

Phl 421: Sartre, ProfLotz, Handout 8: Freedom, part I

1. Right at the beginning S makes clear that he is not interested in the classical problem of determinism and free will (559); so, he tries to shift the entire framework of how to think about freedom and action towards his own ontology; the entire section is one of the most powerful in BN, and less difficult to apprehend: "the will is not a privileged manifestation of freedom (...), and which is supported (...) by an original, ontological freedom" (583)
2. Action
 - a. Intentionality, i.e., consciousness *of* action; consequences belong to the order of causes, not intentions
 - b. The *being* of an agent cannot be the *motive* of an act; in fact, this must be negated in order to establish an act; "factual states" are *never*, S argues, motives
 - i. Position of a *future* ideal state ("value", end, goal, etc.), "what is not"
 - ii. Negation of the current state
 - iii. Consequence: it is never the past as such that can bring about an act
 - c. First step of S's argument: freedom must be related to the *end* of the act (563); i.e. that which causes an act is a *negatite* (future is not)
 - d. Transcendence is the condition of an act; so, notice how S moves away from thinking about action as some kind of "thing" released by a will
 - e. An act is a synthesis of motive, intention, act, and end; the motive is an "integral part of the act" (565)
 - f. Important: "Cause, act, and end constitute a *continuum*, a *plenum*" (568)
 - g. Freedom must be related to the *entirety* of human reality since every act (as a synthesis) belongs to the for-itself *as a whole*; "Man cannot be sometimes slave and sometimes free; he is wholly and forever free or he is not free at all" (569)
3. Freedom
 - a. Freedom cannot be an essence; instead, it is the *absolute condition* of the for-itself
 - b. "My freedom is perpetually in question in my being, it is not a quality added on or a *property* of my nature" (566), i.e., freedom belongs to human reality as such, it belongs to *all* actualizations of my being; "all my 'modes of being' manifest freedom equally since they are all ways of being my own nothingness" (574)
 - c. Psychic determinism posits the motive as *givens* "in" us; as we know by now, S rejects this idea of a "full identity" ("everything is full" 567); I *am* always what I *am not*; "Human-reality is free because it *is not enough*" (568)
 - d. Psychology takes motives as *things* (568); so, it is a form of bad faith
 - e. Note: S is not arguing that we have full "control" of every act; freedom is its own limit; however, even if we have, say, mental health issues or find ourselves in an ICU unit, we are still conscious of it and can struggle with it; freedom, for S, is not on the level of single acts [here, Marcuse will step in]
4. Will
 - a. S discusses this in relation to the passions; by now it should be clear that the will is not the central focus of S's concept of freedom; Freedom "cannot be limited to voluntary acts" (572)

- b. The will/passions model presupposes that there is something in us that we have control of and something else that escapes us; i.e., will is only possible if there is something beyond the will; this conflicts with S's point that either human reality is free or it is not
 - c. Central: "the will, far from being the unique or at least the privileged manifestation of freedom, actually – like every event of the for-itself – must presuppose the foundation of an original freedom in order to be able to constitute itself as will" (571)
 - d. The will/passion approach to freedom posits an *external* cause *in* consciousness, which is, according to S's position, contradictory
 - e. Remember: S does not deny that we *are situational* beings; he is not arguing that we can do whatever we want; we freely exist our bodies, but this belongs to facticity
 - f. Passions are *projects*; i.e., they are actualizations of our being, and, hence, fall under the transcendence/future/end structure; passions cannot be in us like heart and brain; we *are* our passions; i.e., we actualize our freedom *as* passionate beings
 - g. Example: even if run away because I am afraid of dying, this "being in fear" presupposes a transcendence through which I posit the future, i.e., my future life, as *positive*; so, my being taken over by fear and my running away presuppose a negatite, which in this case is the *positive* value of life; this value is *posited* and cannot be derived from nature
 - h. So, "the will is determined within the compass of motives and ends already posited by the for-itself in a transcendent projection of itself toward its possibles" (573)
- 5. Cause, motive, end
 - a. S now comes to the central point, namely, that the *end* is the *absolute condition* of every act and, accordingly, freedom is the condition of both cause and motive
 - b. "the cause, far from determining the action, appears only in and through the project of an action" (578); causes (=external, objective, conditions) are *discovered* through positing ends
 - c. Once a cause is discovered in the light of an end, it turns into a *motive*, i.e., something "in us" that causes us to act; i.e., we turn it into something *past*, 579, and therefore I make it *mine*; however, as S argues, the motive still depends upon the free positing of an end; so, causes and motives have to become *my* motive and they can only become *my* motive since I transcend them towards my end (which is absolute and cannot be derived from nature)
 - d. S argues that the concept of freedom has nothing to do with the concept of deliberation, insofar as every deliberation already *presupposes* a projection of values; even if it is the *project of deliberation* itself
- 6. Existential psychoanalysis
 - a. All projects need to go back to an "original project" (588)