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The Early Sartre and Ideology

As Paul Ricœur reminds us in *L'Idéologie et l'utopie*, the ascription of the characteristic of being 'ideological' to a set of ideas has traditionally always had pejorative implications. One's own ideas are not ideological, only those of one's adversaries.^[1] The philosophical and critical writings of the early Sartre do not offer an explicit discussion of the concept of ideology. Even in *Cahiers pour une morale*, notable for the evidence they provide of Sartre's increasing rapprochement with Marxism, ideology *per se* is never Sartre's centre of interest. This observation would perhaps seem unnoteworthy were it not for the numerous and varied examples of ideology^[2] at work to be found in Sartre's critical and, in particular, literary works. In these works ideological positions are presented almost exclusively in a negative light. For this reason, and even more importantly because of the intrinsic character of his existentialist philosophy, it seems likely that the early Sartre did not consider his own position ideological in any significant sense. The later Sartre of *Questions de méthode*, however, refers to existentialism itself as an ideology.^[3] In this context it is not immediately clear whether Sartre considers the label 'ideological' to be implicitly pejorative or whether he means to employ the term in a neutrally descriptive way. Given his project of formulating a synthesis of Marxism and existentialism in this work, the latter interpretation would seem the most plausible. And yet in view of the later Sartre's tendency, in interviews notably, to be critical, even reductive at times,^[4] of his earlier philosophical positions, it is perhaps fair to infer an implicitly pejorative tone to some extent.^[5] Setting aside this matter for the time being, it is clear that an awareness of the later Sartre's characterisation of existentialism as 'ideological' is greatly beneficial to an analysis of his early philosophy in relation to ideology. Such an awareness inevitably stimulates a profound questioning of what the early Sartre's texts themselves often seem to be impressing on the reader with such force, namely that the theoretical underpinnings of their arguments and positions are non-ideological. A valuable critical distance between reader and text is thus introduced into the interpretative process as we are brought to recognise that, with regard to the matter of ideology, the truth may well lie at times not just in what the early Sartre states explicitly but also in what he does not say.

1. The early Sartre's aversion to ideology

Talk of ideology often suggests a concern with the political and this area was of course not a preoccupation for Sartre in his theoretical work prior to the latter part of the 1940s. Yet his literary texts, from *La Nausée* and *Le Mur* onwards, are rich in political content. Although the characterisations and settings in Sartre's fiction are often contrasting, one of the uniting features of the large majority of his works is the negative portrayal of individual subjects who subscribe to any kind of ideological belief-system. Moreover, given the close, almost symbiotic, relationship between Sartre's fictional representations and his theoretical positions, there is reason to suppose that there might be interesting parallels to this stance with regard to ideology to be found in his philosophical writings. Sartre's texts provide

examples of various ideologies at work, such as bourgeois, fascist, religious, racist, and Stalinist Marxist, and he is clearly hostile to all of them. Whilst it is important to recognise fully the particularity of the contexts in which these ideologies are situated, and the specificity and genuineness of each of these aversions of Sartre's, establishing parallels with his theoretical postulates enables us to see connections between these different representations of ideology which perhaps point to underlying reasons for his dislike of ideology. Ultimately, we are led to ask whether it is ideology *per se* which Sartre objected to fundamentally, and not just particular ideologies in their specificity. That is, it may be that the character of Sartre's philosophical world view was such that he found ideology in all its forms repellent. In *Questions de méthode* Sartre, whilst acknowledging his ambiguous and ultimately uncomprehending attitude towards Marxism as a young man, explains that a key preoccupation for him, in reaction to the idealist tendencies of French philosophy at the time, had nevertheless been to attempt to grasp the concrete.^[6] This point is corroborated and developed by Simone de Beauvoir in various ways in *La force de l'âge*.^[7] It is clear that Sartre's interest in phenomenology in the 1930s was motivated by his conviction that this philosophy would allow him to account philosophically for things themselves. In the conclusion to *La Transcendance de l'ego*, Sartre argues that in contrast to the idealism of such as Brunschvicg, that '[i]l y a des siècles...qu'on n'avait senti dans la philosophie un courant aussi réaliste.'^[8] Indeed, it is in the interests of attaining a greater philosophical realism that Sartre insists, setting himself apart from Husserl, that the ego, unlike consciousness, is not transcendental but transcendent, and hence 'un existant rigoureusement contemporain du monde et dont l'existence a les mêmes caractéristiques essentielles que le monde.'^[9] It is here in the nature of this distinction between consciousness and the ego that the theoretical origins of the early Sartre's libertarian philosophy, arguably the most central and enduring characteristic of his thought, are to be found. In *L'Être et le néant* the *pour soi* is presented as distinct from and irreducible to the transcendent *en soi* and as consequently empty and constantly projecting itself into the world. It hence enjoys an inalienable freedom. There are constraints on this freedom such as facticity and the fact that it is necessarily in situation, an issue which I will return to later, but ultimately consciousness is able to transcend these limitations.^[10] Concomitant with this is Sartre's conviction that the subjective consciousness is inassimilable to any notion of social collectivity or indeed any kind of antecedent forces which could be considered to have a determining influence on it. Indeed, he is critical of all cases in which individual subjects appear to be identifying, as free subjectivities, with an antecedently defined essence of whatever sort. The classic example of such behaviour presented in *L'Être et le néant* is that of bad faith in which the subject is guilty of voluntary self-alienation because he or she attempts to over-identify with a pre-defined social role. Aside from the fact that such social roles can themselves be seen as having an ideological dimension in certain cases,^[11] there is good reason to suppose that although Sartre does not discuss ideology as such in *L'Être et le néant*, his aversion to any kind of constraint on freedom brought about by antecedent determining forces implies a dislike of any notion of ideological system. To accept that an individual is under the influence of an ideology, and that his or her ideas and opinions are perhaps formed in accordance with it, is surely to recognise that his or her freedom of

thought might be subject to certain important limitations. It is precisely this idea which the early Sartre resists so staunchly and which the numerous cases of subjective freedom alienated by one particular ideology or another in his fictional and critical works exemplify. In *La Nausée* there are a number of immediately contiguous passages starting from Roquentin's visit to the Bouville museum which, both individually and above all taken together, convey particularly well Sartre's dislike of ideology. In this case, bourgeois ideology is Sartre's principal target and it is personified, but also suitably reified, in the portraits of the bourgeois leaders ('chefs'^[12]) of Bouville. These leaders clearly symbolise a set of values which are inimical to the Sartrean world view, as is summed up by Roquentin's concluding remark before leaving the museum, 'adieu, Salauds.'^[13] What immediately follows in the text is Roquentin's decision to abandon the Rollebon project, and then his subsequent resurfacing via a series of existential discoveries. This succession of events suggests a final bottoming out of bourgeois ideology on Roquentin's part prior to a kind of rebirth into a more authentic mode of existence. Indeed, not only his distaste for the bourgeois 'salauds' but also his feeling that the Rollebon project is now pointless is part of this bottoming out process. For although it would be both an oversimplification and an overstatement to suggest that the Rollebon project instantiates bourgeois ideology in the text as the portraits do, nevertheless it seems far from merely coincidental that Sartre should have portrayed Roquentin abandoning a particularly stuffy critical project of this sort immediately after his feelings of hatred for the bourgeoisie have come to a head. There is clearly some sort of thematic link in the text between these two events in Roquentin's experience, and the suggestion is that they are both important preliminaries to Roquentin's existential self-discovery.

Roquentin's bottoming out of bourgeois ideology is also the moment of transition in him from what Joseph Catalano identifies as a strong kind of bad faith in him to bad faith of a weaker, and unavoidable, variety.^[14] That is, there is a clear connection between Sartre's portrayals of ideology and inauthenticity such that Roquentin's escape from bourgeois ideology coincides with his transition to a less inauthentic mode of existence. For example, he now realises that through his work on Rollebon he has been hiding from the reality of his own existence: 'il avait besoin de moi pour être et j'avais besoin de lui pour ne pas sentir mon être...Je ne m'apercevais plus que j'existait, je n'existait plus en moi, mais en lui'.^[15] Moreover, Roquentin's escape from bourgeois ideology also coincides with his coming to more acute awareness of the concreteness of his own existence and that of the world around him. Hence, by the same stroke Sartre dispenses with bourgeois ideology *and* affirms an anti-idealist philosophical position. Whilst it is important not to assimilate bourgeois ideology and idealist philosophy to one another, there is a clear coherence to this dual rejection strongly suggested by Sartre at this point in *La Nausée*. From the Sartrean perspective, ideology and philosophical idealism have in common a pronounced metaphysical dimension, which is to say that they both involve abstraction from reality. Sartre is wary of any such abstraction because, in the case of ideology, it allows for the possibility that the individual subject's free consciousness might be determined 'from above' by an antecedently existing value-system and, in the case of philosophical idealism, it implies a distancing from the concreteness of existence. Given that, as Beauvoir remarks, the originality of Sartre's position was that he wanted *both* to insist on the freedom and autonomy of consciousness *and* to accord to

concrete reality its full weight,^[16] these kinds of abstraction were unacceptable to him. Sartre continues to pursue his attack on bourgeois ideology notably in *L'Enfance d'un chef*,^[17] here blackening it further here by pointing to the ways in which it can be complicit with fascist political tendencies. In many ways, Lucien Fleurier can be seen as a kind of alter ego to Antoine Roquentin. Whereas the latter's rejection of bourgeois certainties leads him into existential questions, a rejection of the metaphysical, and, ultimately, to the idea of salvation through art, Lucien, by contrast, passes through a phase of existential anguish and self-questioning only to re-emerge an even more confident and resolute young bourgeois than he had been at the outset. This coming to maturity is closely related to his finding his way politically through joining a right-wing anti-semitic group. The connection between Lucien's newfound political affiliations and bourgeois ideology is articulated with considerable subtlety in *L'Enfance d'un chef*. His father, a bourgeois factory owner, brushes over the objection that Lucien might get himself into trouble, arguing that he should be allowed to continue and adds that 'il faut en avoir passé par là.'^[18] We also learn that Lucien entertains his political associates with 'des histoires juives qu'il tenait de son père'.^[19] And he flatters himself that the effect his anti-semitic convictions have on others is similar to the effect the news that his father was working in his office used to produce on him.^[20] Clearly, Sartre has incarnated in Lucien's father many of the values that he most dislikes and a parallel can be drawn with the bourgeois leaders immortalised in the portrait gallery of the Bouville museum in *La Nausée*.

Written during the same period as *L'Être et le néant*, *Les Mouches* stages an opposition between the inalienably free subject defined in that work and the influence of an oppressive ideology perhaps more clearly than anywhere else in Sartre's fiction. The implications of the portrayal of Orestes' as an allegorical representation of resistance to the German occupation and to the Vichy regime are readily apparent.^[21] In the face of a particularly powerful form of ideology in the pejorative sense, to borrow from Raymond Geuss' interpretative schema,^[22] Orestes' autonomy of thought and action prove to be irreducible because he knows that he is free. He is immune to the noxious influence of the guilt culture of Argos because, as Jupiter explains to Egisthe, 'Quand une fois la liberté a explosé dans une âme d'homme, les Dieux ne peuvent plus rien contre cet homme-là.'^[23] Subsequent to his murdering Egisthe, even the presence of the flies and Jupiter's intimidation tactics cannot bring Oreste to subordinate himself to the dominant ideology and he hence proceeds to defeat it. The portrayal of Oreste is perhaps the pinnacle of the early Sartre's heroic libertarianism. It is also where the clearest parallel is to be found to his claim in *L'Existentialisme est un humanisme* that existentialism is 'un effort pour tirer toutes les conséquences d'une position athée cohérente'; whether God exists or not, man must accept full responsibility for his actions.^[24] Religious ideology is superfluous at best and can also be mystificatory and insidious, as in this case.

Réflexions sur la question juive and *La Putain respectueuse* are perhaps the best expositions of the intrinsically anti-racist character of Sartrean existentialism. There are many indications in these works that the racism which Sartre is attacking, in these cases anti-semitic and anti-black respectively, has a strong ideological dimension. Sartre remarks, with regard to the anti-semitic, that it is 'l'idée de Juif qui paraît essentielle', and that anti-semitism is 'une attitude globale' and 'une conception du monde',^[25] he also suggests that individuals

become anti-semites by falling in with a pre-existing social tendency.^[26] In *La Putain respectueuse*, Fred and his associates impress on Lizzie in numerous ways that the strategy with which they wish her to be complicit is in line with the values of the American nation as a whole.^[27] Sartre's hostility to racism in these works centres primarily on its essentialist character. Early in *Réflexions* he provides examples of anti-semitic attitudes that he has encountered, all of which amount to criticisms of Jews first and foremost because they are Jewish rather than with regard to their actions;^[28] the anti-semite's conviction, both an assumed truth and an emotional commitment, is impervious to either experience or reason.^[29] In *La Putain respectueuse*, instances abound in which the black character is portrayed in a negative light by whites for no other reason than his race. Above all, the fact that the innocence of this character with regard to Lizzie and the events on the train is unambiguously established in the first scene of the play means that the devious schemes of Fred's clan clearly appear as a manifestation of a time-ingrained and institutionalised racism. In *Réflexions*, perhaps because it is a critical rather than a fictional work, many clear parallels between the image of racist ideology which Sartre presents and with his theoretical claims are presented, whereas in *La Putain respectueuse* a relationship with other kinds of ideology, notably bourgeois and patriarchal ideologies, is suggested. Sartre's hostility to essentialism is of course a cornerstone of his early philosophy. The irreconcilability of consciousness with being means that the individual subject is inescapably free and hence cannot be defined in terms of any fixed essence but only in terms of his actions: 'l'homme n'est rien d'autre que ce qu'il se fait.'^[30] Consequently, any attempt to attribute such an essence to an individual or group of individuals must be the work of the other rather as, in *L'Être et le néant*, the reification of the subject's freedom is produced by the objectifying glance of the other. It is the anti-semite, then, who creates the Jew and then proceeds to oppress him or her.^[31] In *La Putain respectueuse*, Sartre's treatment of essentialism concerns not only fallacious perceptions of the oppressed but also the self-perception and self-representation of his oppressors, and it is here that Sartre's critique of racist ideology links up with his hostility to bourgeois and patriarchal ideologies. For if Fred's and his associates' anti-black racism is shored up by an essentialist conception of the black race, it is also bolstered by an essentialist view of themselves not only as whites but also as members of a politically and economically dominant class, and as men. Attempting to persuade Lizzie not to testify against his cousin Thomas, who had murdered an innocent black man on the train, Fred remarks that Thomas is 'un homme de bien'. Lizzie expresses surprise at this, pointing out that he had been constantly pushing himself against her and had tried to lift up her skirt, to which Fred replies:

Il a relevé tes jupes, il a tiré sur un sale nègre, la belle affaire; ce sont les gestes qu'on a sans y penser, ça ne compte pas. Thomas est un chef, voilà ce qui compte.^[32]

The clear implication of this statement is that Thomas, as a white bourgeois male, was perfectly justified in acting the way he had done; such an individual, by his very nature, enjoys a position of superiority with respect to blacks and women. At the end of the play, when Lizzie is threatening to shoot Fred if he comes any closer, he employs the following argument to persuade her to back down:

Mon père est sénateur, je serai sénateur après lui... Nous avons fait ce pays et son histoire est la nôtre... Oserais-tu tirer sur toute l'Amérique?

... Une fille comme toi *ne peut pas* tirer sur un homme comme moi... Moi, j'ai le droit de vivre: il y a beaucoup de choses à entreprendre et l'on m'attend.^[33]

Here Sartre similarly stages the bourgeois spirit of seriousness and illusion of immanence, and in a way reminiscent of the newly resolute Lucien Fleurier at the end of *L'Enfance d'un chef*. The essentialism of the racist's conception of race- both his own and that of other races- is thereby intertwined with the essentialism of bourgeois and patriarchal ideologies. Sartre sums up individuals who subscribe to these ideologies, and who hence attempt to suppress their own freedom at an ontological level in order to assert their socio-political power (surely another kind of freedom), in a remark pertaining to the anti-semitic: 'il y a des gens qui sont attirés par la permanence de la pierre.'^[34]

Sartre's hostility to Stalinist Marxist ideology is expressed in a number of his works, both critical and fictional. In *L'Age de raison*, when Mathieu hopes that his previously close friendship with Brunet might be renewed, the latter replies: 'Je tiens toujours à toi...Mais ça ne change rien à l'affaire: mais seuls amis, à présent, ce sont les camarades du parti, avec ceux-là, j'ai tout un monde en commun.'^[35] Brunet thereby suggests that he can see his social relationships now only through the lens of the Stalinist communist ideological position he has adopted. In *Matérialisme et révolution*,^[36] Sartre sets about dismantling the theoretical supports of this political ideology, highlighting many of its considerable weaknesses.

Although Stalinist communists advocate a revolutionary politics, their insistence on a mechanistic dialectical materialism reduces man to an object in a causal chain. For Sartre, this clearly amounts to an essentialism of the most direct and obvious kind and he suggests that, in so far as man is consequently stripped of his freedom of thought, the revolutionary ideal is undermined.^[37] Stalinist communists' appeals to objectivity over subjectivity are an expression of the spirit of seriousness and of the flight from one's freedom which is characteristic of bad faith.^[38] Brunet's 'ça ne change rien à l'affaire' is an instantiation of this notion of the priority of the objective over the subjective; although he is still fond of Mathieu, objectively he thinks he ought not consider him a friend any more because Mathieu will not actively support communism. And if the Stalinist communists' dialectical materialist philosophy sidelines the issue of individual subjective freedom by prioritising an objective conception of reality, it is not for all that a philosophy of the concrete. The claim that all phenomena are inevitably determined by dialectical material forces is metaphysical in nature, Sartre argues, because it involves superimposing onto reality an a priori schema.^[39] As such, it is ultimately only another form of philosophical idealism.^[40]

The ideologies which Sartre chooses to present in his fictional and critical works, then, are shown almost exclusively in a negative light. One might be tempted to view each negative portrayal as largely in isolation from the others, that is as an expression of a particular aversion of the early Sartre. Indeed, there would surely be some value in such an interpretation. It would allow us to avoid entirely any suggestion that Sartre assimilated these different kinds of ideologies to each other in some way, and to escape the danger of appearing to claim that the positions to be found in his critical and fictional writings were just

expressions or instantiations of a pre-defined philosophical world view. These are important caveats. And yet, it would surely be a considerable oversight not to read significance into the fact that, the majority of the time, Sartre objects to the different ideologies he presents in his works for the same, or closely related, reasons. In view of the fact that his early (and even later^[41]) theoretical writings do not contain an explicit account of ideology as such, we are invariably led to seek explanations for the coherence in his representations of ideology in his philosophical writings. In short, we are brought to enquire as to whether Sartre's conception of ideology can be accounted for, to some extent, in the light of his ontology and general world view. The Sartre of *L'Être et le néant* wanted, above all, to safeguard the inalienable freedom of the individual subject and his conception of this freedom, centering on the irreconcilability of the *pour soi* and the *en soi*, led him to repel all forms of essentialism. As I have shown, in all of the negative portrayals of ideology in Sartre's critical and fictional writings some form of essentialism is prominent. It is to be found in the spirit of seriousness and strong bad faith of the bourgeois in *La Nausée*, *L'Enfance d'un chef*, and *La Putain respectueuse*, and is also central, in the latter two works and in *Réflexions sur la question juive*, to the fixed identities which such power holders project onto those whom they oppress. Sartre objects to the mechanistic dialectical materialism of the Stalinist Marxist similarly because its reduction of all phenomena to matter implies an essentialist denial of the freedom of consciousness. Moreover, there is a clear conceptual correspondence, or parallel, between Sartre's dislike of essentialism and his consistently negative portrayal of any form of determination by ideology. An individual's essentialist identification with, for example, a pre-defined social role with an ideological dimension, such as that of being bourgeois or Stalinist, implies the burying of his ontological freedom in the weight of precedent just as his being under the influence of an ideology does.

A similar parallel can be drawn between Sartre's negative portrayal of all forms of ideology and his aversion to any kind of philosophical idealism or metaphysics. What these phenomena have in common, for Sartre, is that they involve abstraction from the individual subject's concrete reality and hence imply serious encroachment on his or her capacity for autonomous thought and action in situation. The rejection of metaphysics is instantiated in Roquentin's discovery of a more concrete, authentic form of existence subsequent to his bottoming out of bourgeois ideology, in Oreste's victory over the religious ideology of Argos through his assertion of subjective freedom, and in Sartre's debunking of the materialist doctrine as a theory superimposed onto, rather than a genuine explanation of, concrete reality. Sartre strongly implies an opposition between the mystifying falsity of metaphysics and ideology on the one hand, and the greater truth that a concrete philosophy of existence can yield on the other. This antinomy ties in with the opposition which he makes between inauthenticity and authenticity. The characters whom Sartre presents or discusses who are under the influence of an ideology are almost without exception in bad faith and are hence inauthentic. It would seem that inauthenticity, for Sartre, is a necessary precondition for being ideologically mystified. It follows, then, that liberating oneself from an ideology can lead to a greater degree of authenticity on the part of the subject or, more precisely, to a lesser degree of inauthenticity.^[42]

The two principal underlying reasons for Sartre's aversion to ideology are, then, at one and

the same time its capacity to seriously limit the freedom of the subject and its metaphysical, and hence abstract, non-concrete, character. In this regard, a parallel can be drawn between the passage in *La Nausée* discussed above in which Roquentin departs from bourgeois ideology, and Sartre's critique of Stalinist Marxism in *Matérialisme et révolution*. For Roquentin's abandoning of bourgeois ideology coincides directly with the implied rejection of metaphysics which his discovery of the concreteness of his existence suggests. The Stalinist Marxist, in Sartre's view, is caught up in self-imposed unfreedom (bad faith), due to submersion in an ideology, and in metaphysics in a way that is somewhat reminiscent of Roquentin prior to his visit to the Bouville museum portrait gallery. One senses that Sartre would like to see the Stalinist Marxist follow Roquentin's example in this regard, and indeed the second part of *Matérialisme et révolution* outlines a philosophy of revolution based on such a prior rejection of ideology and metaphysics. It is highly significant that in texts as contrasting as *La Nausée* and *Matérialisme et révolution*, both in genre and also in terms of the type of ideology which Sartre foregrounds, there should be such a noticeable parallel. The conclusion which such a correspondence would seem to point to is that it is to Sartre's underlying theoretical positions that we must turn, to some extent at least, if we wish to understand his stance with regard to the specific ideologies which he presents in his fictional and critical works. The absence of a theory of ideology in Sartre's theoretical works, combined with the considerable degree of coherence between his philosophical vision and the individual representations of ideology in his literary and critical works, suggests that his positions on ideology are, to some degree, extrapolated from his ontology, that his conception of ideology is a sort of conceptual epiphenomenon.

2. Sartrean existentialism—ideological?

If the early Sartre considered his existentialist philosophy to be intrinsically hostile to ideology and hence, it would seem fair to presume, non-ideological itself, then what are we to make of his later categorisation of existentialism as ideological? How can this revised view of existentialism with regard to ideology broaden and deepen our understanding of his earlier work? In *Questions de méthode* Sartre states that 'on comprendra que je le [l'existentialisme] tiens pour une *idéologie*: c'est un système parasitaire qui vit en marge du Savoir qui s'y est opposé d'abord et qui, aujourd'hui, tente de s'y intégrer.'^[43] He also makes reference to '*idéologies de l'existence*' and to '*l'idéologie existentielle*'.^[44] Clearly, Sartre's revised view of the status of existentialism, no longer as the principal theoretical expression of philosophical truth but only as an ideology which can play an important contributing role to such a theoretical expression, accords with the Marxist character of *Critique de la raison dialectique*. In this regard, it is important to note that ever since the initial vogue for existentialism in 1945, Sartre's Marxist critics had been labelling existentialism ideological. Henri Lefebvre and Georg Lukacs, two of the most influential and notable thinkers amongst Sartre's Marxist contemporaries, had published studies of existentialism in which they had pointed to the ideological implications of existentialism.^[45] Both writers present existentialism, from Kierkegaard onwards, as a form of philosophical irrationalism and see this latter tendency as politically significant. Lefebvre argues that in ideological terms it translates into an anti-

Marxist reactionary politics.^[46] Lukacs claims that it was and remains an expression of a crisis in bourgeois philosophy which started when a breach developed between bourgeois thought and social reality in the nineteenth century.^[47] In spite of its rather abstract support of socialism, contemporary existentialism ‘reflète...sur le plan de l'idéologie, le chaos spirituel et moral de l'intelligence bourgeoise actuelle’.^[48] For both, only dialectical materialist philosophy offers a remedy to the ills of philosophical irrationalism, and it is the only philosophy in which philosophical problems ‘cessent d'être déterminés “inconsciemment” par les catégories de la décadence bourgeoise’.^[49] Lefebvre goes on to argue that not only does dialectical materialism save reason from irrationalism but that it can assimilate the irrational because ‘cet irrationnel—l'action et la pratique, les contradictions multiples de la vie et de la pensée—devient le *contenu*, le *fondement* de la Raison concrète, au lieu d'en être exclu’.^[50] Although the Sartre of *Questions de méthode* claims his allegiance to Marxism, it is clear that his claim that existentialism is an ideology is not to be conflated with the above argument regarding its ideological implications. Indeed, a number of pages of the first chapter of this text are given over to countering precisely this line of argument, Sartre explicitly citing Lukacs on more than one occasion. Sartre nuances the claim that existentialism is an expression of bourgeois ideology by making a distinction between certain existentialist positions, notably that of Jaspers, which could be fairly categorised in this way and ‘un autre existentialisme, qui s'est développé en marge du marxisme et non pas contre lui’, this latter being his own.^[51] He goes on to explain that as a young man he had felt very much in sympathy with the preoccupations of Marxism, and had been influenced in particular by ‘la *réalité* du marxisme, la lourde présence, à mon horizon, des masses ouvrières, corps énorme et sombre qui *vivait* le marxisme, qui le *pratiquait*’.^[52] However, his existentialist philosophy had retained its independence from a Marxist position because Marxist philosophy, subordinated to the political objective of changing the world, had become stagnant and did not offer the conceptual tools sufficient to explain reality in all its complexity: ‘après avoir liquidé en nous les catégories de la pensée bourgeoise, le marxisme, brusquement, nous laissait en plan; il ne satisfaisait pas notre besoin de comprendre; sur le terrain particulier où nous étions placés, il n'avait plus rien de neuf à nous enseigner parce qu'il s'était arrêté’.^[53] Sartre's position vis a vis the ideological nature of his existentialist philosophy, as set out in *Questions de méthode*, appears somewhat paradoxical in certain respects but ultimately proves coherent. On the one hand, there is his rejection of the claim that his existentialism is an expression of bourgeois ideology and Sartre presents it, rather, as an ideology in sympathy with, although distinct from Marxism. And yet, at the same time he accepts that his existentialism was a form of philosophical idealism, referring at one point to ‘l'existentialisme, cette protestation idéaliste contre l'idéalisme’.^[54] He thereby voices his agreement to some extent with a criticism that had also been advanced by Marxists in particular many years earlier, Henri Mougins's *La Sainte famille existentialiste* being the most thorough treatment of the question.^[55] Sartre had always been highly critical of all forms of philosophical idealism because, like ideology, it involved metaphysical abstraction from concrete reality and hence a distancing from truth. Moreover, he, like the Marxists of his day, had tended to identify idealist philosophy, in its recent manifestations, with bourgeois ideology. The concluding paragraph of *Questions de méthode*, however, centres on the following argument:

'l'autonomie des recherches existentielles résulte nécessairement de la négativité des marxistes (et non du marxisme)...A partir du jour où la recherche marxiste prendra la dimension humaine (c'est-à-dire le projet existentiel) comme le fondement du *Savoir anthropologique*, l'existentialisme n'aura plus de raison d'être: absorbé, dépassé et conservé par le mouvement totalisant de la philosophie, il cessera d'être une enquête particulière pour devenir le fondement de toute enquête.'^[56] The existentialist ideology, then, has a crucial role to play in helping to 'éclairer les données du *Savoir marxiste*',^[57] as Sartre puts it, for as long as 'vulgar' Marxists continue to support the abstract, metaphysical philosophy that he had earlier denounced in *Matérialisme et révolution*. At first sight, it would seem that Sartre casts ideology in an unexpectedly positive light here. Yet his reference to '*Savoir marxiste*' ultimately suggests a similar kind of opposition between truth and ideology to that he had subscribed to in his earlier work. In reality, then, the Sartre of *Questions de méthode* still sees ideology ultimately in a negative light in relation to philosophical truth. Now that his present theoretical position is no longer the quasi-idealist existentialist position of his work of the 1930s and 1940s but a Marxist one, he permits himself to refer to existentialism somewhat critically as an ideology.

3. Latent and explicit proto-Marxism in the existentialism of the early Sartre

For the Sartre of *Questions de méthode*, then, his earlier existentialist philosophy was an ideology which developed on the margins of Marxism. This suggests that it may well be illuminating to seek out points of contact between his existentialism, from as early as the 1930s, and Marxism. Moreover, should such points of contact be found, it would perhaps be fair to conclude that early Sartrean existentialism was an ideological phenomenon also in part for that very reason. Marxism is a political philosophy which has long been held to have a pronounced ideological dimension. Terry Eagleton, agreeing with Martin Seliger, suggests that a convincing concept of ideology should be able to account not only for oppressive dominant ideologies but also for left radicalism and feminism,^[58] thereby indicating that these tendencies are in significant ways ideological in nature. It is important to guard against the suggestion that the early Sartre was Marxist with regard to works of his which clearly have give no indication of being so; the specificity of Sartre's existentialist position until the latter half of the 1940s and even, though to a lesser degree, until well into the 1950s should be respected. And yet, I wish to argue that the relationship between his thought and Marxism was significant, even if often left inexplicit, earlier, and in more fundamental and wider ranging ways, than has often been acknowledged and that, at the very least, conceptual affinities, as well as clear discrepancies, can be identified between the two.

In *La Force de l'âge*, Beauvoir relates that the Sartre of the late 1920s was anti-capitalist without being Marxist, and that he was sceptical of Marxism.^[59] Yet, in numerous places her account centres on Sartre's left political tendencies and on his associations and interests of the period, many of which suggest a certain sympathy and potential common ground with a Marxist outlook and project. One of Sartre's closest friends was Paul Nizan, a committed Marxist, and Sartre shared Nizan's hatred of the bourgeoisie and his hopes for a proletarian

revolution.^[60] Although Sartre did not commit himself to any left political group, he considered joining the French Communist Party many times during the 1930s. He was an admirer in particular of Trotsky and felt drawn to the idea of ‘permanent revolution’.^[61] Beauvoir relates that she and Sartre became personal friends with Colette Audry, an active member of a Trotskyist group.^[62] And at one point, ‘le gauchisme de Sartre’ significantly exacerbated tensions with their more liberal and bourgeois friend Pagniez.^[63] Moreover, whilst on vacation, Sartre would insist on visiting working class and industrial areas of cities, and was disapproving and disdainful of any manifestations of class snobbery.^[64] It is clear, then, that Sartre was no stranger to political radicalism and that whatever his reservations were about the political left, they were in no sense as considerable in extent as his aversions to bourgeois ideology, fascism, and the forces of political reaction. In places, Beauvoir’s account highlights the philosophical tendencies of the young Sartre, and these bear, in certain cases, important areas of affinity with Marxism. For instance, we learn that ‘[I]es “petits camarades”’, amongst whom we must presume was not only Sartre but also Nizan, ‘éprouvaient le plus grand dégoût pour ce qu’on appelle “la vie intérieure”’.^[65] This tendency, even if it would be expressed by Sartre, initially at least, in the terms of a philosophy of the subject, harmonises with a philosophy whose basis lies in articulating the political dimension of social life and culture. The subjective consciousness, for Sartre, is by its very nature in the world, as it is without interiority. Moreover, the early Sartre’s desire for a philosophy of the concrete^[66] clearly bears affinities, at least in intention even if not in philosophical expression, with Marxism’s traditional rejection of philosophical idealism. Nizan, in *Les Chiens de garde* (1932), had taken to task, amongst other things, the tendency of recent French philosophy to be divorced from real, meaningful questions.

Perhaps the most significant of the early Sartre’s writings which expresses his commitment to a radical left revolutionary politics is the second part of *Matérialisme et révolution*. Having rejected the theoretical basis to Stalinist Marxism in part one, Sartre proceeds to outline a philosophy of revolution which takes as its basis his own existentialist philosophy. What is of particular interest in this text is the fact that a number of the key claims which comprise this philosophy of revolution can be linked, in certain important respects, not only to the theses of *L’Etre et le néant* but also with the work of the early Marx in particular and, indeed, arguably with Marxian thought in general. Sartre’s reference to revolutionary thought as ‘*une pensée en situation*’^[67] is clearly derived directly from his claim in *L’Etre et le néant* that freedom is always situated. And yet, as Thomas Flynn points out, “situation” proves to be a major bridge concept between existentialism and Marxism.’ Flynn argues that for all that the Sartre of *L’Etre et le néant* emphasises subjective freedom, in his account of the constraining facticity of the situation ‘there does appear the glimmer of a concept of objective possibility.’ Sartre’s move towards Marxism would involve according an increasingly important role to this latter concept, but it is already present in *L’Etre et le néant*.^[68]

In the second part of *Matérialisme et révolution*, however, Sartre is still primarily concerned, as a follow-up to his rejection of Stalinist determinism, with stressing that the subject can surmount the constraints imposed by his situation: ‘Le révolutionnaire se définit...par le *dépassement* de la situation où il est.’^[69] It is this idea, and the conception of man which underpins it, which links up with the conception of man advanced by the early Marx. Being

able to 'décoller d'une situation' is, for Sartre, 'précisément ce qu'on appelle liberté'^[70] and is closely connected to other key concepts derived from the theses of *L'Être et le néant* such as the revolutionary's recognition of his own (and also his oppressor's) contingency^[71] and that 'la réalité de l'homme est l'action'.^[72] The ontological freedom of the revolutionary means that his existence is contingent and therefore cannot have a fixed, immutable essence but, rather, must be defined through action. Marx, in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, had also suggested that free thought and agency were the principal defining characteristics of man, and saw them as central to man's capacity for creative labour:

Productive life...is species-life...The whole character of a species- its species-character- is contained in the character of its life activity; and free conscious activity is the species-character of man.^[73]

Marx's preoccupation with alienation in this work is founded on the conviction that in capitalist society, in which the worker must sell his labour to produce goods which serve the economic interests of the capitalist, man is alienated from his fundamental nature as a free, creative being. Sartre seems keen to acknowledge Marx as a precursor to his insistence on the freedom of the subject claiming that the latter gives a fine exposition of the idea of men as 'des libertés en possession de leur destin'.^[74] Erich Fromm has referred to Marx's philosophy as a kind of 'existentialist thinking'^[75] and goes on to argue:

Marx's philosophy is one of protest; it is a protest imbued with faith in man, in his capacity to liberate himself, and to realise his potentialities.^[76]

This statement could just as easily be used to describe Sartre's philosophy of revolution as Marx's thought. Moreover, in addition to highlighting the two thinkers' common ground on the matter of subjective freedom, it also points to the humanist implications of the early Marx's position and this is another area of overlap between Sartre and Marx.

The matter of humanism in both Sartre and Marx is a complex one. Sartre's claim that 'la pensée révolutionnaire est humaniste'^[77] is closely linked with his conviction, as expressed for example in 'A Propos de l'existentialisme: Mise au point',^[78] that existentialism is '*une philosophie humaniste de l'action, de l'effort, du combat*',^[79] in that both stress the centrality of free subjective thought and action, and hence make man the focal point around which all other issues turn. One influential commentator has argued recently, however, that much of what is most valuable in the existentialism of the early Sartre is in fact best seen as a continuation of his 'anti-humanist' stance of the pre-war years.^[80] Aside from the fact that this reading involves dismissing Sartre's valiant efforts to convince his readers, from around 1944 onwards, that his brand of existentialism was a humanist philosophy, the view that even the pre-war Sartre's position was anti-humanist is in itself questionable. Beauvoir points out that what had interested Sartre most was people and the attempt to arrive at a concrete understanding of individuals.^[81] Rather than being indifferent to humanity, 'sa sévérité visait seulement ceux qui font profession de l'aduler'.^[82] Indeed, the apparent hostility of the pre-war Sartre to humanism is perhaps better seen as a feeling of repulsion with regard to inauthentic humanism than as a positively anti-humanist position. In a manner analogous to the Stalinist Marxist's flat assertion that everything is matter and obeys dialectical materialist laws, the humanists which Roquentin scorns in *La Nausée* are guilty, for Sartre, of a

metaphysical superimposition onto reality of an a priori claim and their humanism is hence in bad faith. The non-humanist position of the pre-war Sartre, then, can be valuably seen as having a lot more in common with his explicitly humanist existentialism of the postwar years than it may appear.

Different Marxist tendencies have interpreted the thought of Marx as humanist and anti-humanist by turns and it is beyond the scope of this article to attempt to offer an account of the various positions on the issue. I will limit my remarks to a few relevant observations. Sartre's critique of scientific, mechanistic Marxism, a tendency which can be traced back essentially to the work of the later Engels, is nothing if not a rejection of an anti-humanist philosophical position because, as Sartre points out, it denies any creative role to man. The advocates of this brand of Marxism claimed their fidelity to the thought of Marx, although the ascription of such a position to him has long been largely discredited. In reaction to Stalinist Marxism and in the light of the writings of the early Marx, a humanist interpretation of Marx came into focus in the work of certain Western Marxist theorists. This approach, of which Herbert Marcuse, Ernst Bloch, Fromm and Henri Lefebvre were leading representatives amongst others, tended to involve arguing for the continuity between the thought of the early and the mature Marx, and emphasised the ethical dimension to Marx's thought. In the view of this tendency, the humanist dimension of the thought of the early Marx which stressed the centrality of man was implicit in the later works, rather than being discarded in the name of an objectivist conception of historical change. Humanist Marxism was subsequently challenged by Althusser and his followers who, as Lawrence Wilde puts it, 'recast Marx as a positive scientist and relegated the humanist and Hegelian elements to the inferior status of 'ideology'.^[83] Althusser insisted on a separation of the early and the mature Marx, divorcing the latter from the humanist position.

Wilde appropriately categorises Sartre along with the humanist Marxists^[84] and, indeed, it is by and large an uncontroversial move to place him, certainly from 1952 onwards, in this group and to see his work from around 1945 onwards as tending increasingly in this direction. However, the compatibility, with regard to certain crucial philosophical matters, of Sartre's position in *Matérialisme et révolution* with, at one and the same time, the early Marx and the theses of *L'Être et le néant* points to the conclusion that Sartre's position harmonised, or at least bore many affinities, with a humanist Marxist position much earlier than has often been thought. The principal objection of both the early Sartre and the humanist Marxists to scientific, mechanistic Marxism was that it suppressed the role of human agency. As early as 1936, in *La Transcendance de l'ego*, Sartre had written:

Il m'a toujours semblé qu'une hypothèse de travail aussi féconde que le matérialisme historique n'exigeait nullement pour fondement l'absurdité qu'est le matérialisme métaphysique.^[85]

This statement suggests that, at a still early stage in the development of his existentialist philosophy, Sartre's objections to Marxism were in reality directed at its more 'vulgar' varieties to a considerably greater extent than at Marx's work, although Sartre probably did not fully realise this at the time.^[86]

Matérialisme et révolution is chronologically sandwiched between, and of a piece with, two other texts of Sartre's which similarly reveal many areas of compatibility between his thought

and Marxism, the 'Présentation des Temps Modernes' (1945) and *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* (1947). In these pieces, Sartre's support for a future socialist revolution is accompanied by an insistence on the commitment of the writer and on a 'synthetic' conception of man in opposition to the 'analytic' conception which he argues has historically bolstered up the bourgeoisie. What is particularly significant about these texts, from the standpoint of identifying Sartre's affinities with Marxism, is how revealing they are of the fundamentally dialectical nature of his thought. The intellectual vision which Sartre outlines is thoroughly imbued with the notion that one's engagement with ideas and writing is inextricably bound up with socio-political tendencies and that these fields interpenetrate. To take the 'Présentation' first, Sartre points out that the 'esprit d'analyse', the analytic conception, consists in breaking things down into their component elements and seeing them as distinct. With regard to the matter of man in society, this conception had served as a weapon of the bourgeoisie in the struggle against the 'ancien régime':

Ces principes ont présidé à la Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme. Dans la société que conçoit l'esprit d'analyse, l'individu, particule solide et indécomposable, véhicule de la nature humaine, réside comme un petit pois dans une boîte de petits pois : il est tout rond, fermé sur soi, incommunicable. Tous les hommes sont *égaux*...Tous les hommes sont *frères*...Tous les hommes sont *libres* : libres *d'être hommes*...^[87]

However, the analytic conception, Sartre continues, has since become and remains a defensive weapon of the bourgeoisie in its desire to ignore the claim of the working class to obtain greater equality in society. Proclaiming that all men are equal and enjoy equal rights in the form of civil liberties allows the bourgeoisie to draw a veil over the ways in which differences of social class ensure the continuation of basic inequalities at a socio-economic level. Sartre concludes that the analytic conception serves today only to 'troubler la conscience révolutionnaire et d'isoler les hommes au profit des classes privilégiés.'^[88] Stating that his intention is to 'concourir à produire certains changements dans la Société qui nous entoure',^[89] Sartre claims that the synthetic conception, by contrast, is one which conceives of man as a totality. This involves acknowledging that he is conditioned, and in the case of the proletariat, limited by his social class. Man's situation, then, is defined partly in terms of his socio-political condition. In accordance with his aversion to metaphysics, Sartre suggests that the synthetic conception is in no sense a conceptual superimposition onto reality but is a theoretical formulation of the way things really are: 'elle [cette conception] court les rues et...nous ne prétendons pas la découvrir, mais seulement à aider à la préciser.'^[90]

In *Réflexions sur la question juive*, written during the previous year, Sartre states the need for a 'libéralisme concret' with regard to the Jewish community in French society.^[91] The 'libéralisme abstrait' of the democrat, which simply affirms that the Jew has the same rights as any other citizen, is insufficient as it does not take into account the concrete situation of the Jews.^[92] Sartre's assessment of the situation of the Jews clearly bears similarities with his view of the condition of the working class. The suggestion is that political liberalism, because shored up by the 'esprit d'analyse', is in both cases inadequate to ensure that members of these groups enjoy their full rights as citizens and that, moreover, bourgeois liberals have an interest in seeing that they do not. Sartre offers only imprecise and abstract indications in *Réflexions sur la question juive* as to what a 'libéralisme concret' would involve,

but it is of interest to enquire whether his criticisms of the analytic conception of man, and advocacy of a synthetic conception in the 'Présentation des Temps Modernes' suggest that the amelioration of the condition of the working class similarly requires such a concrete liberalism. If indeed Sartre is suggesting this, then it is worth noting, first, that this does not necessarily distance him from the proto-Marxist position which he otherwise appears to be advancing because Marxists' objections to political liberalism have long tended to centre not so much on liberal ideals themselves as on the discrepancy between those ideals and their practical application. Sartre writes that 'il [le libéralisme concret] risque de devenir un simple idéal si nous ne déterminons pas les moyens de l'atteindre',^[93] thereby suggesting that if liberal political ideals cannot be realised in practice then they are ineffectual. And second, it is clear from *Matérialisme et révolution* and *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, where he pushes his political arguments further, that Sartre sees a political revolution to be the most effective means to arriving at a more just society, thereby lending his support to the project to overthrow the liberal political order.

If Sartre is critical of political liberal ideology, everything seems to point to the conclusion that he also has misgivings about intellectual liberalism. His discussion of non-committed and hence, as he sees it, irresponsible writers centres on their tendency to be linked, since the nineteenth century, to the bourgeoisie and to their analytic view of man in society:

Cette légende de l'irresponsabilité...elle tire son origine de l'esprit d'analyse. Puisque les auteurs bourgeois se considèrent eux-mêmes comme des petits pois dans une boîte, la solidarité qui les unit aux autres hommes leur paraît strictement *mécanique*, c'est-à-dire de simple juxtaposition.^[94]

Sartre presents the non-commitment, social class, and analytic conception of such writers as coherent and interdependent characteristics. In reality, non-committed prose writing is an illusion, Sartre counters, because the writer is '*en situation* dans son époque' and his abstentions are themselves revealing.^[95] The examples Sartre gives in the 'Présentation' often centre on political events with regard to which a writer did or did not commit himself,^[96] although this is not exclusively so. His remark that '[c]elui qui consacrerait sa vie à faire des romans sur les Hittites, son abstention serait par elle-même une prise de position'^[97] is reminiscent of Roquentin's Rollebon project in *La Nausée*. Roquentin's hiding behind Rollebon coincides, as I have suggested, with his still being under the influence of bourgeois ideology and is complicit with the latter in so far as it shelters him from having to face existential uncertainties. Only the rejection of both bourgeois ideology and of such a critical project can facilitate the passage to a more authentic form of existence. In the 'Présentation', it is as if Sartre's concept of authenticity has taken on the added dimension of commitment: where authenticity had previously involved recognising one's fundamental freedom, now that freedom also involves the imperative, at least in the case of writers, to take action. Clearly, Sartre's position here can be linked with his ontology and with the idea, expressed in *L'Existentialisme est un humanisme*, that one is responsible, in the choices one makes for committing humanity as a whole in a certain direction.^[98]

Sartre's claim in the first chapter of *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*^[99] that prose writing is by its very nature committed because it necessarily involves 'dévoilement' of reality should not, in itself, be confused with this insistence that the writer has a responsibility to commit himself

politically. 'Dévoilement' implies action and change, and hence responsibility, but Sartre's idea that it thus involves commitment is ultimately much more a statement about the nature of language than it is political, although this is not the same as saying that it is necessarily *unpolitical*.^[100] Elsewhere in this work, however, Sartre's claims imply an insistence on the interpenetration of writing, history and the socio-political field, thereby building on and developing the argument advanced in the 'Présentation'. In particular, he links literature explicitly with the project of working towards a socialist revolution and argues that only in a post-revolutionary society can a literature flourish that is neither bourgeois nor prey to the ills of a sclerotic political radicalism.

In *Marxist Literary Theory*, Eagleton argues that, '[v]ery schematically, it is possible to identify four broad kinds of Marxist criticism', which he categorises as '*anthropological, political, ideological, and economic*'.^[101] He places Sartre along with the other thinkers of the Western Marxist lineage in the third category, that of ideological criticism, arguing that they 'grant a remarkably high priority to culture and philosophy, and do so in part as a substitute for a politics that has failed' and he adds that '[c]riticism, in other words, is now politics by other means'.^[102] Whilst accepting that such a categorisation of Sartre is a fair one in broad terms, I would like to suggest that Sartre's position in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* specifically might also be profitably seen as bearing certain affinities with the second kind of Marxist criticism which Eagleton identifies, namely the 'political' kind. Of this tendency, which came to prominence from the time of the Bolsheviks, Eagleton writes: 'now...criticism becomes a matter of polemic and intervention', and 'where your stand on art reflects your position on the working class, on bourgeois democracy'.^[103] One of the major works of this tendency in Marxist criticism is Trotsky's *Literature and Revolution*, written in 1922-3. Wide-ranging in its subject matter, certain clear parallels can be identified between, in particular, the argument of the closing chapter of this book, entitled 'Revolutionary and socialist art', and the final chapter of *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, which point to the conclusion that the thought of Trotsky can be seen as an important precursor to Sartre's with regard to the matter of the relationship between literature and the political.

Sartre argues that there would ideally be a '*littérature concrète et libérée*' in constant dialogue with its readers.^[104] Such a literature would be '*le monde présent à lui-même*' and '*la subjectivité d'une société en révolution permanente*'. In speaking about himself, the writer would also be speaking about his readers and vice versa, because literature would encapsulate all that was universally human. This degree of reciprocity could only be possible in a classless society because a greater freedom of the public is a necessary pre-requisite. Sartre acknowledges that this vision for literature is a utopian one and goes on to ask what kind of role for literature can be envisaged in contemporary France. Citing Camus and Malraux as possible models, Sartre advocates a '*littérature des grandes circonstances*', adding that '[i]l ne s'agit pour nous ni de nous évader dans l'éternel ni d'abdiquer devant...le « processus historique »'.^[105] In this last remark, Sartre expresses his desire to avoid both the traditionally disengaged and uncommitted bourgeois approach to writing, and the ideologically-overladen work of certain left radicals. As such, a parallel can be drawn with his dual rejection of idealism and materialism- both of which he sees as metaphysical rather than concrete- and his attempt to steer a course between the two. As the kind of literature that

Sartre dreams of, which he refers to as a '*littérature totale*' and '*de la praxis*' addressing "'l'universel concret'", would, he says, be possible only in a socialist collectivity,^[106] in the meantime literature should tend towards encouraging a greater degree of freedom and a political transformation of society: 'nous devons dans nos écrits militer en faveur de la liberté de la personne *et* de la révolution socialiste.'^[107]

Trotsky's *Literature and Revolution* was of course written in post-revolutionary Russia, but his belief that '[t]here is no revolutionary art as yet',^[108] in conjunction with his clear desire to see it develop, makes comparison with Sartre's argument viable. The category of revolutionary art, for Trotsky, covers art which directly touches on matters pertaining to the revolution but it also includes 'works which are not connected with the Revolution in theme, but are thoroughly imbued with it'.^[109] Like Sartre after him, Trotsky accords considerable importance to the role that art can play in contributing to positive political change. His claim that, '[a]t present, one has to carry out great aims by the means of art',^[110] is of a piece with Sartre's conviction that writers should work to raise the reader's awareness of the need for socialism: 'Ainsi le guidera-t-on...jusqu'à lui faire voir que ce qu'il veut en effet c'est abolir l'exploitation de l'homme par l'homme...nous devons transformer sa bonne volonté formelle en une volonté concrète et matérielle de changer *ce monde-ci* par des moyens déterminés, pour contribuer à l'avènement futur de la société concrète des fins.'^[111] Trotsky makes a distinction between revolutionary art and socialist art, the former being a temporary but necessary phase whilst a socialist society is developing. Revolutionary literature, he argues, will necessarily involve an expression of animosity towards the exploiters of the working class whereas, '[u]nder Socialism, solidarity will be the basis of society. Literature and art will be tuned to a different key...Art then will become more general, will mature, will become tempered, and will become the most perfect method of the progressive building of life in every field.'^[112]

There is reason to suppose that Trotsky's remarks concerning revolutionary literature are relevant not only to an account of the role which Sartre outlines for literature in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* but perhaps also to the interpretation of certain of his earlier literary works, although to a more limited extent. The consistently negative images of the bourgeoisie which Sartre presents in *La Nausée*, *L'Age de raison* and, in particular, *L'Enfance d'un chef* certainly seem consistent with Trotsky's conviction that revolutionary literature must inevitably be 'imbued with a spirit of social hatred'.^[113] In *L'Enfance d'un chef*, for instance, there are passages in which Sartre directly, although subtly, links a negative image of the bourgeoisie with the underprivileged condition of the working class. To cite one such passage, when M. Fleurier explains to Lucien that a boss should learn the names of his workers, 'Lucien fut profondément remué, et, *quand le fils du contremaître Morel vint à la maison annoncer que son père avait eu deux doigts coupés*, Lucien lui parla sérieusement et doucement, en le regardant tout droit dans les yeux et en l'appelant Morel.'^[114] [My italics]. For the young bourgeois Lucien, then, the significance of the foreman's serious accident is that it provides an opportunity to rehearse his future role as a boss, there being no indication that the news stimulates any genuine emotional reaction in him. Admittedly, scenes of this sort in which the relationship between the bourgeoisie and the working class is articulated explicitly are not common in Sartre's fiction. Moreover, for Trotsky, revolutionary literature

should encourage 'the consolidation of the workers in their struggle against the exploiters',^[115] which is a dimension that is largely absent in Sartre. A certain expression of protest at the unjustified power and privilege of the bourgeoisie, however, can be clearly identified in Sartre's texts and this suggests common ground with a radical politics. Rather as Trotsky sees revolutionary art and literature only as a phase prior to the flowering of their socialist successors, Sartre's remark in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* that literature should 'contribuer à l'avènement futur de la société concrète des fins'^[116] points to a future socialist society in which the reader will accede to the Kantian city of ends. Having suggested that aesthetic and political freedom are interdependent during the struggle for socialism, Sartre implies that they would be mutually complementing once it is realised. Trotsky's account focuses more on the ways in which socialist art and literature would contribute vitally to the ever higher levels of coordination and internal harmony that man would achieve under socialism. However, these achievements rebound on the aesthetic in turn because they facilitate the development 'of all the vital elements of contemporary art to the highest point.'^[117] For Trotsky, as for Sartre, then, the aesthetic and the political are fundamentally interactive and interpenetrating: a fully flourishing art requires an emancipated political condition, and political emancipation involves a supporting enlightened aesthetics.

Conclusion: The ideological ambiguity of the work of the early Sartre

For all that affinities between the early Sartre's various positions and Marxist ones can be identified, the specificity of Sartre's existentialist outlook and preoccupations must always be accounted for and it is not my intention to veil over their crucial importance. Rather, I would like to suggest that in certain significant respects they contrast considerably less with Marxism than has often been thought. I have argued in the last section that the areas in which Sartrean existentialism and Marxism are philosophically distinct are not paralleled by any important divergence at the level of political ideology. Indeed, from as early as the 1930s, Sartre's disagreements with Marxism- and I am referring to its non-Stalinist varieties and, above all, Marxian thought- were centred much more on theoretical issues than on political ideals: Sartre rejected any notion of determination by material forces, but supported the idea of a future proletarian revolution. In the 'Présentation des Temps Modernes' Sartre, having argued forcefully for a synthetic rather than analytic conception of reality, states that man should be seen as 'un centre d'indétermination irréductible.'^[118] Given that Marxism is the political ideology typically associated with the doctrine of determinism, it might seem fair to infer from this that Sartre's political position ultimately remains that of a left liberal, that his insistence on the autonomous self-determining subject suggests an implicit support for an individualist political ideology. However, it is quite clear from elsewhere in the passage, as I have argued, that he is highly critical of political liberalism, and indeed only a year later he publishes nothing less than a philosophy of revolution aimed at the overthrow of the liberal political order. Any temptation, then, to see Sartre's existentialist philosophical convictions as translating, on the political plane, into a liberal position should be resisted. Moreover, the issue of Sartre's disagreements with Marxism over questions pertaining to materialism, determination, and freedom is a highly complex one, as Sartre was later to realise more fully.

Sartre's statement, in *Questions de méthode*, that, '*le marxisme de Marx, en marquant l'opposition dialectique de la connaissance et de l'être, contenait à titre implicite l'exigence d'un fondement existentiel de la théorie*',^[19] in many ways only echoes what humanist Marxists had been saying for some time. And if the early Sartre's existentialist philosophy bears many more affinities with Marxian thought with respect to the question of subjective freedom than has often been suggested, what he also shares with Marx, as of his first political writings and arguably much earlier, is a notably dialectical conception of reality. By the time of the 'Présentation de Temps Modernes' and *Matérialisme et révolution*, the concept of the 'situation' with which the subject's freedom constantly interacts has taken on a markedly socio-political dimension in comparison to the account of it given in *L'Être et le néant*. The underlying principle of subjective freedom being defined in relation to the circumstances it finds itself in, however, remains the same. Ultimately, if the early Sartre's politically radical and then proto-Marxist position is ideologically ambiguous, then it not because of a residual attachment to political liberalism, but in so far as what he would later refer to as existentialist ideology remains philosophically distinct from Marxism. This ideological ambiguity, however, is one which is constituted by theoretically distinct ideological relations, viz existentialism and Marxism, rather than being located at the level of political divergences. It amounts to a philosophical disagreement amongst left wing thinkers rather than a dispute between the political left and centre.

^[1] Ricœur *L'Idéologie et l'utopie* (Seuil, 1997) p.19 'L'Idéologie est toujours un concept polémique. Elle n'est jamais assumée en première personne; c'est toujours l'idéologie de quelqu'un d'autre. Même lorsqu'on l'entend en un sens plus faible, l'idéologie est quand même le tort de l'autre.'

^[2] Note that I intend at least two principal meanings of 'ideology' in the course of this article, the meaning of term in parts two and, in particular, three differing from that in part one. Broadly speaking, my discussion in part one assumes that an ideology is propounded principally by a dominant social group in the interests of legitimating its power. The early Sartre's negative portrayal of ideologies implies this conception, and it is also that favoured by both the classic Marxists of the period and by many theorists since. In parts two and three, my intended meaning of 'ideology' is close to that advanced by Martin Seliger when he defines it as 'sets of ideas by which men posit, explain and justify ends and means of organised social action, and specifically political action, irrespective of whether such action aims to preserve, amend, uproot or rebuild a given social order' (*Ideology and Politics*, London, 1976, p.11).

There are important reasons for this conceptual change in the course of the article. The second definition of ideology is broader in extent and allows for considering not only dominant forms of social thought (for example capitalist or patriarchal forms) but also the thought of important protest movements (socialism, feminism) as ideological. I do not want to go so far as to suggest that the distinction between ideology and truth on which proponents of the first definition often insist should be jettisoned. Slavoj Žižek is rightly wary of conceptions of ideology which have it that 'all we are dealing with are symbolic fictions, the plurality of discursive universes, never 'reality'', adding that '*such a quick, 'postmodern'*

solution...is ideology par excellence' (*Mapping Ideology* London, 1994, p.17). Broadening the concept of ideology beyond relations of domination may carry the risk of diluting its force as a component of radical critique and therefore incurs the danger of serving the interests of contemporary neoliberal ideological hegemony. And yet, it is the narrowness of the first (and certain other) definition(s) of ideology which lead to conclusions of the sort related by Ricoeur. Such conclusions about ideology, which held sway for so long, are implausible, and in the contemporary context more so than ever before. As I hope will become clear from my argument in parts two and three of the article, the second, broader conception of ideology is close to that implied by the later Sartre. In *Questions de méthode*, it is apparent that Sartre's conception of ideology is such that it can accommodate for existentialism being considered an ideology even though he of course remains faithful to the existentialist outlook, albeit in a highly qualified sense. The later Sartre therefore conceives of ideology as not only relatively broad in extent but also as a phenomenon which is by no means necessarily negative in character. Moreover, it is worth noting that, for all that this is the case, in no sense does the later Sartre succumb to the tendency of which Žižek, admonishing postmodernism, is critical. The broadened conception of ideology implied by Sartre does not involve him in rejecting the notion that there is what Žižek calls 'actual reality', that is a social reality outside of ideology. I would hence like to suggest that a concept of ideology is adumbrated in the work of the later Sartre which not only informs our reading of his early thought in this regard but which is also perhaps of considerable value to the contemporary debate about ideology.

[3] *Questions de méthode* pp 18, 107

[4] I. Mészáros *The Work of Sartre Vol.1* (Brighton: Harvester, 1979) p.108

[5] Ultimately, this question is inextricable from the much broader and more complex one of whether Sartre considered his later philosophy of *Critique de la raison dialectique* itself, at the time of its production, to be in any important sense ideological or whether he continued to make an implicit opposition, as it appears that he did at the time of the early philosophical writings, between truth and ideology. My discussion will touch upon this matter later.

[6] *Questions de méthode* pp 23, 24

[7] Beauvoir *La Force de l'âge* See, for example, pp 39, 52 , 157

[8] *La Transcendance de l'ego* pp85-6. Note that Sartre believes that he is answering the charge of idealism made by the extreme left here. Moreover, he counterattacks by criticising metaphysical materialism- whilst nevertheless distinguishing it from historical materialism- in order to support his point. I shall discuss Sartre's rejection of metaphysical materialism later in relation to the more detailed treatment it receives in *Matérialisme et révolution*.

[9] *Ibid* p.86

[10] See Thomas C. Anderson, in *Sartre's Two Ethics* (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1993) pp 22-3, for a detailed and convincing justification of this point.

[11] I have discussed this matter in detail elsewhere. See ' Sartre's Concept of Bad Faith in Relation to the Marxist Notion of False Consciousness: Inauthenticity and Ideology Re-Examined' in *Cultural Logic* Volume 4, Number 2, Spring 2002, on: <http://eserver.org/clogic>

[12] The theme of bourgeois 'chefs' is a recurring one in Sartre's writings, also making notable appearances in *L'Enfance d'un chef*, *La Putain respectueuse* and *Matérialisme et révolution*. The mention of 'chefs' unfailingly designates at one and the same time a condition, an

attitude and an ideology which Sartre abhors.

[13] *La Nausée* p.138

[14] See Joseph Catalano 'Good and Bad Faith: Weak and Strong Notions' (1993), re-printed in W. McBride *Existentialist Ethics* (1997) p.125

[15] *La Nausée* p.143

[16] Beauvoir op.cit. p.39

[17] In *Le Mur* pp 149-245

[18] *Ibid* p.229

[19] *Ibid* p.230

[20] *Ibid* pp 241-2

[21] See Annie-Cohen Solal *Sartre* (London: William Heinemann, 1987) [1985]. See pp183-4 for a discussion of the play's reception.

[22] Raymond Geuss *The Idea of a Critical Theory* (Cambridge University Press, 1981). See pp 12-22 for a detailed account of ideology in the pejorative sense, or false consciousness. Geuss contrasts this form of ideology from ideology in descriptive and positive senses.

[23] *Les Mouches* published in *Huis Clos suivi de Les Mouches* (Gallimard, 1947) p.203

[24] *L'Existentialisme est un humanisme* p.77

[25] *Réflexions sur la question juive* pp 18-19

[26] *Ibid* p.62

[27] *La Putain respectueuse* pp 54-5, 58, 81

[28] *Réflexions sur la question juive* pp 12-14

[29] *Ibid* pp 20, 23

[30] *L'Existentialisme est un humanisme* p. 30

[31] *Réflexions sur la question juive* pp 83, 173

[32] *La Putain respectueuse* p. 38

[33] *Ibid* p.82

[34] *Réflexions sur la question juive* p.21

[35] *L'Age de raison* p.152

[36] *Situations III* pp 135-225

[37] *Ibid* pp 172, 225

[38] *Ibid* p.162

[39] *Ibid* pp 138,140

[40] *Ibid* p.166

[41] Mészáros op.cit. pp 109-110. Mészáros points out that in Sartre's later works there are 'only some fragments' of a general theory of ideology.

[42] On the Sartrean view, individuals essentially remain inauthentic, even if in a weak rather than strong sense, unless there is 'une reprise de l'être par lui-même que nous nommerons authenticité' (*L'Être et le néant* p. 107). This passage points to the ethics of conversion which Sartre would not attempt to set out until the *Cahiers pour une morale*.

[43] *Questions de méthode* p.18

[44] *Ibid* p. 107

[45] Henri Lefebvre *L'Existentialisme* (Editons du Sagittaire, 1946), Georg Lukacs *Existentialisme ou marxisme ?* (Nagel, 1948)

[46] Lefebvre op.cit. p.243

[47] Lukacs op.cit. pp 23-67.

[48] *Ibid* p.19

[49] Lefebvre op.cit. p.243

[50] *Ibid* p.249 This statement is of particular interest because it reveals that Lefebvre is not guilty of the 'vulgar' Marxist reductionism to which Sartre suggests that his new position, in *La Critique de la raison dialectique*, stands in opposition (See *Questions de méthode* pp 24-29). Sartre refers to this reductionism as '*un idéalisme volontariste*' and criticises its tendency to fall back on a priori philosophical abstractions, neglecting to take sufficiently into account the facts and details of historical change.

[51] *Questions de méthode/La CRD* p.22

[52] *Ibid* p.23

[53] *Ibid* p.25

[54] *Ibid* p.21

[55] Editions Sociales, 1947. Generally, S's Marxist critics were quick to point to the philosophical idealism implied by his conception of the transcendental subject and its freedom from determination by forces originating in material reality.

[56] Sartre op.cit. pp 110-111

[57] *Ibid* p.110

[58] Terry Eagleton *Ideology: an introduction* (London: Verso, 1991) pp 6-7. Such a position of course involves implicitly questioning the later Sartre's tendency still to suggest a distinction between ideology and truth, the implication in *Questions de méthode* being that '*Savoir marxiste*' is an expression of philosophical truth in contrast to the inadequacies of ideology. This is a complex matter and my point is not to claim that Sartre is mistaken but to make explicit that we cannot simply assume that he is right. Moreover, the '*Savoir marxiste*' the Sartre of *Questions de méthode* refers to is presumably his own particular brand of Marxism whereas those elements I wish to chart are drawn from broader Marxist sources.

[59] Beauvoir op.cit. pp 52, 43

[60] *Ibid* pp 41-2

[61] *Ibid* p.156

[62] *Ibid* pp 140-1

[63] *Ibid* p.135

[64] *Ibid* p.166

[65] *Ibid* p.32

[66] *Ibid* p.157

[67] *Situations III* p.182

[68] Thomas R. Flynn *Sartre and Marxist Existentialism* (The University of Chicago Press, 1984) pp 26-8

[69] Sartre op.cit. p.179

[70] Sartre op.cit. 194

[71] *Ibid* p.192

[72] *Ibid* p.184

[73] Karl Marx *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (ed. Dirk Struik) p.113

[74] Sartre op.cit. p.210

[75] Erich Fromm *Marx's Concept of Man* (1961). Preface: (v)

[76] *Ibid* Preface: (vi)

[77] Sartre op.cit. p.188

[78] Originally published in *Action*, 17 (1944), re-printed in Contat and Rybalka *Les Ecrits de Sartre* (Gallimard, 1970) pp.652-8

[79] *Ibid* p.658

[80] Bernard-Henri Lévy *Le Siècle de Sartre* (Grasset, 2000) pp 221-268 in particular.

[81] Beauvoir op.cit. p.52

[82] *Ibid* p.173

[83] Lawrence Wilde *Ethical Marxism and Its Radical Critics* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998) p.4

[84] *Ibid* p.4

[85] *La Transcendance de l'ego* p.86

[86] However, I do not wish to appear to be minimising the undeniable areas in which the reconciliation of early Sartrean and Marxian thought is problematic. Although Marx's philosophy cannot be assimilated to the metaphysical materialist position characteristic of Stalinist Marxism, and Marx should indeed be seen as acknowledging the crucial role played by human subjectivity in the historical process, he was nevertheless a materialist thinker whereas the early Sartre rejects the doctrine of materialism outright. Sartre continues, in his conclusion to *La Transcendance de l'ego*, thus :

Il n'est pas nécessaire...que *l'objet* précède *le sujet* pour que les pseudo-valeurs spirituelles s'évanouissent et pour que la morale retrouve ses bases dans la réalité. Il suffit que le *Moi* soit contemporain du monde et que la dualité sujet-objet, qui est purement logique, disparaissent définitivement des préoccupations philosophiques. Le Monde n'a pas créé le Moi, le Moi n'a pas créé le Monde'. (pp 86-7)

This position is clearly some way from the Marxian one because it seeks to deny any form of determination of the individual subject, whereas Marx, although far from being a reductionist determinist, believes that there are causal forces at work, originating in a material reality, which act upon the subject. Given Sartre's rejection of materialism, even his assertion in *L'Être et le néant* that being precedes consciousness and that it is to being that consciousness' existence is owing cannot bridge the gap with the Marxian position although it suggests some degree of rapprochement with it. Ultimately, this question requires in-depth consideration of the implications of Sartre's and Marx's philosophies for a conception of nature. Such a line of investigation is beyond the scope of this article. Suffice it to say that the two thinkers' ontologies are divergent in certain fundamental ways, Sartre the libertarian anti-essentialist contrasting with Marx who was 'a sort of Aristotelian essentialist', holding that 'there is a human nature or essence, and that the just society would be one in which this nature was allowed to come into its own' (Eagleton *Marx and Freedom* (London: Phoenix, 1997) p.17). And yet, Marx's essentialism, when viewed through the Sartrean optic, is a rather paradoxical one in that he believes that the human nature or essence is characterised principally by the capacity for change and creativity, which is a position that bears fundamental affinities with Sartre's.

- [87] *Situations II* p.18
- [88] *Ibid* p.20
- [89] *Ibid* p.16
- [90] *Ibid* p.17
- [91] *Réflexions sur la question juive* p.177
- [92] *Ibid* pp 176-7
- [93] *Ibid* p.178
- [94] *Ibid* p.20
- [95] *Ibid* p.13
- [96] There is the comparison he sets up, for instance, between Flaubert not speaking out about the repression which followed the Paris Commune and Zola's involvement in the Dreyfus case.
- [97] 'Présentation' p.13
- [98] *L'Existentialisme est un humanisme* pp 31-3
- [99] See, in particular, pp 25-30
- [100] Indeed, in so far as it can be linked conceptually to the idea of *doing*, it can be seen as of a piece, to some extent, with Sartre's claims, in the fourth chapter of *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, pertaining to '*faire*' revealing '*être*' and of his subsequent remark that '[n]ous ne sommes plus avec ceux qui veulent posséder le monde mais avec ceux qui veulent le changer' (pp 236-7).
- [101] *Marxist Literary Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996) p.7
- [102] *Ibid* p.10
- [103] *Ibid* p.9
- [104] *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* pp 160-3
- [105] *Ibid* p.223
- [106] *Ibid* pp 238-9
- [107] *Ibid* p.274
- [108] Trotsky *Literature and Revolution* (London: Redwords, 1991) [translation: Rose Strunsky, 1925] p.258
- [109] *Ibid* p.257
- [110] *Ibid* p.273
- [111] Sartre op.cit. p.273
- [112] Trotsky op.cit.p.259
- [113] *Ibid* p.259
- [114] *L'Enfance d'un chef* p.165
- [115] Trotsky op.cit.p.259
- [116] *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* p.273
- [117] Trotsky op.cit.p.284
- [118] 'Présentation des Temps Modernes', in *Situations II* p.26
- [119] *Questions de méthode* p.108