

CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF JEAN-PAUL SARTRE'S CONCEPTION OF FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON MAN'S FREEDOM IN NIGERIA

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DOI:10.13140/RG.2.2.21082.35528

Abstract

In his search to understand his individuality, man faces many questions, among them: What is freedom? What do we actually mean when we talk about human freedom? By engaging in logical debates and disagreements, many philosophers have addressed specific issues regarding human freedom, which has led them to make claims about certain concepts and errors. Based on this context, this study embraces a critical examination of freedom and responsibility in Jean-Paul Sartre's view as a path to actual living. In Sartre's view, freedom is the essence of man since it is rooted in nothingness, unconstrained by anything, and has nothingness as its source. The research study in question uses the critical analysis methodology. As a result of the principle that "existence precedes essence," which states that a person is without an essence before they are born, research indicates that man first creates his own essence. Through free will and determination, man builds self. This research effort aims to reawaken in man the essential truth that man's freedom is unavoidably accompanied by a heavy and unavoidable duty, which is a necessary requirement for true self-existence. Only when we accept responsibility for the significance of our past and present and intentionally choose our future can we truly achieve the value Sartre has seen it embrace.

Keywords: Sartre's, Freedom, Responsibility, God, Man

Introduction

Freedom has been a major challenge from the beginning of time till the present. It is crucial to stress that Greek philosophy attempted to come up with a solution that was as profound as the ones it offered to so many other significant problems. Over the span of several epochs, numerous philosophers from many schools of thought have shown an interest in this issue. The early Greek thinkers of that era held the view that "fate" controlled everything. This quest for freedom remained all the way until the middle Ages. When we got to the middle Ages, the emphasis shifted from "fate" to "god." Over time, a theocentric viewpoint on everything came to be accepted. Because it was believed that God had already predetermined what would happen to each man and at each instant, even before conception, everything that occurred during this time was attributed to divine providence. Throughout this time, there were numerous Christian thinkers' thoughts present. We can conclude that God controls much of what humans do since he knows everything that will happen in the future and knows that it will happen. The will is therefore subject to moral obligations and the burden of loving God even if it is free. The ability to sustain the rectitude of the will, which is a quality of the will to the extent that it is logical, is how

modern thinkers describe freedom, on the other hand. With the advent of the modern era, theocentric thinking was replaced by anthropocentric thinking, which placed man at the center of focus. Man's desire to understand the universe through speculation and research gave rise to a revolt against religious limits on his freedom and knowledge. Again, man controls the question of freedom throughout this historical period, but this time in relation to his wishes, emotions, other people, society, and the state rather than the medieval god or even the fate of the early Greeks. In an endeavor to eradicate religion, this time period gave rise to intellectual plurality, which has elevated human freedom. Having observed all these shifts in emphasis over the ages from "fate" to "God," as well as the emphasis placed on man and his free will.

For Jean-Paul Sartre, the main problem with freedom is that it is synonymous with human existence, which is the unrestricted freedom of man with moral responsibility; existence comes before essence; freedom as a release from self-deception; interpersonal relationships; freedom and choice; freedom as a release from deception; freedom and passion: the nature of the world; and nothingness, which gave rise to what is now known as freedom. Jean-Paul Sartre, a well-known academic and existentialist philosopher, is included in this debate of human freedom. The most innovative aspects of his approach to teaching are freedom and accountability. Although consciousness is what distinguishes us from other living things, he asserts that freedom is what distinguishes man from other beings. It is important to keep in mind that two major camps have historically been viewed as being very necessary when addressing the concept of freedom. These categories encompass both responsibility and irresponsibility. There has been continued hostility amongst the various camp members. Our intellectual investigation in this essay is focused on deducing from these whether or not human freedom is a matter of accountability. Jean-Paul Sartre was a prominent French philosopher who developed a unique philosophy of existentialism. One of the key concepts in his philosophy is the idea of freedom and responsibility. In this paper, we will examine Sartre's understanding of freedom and responsibility and their implications for how we understand our path to actual living. And for this purpose making decisions is an expression of the freedom that makes a man. Thus, choice of course of action and making decisions became necessary for man. For Sartre, freedom is an essential feature of human existence. He believed that human beings are fundamentally free, in the sense that we are not bound by any pre-determined nature or essence. Unlike other animals or objects, which are bound by the laws of nature, human beings are free to choose their own path in life and to create their own meaning. This freedom is not just a matter of having choices, but of being responsible for those choices. For Sartre, we are responsible for our own lives and for the World we create around us. We are not passive objects of fate or circumstance, but active agents who shape our own destiny. However, this freedom also comes with a great burden of responsibility. Sartre believed that we cannot simply blame our actions on external factors or circumstances, but must take full responsibility for them. This means that we must Own up to the Consequences of our actions, even if they are unintended or unwanted. Sartre believed that it is essential if we are to live truly authentic lives. By embracing our own freedom and responsibility, we are able to create our Own meaning and purpose in life, and to live in a way that is true to our own values and beliefs.

The Nature of Sartre's Theory of Freedom

Sartre, a prominent existentialist philosopher, concentrated mostly on the truth of individual freedom. Sometimes the word "freedom" is given a very unfavourable connotation, implying that there are no limitations or obstacles in the way of one's accomplishing or achieving anything. Sartre, who defines freedom as the inalienable right of man to choose his own objectives, shares this idea of negation. The word freedom implies that man has total discretion. According to Sartre, we not only practice freedom but are freedom. Regarding the absoluteness of the concept

of freedom, Sartre had this to say: "Freedom- I sought it far away; it was so near that I could not touch it, that I can't touch it- it is essentially myself. Who I am is defined by my independence (Sartre, 1943:362). Sartre relates freedom with the basic nature of man through his concepts of "negation," "nihilation," "nothingness," and "consciousness," all of which, as we've seen, he equates with both the being of a man and with freedom. Humans are examples of conscious beings, and freedom is the existence of consciousness. He repeated his claim that freedom is precisely the void that is meant to exist at the core of man and that forces human actuality to create itself as opposed to simply existing. Since freedom is synonymous with my existence, the only thing that can restrict my freedom is freedom itself. Freedom is essentially the way our consciousness is organized and the ambiguity of how we respond to what is "out there." The "gap" or division between awareness and its object, in Sartre's view, is all that freedom is. According to Sartre, a man is free because all that he is is what he generates for himself.

In this text, he claims that humans have the total freedom to achieve any goal they choose for themselves without even making a serious attempt. Being able to perform things or have amazing ability has nothing to do with being free. In response, Sartre says it's crucial to stress that, in line with "common sense," being free doesn't mean getting what one wants; rather, it means making one's own decisions about what one wants. The word "freedom" in this sense alludes to the independence of decision as opposed to dream and hope (Sartre, 1943:503).

It is possible to read Sartre's claim that "we make ourselves into whatever we choose" to indicate that "we create the meaning of our lives, together with the meaning of the world we live in." Each agent is completely/unrestricted free, in his opinion. This claim could seem odd in light of the obvious limitations on each person's freedom of choice. Freedom is the fundamental and unique quality that makes us human. Freedom is an essential human right and an undeniable truth of the human condition. Freedom is a characteristic rather than a trait of the will, as it is in the case of freedom of will. Freedom, on the other hand, is the supreme value and the core of everything. Man must be free because of his birth into the world, but he is also free because, once he is conscious of himself, whatever he does is his responsibility and is not predetermined. Based on Sartre, who rejects determinism, how we respond to deterministic tendencies is up to us. He contends that freedom is the sole means of comprehending human nature. Only freedom can force a man to be who he is. As a result, Sartre extols the importance of human freedom as the basis for existence.

Existence Precedes Essence

The idea that existence comes before essence, which the existentialists claim is the fundamental premise of existentialism, is another Sartre viewpoint that is crucial to the exploration of human freedom. "Existence precedes Essence" is Sartre's definition of the key thesis shared by all existentialists (both theists and atheists). This implies that a human must initially exist before defining who they are by subsequent thought, free will, and action. On the other hand, an item or a person's essence is the collection of distinguishing characteristics that actually determine what kind of object or person they are. Nothing, not even God, whom Sartre denied, has significance for him prior to man, as we have already established (Sartre, 1957; 543).

The concept of a paper knife, which Sartre used as an example to show what he meant, is first constructed for a specific purpose before the item with the attributes of the concept is created. The paper knife's essence can be said to have existed before it was created, if by essence we mean the process by which it was manufactured and the reason it was produced. Therefore, if we believe that God created the cosmos in the same way that Rene Descartes or Gottfried Leibniz did, then God has given the creation some thought and is aware of exactly what he is making.

As a result, in Sartre's opinion, the idea of humanity in God's mind is similar to the idea of the paper knife in an artisan's head. Therefore, just as an artist follows a methodology to make paper or a knife, God creates man by using specific methods and a notion. According to Sartre, "man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world and defines himself afterwards" (Lescoc, 1974:298). To him, explaining human nature in the same way that we do with produced goods is impossible. We must first imagine every product as having a certain use for which it is manufactured as well as a specific manufacturing method before we can actually start to create it. An entity's essences in this situation can only come before it exists. On the other hand, if humans were not divinely formed as Sartre contends, then there would have been no purpose or plan for who and what we are. The idea behind Sartre's adage "existence precedes essence" is that a person first existing, then manifests themselves on the scene, and finally defines themselves.

For him, man is nothing other than that which he makes of himself. Freedom is existence, and in its existence comes essence. This simply implies that man merely exists and subsequently becomes his essential self; he is the author of his essential self. Existence, therefore, has primacy over any essence imposed upon it. This means that what we do and how we act in our lives determine our apparent "qualities".

Nothingness: The Foundation of Human Freedom

The most important addition Sartre made to his metaphysics was the examination of the idea of nothingness. He contended that it is fundamental to the nature of existence. He views human freedom as being negated and destroyed. Nothingness, negation, and the consciousness phenomenon, when connected to freedom, give the context for inquiry as the source of human freedom. Every inquiry implies the chance of an unfavorable response. The ability to separate oneself from the incidental service of being is necessary for this. Sartre held that freedom came from hiding one's own nothingness and getting one's past out of the way. By posing this query, he alludes to the fact that the capacity to dissociate oneself from the global casual order is necessary for the potential of negating being and producing non-being. The source of this ability to negate lies within the nothingness that each person possesses. Sartre argues as a result: Nothingness is a part of human existence; it always separates a person from their essence; and a person is nothing but themselves. Man must be able to be his own emptiness in order to be able to question; otherwise, he cannot be at the beginning of non-being. This can only happen if man's being in and of himself is paralyzed by nothingness. (Sartre, 1943:35)

This emptiness serves as the basis for man's freedom and determines the type of being he is. This is a creature that lacks substance, that is unsupported, that is both what he is not and what he is. According to Sartre, freedom is neither a quality of the will nor a faculty of the soul. Instead, it's something he possesses. Thus, he claims: Freedom is not a soul attribute that should be imagined and defined in a vacuum. What we refer to as freedom cannot be distinguished from the reality of human existence; freedom is humanity. Freedom is not a creature; rather, it is the nothingness that is man. (Sartre, 1943:35). As a result, man is freedom rather than just having freedom as a trait. Freedom and his being are one and the same.

Human Freedom and Moral Responsibility

The idea of responsibility is central to the concept of freedom in its purest form. Still, Sartre's worldview is centered totally on the unrestricted freedom of the individual. Men also anticipate absolute accountability as a result of this absolute independence. Sartre defines "responsibility" as "the consciousness of being the incontestable author of an event or of an object" (Sartre 1966:553). Given that "he is the one by whom it happens that there is a world" (Sartre 1966:593),

the Being-for-Itself bears an enormous amount of responsibility. This obligation is not resignation, either. It is just what our freedom logically demands. In other words, what occurs to us happens through us, and we are powerless to change it, rebel against it, or accept it. The fact that a man is doomed to be alone responsible for himself constitutes his facticity, in actuality. The Latin word *respondeo*, which meaning "answerable" and "accountable," is where the word "responsible" derives from etymologically. One must take responsibility for any determined and consciously carried out action. Nothing influences the events or actions of man. Since absolute responsibility follows from absolute freedom, Sartre outlines the implications of absolute freedom on human destiny by stating that "man is condemned to be free" and that "he is responsible for the world and for himself as a way of being" (Sartre, 1966:553). Whatever happens to a man happens not just by him or through him, but also in him. Considering this, accountability is a logical condition of man's freedom and not a submission to the results of his acts. In Sartre's words, being responsible does not only refer to one's own choices; it also includes those of other men (others). Kaufmann stated, "to choose between this and that is at the same time to affirm the value of that which is chosen, for we are unable to choose the worse." Unless it is better for everyone, everything we decide is always better for worse (Kaufmann, 1956:291). Therefore, according to Sartre, freedom might be viewed as the fundamental core of man, and as a result, he is accountable for all of his actions. In this sense, man is wholly responsible for his actions and is what he makes of himself. Therefore, complete freedom includes complete accountability for real human existence. The idea that the government exists to serve the needs of the people and the common good is rejected by Sartre. This is due to the fact that he holds that there are no moral standards and that "I am not the foundation of my being" (Kaufmann, 1956:293). The logical accountability of his or her freely chosen events cannot be escaped; hence there is no way to do so. All things considered, his consciousness will not be at ease with anything that attempts to reroute his responsibilities through self-deception or in any other way. He has ill intentions and leads a false life.

Freedom and Interpersonal Relationships

Sartre thought that it was difficult to have genuine human interactions when he authored "Being and Nothingness" in the 1950s. His viewpoints were revised in his later works. According to him, we should always be considerate of others' freedoms in our interactions with them because both their and our own freedoms are reliant on one another. Thus, he claims: In our pursuit of freedom, we come to see how interdependent it is with both the freedom of others and our own. As soon as there is commitment, I am compelled to desire both my own freedom and the freedom of others. Without likewise valuing the freedom of others, I cannot pursue my freedom as a goal. (Sartre, 1943:85) As a result, freedom has restrictions that are external to you. First of all, my own freedom is restricted by another person's freedom. The burden of the entire planet, society, and history resting on a single person is also clear as to serve as a restriction on human freedom.

Freedom as a Choice

In ethics, the word "choice" refers to an agent's volitional act of selecting one option from two or more possibilities. A decision might be made with good intent or with unease, according to Sartre. Choice and being are interchangeable terms. What authenticates a person as a being is choice. Choice authenticates freedom since it allows a person to make his or her own decisions by selecting from a range of options. Choice is a self-fulfillment basis for self-realization, according to Macquarrie, who also believes that man is the sum of all of his decisions and choices. However, choice is also a self-renunciation (Macquarrie, 1972:183).

This suggests that when one chooses, he has given up everything -including himself. Being able

to make your own decisions is what freedom of choice entails. Being able to choose is what freedom of choice entails. Choice consequently implies the existence of numerous alternatives from which one must select. We have the option of not making a decision. In each instance, ends are placed above a factual circumstance, and it is our job to achieve these ends. In response to Sartre's perspective, Ndubuisi writes, "whatever thing our existence may be, it is a decision, and it is entirely up to us to choose to be magnificent, noble, or low and humiliated. If we are humiliated and resentful, we cannot resist making a decision (Ndubuisi, 1998:61). For Sartre, not making a decision is a form of decision-making. An action is made valid by our decision. Any project I decide to pursue is a manifestation of my independence. Nothing about me that is external to me forces me to do this. In support of this, Greene says, "The belief that the approval of another or of society at large can justify our actions is a fallacy, as is the belief that there are moral absolutes that are both universally true and valid." Furthermore, transcendence is neither a premise nor a current option (Greene, 1960; 46).

Do we all independently make decisions, just as each of us has free will? He cannot avoid making decisions; additionally, as I've already stated, refusing to make a decision is also a decision. Freedom is the ability to choose, but not the ability to not choose. According to Stumpf, "our ability to choose and make choice is what makes freedom possible" (Stumpf, 1982:21). On the other hand, Ogbonna claims that "man is continually faced with choice; there are many options available, but humanity is involved in this choice... Even when he refuses to make a decision, he is always making one (Ogbonna, 1992:19). In accordance with Sartre, people are always free to make decisions and direct their life toward a specific objective or "project". (Sartre 1943) According to the claim, people are unable to evade this freedom, despite our challenging circumstances. Although external factors may constrain a person, they cannot compel that person to choose one of the alternative routes over the others. The person still has some discretion in this regard. Since they are aware that they must make a decision and that it will have an impact, people pick in agony for this reason. For Sartre, asserting that one conscious possibility out of many takes irrefutable primacy is to assume the position of an object in the world, not a free agent but solely subject to chance.

The Decadence of Freedom in Nigeria

While discussing how Sartre would define freedom in Nigeria with a young, employed graduate on the bus from Umuahia to Aba, we became aware of a certain bitterness that has crept deeply into the veins of Nigerian youth. In his address, the young man asserted that one of the immediate advantages of Nigeria's transition from military rule to civilian democracy (civil rule) in 1999 was the country's noticeably greater civic and expression freedoms. Little to almost nothing has changed with regard to persistent corruption, violent crime, and poverty, among other drawbacks. The majority of people assume that Nigerians can at least express themselves freely under the country's new political environment. The fundamental right to freedom of expression is still not guaranteed, thus the impression given to other nations is misleading. Since 2016, there have been numerous instances of violations of the right to freedom of expression in Nigeria, including detentions, acts of torture, and other forms of harassment and intimidation, many of which result in fatalities. He described these instances. It has become the norm to use force to crush peaceful expression. When the government responds to nonviolent protests by carrying out extrajudicial murders, people don't care about the dead. How can they care about the dead if they don't care about the living? The majority of these crimes have been committed by Nigerian Police Force members. The Nigerian Armed Forces have occasionally been responsible for the offenses, employing phrases like "crocodile dance," "crocodile smile," "python dance," and other like terminology. Along with nonviolent protestors, journalists, human rights campaigners, members of rival political parties, other political activists, and innocent bystanders have all fallen prey to

indiscriminate police operations. In the hinterlands, innumerable such atrocities against Nigerian citizens are being committed.

Since they are not even reported, the media or a human rights organization might never be aware of them. Consider the unspeakable tragedies, such as rape, murder, and cruelty that ranchers inflict on the women in their farmlands and villages. Furthermore, it cannot be denied that there have been more current cases of free speech violations in Nigeria than there were in the past. Due to several instances of political incarceration, including the denial of the right to vote to qualified individuals and the murder of Nigerians even at the polling locations, they grew scared of coming to the polls, let alone casting their vote. The elections are essentially rigged. These have two outcomes: political imprisonment and enslavement. In contrast to the pointless chitchat on social media (Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, etc.), Nigerians seem not to be able to openly voice their ideas. The talk with the young Nigerian graduate who was jobless and traveling caused us to contemplate philosophically about freedom in Nigeria, between Nigerians and the government (leaders), among other many other repercussions of the conversation.

Evaluation of Freedom and Responsibility in Jean-Paul Sartre's Philosophy

Philosophical facts are subject to criticism and review since, as we all know, they are not absolutes. Thus, neither exceptions nor exclusions are established for Sartre's philosophical views on freedom and responsibility. In this study project, we have attempted to examine a dictionary and reveal Sartre's views on human freedom. Because of the circumstances in which he found himself when he wrote down his ideas, Sartre's theory or position is, up to a point, quite persuasive. Also noteworthy is the fact that the majority of modern philosophers and intellectuals accepted his fusion with the concept of human freedom.

Despite treating these two ideas, Jean-Paul Sartre focused more on the idea of freedom as a value or aspiration, and as a result, he believed it to be the very essence of man. A thing's essence—that which gives it its unique identity—can be thought of as its definition. Although freedom is not what makes a man, it cannot be disputed that a man is free. In any case, we must also comprehend the fact that, as a result of this comprehension, freedom cannot be taken to be total. Man must accept responsibility for his acts because of the nature of man, which makes him prone to making mistakes. Because of his flaws as a creature, man occasionally fails to achieve his goals; as a result, some of his acts frequently have the opposite effect. However, it is not unexpected that we tend to retreat from suffering into ill faith the majority of the time if, as Sartre claims, accountability extends from the smallest incident in personal life to the largest occurring in the world at large and forever free. On the other hand, we must concur with Sartre that it is bad to use self-deception to abdicate one's responsibility. The individual will not feel at peace with his conscience, in his words. Furthermore, we acknowledge that a man should make an effort to live a genuine life that is in line with his fundamental values, regardless of how significantly these values diverge from those of his society (Sartre, 1943; 88). Regarding the topic of choice, Sartre firmly holds that man was thrown into the world and that he chooses and determines what he makes of himself. The fact that choice implies limiting one's situation makes it challenging to discuss in this context, it is important to note. In other words, when one selects from a wide range of options and alternatives, he separates himself from those he did not select from. Considering the present, one might venture to say that, absent the circumstances that shaped his philosophical formation, Jean-Paul Sartre would not have taken atheism seriously. Given the influence of the time's rational scientific thought on religion, which led to the final disintegration of religious tradition in Europe, and the impact of World War II, which also resulted in the massive destruction of pre-existing superstructures in the west and claimed the lives of so many people, Friedrich Nietzsche declared that "God is dead," which heightened the sense of futility and

meaninglessness of life.

Conclusion

Throughout history, there has been discussion about freedom and responsibility. Whether or not we have control, is freedom confined or unrestrained, conscious or unconscious, and responsible or irresponsible? This topic was tackled from numerous angles by philosophers with distinct backgrounds. Freedom and responsibility are two characteristics that help to define what is morally right and what is human. We must act impartially, responsibly, and without prejudice if we are to completely comprehend the reality of human existence. It is important to note that Jean-Paul Sartre's philosophical ideas and teachings touched on the freedom that is the vital future of man. Making decisions is an expression of the freedom that makes a man. Thus, choice of course of action and making decisions became necessary for man. It should be stressed, though, that our love of freedom and responsibility does not in any way elevate us above other humans or oblige us to act on our desires. Instead, it illustrates the joy that freedom offers to people. For something to be termed freedom, it needs to make sense and be cognizant of responsibility. The idea of having freedom without responsibility is absurd and untrue. The flexibility that comes with responsibility allows us to weigh the "pros" and "cons" of our options while making decisions. Therefore, absolute freedom is illogical and unreasonable. This work supports the necessity and promise of living in full freedom in light of the challenges and struggles that exist around the world, particularly in Nigeria.

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