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## FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY DEFINE HUMAN ESSENCE IN SARTRE PHILOSOPHY

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### Abstract

Freedom and responsibility are the essential dimensions of human existence. In the absence of these significant dimensions man cannot be expressed in a holistic way. By the beginning of philosophy this question came before philosophers in many ways and recognised the significance of freedom. Some philosophers against freedom by their deterministic approaches along with this it's also shown that traditional essentialists standpoints possessed an extent on freedom of human being intentionally or unintentionally. But Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980) presents freedom and responsibility as an ontological entity and identically relates it with human existence. In view of these considerations certain pertinent questions are bound to arise such as How freedom is identical with existence? How freedom and responsibility define human essence? How responsibility is related to freedom?

**Keywords:** Freedom, Responsibility, Existence, Ontological, Essence, Human, Identical.

### Introduction

As Sartre says in his book Being and Nothingness Freedom is the first principle of existentialism. As we can see Sartre's freedom is the sole foundation of all values and responsibility is the logical requirement of consequences of our freedom. (BN p. 554) In this regards this paper will focus on ontological explanation in this regard he says 'one must be conscious order to choose and one must choose in order to be conscious.' (BN p. 462). Choice and consciousness are the one and the same thing... the conclusion is that to be conscious of oneself and to choose oneself are one and the same. After that this paper will present a little glimpse of social-ethical viewpoint. Here, Sartre also gives an ontological background for responsibility. He says being-for-others is the third mode of being, it's not a kind of being, there is interpersonal relation between being-for-itself. But ultimately this explanation goes to socio-ethical discourse. Due to responsibility, we feel if anything is valuable then it should be accessible for all and lastly this paper will describe general remarks of bad-faith, authentic and inauthentic life as terms of virtuous and vicious cycle and charge some criticism on Sartre theories.

### Research Methodology

In this research work, the use of analytic, synthetic, comparative and speculative methods are expected in the qualitative research methodology.

### Ontological explanation

Sartre's freedom is not only Socio-Political or ethical value but it deeply rooted with human existence. According to him man is free, freedom does not mean a property of existence but it means that to be identical with to be free. Existence and freedom are the two aspects of the same coin. Man has no other option to choose, hence freedom is identical with my existence. Here it requires a clarification about the identical relation between freedom and existence. So, first of all we should try to understand that how freedom is identically related with existence? Here Sartre says that man is conscious, consciousness is constituted by nothingness. Since there is nothingness in man, man is conscious. Nothingness is a structural property of consciousness. Consciousness is empty or nothing because it has no essence, there is no permanent essence of man. It is nothingness that makes freedom and choice possible.

Due to emptiness man choose to fill this nothingness. In this way we can say that nothingness is a space or capacity to hold the possibility of man and it motivates the action of freedom. Furthermore, we can say that existence of man is not a pre-determined essence, it is defined by himself in the presence of nothingness in his consciousness. Here nothingness relates to consciousness and consciousness denotes to human existence. Therefore, we can see that the account of freedom is not like a socio-political or ethical value but it deeply associated with man's existence, his consciousness and nothingness. So, the term identical relation consists an ontological nature of freedom. Here freedom is ontological because it's not value or property of man but it is nature or form of man. Man is a being; being-for-itself (conscious being). Here freedom is not an 'OUGHT' concern but it is associated with 'IS' concern.

According to Sartre essence precedes existence, is tragically mistaken. In place of this his core idea is that existence precedes essence. In this renowned dictum he expresses that man is not define a predetermined cause like essence. There is no any fundamental characteristic as humans are already set. If we do not think so and accept essence precedes existence then it prevents us



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from seeing future as an open possibility, distorts our creativity, limit our freedom and weaken our sense of moral responsibility. But existence precedes essence is a real fact about human nature so, man first come into being and then he defines himself. He promulgates, “Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself” (BN p. 28).

But how it is possible for man to define himself, its answer is clear because he is not a predefined essence, he has possibility to define himself and for this in his existence he has a consciousness with nothingness as a structural property and this nothingness is a space or capacity to hold the possibility of man. Existence is a fact; it is actuality but the possibility to define himself is a potentiality. Actuality holds potentiality due to emptiness within consciousness when human perform according to his freedom and choice. He transforms his potentiality into actuality and this is a process to defines himself. And this definition ultimately transforms into essence for that particular man who performs it. In this way man makes his essence.

On another approach we can say that the actuality of man is thesis nothingness of man is antithesis and ultimately acquired essence is synthesis. We should with attention, here I used a term that is acquired essence signifies completely opposite to determine essence. Determined essence is an implication of essence precedes existence whereas acquired essence is implication of existence precedes essence. It means that acquired essence is not same as predetermined essence. So here the essence is not against with the core concept. Sartre reject past based predetermined essence but he accepts future-oriented essence, which is earn by better performance of freedom and responsibilities. There is no any known Universal essence of man but here is possibility of unknown particular essence.

As an ontological entity Sartre outlines the binary distinction between unconscious being that is **being-in-itself** (en-soi) and conscious being that is **being-for-itself**(pour-soi). Being- in-itself is concrete, fixed, lacks the ability to change, devoid of potency and is unaware of itself such as material object. Being-for-itself is conscious of its own consciousness but it is also incomplete, fluid, indeterminate and it corresponds to the being of human consciousness. Since the for-itself (man) lacks a pre-determined essence, it is forced to create itself from nothingness. Along with this **being-for-others** is third mode of being, it’s not a new type of being but it just a mode of being. There are interpersonal relations among being-for-itself. Here, being-in-itself is related to facticity, being-for-itself is related to freedom, consciousness and nothingness and being-for-others is related to responsibility. So, in this way we can say that these concepts of facticity, freedom and responsibility correspond to being-in-itself, being-for-itself and being-for-others respectively.

So let us describe what is called facticity, it is factual condition; Socio-Political condition, death etc. are limitations of freedom. One cannot choose his/her family or parents. But facticity is not a paradox of freedom. Sartre clarifies that there is Freedom only in situation and there is situation only for freedom. (BN p. 489). How freedom and facticity interpenetrate to each other, my place, my past, my environment, my fellow men, my death. Insofar as freedom always interpenetrates facticity, man becomes wholly responsible for himself. He is responsible for everything except for the fact of his responsibility. Here, we have seen how facticity, freedom and responsibility interlinked to each other. Human is condemned to be free because he finds himself in a facticity or situation. He says “Man being condemned to be free carries the weight of the whole world on his shoulders; he is responsible for the world and for himself as a way of being... Furthermore, this absolute responsibility is not resignation; it is simply the logical requirement of the consequences of our freedom... Everything which happens to me is mine... Thus, there are no accidents in a life.” (BN p. 553-54).

According to Sartre man is condemned because he did not create himself, he is thrown in the world. But once he thrown in the world, he is responsible for everything he does. freedom is Summum Bonum of Sartre's ethical system as well as his political thought. Man is free to choose, to be is to choose oneself; nothing comes to it either from the outside or from within which it can receive. In every situation one has to choose and even not to choose is also a choice. If man is free, he alone is responsible for what he chooses. If man is angry, he has chosen to be angry. Sartre says even the moods and situations is chosen by man. Man is completely responsible for his decisions. One cannot give excuses. There is no escape route for one’s decision. According to Sartre “This means that no limits to my freedom can be found except freedom itself” (BN p. 439).

### Socio-ethical explanation

Now we should focus socio-ethical explanation of freedom and responsibility. As we have seen man is condemned to be free so he is responsible for himself anything what he does. Here Sartre quotes J. Romaines “In war there are no innocent victims” (BN p. 554). It means freedom of choice entails commitment and responsibility, freedom is necessarily connected with responsibility, more freedom means more responsibility. Responsibility creates anguish when a man chooses something he assigns value. If it is value, it should be for others also that is by a particular choice, I am not only responsible for myself I become responsible for others also. This



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apprehension of responsibility increases the feeling of anguish and anguish at a time become unbearable and then it becomes painful. And in this situation man try to avoid responsibility, as a result he performs by bad-faith, any attempt to escape from responsibility is bad-faith.

Now let's describe about authentic and inauthentic life of Sartre if we perform freedom and admitting the responsibility what man does or choose, it is an authentic life but if we try to escape from responsibility this is an inauthentic life. Inauthentic life happens due to bad-faith. Bad-faith is avoiding the decision here he gives two examples-

- 1-Waiter in a restaurant.
- 2-A young boy and girl during intellectual talk.

Firstly, a waiter in a cafe wears mask of waiter which he is not. Waiter take his role seriously and forgets that he is a real human being and waiter is a part time job. He changes his whole personality and starts playing role of waiter. So, most of us assume the role which is assigned to ourself by society.

Secondly, one day boy holds girl's hand. Girl has to decide but she does not take decision and sensation occurs in their body and mind, hand in boy's hand and mind not taking decision.

We can summarise all the philosophical concepts of Sartre in terms of virtuous and vicious cycles. Virtuous cycle leads to authentic life which is result of better performance of freedom and responsibility while vicious cycle leads to inauthentic life by violation and avoidance of freedom and responsibility and it leads to the state of bad-faith and self-deception. Therefore, bad-faith and self-deception leads to inauthentic life.

### Criticism

- 1- Sartre says freedom of man is the first principle of his philosophy. Further he says that it is the source of all values and it is identically with existence. Then here it can be said that freedom is also an essence of man. There is at least one predefined essence of man and that is freedom. There is violation of existence precedes essence.
- 2- According to Sartre there is no universal obligatory moral law and no set of absolute fixed value then he accepts freedom as objective and all related values are subjective but this viewpoint is not appropriate for Ethical behaviour.
- 3- There is no clarity about the term that freedom is 'IS' concern or 'OUGHT' concern. If it is related IS concern then it cannot be a source of all values because if we affirm it then there arises a Naturalistic Fallacy. And if there is ought concern then it cannot be identically related with human existence. Because here value cannot be transformed into fact.
- 4- Sartre opinion is that freedom is the fundamental source of all values and identically related with existence but one can say same as integrity. So how will Sartre defend his opinion and what will be the arguments. In this context his work has no any illustration.
- 5- Sartre says that even man is free to commit suicide and an individual can decide. who will choose for him? By this statement we can say that whether it is ethical sense of suicide or being a slave has an ethical sense since. Since it chooses by our freedom this distorts the concept of freedom.
- 6- In practical scenario we can see in the decision of Jurisdiction is that the innocent get reward and convict get punishment but Sartre holds that there is no innocent in the war. What does it mean? Should both be punished or only one?

### General Remark

- Freedom is the first principle of existentialism.
- Freedom is the source of all values.
- Existence precedes essence.
- Responsibility is the logical requirement of freedom.
- Freedom is identically related with existence.
- If we not choose, it's also a choice.
- Choice and consciousness are same.
- Nothingness is a structural property of consciousness.

### Conclusion

According to Sartre man is free, man is freedom. (EH p.29) Sartre says that man first exists then he defines himself. Man is merely a possibility. Paradoxically Sartre says that "man is not what he is, but he is what he is not." It means whatever a man is up to present moment is not his real nature. He is his future possibility and since future possibilities are not real at present so he is not what



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he is, he is what he is not. In this context Sartre says that existence comes prior to essence. Nothingness separates a man from himself. There is a nothingness between a man and his past and between a man and his future. The way he interprets his past and foresees his future, is itself a series of choices and decisions. Therefore, a man is not essentially what one might describe him as now. Sartre asserts that there is no God and hence everything is permitted. Had there been God freedom would be curtailed. Since God does not exist, so man is the only one being whose existence comes before essence. Therefore man is undefinable. According to Sartre there is no universally obligatory moral law and not set an absolute fixed value for there is no God. The individual human person is the sole source of all values and his freedom being their foundation. "We cannot decide a priori what ought to be done... man makes himself; he does not come into the world fully made; he makes himself by choosing his own morality" (EH p. 46).

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