

EDITOR'S PREFACE



No philosopher in all of history has reached as large an audience in his lifetime as has Jean-Paul Sartre. Of course, he is not only a philosopher but also a playwright, novelist, and journalist, a writer of short stories, essays, and criticism, and an astonishing person. He is, in short, a philosopher in the French tradition—more like Rousseau and Voltaire than like most professional philosophers today. Yet his philosophical works are extremely difficult to read. Moreover, the relation of his fiction to his philosophy poses many problems, and there is no agreement as to whether his *Critique de la raison dialectique* ("Critique of Dialectical Reason," not yet available in a complete English translation) is consistent with his earlier existentialism. Has he given up existentialism to become a Marxist?

Hazel E. Barnes, a Professor of Classics, has translated into English Sartre's early *Being and Nothingness*, which established his reputation as an existentialist philosopher, and his later *Search for a Method*, an essay contained in the *Critique*, in which he disparages existentialism as "a parasitical system" while hailing Marxism as "the philosophy of our time." She has also written a large book on *Humanistic Existentialism* in which she relates the fiction of Sartre, Camus, and de Beauvoir to their philosophical writings. Her other works include *An Existentialist Ethics*.

The present book does not concentrate on Sartre's life and personality because he himself has written a celebrated autobiography covering his early years, and Simone de Beauvoir's three-volume autobiography also deals with Sartre. Only the first chapter of this book is devoted to the man and his life. The bulk of the book deals with the development of his thought and tries to demonstrate its essential unity. Only a scholar who is thoroughly at home in the whole corpus of Sartre's voluminous writings could have accomplished such a difficult feat.

WALTER KAUFMANN