks Sartre. Somehow Sartre thinks that everything should be reduced to the terms of the "perceiving/perceived" dichotomy.

Sartre's whole problem, therefore, of doing a phenomenology of absence rests on his failure to understand that absence need not be understood in terms of the phenomena in the cafe and my perception of them. Absence need not be conceived in terms of the dichotomy "perceiving/perceived," or the dichotomy of consciousness and phenomenon. Pierre's absence is a fact; we can talk about Pierre's absence, we can describe it. But this does not mean that we are describing
what we perceive or what we do not perceive when we describe it. Nor does it mean that when we talk about what absence is we need talk about perception at all.

In short, I can give a description of Pierre's absence. But such a description will not be a description of the sort which describes the appearance of some object, nor will it be a description of the sort which describes what something is like to the other senses. Moreover, the notion of such a description does not rest in any fundamental way on descriptions that can be given of the appearances of various objects or on descriptions that tell what something is like with respect to its perceptual qualities, attributes, or features. There certainly can be a question of how Pierre's absence appears. It may appear as a calculated move to upset protocol. There just is not a question of what perceptual features Pierre's absence has. But this does not mean that describing Pierre's absence must in any way rest on a more fundamental kind of description, namely the kind that gives the perceptual features of something. There are many different kinds of descriptions. Descriptions describe many different kinds of features, not just perceptual features. To assume that there is a fundamental sort of description which one must give when one does philosophy is to make a major mistake, and one which is illustrated by the problems Sartre encounters in providing phenomenology of absence. If one thinks that perceptual features are somehow basically all that can be
described or that a description of perceptual features is somehow basic to or at the bottom of describing everything, then one will, of course, have problems with describing absence.

Exactly what general or overall assumptions Sartre is making when he begins his phenomenological ontology is not entirely clear. At least in the example of Pierre and the cafe, the assumption seems to be made that an analysis of consciousness of is basically no different from an analysis of perception. Now the term "consciousness of" is technical; we do not ordinarily go around talking about our consciousness of the tree. So it may be wrong to say there is an assumption that an analysis of consciousness of is basically no different from an analysis of perception. In other words, it may be wrong to call what might be a definition of a technical notion such as consciousness an assumption about it. But the point is, definition or assumption, it seems for Sartre that what man is and what man does can be understood in terms of perception, in terms of what it is for man to perceive something, and it is in the relation of perception to perceived that one discovers how man is related to the world. But if what we earlier discussed as "being-in-the-world" amounts, in the Sartrian sense, to being conscious of the world about one and if this is to be the basic relation in terms of which everything man is and does is to be comprehended, then there is
a basic difficulty in Sartre's account. For we have seen the
problems with absence that Sartre appears to run into.

There seems to be a further difficulty in Sartre con-
cerning description: that is, to describe something is
equated with describing its appearance. Now "appearance" as
a technical notion seems to function differently from the
ordinary notion of appearance discussed in Chapter I. To
describe an appearance in Sartre is to describe how a thing
effects our senses. It is to describe what is perceivable,
what can be seen, heard, felt, smelled, tasted. When Sartre
describes an appearance, he is concerned to note whatever
perceptible features or qualities a thing has, for this is
what describing an appearance amounts to for him. Of course,
there is some mistake here about what describing appearances
is, if Sartre is taken to be employing the ordinary notion
of describing appearances. But this is a mere quibble com-
pared to the difficulty encountered if we think descriptions
are just of perceptual features for descriptions can obviously
be of things other than perceptual features.

In addition, there may be further problems in linking
the concept of description too strongly to the technical
notion of describing appearances in Sartrian phenomenology.
For this may lead one to suppose that everything that can be
described is an appearance, which is surely false. Or, what
is just as false, it may lead one to think that there is a
kind of description--description of appearances--which is basic to all other forms of description and that a description of appearances is somehow of prime importance when one describes the world about him. But this, of course, would be a serious blunder. Descriptions are not especially cut to describe appearances, nor are things especially cut to have their appearances described.

I think, then, that Sartre's specific failure to understand absence is due to his thinking that consciousness is basically related to what it is conscious of in one paramount way, and that all human reality can be understood in terms of this relation. The relation seems to be, at least in the Pierre example, the relation of seeing to what is to be seen. While it may be unfair to say that Sartre thinks everything one is conscious of can be understood in terms of this relation, it certainly appears that the relation of seeing to seen lies behind his treatment of Pierre's absence. For one does not see Pierre's absence, and that is the problem. Consequently, Sartre is forced to conclude that the being of Pierre's absence must not be understood in terms of the being of what is seen but must be understood in terms of the being of the perceiver. Because the perceiver looks for a figure which he does not see in the cafe, he is ontologically the source of absence, for there is nothing to be seen in the cafe which counts as Pierre's absence.
FOOTNOTES


15 Ibid., pp. 136-137.


18 Ibid., p. 21.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid., p. 11.

21 Ibid., p. lxi.

22 Ibid., p. lxi.

23 Ibid., pp. lx-lxi.


26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid., p. 9.
CHAPTER V

RECAPITULATION

Phenomenology, since Husserl, is properly understood to be a kind of description. The first chapter, accordingly, concentrates on descriptions, what they are and what they can do. This investigation was needed to establish a position from which we could pass judgment on what a phenomenologist like Sartre says. Its most important conclusion for the rest of our study was that descriptions cannot claim to mention features which are necessary to something's being what it is; since it is never necessary to mention anything in particular in a description. No feature noted in a description of what \( x \) is could be necessary to its being what it is, for if any feature were necessary, there would be some purpose for which, and some context in which, it would be necessary to mention it in a description of what \( x \) is. But there is no such context or purpose. No particular feature need be mentioned in any description of any sort; consequently, no description can set forth necessary features of what it describes.

The idea that certain things must be mentioned in a description of what \( x \) is stems from, among other things, the notion that a description of what \( x \) is can somehow be independent of any purpose which one might have in giving the
description. But all descriptions are understood to have some purpose, and there are many different purposes which a description might serve. Consequently, numerous different descriptions might all count as descriptions of what man is, say, and might all be correct descriptions, given their respective purposes.

That there can be different purposes in giving descriptions of man means that different details may be mentioned in various descriptions of him. But within the established purpose of describing man, say, to see how he differs from and is like the ape, there is no detail which is necessary to mention. For again, many descriptions can be offered as to how man compares to the ape. One might have different, specialized purposes within the expressed purpose of comparing man to the ape. The possibility of going into different details, of a certain sort and in particular, is open. No matter how specialized one attempts to make his description, it is never necessary to mention any particular details or features, or particular kinds of details or features in his description. Insofar as it is open to give detail (and it is so when one gives a description), it is open to say any number of things.

In the initial chapter we further established that no description of x can state features that are sufficient for x’s being what it is. For it does not follow from any list of
features which we could mention in a description of \( x \) that the description is a description of \( x \). If it could, there would be no need to check to see if the description squared with what it describes. Indeed, if it did follow from what was said in a description that it was a description of \( x \), it could not be the case that anything in the description of \( x \) was false, for if it mentioned things which were false of \( x \), it could not follow that it was a description of \( x \). Yet we often give descriptions in which we say things which are false of what they describe. Indeed, even adequate descriptions may not be entirely correct in what they say about what they describe. They may be quite false in some respects.

We also saw that since whatever is described is independent of the description of it, no description can be complete, in the sense of exhausting the possibility of saying something more about what it describes. It is in principle possible to say more and, consequently, to say something different about what is described. One can always say how a description fits what it describes, and this in itself is to make a remark about what is described which transcends the description of it. Because there is always more to say, and because a description by itself cannot take into account this possibility with regard to itself, it is not possible for a description to state the necessary and/or sufficient features of what it describes. To do this, it would be necessary to
rule out the possibility of saying something more and
different about what is described. Ruling this out, however,
is unintelligible.

In Chapter II we turned to the idea of phenomenological
ontology and how it finds its substance in Sartre. Appealing
to points established in Chapter I, we claimed that Sartre
could not in his ontology state the necessary and/or sufficient
features of "being-in-the-world." We then attempted to show
that Sartre, given his doctrine of abstraction, does not
make the mistake of attempting such a thing in his ontology.
Sartre's ontology does not acknowledge the possibility of
this metaphysical enterprise. Phenomenological ontology, as
Sartre sees it, deals with the concrete and is always subject
to the concrete for confirmation of its claims. As it deals
with the concrete and recognizes its own abstract status as
a piece of analysis, Sartre's ontology is not metaphysics,
or at least it professes not to be. Since concrete being is
inexhaustible, necessary and/or sufficient features cannot be
stated for it in phenomenological ontology.

Despite finding much right with Sartre, we suggested
some possible difficulty in his ontology, i.e., that his use
of the technical term "being-in-the-world" seemed to assume
some analysis which was not justified in his text. From his
introductory remarks it was not clear that Sartre did not
assume that the subject matter of phenomenological ontology
was somehow intrinsically unified into a single whole, a unity unsupported by his phenomenology. It was our claim that if Sartre thinks that "being-in-the-world" is basically one relation, he is not entitled to do so given his initial remarks. Moreover, regardless of his beginning remarks, we claimed that if he thinks that "being-in-the-world" is basically one relation, he is open to the charge that he is doing metaphysics, in giving a description of "being-in-the-world" without regard for the concrete context in which the description is offered. Since for various purposes "man-in-the-world" may be described as basically a number of things, there is not one basic set of features which man embodies. To think that there is is to make a metaphysical supposition, metaphysics being an abstraction which disregards its abstract purpose and hence the concrete cases from which it abstracts.

Having, in Chapter II, outlined a criticism to which Sartre's discussion of "being-in-the-world," as a piece of phenomenological ontology, might be supposed open, we concentrated in Chapter III on a description which is central to Sartre's view of "being-in-the-world," a description in which Sartre purports to deal with the reality of absence. Our analysis of Sartre's treatment of Pierre's absence pointed to a serious misunderstanding of what absence is. In terms of the concrete, Sartre's position on absence can be reduced
to saying that Pierre's absence from the cafe where I expect him amounts to my not seeing Pierre in the cafe where I expect to find him, a position which is undoubtedly wrong.

In Chapter IV, we attempted to discover what led Sartre to go wrong in his description of the situation in the cafe. We examined Sartre's notions of consciousness and phenomenon which play a profound part in his description of the situation. Not finding troublesome his idea that what is described in a phenomenology is independent and prior to the phenomenology, we objected to the implication in Sartre that phenomenology, which is at the basis of elucidating "being-in-the-world," can only describe objects of perception, and that "being-in-the-world" must somehow be comprehended in terms of perception, in terms of consciousness and phenomena. In Sartre, it is only phenomena which consciousness is consciousness of, and only phenomena are described in phenomenology. But Pierre's absence, it turns out, is not a phenomenon in Sartre's sense. It is not a thing-perceived. So when Sartre describes the situation in the cafe he cannot include Pierre's absence, because Pierre's absence is not a phenomenon in the cafe; it is not perceived in the cafe. Pierre's absence, a negative, must be taken into account in some other way. Given the terms Sartre thinks appropriate to understanding absence, namely consciousness and phenomena, it is no surprise that Sartre turns to the notion of consciousness to explain what absence
is, when the notion of phenomenon fails to do the job.

Following through on the only possibility remaining, Sartre concludes that it is in my expectation of Pierre and in my failing to see him that the reality of his absence lies.

We saw in Chapter III, however, that Pierre's absence need not be understood in terms of the relation between consciousness and phenomena. In fact, we have seen that it cannot. Nevertheless, the implication of Sartre's view is that phenomenology which only describes things perceived is the only means available for getting clear about the relation "being-in-the-world" and consequently about absence. Sartre has so strongly linked phenomenology to perception that he cannot come to grips with absence, and yet he takes his phenomenology, with its restriction to describing what is perceived, to be the only way to understand it. So absence gets reduced to perceptual terms. For Sartre, I describe what I see in the cafe. But I do not see Pierre. So Pierre's being absent becomes my not seeing Pierre in the cafe where I expect him. Pierre's absence is not a phenomenon. It is a "hole" in transphenomenal being, so I cannot describe it. Instead, I must account for it in terms of the "structure" of my perception of the cafe.

This difficulty also manifests itself in the fact that Sartre thinks consciousness is related to the world in one way, namely in that of perception. When Sartre speaks of getting
to the "profound meaning of the relation 'man-world'," he does seem to have one thing in mind, that the relation of man to the world is primarily one of perceiving to be perceived. So, the relationship of consciousness to its object which carries the weight of Sartre's analysis of Pierre and the cafe is assumed in Being and Nothingness from the beginning. The "profound meaning of the relation man-world" is to be discovered through working out all the implications of the assumed relation between consciousness and its object.

What causes Sartre to go wrong, then, is his restricted notion of phenomenology, i.e., of what can be described when one attempts to understand what man is and how he is related to the world about him. This notion rests upon Sartre's assumption that all matters must somehow be resolved in terms of describing what I perceive. But we should guard against allowing this difficulty in Sartre's ontology to blind us to some of his major insights. His remarks about the significance of the concrete in doing analysis are well taken. So are some of his remarks in the ontological proof. The ontological proof is quite right, if it is meant to be a remark about the independence of what is described from the descriptions given of it. It also has the consequence that metaphysics is impossible, that existence, so to say, is inexhaustible. Indeed, this is all Sartre needs as a basis for his existentialism: no analysis can claim to set forth the necessary and/or sufficient conditions for being, because being is prior to any analysis.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books:


Articles:


Works on Sartre:


**Related Readings:**


