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## Existentialist Concept of Nothingness in Philosophy: A Review or An Analysis of Sartre's Critique of Heidegger

*Felsefede Varoluşçu Hiçlik Kavramı: Sartre'in Heidegger Eleştirisine İlişkin Bir Değerlendirme ya da Çözümleme*

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### Abstract

The concept of nothingness refers to the absence of being or existence, and its importance has been debated by many prominent philosophers over time. It is possible to trace the traces of these debates in the history of philosophy to Ancient Greek philosophy, especially to the *arche* debates, which was interpreted as the first founding substance by the philosophers in the pre-Socratic period. However, this article explores the existential concept of nothingness, which has been a recurring theme throughout the history of modern philosophy as well, in the context of ideas of two great philosophers, that is to say, through a review and analysis of Jean-Paul Sartre's critique on Martin Heidegger; because the concept of nothingness is also fundamental to both philosophers' understanding of being, with Heidegger viewing it as a fundamental aspect of being-in-the-world and Sartre emphasizing its role in human consciousness and intentionality; hence, it will be discussed, in this article, their similar and differing perspectives on the meaning and implications of nothingness, including especially Sartre's critiques of Heidegger's ideas; so it is possible to see how important a concept such as nothingness, which seems quite abstract at first glance and has no equivalent or concrete existence in the physical world, for philosophy, and thus, how closely the concepts in philosophy are in relation to each other, especially in the context of the concepts of Being and Nothingness. Ultimately, the article tries to show that a nuanced understanding of the concept of nothingness is essential for grappling with the fundamental questions of existence/being and human experience and in addition a deep understanding of the concept of nothingness is necessary for comprehending the fundamental questions of philosophy, such as the meaning of life, existence, and reality.

**Keywords:** *Nothingness, Being, Consciousness, Intentionality, Being-in-the-World.*

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## Öz

Hiçlik kavramı, varlığın veya varoluşun yokluğunu ifade eder ve önemi, zaman içinde birçok önde gelen filozof tarafından tartışılmıştır. Bu tartışmaların izlerini, felsefe tarihinde Antik Yunan felsefesine, özellikle de Sokrates-öncesi dönemin filozoflarınca ilk kurucu madde olarak yorumlanan arke tartışmalarına kadar tâkip etmek mümkündür. Bununla birlikte, bu makale, modern felsefe tarihi boyunca da tekrarlanan bir tema olan varoluşsal hiçlik kavramını, iki büyük filozofun fikirleri bağlamında, yani Jean-Paul Sartre'in Martin Heidegger eleştirisi üzerine bir değerlendirme ve çözümleme aracılığıyla incelemektedir; çünkü hiçlik kavramı, Heidegger'in, onu dünyada-içinde-olmanın temel bir yönü olarak görmesi ve Sartre'in insan bilinci ve yönelimindeki rolünü vurgulaması ile, her iki filozofun varlık anlayışı için de temeldir; dolayısıyla, bu makalede, özellikle Sartre'in Heidegger'in fikirlerine yönelik eleştirileri de dahil olmak üzere, onların hiçliğin anlamı ve içerimlerine ilişkin benzer ve farklı bakış açıları tartışılacaktır; böylece hiçlik gibi, ilk bakışta bir hayli soyut görünen, fizik âlemde hiçbir karşılığı ya da somut varlığı olmayan bir kavramın felsefe açısından ne kadar önem arz ettiğinin görülmesi ve böylece bu kavram aracılığıyla, özellikle Varlık ve Hiçlik kavramları bağlamında da, felsefede kavramların birbirleriyle ne kadar yakın bir ilişki içinde olduğunun görülmesi mümkün olacaktır. Sonuç olarak makale, hiçliğin nüanslarla anlaşılmasının varoluş/varlık ve insan deneyiminin temel sorularıyla boğuşmak için gerekli olduğunu ve ilaveten hiçlik kavramının derin bir şekilde anlaşılmasının felsefenin, yaşamın, varoluşun ve gerçekliğin anlamı, gibi esaslî sorularının kavranmasında elzem olduğunu göstermeye çalışmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Hiçlik, Varlık, Bilinç, Yönelimsellik, Dünya-içinde-Olmak.*

## Introduction

The concept of nothingness cannot be thought from the concept of being separately. However, the concept of being first appears, in Western philosophy, in Presocratic philosophers, as the concept of *arke*, which is posed through the question of *what is the first material of existing things*. In ancient Greek *the question of Being*, which engaged philosophers in the attempt to find different first materials, but they had not yet the concept of nothingness; because, the concept of nothingness was foreign to the Greek conceptual world. The thought of *Being* in Western philosophy, which is claimed to have begun with Hesiod and Homer, is that being has always existed; therefore, in Greek culture and vocabulary, there were no expressions or descriptions about nothingness; hence creation or created actions as well; because the concept of nothingness can only be grasped meaningfully through the concept of an absolute power, that is, the concept of God, which is considered as the basis of creative activity; but, in the Greek world, the absolute power is believed to be active completely was a power of a kind of formation rather than creation.<sup>1</sup> The property of being is a transformation, that occurs through the spontaneous union, separation or activation by another principle or force, of the fundamental elements that exist in nature since time immemorial; therefore philosophers have tried to understand, interpret or explain being by basing it on some of these elements. However, with Atomistic thinkers like Leukippos and Democritus, the concept of nothingness as the concept of space or void, becomes the object of thought. Void was the space or a special area for movement of the invisible smallest particles,

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<sup>1</sup> Especially Demiurgos of Plato is, in *Timaeus*, a celebrated example of such a concept of God or a kind of secondary agent who uses the preexisting materials or elements of chaos and arranges them according to the models of eternal forms.

namely atoms, which are the basic constituents of existence and it was an essential condition for the movement of atoms. Therefore, there is an empty space behind beings (Barnes, 1983:268). In ancient Greek philosophy, if it is possible, a concept that could be considered *a kind of nothingness* or interpreted as a parallel concept of nothingness was the idea of void held by Atomists. However, Parmenides, one of the founding figures of Western metaphysics, rejected the idea of space and stated that '*nothing is not and that being cannot arise from non-being,*' which opened the way for Plato, one of the greatest thinkers who influenced the history of philosophy; together with Plato who constructed his own metaphysical thought on the claims of Heraclitus and Parmenides; so especially as mentioned in his Parmenides dialogue, it arises the possibility of thinking of nothingness as a kind of non-being, but according to Plato's thought, nothingness shows its being only through negation or difference in language and thought (Platon, 1997 119,172,323-325,328,29).

However, it is possible to say that the period that gave weight to the concept of nothingness was the Middle Ages; because in this period, the concept of nothingness begins to be interpreted in the context of theological debates; especially in Saint Augustine, nothingness, which was not considered as a positive entity but rather as a privation or absence of being, that is, absence of goodness; in other word, it was interpreted in the context of the problem of evil and human free will and choices (St. Augustine; 2008, 40-61,67-94,183). The great philosopher Thomas Aquinas, who synthesized scholastic philosophy with an Aristotelian system, also defines nothingness as a negation or limitation of being; it is not as an independent thing, and he uses nothingness to define the problem of evil in the context of the concept of nothingness. Just as darkness can only be understood with its opposite, light, so evil is understood in opposition to good. If goodness is all that is desirable, and every nature desires its own existence/being and perfection, then it must be said that the existence/being and perfection of every nature is good. This is exactly why it can be said that evil does not indicate existence/being. In other words, evil is the absence of good; since being is generally good, the absence of one indicates the absence of the other (Aquinas, 1981: 330,331).

The question of "*Why is there something rather than nothing?*" asked by Leibniz -one of the important names of the modern era with Descartes- is actually very important in terms of the approach to nothingness. (Leibniz, 2014:64-71) In this question, which is the central question of monadology, Leibniz tried to ground the famous *sufficient-reason* principle by claiming that the basis of the universe, and therefore of being, can only be discussed in the context of the being of God. Therefore, for Leibniz, who interpreted being as the manifestation of a perfect order, the concept of nothingness was not something that can be thought or comprehended. The concept of nothingness reaches its conceptual value in the philosophy of Hegel who is undoubtedly, not only of the 19th Century and the German Idealists, but also with his thoughts, one of the most important names in the history of philosophy. Hegel, who set out by thinking of pure being, which is the widest and most inclusive of concepts, reaches nothingness itself in the immediacy of this most indeterminateness; therefore, according to Hegel, it was clear that contemplating being assumes the task of reaching nothingness;

the point where this dialectical transition carries the philosopher was the becoming; so, in this metaphysical envisagement, in which the natural working of the mind and the working of reality were identical, being was interpreted as the dialectical steps/moments of the synthesis phase, intertwined with nothingness (Hegel, 2010: 59). It is possible to see the influence of the opening up of the concept of nothingness in being with Hegel in 20th century. In this context, especially Heidegger and Sartre's interpretations of the concept of nothingness are quite original. The nothingness, which is dealt with in relation to human existence in both philosophers, deserves to be considered with its similarities and differences.

### **The Concept of Nothingness and Critique of Tradition in Heidegger**

Answering the question posed by the concept of nothingness, according to Heidegger, first requires answering another question. This question is the question of being, and Heidegger does not see the question of being only as a problem related to the concept of nothingness, because according to him, this question is a necessary question that determines the entire history of philosophy and attracts almost every philosopher in some way. Heidegger even goes a little further and says that the history we encounter as the history of philosophy is basically built around the question of "*the meaning of being*"; therefore, the primary activity of the philosopher is to turn to this history and to reveal what is understood by being.

While Heidegger begins to explain why the concept of being is the most important subject of thought in his great work *Being and Time*, which made him stand out as a distinguished thinker in the history of philosophy, he says that the main feature of being is that it is an open concept by itself. The clearest indication of this is that being can be used as a *predicate* in all our knowing activities. This is also an indication that being has a relationship with every being. So, everyone understands what you mean by "*The sky is blue*", "*I am happy*" or similar sentences, but this average intelligibility essentially only indicates an incomprehensibility. (Heidegger, 1996:3) In other words, a paradoxical situation arises when the being of something is referred to. Being necessarily appears in our relationship with the existing things and shows itself, but every time we try to point to it, it almost *evaporates* and *disappears*, as if it never existed, so the concept of being remains a mystery before thought. For this reason, Heidegger thought that the question of being should be formulated and asked again as an inevitable attitude that philosophical thought should take, and thus declared the main goal of his own philosophical project. In this context, it is necessary to say that Heidegger's philosophical project is also the construction of an ontology different from the traditional ontology in philosophy. Heidegger calls this new ontology to be constructed and put forward as *fundamental ontology*. Fundamental ontology may give the impression that it doesn't make much sense as a concept at first. However, the condition of awareness or authentic understanding of the *question of being* lies in inviting such a new approach to philosophical thought, so it is important for Heidegger to reveal the approach of this new ontology, what elements this style consists of, and its fundamental difference from the old ontological approach.

Heidegger begins to exhibit this basic approach through his work *Being and Time*, published in 1927. So, what is the main difference between fundamental ontology and traditional ontology? Why was a new ontology needed and why did Heidegger attempt to challenge tradition in this way? Firstly, it should be noted that the classical ontology's understanding of being, which tries to reveal the *whatness* of being by trying to understand the nature of being, is different from Heidegger's. Philosophers who deal directly or indirectly with the *question of being* in the tradition, although they have adhered to different thought systems and used different terminologies, have shown *similarity* to each other in terms of their understanding of being. In this context, Heidegger criticizes all the names, he thinks in classical ontology, because according to him, the philosophers made a big mistake by eliminating the difference between being and beings; so this similarity is the elimination of a fundamental distinction, which Heidegger calls the *ontological difference* and which he considers very important. This fact was also briefly called "*forgetfulness and abandonment of being*" by Heidegger in the later period of his thought.<sup>2</sup> The fact that the being is constantly missing or not showing itself in the orientation of the human to the beings is basically related to the structure of the being, because the essence of this Being lies in its to be. The whatness of this Being must be understood in terms of its Being (Heidegger, 1996:39). Therefore, when the being of a being is mentioned, the meaning understood by classical ontology is moved away, because here is a *becoming* that emerges only in the context of *relationality*. It refers to being as existential, not as essence. But what does this mean? How does Heidegger differ from the approach of classical ontology with his emphasis on *relationality*, and how does he point out the possibility of a change? Exactly in this context, it should be looked at the concept of Da-sein, which is at the center of Heidegger's philosophy and serves as the legitimate ground of the founding basic arguments in his thought.

Heidegger, who needs new concepts while constructing his thought, uses the concept of Da-sein instead of the concept of human. His invention of such a concept is not based on an arbitrary reason, on the contrary, it is a necessity, because man, in the sense of classical ontology, is a rational being and his relation to beings is not ontological but epistemological, that is, in fact, man is a knowing subject. In this context, the most fundamental mistake of the tradition, which interprets human existence primarily and sometimes only as knowing one, is that it is far from understanding human existence in an authentic way. An authentic understanding of human existence is possible only in fundamental ontology with the method Heidegger calls Da-sein analysis;<sup>3</sup> because only Da-sein analysis will be able

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<sup>2</sup> The expression "*forgetfulness of being*" is considered in many parts of *Being and Time* as concealing of being, veiling or hiding of being. In fact, it points out the way of being understood, it means that Being remains hidden from man; because, according to Heidegger, man, in his relationship with beings, because of existing in the field of praxis, always establishes a relationship as if being does not exist without seeing being; because the relationship between being and beings is a relationship in which existents/beings come into Being and meaning(s) emerge during this *coming*. We can see this theme as a prominent subject in many of Heidegger's works; regarding the subject, one can refer especially the following pages in "*Being and Time*" (Heidegger, 1996:21,44,62,219,262,277,292,322,339,34, 406-407, 409-4110, 424-425).

<sup>3</sup> The main purpose of Da-sein analysis is to reveal the constitutive a priori elements of human existence by analyzing them. As a result of this analysis, the existence of human being is seen to consist of many elements such as Being-in-the-World, Attunement, Care, Being-toward, Being-with, Being-together-with, To-be-Between.

to reveal to Heidegger *what the meaning of being is*. Thus, through this specific analysis, Heidegger interprets man as an *ontological being*, which cannot be understood solely in terms of knowing; but what does it mean for man to be an ontological being? The fact that man is an ontological being means, above all, that he establishes an ontological relationship with beings, that is, he is Da-sein. Da-sein, for Heidegger, is being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1996:11). Being-in-the-world is the result of the fundamental ontological approach that characterizes man, which does not position it against the object as an isolated and independent being; in other words, the fact that man has an ontological existence, that is, being Da-sein, means that his relationship with things is in the context of an *interest*. In this context, *to care* or *to consider* means to live in a space surrounded by beings, and Heidegger thinks that this is precisely what makes man a *being-in-the-world*. This is the most basic feature that distinguishes man from other beings at the same time. Heidegger states that this *interest* opened in the basis of human existence is an essential element that emerges as a result of Da-sein analysis. The concept of interest as such is not a term used because of the economical perspective; on the contrary, it is a fundamental element that is the reason for Da-sein's existence to be visible (Heidegger, 1996:53). In fact, showing interest or paying attention is basically a kind of care or worry; because all human actions gain meaning in a *disquiet* that basically refers to his existence. This is exactly what Heidegger's fable uses to support his claim:

“Once when ‘Care’ was crossing a river, she saw some clay; she thoughtfully took a piece and began to shape it. While she was thinking about what she had made, Jupiter came by. ‘Care’ asked him to give it spirit, and this he gladly granted. But when she wanted her name to be bestowed upon it, Jupiter forbade this and demanded that it be given his name instead. While ‘care’ and Jupiter were arguing, earth (Tellus) arose, and desired that her name be conferred upon the creature, since she had offered it part of her body. They asked Saturn to be the judge and Saturn gave them the following decision, which seemed to be just: ‘Since you, Jupiter, have given its spirit, you should receive that spirit at death; and since you, Earth, have given its body, you shall receive its body. But since ‘Care’ first shaped this creature, she shall possess it as long as it lives and because there is a dispute among you as to its name, let it be called ‘homo’, for it is made out of humus (earth)” (Heidegger, 1996: 184).

According to Heidegger, as can be understood from such an ancient text, the origin of human existence is *interest* and *concern*. “The pre-ontological characterization of the essence of human Being expressed in this fable thus has envisaged from the very Beginning the mode of Being which rules its temporal sojourn in the World” (Heidegger, 1996: 185). Therefore, being-in-the-world is having the character of being anxious (Heidegger, 1996: 185). A further analysis of anxiety in this context shows us that human being is in an existential relationship with things, because dealing with something is fundamentally to produce something for a certain purpose means to reveal something. In this sense, human beings are in an informal know-how relationship with things rather than a theoretical relationship (Inwood, 2004:36). This is a situation that is the main feature of human existence and is precisely related to another important concept that Heidegger calls facticity.

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Facticity, as a concept that expresses the *thrownness* of man to this world and to himself, refers to a situation that man cannot change or has no chance to determine; therefore, the fact that man finds himself here and stuck in himself establishes the possibility of his being in relation to his own past as a temporal being as well. Man is a being that exists in his own past at the same time as he is in this world, and this area, which precedes his existence, has a founding function in the process of constructing human existence. The facticity as the past, as a given field, provides a priori conditions for all kinds of relations that human beings will establish with things; in this sense, being-in-the-world works as the basis of all human actions such as understanding and giving meaning. For this reason, the world is never just a place to be a neutral living space; on the contrary, it is a field that is always filled with certain contents and takes shape through the intersection and synthesis of certain contexts. In this context, as Sheehan puts it:

“Human beings in their lived, factual intentionality are Being-in-the-world, i.e., always “outside” the supposed immanence of consciousness and concernfully absorbed in worldly contexts of meaning: the use-world of implements, the co-world of sociality, and, running through both of these, the self-world of concern for their own interests. Evidence of human worldliness is the fact that we always find ourselves in moods, that is, “tuned in” to a given worldly context (Sheehan, 1984:291).

So, being-in-the-world means that man, always in a constant movement due to his own interests, subordinates existing things to himself and thus realizes his own nature and essence. Heidegger justifies this basic attitude with the fact that human is an *incomplete, mortal being*. Man is a being whose essence does not encompass his existence, or as Sheehan puts it:

“Our inevitable lack-in-being is our finitude, which opens us up. It ‘throws’ or ‘pulls’ us into our ineluctable becoming. It is our own intrinsic self-absence that draws us out into openness, into the movement of becoming, and thereby into the Possibility of understanding both givenness-itself (world) and the givenness of this or that entity (Sheehan, 2000: 7).

Heidegger tried to define the ontological relationship that human beings make the things intelligible and that he brings them to his own clarity, with the concept of *Deinotaton*, which he thinks reflects Da-sein's main character and therefore uses it by borrowing from ancient Greek. Heidegger translates this adjective into his own language as *the uncanniest*. So, what does it mean for man to be the uncanniest? What does this have to do with being-in-the-world, and therefore with being and man? According to Heidegger, human being is the most alien being among the existing ones; because it is an opening; *being open* or being-in-the-world means that man is different from other creatures that live in closed eco-systems; other living things are actually *at home* in their own living systems; however, human being is a being that cannot adhere to a determined life system and experiences the earth in which he finds himself as a frightening, distant and alien environment. In this context, even considering the data of the sciences describing the state of primitive Da-sein, it is quite understandable why man can be called an outsider on this earth; because man realizes the relationship he has established with the things in this living space, which he finds strange to himself, in an unprecedented way, and gradually turns this unfamiliar world into his familiar world. In fact, this is nothing but the stranger's making his living space familiar in order to eliminate the foreignness or unfamiliarity, and this is exactly the

expression of a process in which the man in the face of danger constructs his own nature by crossing the borders; because man responds to the violence and meaninglessness called existence, which he did not determine but is exposed to by finding himself, only by going beyond the limits he is in. In Heidegger's words:

“We understand the un-canny as that which throws one out of the ‘canny’, that is, the homely, the accustomed, the usual, the unendangered. The unhomely does not allow us to be at home. Therein lies the over-whelming. But human beings are the uncanniest, not only because they spend their lives essentially in the midst of the un-canny understood in this sense, but also because they step out, move out of the limits that at first and for the most part are accustomed and homely, because as those who do violence, they overstep the limits of the homely, precisely in the direction of the uncanny in the sense of the overwhelming” (Heidegger, 2000: 161).

As it can be understood from here, while interpreting human existence, the point Heidegger refers is the fact that man is strange by nature, that is, without essence, makes it possible for him to relate to Being. Man is a being who cannot be closed in a system because he belongs to a groundless existence where there is no meaning, but on the contrary, he is an open being; this is another expression of its being-in-the-world. So, by calling man *Da-sein* in his relation to the world, Heidegger also confirms that man is a being who lives only *in meaning*. The world is then a kind of source of meaning for man. It is a determining and determined area where man finds himself against his will, and as such, it is a home; because man is a being who can feel itself comfortable only when he is familiar and used to it. The world, as it is, is a comfort zone that gives comfort to man, protects him from the horror of meaninglessness, and hides meaninglessness with a curtain. The integrity of the world in which the human being lives, consisting of existing things, keeps him busy all the time and prevents him from encountering meaninglessness. In this state, the world is also a place where the human being flees to himself and get lost in it. The fact that the world offers a comfort zone, that one feels at home there, means that one forgets his own existence in a way. Thus, the relation of existence and the world is, for Heidegger, a field of movement that takes place in opposite directions in the context of human existence. What does this mean? What is meant by moving in opposite directions here? It was stated that human existence, in Heidegger's philosophy, is determined by being mortal; this also meant that man was the strangest, the most unfamiliar and the most dangerous being, that is, man appeared on the stage of history as the most exceptional being among other beings/living beings, precisely because he was mortal and moreover, he knew that he was mortal. In regard to Heidegger, the awareness of human mortality means that such a knowing reveals an essence that established him as a being who tries to escape from this consciousness, and thus his own death. Thus, since man is mortal, he chooses to live by forgetting it, even if he remembers it, that is, without believing much in his own death; the man who is-toward-to his future, that is, to his death, escapes from the death towards which he is going, in the opposite direction, plunges into the forgetfulness that arises among the beings in the world, and forgets itself in this forgetfulness at home. Thus, what is forgotten is existence, with existence it is nothingness or meaninglessness. In this context, the content of Heidegger's concept of *Da-sein* as human existence makes clear an intertwined connection with the concept of nothingness.

For Heidegger, the question of what nothingness is involves a kind of impossibility from the very beginning of the question; for the question itself presupposes the form that "nothing" is this or that; therefore, at this point, both the question and the answer to the question is absurd. However, the question of nothingness is one of the primary questions and problems of the reason and therefore awaits an answer; because the nothing is the negation of the totality of beings; its nonbeings pure and simple (Heidegger, 1998:85). At this point, Heidegger thinks that questions such as these are inevitable: Do the "not", negatedness and thereby negation too represent the higher determination under which the nothing falls as a particular kind of negated matter? Is the nothing given only because the "not", i.e., negation, is given? Or is the other way around? Are negation and the "not" given only because the nothing is given? Despite all these questions, the truth Heidegger points to is this: 'nothing is more original than the "not" and negation' (Heidegger, 1998: 86). but if nothingness refers to a more fundamental situation than any negation, then Heidegger's basic question would be: Where shall we seek the nothing?" Because in order to find something, first of all, it is necessary to know that it exists; but nothingness is not something that exists like individual beings and cannot be found like them. In this context, it can be argued that nothingness is conceived as the negation of this totality, which is first thought of all that exists and then imagined; but for Heidegger there is a formal concept of the imagined nothingness, otherwise there is no such thing as nothingness itself, because nothing is nothing. The way the human mind works here, works in a similar way when it comes to the concept of being:

"As surely as we can never comprehend absolutely the whole of beings in themselves we certainly do find ourselves stationed in the midst of beings that are unveiled somehow as a whole. In the end an essential distinction prevails between comprehending the whole of beings in themselves and finding oneself (Sichbefinden) in the midst of beings as a whole. The former is impossible in principle. The latter happens all the time in our Dasein. It does seem as though we cling to this or that particular being, precisely in our everyday preoccupations, as though we were completely lost in this or that region of beings. No matter how fragmented our everyday existence may appear to be, however it always deals with beings in a unity of the 'whole', if only in a shadowy way. Even and precisely when we are not actually busy with things or ourselves, this 'as a whole' comes over us-for example, in authentic boredom. Such boredom is still distant when it is only this book or that play, that business or this idleness, that drags on and on. It irrupts when 'one is bored'. Profound boredom, drifting here and there in the abysses of our existence like a muffling fog, removes all things and human beings and oneself along with them into a remarkable indifference. This boredom manifests beings as a whole" (Heidegger, 1998: 87).

As shown by this quote from Heidegger's text "*What is Metaphysics?*", the essential or authentic experience of the meaning of human existence is revealed in a state of anxiety where one is exposed to nothingness, precisely when the feeling of emptiness is experienced. However, this distress that Heidegger points out is not an epiphenomenon that derives from a behavior related to human thought or will, or a situation to be dealt with, or a kind of impulse. This is a very essential situation where the human being is confronted with the whole of being and meanwhile the ground of meaningful contexts called the world is pulled from under his feet. Therefore, it is not correct to interpret distress as a psychological feeling. On the contrary, this *existential distress* itself is the condition of possibility of the psychological structure of man, and as such it refers to the existence of man. In other words, Being of beings is negated in this experience, everything is abstracted from the meanings we think they have, in short, everything loses its meaning and it becomes possible to encounter nothing. Thus, the ground

that human beings encounter with the whole of beings is experienced as the ground where nothingness is revealed. According to Heidegger, in terms of this existential meaning, boredom or anxiety is not a feeling of distress because of something concrete; the object of anxiety is indefinite, and its uncertainty is directly related to the indescribability of nothingness, and it is a kind of alienation, according to Heidegger, felt in this essential experience: "In anxiety, we say, 'one feels uncanny'. What is 'it' that makes 'one' feel uncanny? We cannot say what it is before which one feels uncanny. As a whole it is so for one. All things and we ourselves sink into indifference" (Heidegger, 1998: 88). However, the indifference mentioned here is not something in which man disappears or loses himself; on the contrary, things come upon man through their withdrawal or their becoming meaningless. What is happening here is that, in a sense, *Being* oppresses or crushes the human being, crushing the human existence; thus, in the state of holding on to nothing in anxiety, man hangs on to this boredom, feeling the nothingness and meaninglessness most deeply. In Heidegger's words:

"This unsettling experience of hanging is revealed in Da-sein, while anxiety leaves us speechless; because Being, as a whole, has disappeared now and nothing has surrounded us all around us, so that the expression "is" has fallen into silence in the face of nothing (Heidegger, 1998: 89).

So, in Heidegger, nothingness is an experience that reveals itself in anxiety and, unlike Being, makes one silent, this is what Heidegger calls the nothing itself nihilates (Heidegger, 1998: 90). Whereas being or the meaning of being is an area where language is located; therefore, there is not silence, but the effectiveness of speech. Being and nothingness are intertwined in man; because Da-sein means being held out into the nothing. By keeping itself in nothingness, Da-sein in any case exists beyond what is as a whole. This is the process that establishes being or meaning what Heidegger calls transcendence or existence (Heidegger, 1998: 91).

### **The Concept of Nothingness in Sartre and His Critique of Heidegger**

The concept of nothingness and the problem of how this concept can be determined and defined is a philosophical problem that is important for Sartre as well as for Heidegger. When it comes to existentialism, one of the first philosophers to come to mind, without a doubt, Sartre is and his thoughts on this subject are in parallel with Heidegger in general, but when Sartre's claims are taken into account, it is seen that he differs from Heidegger's approach in fundamental points; therefore, Sartre's main purpose, who was influenced by Husserl's phenomenological thought, like Heidegger, is to examine the existence of phenomena, to deal with the concept of existence in a different way from the tradition, to analyze some basic existential phenomena that emerge in the context of *human reality*, and after that, to describe all of these in a specific way to phenomenology. To do this, Sartre reconsiders ontology. In this context, it is significant that the subtitle of his main work "*Being and Nothingness*" is "*A Phenomenological Ontology*". With this second title, Sartre tried to show that he does not consider the concept of being, which is the most ancient problem of philosophy, and the concept of nothingness in relation to this concept, *only* as an ontological problem; because the existence of consciousness should only be considered in the context of a difference that transcends it or, if it is to

be expressed in another way, in the context of its relation to what is transcendent to itself, there is a research in Sartre's philosophy to reveal this; therefore, it is possible to say that Sartre's main effort is based on understanding the relationship between the conscious and the *unconscious*.

The relationship between the conscious and the unconscious, for Sartre, is a relationship that needs to be explained firstly in the context of the problem of existence and nothingness; because, according to Sartre, there is an extremely important situation in this relationship that classical phenomenology ignores or leaves unexplained, and this forms the basis of Sartre's existential claims. Husserl, while describing the structure of consciousness, always postulated consciousness as consciousness *of* something. This was the most basic feature of consciousness, which Husserl called *intentionality*. Having consciousness of something constantly meant that it was intentional; hence intentionality meant that consciousness was not an empty construct, but towards something, always being filled with something. Sartre also accepted this characteristic of consciousness and tried to look at it closely in order to analyze it; therefore, questions such as what the structure of consciousness was, its mode of operation, what primary and secondary characteristics it has gain importance in this research.

The fact that consciousness is not an empty structure but always oriented towards something is first examined in the context of perception activity. If what are called phenomena consist of appearances that appear in consciousness, as classical phenomenology accepts, it is impossible to think of them only within the limits of consciousness; because, according to Sartre, identifying the perceived with the perception or limiting the phenomenon only with the consciousness gives the consciousness an absolute structure and establishes the consciousness as a purely immanent field. This means that what appears before consciousness as a table loses its tableness (being a table). In so far then as the known cannot be reabsorbed into knowledge, we must discover for it a being (Sartre, 1984:18). At this point, Sartre discusses the passivity of perception. Passivity refers to our exposure to change for which we are neither the creator nor the foundation. Thus, the existence of man endures a mode of being for which he has no source. To endure, however, one must exist; therefore, existence is always situated beyond passivity (Sartre, 1984: 19). The claim that existence is always active in a relationship of exposure is a very important and even critical claim, and Sartre interprets this relationship as an ontological proof relationship. Ontological proof, which has been used as a classical method of proof of God by many other philosophers in the history of philosophical thought, is used by Sartre but he changed its content. What the ontological proof means for Sartre is that it is essentially a proof of the intentionality of consciousness; because the examination of intentionality- the thesis that consciousness is directly a revelation of a being other than consciousness-is an ontological proof (Catalano, 1985: 39). Therefore, in Sartre, ontological proof is basically a proof that expresses the encounter of two different areas of being, that is, consciousness and something other than consciousness, and as such, it has been attributed to *an existentialist way of thinking*. The claim that Sartre tries to justify through this argumentation is that: if phenomena cannot be limited to be only in consciousness, this is proof that phenomena have a transcendent being. In this case, the question to be asked is how, according to Sartre, takes place the relation of consciousness with the transcendent

one or how did Sartre interpret the elements that make up the two sides of this relationship? The central question of Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* is the most fundamental question of phenomenology. It is possible to formulate this question as Gardner states: what is it for a thing to be given to and grasped by a subject as having real, objective existence, as transcending the subject? (Gardner, 2009: 39). This question is undoubtedly one of the most fundamental problems in the history of philosophy, especially in epistemology; however, classical epistemology has always handled the problem in the context of a subject-object duality, so it has been inevitable that other questions and problems arise from this perspective. So much so that Sartre discusses them extensively, pointing out that this duality is seen not only as the subject-object duality, but also under different names such as interior-exterior or potentiality-actuality dualities throughout the history of philosophy (Sartre, 1984: 9-17).

In this context, especially Husserl and Heidegger, as philosophers dealing with this fundamental question, stand out as the names that Sartre attaches importance to; but especially Husserl's phenomenological approach provided Sartre with the most important output/data in seeing the problem and producing a kind of solution; for this reason, firstly it is possible to say that Husserl's view of phenomena has a very decisive effect on Sartre's conclusions and basic claims in his analysis of being. Although the definition of the phenomenon, which is the main element of Husserl's approach, emerged as a result of a critique of tradition, according to Sartre, Husserl himself cannot avoid falling into the paradox of duality that tradition has fallen into; because, for Husserl, consciousness has a transcendental status, first of all because it is a field in which phenomena emerge, and the purpose of phenomenology is to grasp consciousness in its intentionality towards beings, while the object is given independently of all its accidental properties. This is to say that consciousness has a structure that can grasp the object in terms of its *essence*; however, there is a problem to be solved here, and at the heart of this problem is the understanding of the essence as a completed, finished, ahistorical kernel; because when the object is wanted to be understood, it is seen that the essence of the object is never complete in the consciousness in relation to the object. Essence, on the contrary, is experienced as a property of the object that can never be fully given in perception because of the potential future possibilities of consciousness oriented towards it; therefore, a finite-infinite duality emerges in the context of the concept of essence in the Husserlian understanding of phenomena. In Gardner's words, this problem is the infinite in the finite as Sartre puts it (Gardner, 2009: 41). And this is the most vulnerable and weakest point of Husserl's phenomenology from Sartre's perspective. The situation that causes the finite-infinite duality to emerge is that the phenomenon constantly points to the existence of a remnant of being that transcends consciousness; in other words, what is called the phenomenon or the objectivity of the thing remains something that transcends what consciousness perceives, that is always lacking in full and complete presence; Sartre calls this being, and as such he states that being has a trans-phenomenal or concept-exclusive feature (Sartre, 1984: 10-11-15-18-20-23). Hence the object does not possess being, and its existence is not a participation in being, nor any other kind of relation. It *is* (Gardner, 2009: 42).

After Sartre's claim that being is a trans-phenomenon fact, his claims about consciousness in relation to being are important, because the relation of consciousness to its transcendent one will also provide an understanding of the nature of consciousness. If phenomena exist for consciousness and somehow connect human existence to being, then what does it mean for these phenomena to exist in consciousness? The existence of phenomena as evidence of a relationship with a being transcendent to consciousness, then, shows that consciousness is not a self-enclosed, self-contained structure; for to be conscious is precisely to be tend towards what is unconscious; for consciousness taken by itself is contentless; in other words, consciousness is pure appearance, because it is total emptiness; since the entire world is outside it (Barnes, 1992: 14). In this context, it is necessary to remember once again the concept of intentionality, which is the most important concept of phenomenology. For Sartre's thought, intentionality means that consciousness tends out of itself, and therefore does not exist in a self-sufficient way; but why does consciousness turn outside of itself? For that is the nature of consciousness; consciousness realizes itself primarily and always as consciousness *of something*; his activity is actually a double activity; because to exist as consciousness *of something* is also to exist *as self-consciousness*, and consciousness as such is also consciousness *of existence*, that is to say, *of to be*. Self-consciousness is, in Sartre's terms, a pre-reflective self-consciousness; that is, its self-actualization occurs spontaneously (Sartre, 1984:23). The incomplete existence of phenomena that become a given in consciousness in relation to being as trans-phenomenon shows that not only being but also consciousness exists as a trans-phenomenon fact; because if consciousness is something that always exists as a consciousness of something, and in this context it is also self-consciousness, the meaning of this self-consciousness is, according to Sartre, the being of existence as the being of consciousness and in this sense, existence is, just like being, not an element that can be melted down in the activity of knowing or comprehending; therefore, it is inevitable for Sartre that human existence, that is consciousness, is also trans-phenomenal. In this case, it needs to be explained for the relationship of these two transphenomenal fields from the viewpoint of Sartre.

According to Catalano, Sartre, who thinks of consciousness as a relation with something other than consciousness by its nature, will devote his entire book *-Being and Nothingness-*to explaining this relation and difference (Catalano, 1985: 34). The manifestation of consciousness and the fact that it does not hide reality, allows it to be understood as a mere *translucency*. Consciousness, in Sartre's understanding, is not something of having any character or structure; the interpretation of consciousness as a *translucency* actually shows why consciousness is understood as “*concrete nothingness*.” throughout the book, especially from the first chapter titled *The Problem of Nothingness*; because the fact that consciousness is a concrete nothingness is basically related to the fact that it has no any nature; that is, consciousness does not have a character with certain forms like the understanding in Kant; on the contrary, the most important feature of consciousness is that it exists as pure activity and self-determination (Catalano, 1985: 34). The claim that consciousness exists as a nothingness in pure activity is an important claim for Sartre, showing that consciousness also constructs its own structure or essence in its own existence. Consciousness, accordingly, is something indefinite, a groundless, self-founded self-activity. Therefore, for Sartre, the most important issue that needs to be explained is the

relationship between *the being* of consciousness as this self-activity and *the being* indicated by the intentionality of this consciousness.

Sartre tries to explain these two fields of being by using two concepts we encounter in Hegel's terminology: *being-in-itself* and *being-for-itself*. However, there are fundamental differences in the content and use of these concepts, related to the goal of Sartre's philosophy. For Sartre, who thinks that being-in-itself cannot have been created because every divine creation is an impossibility that eliminates the difference between the creature and the creator, it is sufficient for the being to simply exist/to be in the sense of being-in-itself. This is valid for the phenomenological approach of Sartre as well; for phenomenology is precisely about identifying and describing facts; therefore, phenomenology is not expected to explain in a manner similar to that of the sciences; so, the essential feature of being-in-itself is that it is identical with itself, complete and therefore immobile. This means that it is neither passivity nor activity. Both of these concepts belong to the human world and they are most fundamentally related to human behavior. However, a conscious being acts for a purpose; therefore, being-in-itself cannot be the cause of itself in the way consciousness is. The self-consistency of being-in-itself is beyond the active as it is beyond the passive. It is likewise beyond affirmation as well as negation. According to Sartre, being, as being-in-itself, cannot refer to itself like self-consciousness; for being is being-in-itself. Being is an entity that cannot go beyond itself in this state and therefore is full of itself. To be full of itself is also to say that this being is *what it is*; in other words, Sartre summarizes being-in-itself as follows: *what is what it is*. Being what it is is a *contingent* principle of being-in-itself, and being-in-itself as such is that which is the opposite of an outside and has no such content as any judgment, law, self-consciousness. Being-in-itself has no secret; it is solid. It stands there in isolation, not relating to anything that is not itself. It is the one who stands with its intense positivity beyond all forms of becoming. Beyond and outside of everything, identically with itself, it is closed to all possibilities (Sartre; 1984: 27,28,29,30). In this context, when it comes to being-in-itself, it is possible to express everything about it in these three summary claims: Being-in-itself (1)'is (est), (2) '*is in itself* and (3) '*is what it is*'.

The field of being, which is positioned as the opposite of this field of being-in-itself, which is the field of an uninterrupted absolute, is the field of being-for-itself. The metaphysical character of being-for-itself is the inverse of that of being-in-itself; as Sartre will express, being-for-itself is defined as '*being what it is not and not being what it is*', being which must be what it is. The fact that consciousness is being-for-itself primarily indicates that it is not full but empty and without content; the fact that consciousness is free of all content shows us that it also has an existence that is directed outside of itself, so that it must in any case be intentional. In this context, for Sartre, consciousness is the structure of being in which *nothingness* emerges; because every activity it performs is the cause of the emergence of *denials* or *negations*, albeit in different ways; because any form of judgment is made through language opens up the possibility of affirmation or negation in some way under the question form. This is not to say that negation only emerges in a linguistic form, abstractly, so that such a possibility

can be mentioned because of language; because for Sartre, nothingness is a situation that includes the linguistic and the factual situation, which Sartre calls human reality, takes shape precisely in the relationship of the conscious with the outside of conscious, and in this relationship, consciousness is the one that provides movement; because consciousness is *empty, open, incomplete*, and therefore it primarily negates itself and only through this primal negation it is directed towards what is outside itself. In the intentionality of consciousness, which is basically a negation, other kinds of negations are experienced in terms of encountering the *outside* things; in other words, the existence of consciousness as a negative structure causes nothingness to appear in concrete being as well. As Barnes points out:

“It is easier to approach the problem of what consciousness is through questions of what consciousness does or what happens in consciousness. At this point, it is possible to identify the following differences regarding consciousness: awareness, intentionality, revelation, reflection, nihilation. Being aware of an object means separating it from its ground as something, as one is aware of a tree rather than an undifferentiated, blurred landscape. It is also to be aware that the object is not the same as the awareness; viz, to be conscious of the tree is to reveal the tree as not the same as the boulder beside it, or the earth in which it is rooted, or the sky above it, and to reveal that the tree is there, not with or a part of the perceiving consciousness (Barnes, 1992:18).

Therefore, according to Sartre, who states that we cannot think of nothingness as an abstract concept:

“Nothingness can be conceived neither outside of being, nor as a complementary, abstract notion, nor as an infinite milieu where being is suspended. Nothingness must be given at the heart of Being, in order for us to be able to apprehend that particular type of realities which we have called *négatités*. But this-intra-mundane Nothingness can not be produced by Being-in-itself; the notion of Being as full positivity does not contain Nothingness as one of its structures” (Sartre, 1984:56).

However, having stated that existence does not exclude nothingness, Sartre also points out that there can be no relation between being-in-itself and nothing, he thinks that this seemingly paradoxical situation should be resolved; because on the one hand there is a concept of nothingness that stands outside of being, but on the other hand is contained by it; hence, considering that nothingness hasn't got the power to emerge on its own, then Sartre's basic question is expressed in the form of *where nothingness comes from?*

Sartre thinks that this question brings us to the human being as he bearer of consciousness and its intentionality. The activity of asking or questioning causes negations to be opened in concrete being, or, as Sartre puts it, a place for nothingness is opened in being in the human intentionality; *Nothingness*, in the being that is full of itself, appears as if it were a crack; therefore, man, with his consciousness, is in an important position in the revelation and experience of nothingness; he is even in the center; therefore, nothingness does not have an earlier position before being; Being is always *there*, and nothingness comes into being through the being of man. Nothingness is not, Nothingness is made to be. Nothingness does nihilates itself; Nothingness is nihilated” (Sartre, 1984: 57). Therefore, nothingness can be thought of as an expression or phenomenon of human reality. Man does not have an identity like an apple to be an apple. Concrete nothingness means that the being of consciousness is somewhere other than itself, that is, outside itself. Since asking questions requires a distance, it is seen that consciousness is not identical with itself in questioning; this is concrete nothingness in human

consciousness; therefore, the being that mediates the coming of nothingness into the world must be its own nothingness. The ability of man to turn towards anything and question everything is a rule that applies to his own existence as well; therefore, every question posed in the intentionality of consciousness, including the human being's own existence, refers to an existence or positioning that is directed towards the world.

Questions are, in fact, expectations in this context, and expectations are ultimately about an opening or non-opening in the being; hence, the world is the emergence of the concrete nothingness in man in simple, pure, rough, raw beings. The daily flow of life that constitutes human reality is the space where nothingness emerges in different forms; thus, there is a revelation in nothingness that can be called pre-reflective or pre-ontological. A meeting without a friend, the death of a loved one, a negative answer to a question, the emotional tension of the gambler who promised himself he would never play and the psychological situation of him against the gambling table or a person's self-deception about a critical event, or the withdrawal of all meaningful layers of the world to its depths etc.; the subject invokes nothingness through such negativities that open before him in the form of possibility as the experience of solid being. So, there is a "natural" realization of the consciousness that overflows itself in the context of its intentionality; however, the "naturalness" here is by no means a cause-effect connection; on the contrary, for Sartre, questioning as the outward intentionality of consciousness indicates that the relationship between consciousness and the object of intention is *contingent*. There is a relationship that excludes all kinds of universal determinism, and the character of this relationship is that it is a synthetic unity that expresses the state of being in the world (Sartre; 1984: 58-65).

Sartre, in the context of the concept of nothingness, which he describes as the self-activity of consciousness, criticizes Heidegger, in terms of some basic points. In Heidegger, the relationship of man with being is a relationship in which meaning is opened, and philosophy is an activity whose primary task is to understand and analyze this relationship; in this context, Sartre's main criticism of Heidegger is that this relationship is one that produces meaning; because Heidegger interprets the relationship between being and human being as a relationship that Being *needs* human being, and the concept of Da-sein is the basis of this need. According to this:

"Heidegger's conception of the relation of Dasein to Being implies that Being in some sense needs human being, and in asserting the primacy of the indissoluble, unanalysable, fused whole of 'Dasein's being-in-the-world, Heidegger guarantees a limit to Dasein's alienation-whatever the errors and lapses of Dasein, Being always belongs properly to Dasein, as Dasein does to Being, and the possibility remains in principle, however remote it may be in practice, that Dasein can make itself at home in Being. This is metaphysical optimism of a sort, and it is ruled out by Sartre: The world qua its being is unconditionally indifferent to human concerns" (Gardner, 2009: 56).

According to Sartre, Heidegger's concept of nothingness still remains abstract even though it seems to represent a progress over Hegel's abstract notion of nothingness (Sartre, 1984:50). It is an important point for Sartre that Heidegger brought nothingness to the field of experience, especially through the

concept of Da-sein; however, the structure of nothingness remained hidden in Heidegger's philosophy. Sartre thinks that the concept of nothingness plays a key role in capturing the world as the world in Heidegger, but despite this key role, the importance of nothingness is reduced under the title of some positive concepts or nothingness is neutralized in positive terms. According to Sartre, in the Heidegger terminology where Da-sein is at the center, it can be seen an approach that conceals implicit negations that is hidden by claiming that Da-sein is outside of itself, in-the-world, as a being from beyond or as its own anxiety and own possibilities; thus, it is, in fact, claimed that Da-sein is not in itself, not at a direct distance from itself, and transcends the world to the extent that it manifests itself as not-in-itself and not-the-world (Sartre, 1984:52).

Therefore, Sartre's main criticism is that nothingness is not shown as the cause of human transcendence; here, from the point of view of Sartre, Heidegger's fundamental mistake is that he failed to see that there is nothingness at the root of transcendence. One of the typical manifestations of this is Heidegger's interpretation of nothingness as an almost extraterrestrial or transmundane experience from which the meaning of the world is withdrawn. Accordingly, in order for man to realize nothingness, he must live this experience every time, that is, to be exposed to nothingness, the nothingness of nothing. Will it then be said that, according to Sartre, "*Is the world suspended in the non-being just as the real is in the heart of the possible?*" In this case, every negation must therefore have its origin in a particular going beyond, which is the going beyond being towards the other; however, Sartre's criticism at this point is that, as Gardner also states, beyond being-in-itself, its meaning cannot be reached (Gardner, 2009:56). So, for Sartre, Heidegger leaves unanswered the question of what Da-sein must be like to be able 'to transcend', that is, go beyond and establish relations of distance (Catalano, 1985: 62). Because, even the existence of distance, according to Sartre, consists of the negation of the plenitude and existence between two points. Sartre, in this context, argues that the meaningful whole, as a gestalt structure, consists of relatednesses that are revealed through certain negative elements; therefore, this constructive and constitutive functioning of nothingness is not taken into account in the concept of nothingness in the context of Heidegger's view of being. Yet, this emerging nothingness itself reveals every moment is a process encountered in many intermediaries within the world, and presenting these negations as an extra-terrestrial field of experience, as in the kind of experience Heidegger tries to explain as the experience of nothingness, means nothingness is to understand abstractly; in short, according to Sartre, Heidegger's concept of nothingness, for all these reasons, remained abstract and does not appear to belong to the world as such. However, in Sartre's words:

“Nothingness can be nihilated only on the foundation of being; if nothingness can be given, it is neither before nor after being, nor in a general way outside of being. Nothingness lies coiled in the heart of being-like a worm” (Sartre, 1984:56).

This is exactly a situation related to the relationship of two fields of being, and for Sartre, what a phenomenological ontology should do is to analyze and reveal whatness of this relationship.

## Conclusion

When Sartre and Heidegger's concepts of nothingness are examined, it is seen that the main difference, in the context of Sartre, is in the emphasis on consciousness. Especially in Sartre's text *Being and Nothingness*, at the center, there is the existence of human being, in terms of his existence; so, consciousness is also in the foreground in terms of its three characteristics. First, consciousness is necessarily consciousness of something, it is in the position of putting a transcendent object and as such a positional consciousness of the world (Sartre, 1984: 13-14). Secondly, consciousness is necessarily consciousness of itself, and finally consciousness is autonomous and an absolute, but a non-substantial which does not provide its own foundation (Sartre, 1984: 17, 18). However, in Heidegger, consciousness is a concept that is criticized because it, in the sense of tradition, refers to the subject and the knowing activity of subject. However, the consciousness that Sartre emphasizes is a concept that is considered and analyzed primarily in terms of its *ontological structure*, not in terms of its epistemological features; therefore, it is possible to say that an ontological approach is predominant in both thinkers as well; but the main difference is that, in Sartre, the consciousness has got a constitutive role; but in Heidegger, Da-sein has got such a role. In this context, it can be argued that one of the most significant differences between Heidegger and Sartre, who can be positioned along a parallel line of thought, is that Sartre, unlike Heidegger, emphasizes the subject and the subject's existence; hence, it is possible to say that Descartes' emphasis on the subject has a particular influence on Sartre's thought; but it should be stated that this influence is not about understanding the subject in an epistemological context; rather, it is about the subject's being in a structure that experiences his own being *in existence*.

The concept of Da-sein is considered in connection with the question of the meaning of Being, which is the essential question of philosophy in Heidegger; the meaning of Being, on the other hand, develops in the context of the question of the *ontological distinction*, which Heidegger points to as the difference between Being and being; for Heidegger, the only being that can make the ontic-ontological distinction is man himself; but to see man as such, requires a phenomenological definition of him, in the context of this distinction. Man is thus characterized as a unique and very special being, called Da-sein, who can attain Being (Coe, 1985:96). However, for Sartre, it is not meaningful to ask such a question; because *the relationship* that consciousness establishes with the transcendent, that is, with the other than consciousness, invalidates the assumption that existence or Being is meaningful; because the problem that Sartre expresses as the being of the phenomenon is a problem that the being of the phenomenon cannot be reduced to the phenomenon of being; therefore, the trans-phenomenal feature of the being excludes all kinds of relations and a deep anxiety is revealed and experienced precisely in this non-conceptual being of the being; thus while, for Heidegger, the question of the *meaning of Being* is put forward as a fundamental problem of philosophy; for Sartre, the question of the *meaninglessness of Being* is put forward as a fundamental problem of philosophy. While the problem of nothingness is

experienced, in Sartre, as an encounter with the meaninglessness of being in its solid being, for Heidegger, on the contrary, nothingness occurs as an experience that reveals the meaning of being.

In the context of all that has been said, it can be claimed that Sartre's reading and criticism of Heidegger is based on "*a kind of misunderstanding*" that can be detected, in a way, in almost all philosophers and philosophy. Hence, Sartre's criticism that nothingness remains abstract in Heidegger is an interpretation that should be subject to criticism; because Heidegger's analysis of Da-sein shows that mortality is what constitutes the essence of Da-sein, and mortality or being-towards-death is the main element that establishes the transcendence of existence/being as a fundamental negativity and it is in life every time and human being is a being who escapes from this negativity that establishes his own existence and tries to forget it; therefore the construction of the world as a set of meaningful ties emerges from precisely this mortality/essential Nothingness; so, Sartre's criticism seems to be an incomplete or "*faulty*" criticism. For nothingness to be active one does not necessarily need the experience of vanishing meaning; everyday life is nothing but the effect of nothingness itself.

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