

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background of Study**

Existentialism, which is the core area of this research, with its emphasis on the human condition in the philosophy of Jean Paul Sartre is one of the most exciting branches of modern philosophy. Existentialism is the philosophical traditional of the late 19th-century and 20th-century which believes that the philosophical enterprise should be about the consideration and exploration of the being with an existential experience-man. Jean-Paul Sartre, the founder of French Existentialism, was born in Paris in 1905 but unfortunately lost his father, when he was only fifteen months old. His mother, Anne-Marie “without money or a profession”, had no option but to return with him to the home of her parents, Charles and Louise (Guillemin) Schweitzer. Sartre, in his own autobiography, described how he hated his childhood and everything that remains from it because of the bourgeois hypocritical atmosphere of his grandfather’s household. His grandfather, Charles Schweitzer, kept him at home until he, was ten years old, supplying him with tutors rather than submit him to the inferior standards and association with less gifted children of the public schools. The consequences was that Sartre stayed at home for five years beyond the normal time for entering school, received a poor education from irregular tutoring and was kept a prisoner in his grandfather’s huge apartment. However, one was that he lived in a world of books which filled his grandfather’s study and his grandmother’s lending library. “I began my life” Sartre reveals, “as I shall no doubt end it amidst books.”<sup>1</sup> This profoundly influenced his lifelong vocation of writing.

Later in life, Sartre was educated in some of the finest schools in France, culminating in the prestigious Ecole Normale Supérieure, a graduate school, where he met Simone de Beauvoir. While in Germany, he studied the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger and in 1938 published his *Nausee* (translated as *Nausea* in 1949). This was followed by *Imagination* (1940) – translated as *The Psychology of the Imagination* (1948). Sartre's major philosophical work *L'Être et le Néant* (1943) was translated, as *Being and Nothingness* (1956). Apparently, this work was influenced by Heideggerian phenomenology, although Heidegger was not impressed with Sartre's adoption of his ideas in the articulation of an existentialist humanism. Sartre's *Lecture, L'Existentialisme est un Humanisme* published 1946 was translated as *Existentialism is a Humanism* in 1947.

In 1964, Sartre refused to accept the Nobel Prize in Literature on the ground of personal principles. Before his demise in 1980, his interests shifted towards social and political philosophy, where he tried to synthesize his atheistic existentialism with a seeming contradictory *Reason* (1960) was an attempt at humanizing Marxism. In summary, Sartre's philosophy embraces a human centered phenomenological ontology, existentialist humanism, extreme individualism and absolute human freedom.<sup>2</sup> Sartre's philosophy owes more to Heidegger than to any other thinker.

Throughout the ages, all of man's major planned or implemented endeavours have been guided by well-thought-out ideas, leading to expectations, views and visions. Indeed, there is hardly any major event undertaken or proposed by man, which is not guided by ideas developed through intuition, induction or deduction. When there is not this basic idea, that event is most often rudderless and doomed to failure. The discipline and enterprise of philosophy has for many centuries continued to help man

to increase and improve his understanding of himself and his world. Thus, "It is philosophers who undertake this task of articulating ideas and positions towards deriving solutions to the problems of life and existence."<sup>3</sup> To avoid failure in human endeavours and to continue to improve the methods and results of other disciplines, the importance of the continued development of philosophical ideas cannot be over-emphasized. In philosophy, it is the case that there is a continuous dissatisfaction with the existing *status quo*. There is no room for any epistemological complacency.

"Despite some minor and major doctrinal differences, the existentialists share the belief that philosophical thinking begins with the human subject."<sup>4</sup> According to Sartre, "Existentialism is first moved to make every man aware of what he is and to make the full responsibility of his existence rest on him". Many critics argue that Sartre's philosophy is contradictory."<sup>3</sup>

Specifically, they argue that Sartre makes metaphysical arguments despite his claim that, philosophical views ignore metaphysics. Herbert Marcuse criticized *Being and Nothingness* by Jean-Paul Sartre for projecting anxiety and meaninglessness onto the nature of existence itself: "Insofar as existentialism is a philosophical doctrine, it remains an idealistic doctrine: it hypostatizes specific historical conditions of human existence into ontological and metaphysical characteristics. Existentialism thus becomes part of the very ideology which it attacks, and its radicalism is illusory."<sup>5</sup>

Sartre defines man as a free being, for Sartre man is absolutely free.

Sartre's philosophy attempts to make man the centre of the universe and the first in the scheme of things. His thought was also influenced by the Second World War in which there was a need for individual salvation in a crumbling world and he believed that the solution lies in existentialism, a philosophy which advocates human freedom,

choice and subjectivity over any abstract, objective rationalistic procedure at solving human problems. Sartre believes that man has an absolute freedom through which he can order his actions. Like Descartes, Sartre is of the view that knowledge starts from the subject, that is, the individual. There is no way in which something can constitute knowledge without being influenced by man's subjective considerations. This work therefore takes a look at Sartre's human condition in order to bring to light certain principles that condition human existence and core existence in Nigeria.

## **1.2 Statement of Problem**

Ever since man began to have concerns beyond the necessary fulfillment of subsistence needs, there have arisen questions as to the origin, nature, essence and definition of the human being. These questions have been raised from different situations, and answers to it expressed through various means as well. For Sartre, the human condition is the fundamental situation which man finds himself. This situation which all men share consists of freedom and facticity. In this situation each person strives to achieve his goals within his limitations. Actually, this work overwhelmed over certain social political issues bedeviling Nigeria. This work asserts that these issues are responsible for why Nigeria is progressing retrogressively. This issues why Nigeria is not progressing, this research work discovered them in Jean Paul Sartre's philosophy in human condition. For example in issues of freedom the question is: to what extent is man free? Can we say that we are really free? When we look at the context of Nigeria in terms of freedom, can we therefore say that we are really free especially area of freedom of expression, freedom of movement, freedom of religion and freedom of association. In Nigeria, one is not free to express oneself anyhow. Nowadays people are killed and kidnapped because they belong to one religion or the

other just like in the case of Lieah Sheribah who was kidnapped with her follow students was held back because her ardent believe her faith as a Christian. So can we say that we are really free? These and more are the questions to which this study shall address itself.

### **1. 3 Purpose of Study**

.For Sartre, man is “condemned to freedom.”<sup>5</sup> However, the central proposition of existentialism is that *existence precedes essence*. The actual life of the individual is what constitutes what could be called his or her "true essence" instead of there being an arbitrarily attributed essence used by others to define him or her. Thus, human beings, through their own consciousness, create their own values and determine meaning to their life.

This work aims at proper hermeneutics of the meaning of human, condition which entails freedom and facticity. This work also attempts to establish the nature of man’s existence for Sartre and a place of freedom for man’s authentic existence. The reason is to avoid the erroneous notion of freedom, facticity, injustice, wrong notions and implications of certain principles that condition human existence and co-existence in Nigeria and that was the reason for the choice of this topic.

### **1.4. Scope of Study**

This study which is concerned with the human condition in Jean Paul Sartre is a research within the discipline or branch of philosophy that is existentialism. It will dwell on Sartre’s conception of man and his existence, while bringing into cognizance the position of other existentialists towards a greater understanding of the human being in existence.

## **1.5 Significance of Study**

Every research should aim at contributing to knowledge or scholarship. The significance of this dissertation therefore is to contribute to scholarship. Jean Paul Sartre postulated that “existence precedes essence.” This simply means that “man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world and defines himself afterwards”<sup>6</sup>. Not that he is simply what he conceives himself to be, but he is what he wills. Man is indeed a project which possesses a subjective life, instead of being a kind of moss or a fungus. Before the projection of the self, nothing exists of man; not even in the heavenly realm of intelligence. Man only attains existence when he is what he proposes to be. What is new in this research is that we are using Sartre’s philosophy as recourse to solving certain social political issues in Nigeria. For example when we talk about the authenticity of life, we will see that our leaders in Nigeria are living inauthentic life. They say one thing and mean another thing. They make promises and do not keep to them. This work submits that they should own up their responsibilities, let their ‘yes be yes’ and ‘no be no’. Furthermore, we should not allowed the natural conditions we are born into to hinder us from progressing, that is, tribe should not hinder us; religion should not hinder us; language should not hinder us; party affiliation should not hinder us; from working for the overall development of Nigeria. This work therefore calls for war against ‘executive impunity and rascality’.

## **1.6 Methodology**

This work adopts hermeneutic method. “Hermeneutics is derived from the Greek word ‘*hermeneuo*’-to interpret. Folk etymology places its origin with *Hermes*, the methodological Greek deity who was a messenger of the gods.”<sup>7</sup> Hermeneutic method

is adopted in this research to interpret the views of Sartre on human condition. This shall be examined side-by-side with the positions of other existentialists towards a determination of the authentic human condition. Hermeneutic method “is the method of interpretation of opinion, works, and concepts”<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the work comprises five chapters. Chapter one shall be the general introduction, chapter two deals with literature review which exposes the views of some philosophers and scholars on Sartre’s human condition, while Chapter three focuses on Jean Paul Sartre’s existentialism. Chapter four dwells on human condition in Sartre. Chapter five has to do with the evaluation and conclusion.

### **1.7 Definition of Terms**

According to Aristotle, the starting point of every philosophical discourse is the definition of the terms involved. The need for explication of terms is to avoid ambiguities as well as possible misconceptions. Moreover, some terms have additional nuances of meaning arising from the context of the study, hence the need to bring out such meanings. In respect of this, the following terms are clarified:

#### **Man**

According to George Ekwuru man is “an enigma”<sup>9</sup>. In Buddha’s conception, the human being is a “Skandha of Skandhas”. This means that the human being is a bundle of the five bundles of form or shape, feelings, sensation or perception, act of will and consciousness or awareness<sup>10</sup>. For Aristotle, man is a rational animal, while for Descartes, man is a thinking being (*res cogitans*) with an extended body (*res extensa*). Literarily, the new *Webster’s dictionary of the English language* defines man as “the most highly developed of all primates differing from other animals in having

erect posture, extraordinary development of the brain and the power of articulate language.”<sup>11</sup> However, in the context of this study, man is a free being i.e. existential being. Man is that being with an existential experience. Man is that being that creates his own essence in his freedom and choice.

Man is that being that develops his own meaning and impacts meaning unto every other thing that there is. For Sartre, Man is that being that has absolute freedom and creates his essence. Briefly, the theory is this: Man’s project to be God is a universal structure of his being and a necessary motive of his behaviour, but it is not necessarily the final motive of his behaviour, and it is not an absolute or exclusive structure of his being. Man is capable of refusing to be “an accomplice” of the cosmic process; man defies God and the values which haunt him. In doing so, he finds his salvation. The explicit consciousness of the human situation and of man’s total freedom as revealed in anguish gives to the individual a new perspective in terms of which the fundamental structure of his being may be completely altered through a “radical conversion.” As Sartre himself puts it in the last pages of *Being and Nothingness*, the analyses which he has there made should.

According to Sartre, man freely chooses his own goals and in terms of his choice of goals confers upon the ready-made and pre-human whatever meaning it may possibly have. Resuming this argument briefly, human action is always to be interpreted as a reaction against an existing state of affairs and an effort to establish an ideal state of affairs. It implies both the recognition of a given situation as undesirable and the conception of an ideal situation as desirable. These two factors appear simultaneously, complimenting one another; but neither of them can be determined by the objective



situation in itself, since “no state of fact can determine consciousness to grasp it as a negative quantity or as lack.”

Man, says Sartre, is “nihilating nothingness.” If again we follow the common sense approach and take as the primary definition of being the being of fact, that is, the being which points to no ideal goal and which is simply what it is without reference to any system of values, then conscious human existence is pure nothingness; for consciousness is nothing more than complex of desires tending towards the realization of an ideal state in the future. This ideal state of affairs being nonexistent, the desire or motive behind it is likewise nonexistent, the desire and its ideal value being but two aspects of a single phenomenon. “The motive can only be understood by its end, that is to say, by a nonexistent; the motive of action, therefore, is in itself a negative quantity”<sup>12</sup>. But this nothingness of desire and of value, of motive and end of human behavior, can only exist for the individual in so far as he nihilates the being which he is, i.e., the objective situation and the condition which constitute his being of fact, by posing a better ideal world in terms of which the objective situation and his empirical being are viewed as nothingness. In other words, to exist, man must perpetually transcend himself.

## **Being**

According to I. M. Onyeocha, being is anything that is or exists. *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary*; defines being as that which exists or anything that can be conceived as existing.<sup>13</sup> However, in the field of existentialism, being is that subject that is capable of existential experience. Being is man and man is the only being, every other thing being is a thing.

## **Existentialism**

This is a term applied to the work of certain late 19th- and 20th-century philosophers who, despite profound doctrinal differences, shared the belief that philosophical thinking begins with the human subject and not merely the thinking subjects, but the acting, feeling, living human individual.

In existentialism, the individual's starting point is characterized by what has been called "the existential attitude" or a sense of disorientation and confusion in the face of an apparently meaningless or absurd world. Many existentialists have also regarded traditional systematic or academic philosophies, in both style and content, as too abstract and remote from concrete human experience<sup>14</sup>. Sadly, the degree of man-made suffering has increased exponentially since 1984 due to incompetent leadership. Suffering in Nigeria is largely still, many people are suffering because of situations that are out of their control, such as sudden misfortune in business, debilitating disease and the tragic loss of parents, spouses, relatives and friends. But no matter the kind of suffering we are going through, we can still distill some meaning out of it; every human being in a position to alleviate the suffering of another person should do so.

However, when the situation is such that we cannot do anything about it, we can still turn adversity into triumph, our predicament into achievement that we can change our attitude to suffering positively by extracting meaning from it.

If the suffering is avoidable, the reasonable things to do are to remove its cause, unnecessary suffering benefits no one; it is masochistic rather than heroic. Given the increasingly dominant materialism all over the world nowadays it would appear that

the youth consider making money their most important project in life, yet a significant number of people would consider as priority finding a purpose or meaning to their lives.

As a result, the primary motivational force in humans is not the will to power or pleasure, although these are powerful indeed and have contributed in shaping the cause of human history, but the will to meaning, in fact the craving for power or pleasure can be interpreted as a poor response to the question of meaning.

## **Freedom**

Freedom means many things to different persons and in different situations. Thus, it is pertinent to examine it from the perspectives of two of its important senses: the metaphysical and the political senses. Freedom can be metaphysical when it involves freedom of the will. On the other hand, political freedom represents the freedom to participate in political processes. Sartre is concerned with both types of freedom, “although his existentialist theory places most emphasis on the metaphysical freedom” For Sartre, human freedom is just an unavoidable fact that every human being must face. Thus, man is condemned to be free. The word responsibility means one being accountable for something or being morally or legally liable for carrying out a duty. Again, “The freedom of man is accomplished by a heavy and inseparable responsibility in that man is responsible for the way in which he uses his freedom. Man having been compelled to carry the weight of his whole world on his shoulders discovers that there is no way he can escape from responsibility.”<sup>15</sup> There are some basic concepts that feature prominently in Sartre’s notion of absolute freedom such that freedom cannot be treated in isolation from them. These concepts include choice, anguish and responsibility.

## Death

Death is a theme upon which all the existentialists have written extensively. According to Jaspers, "Philosophizing means learning to die" For Camus, in his most existentialist book, the *Myth of Sisyphus*, suicide is the only genuine philosophical issue. Unamuno seemed to be constitutionally incapable of writing a single page without mentioning the word 'death' at least once. St. Augustine and Pascal who are most akin to the existentialists gave this theme the prominence which it has assumed in existentialist literature. "Death is for Sartre a human phenomenon. It is for him the final phenomenon of life and is still life."<sup>16</sup>

Death is always mine and therefore interiorized and individualized. "Thus death is not my possibility" says Sartre, "Rather an always possible nihilation of my possible, which is outside my possibilities"<sup>17</sup>. The two greatest existentialists in this century, Sartre and Heidegger, differ sharply on 'death'. Heidegger tells us that death is a meaningful part of human life, that it is death which confers on human existence its uniqueness and meaning. But on the contrary, Sartre tells us that death is a meaningless absurd which removes all meaning from human existence. 'It is absurd that humans are born' says Sartre, and 'it is absurd that humans die'. Death is not part of man's life; it has no place in man's life. Heidegger is guilty of circular reasoning when he says that death has an individualizing effect on man. Death is never that which gives life its meaning; it is, on the contrary, that which on principle removes all meaning from life<sup>18</sup>. According to Sartre, "Death is merely an external limit or a "wall" which we may encounter at any time in pursuing our personal projects, but which we can never personally or freely project as an end to be pursued."<sup>19</sup>

## **Human Condition**

Although there is no such thing as a universal human nature, there is human universality of condition, which consists of the limitations which define the situation in which human beings find themselves<sup>20</sup>. This human universality of condition, however, is not something which is objectively given, but is being perpetually made and remade by human beings. No purpose defines a human being forever, for a human being can always decide to choose himself anew. Sartre does not think that our physical circumstances, our economic situation or our past actions make no difference at all to our freedom. He acknowledges the limits of freedom to be all those facts that are true of us but that we cannot choose to change. Some general things that we are not free to choose include: our place of birth, our parents, our sex, the language we were brought up to speak, the culture we were brought up in and the laws of physics. We are not free to change them but they are part of the backdrop against which we act. We may choose to react against our past; we also free to embrace our past, and to give it value and meaning. But we are not free to go back and to change what we have done. We must accept our past and move on, reinventing ourselves.

## **Determinism**

Some philosophers have taken determinism to imply that individual human beings have no free will and cannot be held morally responsible for their actions. The determinists ask Sartre: if my action...cannot be understood either in terms of the state of the world or in terms of my past taken as something irremediable, how can it possibly not be gratuitous?"<sup>21</sup> Sartre counters by asking: if the world and my past are

not understood in terms of my personally chosen projects, how can the world and my past possibly not be gratuitous?

The determinists, in other words, say that man's life would be vain and meaningless if it did not have a place in an objective and meaningful scheme of things. Sartre says the universe would be vain and meaningless if man did not endow it with meaning by an unceasing act of choice. It follows from Sartre's fundamental contention that "No state of fact, whatever it may be (political or economic structure of society, psychical 'state' etc.), is by itself capable of motivating any act of whatsoever." He invites us to consider the case of the individual who revolts against certain bitter material conditions in his life. According to the common-sense point of view, in this respect similar to that of the determinist, these objective conditions constitute in themselves a sufficient cause for the action of the individual. But common opinion, if pressed, will recognize that the objective situation stimulates action only to the extent that the individual is aware of a better state of affairs in terms of which the actual circumstances of his life are seen to be unsatisfactory. In order to reconcile the recognition of the fact with the belief that external circumstances are sufficient to cause action, the determinist and the common man tend to explain the awareness of a better situation to be realized in the future as itself a strict causal consequence of the objective situation.

Sartre, however, finds it necessary to "Invite the common opinion and recognize that it is not the severity of a situation or the sufferings it imposes which gives rise to the conception of another state of affairs on the contrary, it is from the day we conceive a different state of affairs that a new light falls upon our misery and our sufferings and that we decide they are no longer tolerable." In so far as man is a part of nature or

“Sunk in the historical situation, it will not even occur to him to receive the defects or the insufficiencies of the given political or economic organization ... he grasps it in its fullness of being and cannot even imagine that it could be different”. The worker subjected the extreme hardship “Will have to go beyond the objective situation and his suffering, to but a distance between himself and it and to affect a double nihilation”<sup>22</sup> on the one hand he will have to pose an ideal state of affairs as a pure nothingness with respect to the present; on the other hand he will have to pose the present situation as a nothingness with respect to that ideal state of affairs.

## ENDNOTES

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2. Ibid. p 136
3. J. P. Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions*. (New York: Philosophical Library. 1957), p.16.
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5. G. Haeffner, *The Human Situation: A Philosophical Anthropology*. (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), p.1
6. G. Jones, Daniel Cardinal, Jeremy Hayward, *Existentialism and Humanism*. (London: John Murray Publishers, 2003), p.1.
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15. J. P. Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, (Great Britain: Methuen & Co., 1973), p.45.
16. G. E. Ekwuru, *Introduction to Philosophical Anthropology* (Owerri: Austus Printers and Publishers. 2008), p.6.



17. S. E. Stumpf, *Element of Philosophy: An introduction*. 4<sup>th</sup> edition. (New York: McGraw-Hill Inc. 2002), p.223.
18. Warnock, *The Philosophy of Sartre*(London: Hutchison university Library. 1965), p.15.
19. J. P. Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotion*. (New York: The Philosophical Library Press. 1959), p. 216.
20. M. Warnock. *The Philosophy of Sartre*. p.34.
21. G. Jones, D. Cardinal, J. Hayward, *Existentialism and Humanism*.(London:John Murray Publishers, 2003), pp.33-34.
22. R. G. Olson, *An Introduction to Existentialism*.(New York: Dover Publications. 1962). p. 139.
23. R. G. Olson. *An Introduction to Existentialism*. p.78.
24. J. P. Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotion*. (New York: The Philosophical Library Press. 1959), p. 212

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In Adrian van den Hoven's edition of Sartre's *We Have Only This Life to Live: The Selected Essays of Jean-Paul Sartre*,<sup>1</sup> nothing disproves the ill-informed criticisms that philosophy is an obscure field better than a philosopher's writings on allegedly non-philosophical topics. This collection of essays from the existentialist philosopher counters such claims and attests to philosophy's continued relevance without explicitly setting that goal. Now-common place subjects, like New York City and jazz, in Sartre's hands become telling indications of the differences between American and European metropolitan lifestyles, their solitary versus communal tendencies.

Lloyd Alexander and Richard Howard's edition of Jean Paul Sartre's *Nausea*, "presented Sartre in his first novel, where he began to explore what would later come to be known as existentialism, or the philosophy that: Holds that there is no intrinsic meaning or purpose, therefore it is up to each individual to determine his own meaning and purpose and take responsibility for his actions."<sup>2</sup> While this line of philosophical thought does have its origin in Kierkegaard, it was in the writings of Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus and Sartre that these ideas were fully developed. Sartre's position on human freedom has elicited a rich scholarship.

Antoine Roquentin in his book: *A Solitary Man* recants Sartre's affliction with a recurrent feeling, one that he terms 'the Nausea'. At times, he feels that life is repugnant, a vapid, shallow game between mindless people who have no real idea of their own purpose or consequence, himself included. At first he dismisses these feelings as the typical lonely thoughts of an ageing academic who is unable to

complete the book he has been researching for years, but as the feeling continues and he is able to examine himself with greater and greater clarity<sup>3</sup>, Roquentin begins to learn that maybe he has stumbled upon one of the great truths of human reality. As Roquentin realizes in *Nausea*, man makes himself exist by projecting and losing himself beyond himself. Sartre argues that the individual is the desire to be, without ever being able to be, a substance. Therefore, he must transcend himself and reach outside of himself in order to realize a conscious project. Only then will he live authentically, and only then will he ever come closer to realizing himself as truly human. "It is not by turning back upon himself" writes Sartre, "but always by seeking, beyond himself, an aim which is one of liberation or of some particular realization, that man can realize himself as truly human.". What this means is that in spite of the fact that an individual will probably never reach his ideal realization, it is still better for him to transcend himself than it is for him to turn 'back upon himself' and attempt to live like an in-itself, in bad faith. He discovers that there is no essence, no importance in motion or in the petty labels that people like to attach to themselves and others in a bid to catalogue the world and everything in it, and by cataloguing, to control.

The terms of our existence are unspecific, but clear. We do not exist to be pawns to a god, or to move the path of humanity forward. Instead, we exist simply to exist, we are an end unto ourselves, and the inherent absurdity in our lives means that a meaningful existence is impossible and even blasphemous. Through clear-eyed, coherent thinking, we are able to control our lives as we choose, and it is up to every man and woman to independently reject suicide. For those that do not, the

meaningless quality of our lives makes no difference when compared to those that do, thus there is no dishonor or achievement in either.

Leo Franchi in an article titled: *Sartre and Freedom* states that human freedom is undoubtedly one of the most fundamental ideas that have driven the development of democratic politics in the last few hundred years. However, Jean-Paul Sartre, in *Being and Nothingness*, upends the conventional view of freedom and frames the issue in a new, existential framework<sup>4</sup>. Sartre's existential philosophy stems from his new vision of consciousness, and by answering the question of the being in a new way; he provides a different understanding of our existence in this world. At the heart of Sartre's new philosophy is his division of being into two categories: for-itself and the in-itself.

Franchi maintains that central to Sartre's philosophy is the concept of nothingness, or, as he puts it, the nihilation of being. This is for-itself, which is an empty negation of the non-conscious being which is called the in-itself. In simpler terms, we can look at the consciousness of human beings as for-itself, and the non-conscious being of human beings the in-itself. Although it seems that these two terms divide the being of humans into two separate parts, Sartre explains that because the for-itself is nothing more than the negation of the in-itself, they are irrevocably linked, and we can avoid the pitfall of having a dichotomy at the heart of being.

Freedom plays a key role in the determination of consciousness for Sartre. Freedom is the being of humans, and is inexorably linked to for-itself. Although it sounds uncomfortable, if not unnerving, Sartre maintains that human beings are necessarily free, always, and it is impossible for a human to fail to be free. To fail to be free, in his

view, is the same as to cease to be. For-it exists as nothingness in the middle of being. This is why Sartre states that “For-itself, in fact, is nothing but the pure nihilation of the in-itself, it is like a hole in being at the heart of Being.”<sup>5</sup> From this point, Sartre concludes in a famous sentence, that existence precedes essence. As the fundamental being of consciousness is nothingness, but nevertheless consciousness exists, consciousness has the task of defining itself by what it projects upon itself. There is no predefined being that consciousness is tied to, and there is no path that consciousness is forced to take. Sartre talks about two things in relation to the nothingness for-itself: time and freedom. Sartre begins by saying that consciousness is separated by its past and its future by the nothingness of its being. This sounds like a vacuous statement, but once the concept of freedom is brought to bear, it becomes clear. For-itself, by being completely empty, has the ability to define itself at any moment. This is its freedom. Freedom allows the for-itself to redefine itself in every instant, it gives it the power to break from the past and to create itself.

Yvonne Manzi, in another paper titled; *Jean-Paul Sartre: Existential ‘Freedom’ and the political*. Philosophers have been pondering the notion of freedom for thousands of years. From Thucydides, through to Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, John Stuart Mill and Jean Jacques Rousseau, the concept of freedom has continually been dealt with to some degree in political thought. However, existentialist philosophers such as Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre were well-known in their time for being involved in resistance, unforgiving of collaborationism and conformity, and for having an active interest in revolutionary movements<sup>6</sup>. When coupled with the fact that freedom is one of the most significant themes that are examined by existentialist philosophers, one wonders why this branch of philosophy has not been more appropriately dealt with in

political thought. Perhaps it is because existentialism indeed appears to be more of a life-philosophy than a tradition fit for the conception of political theory and policy.

Manzi submits that it is not out of place to argue that before political theories, policies and institutions can be conceived, one must first be able to appropriately situate the human condition. Existentialism provides a unique and compelling account of what it means to be 'human', which allows for Sartre's conception of freedom to be reasonably developed."<sup>7</sup> Manzi states that it is primarily important to note the context in which the existentialist ideas of Jean-Paul Sartre arose. After the world wars, there was a break down in traditional ideas of philosophy. There was no true sense of community, no faith in human nature, and an increasing belief that perhaps the divine did not truly exist if it allowed for atrocities such as the holocaust to happen. Manzi quotes Sartre stating:

Never have we been as free as during the German occupation... Since the Nazi venom snuck even into our thoughts, every correct thought was a conquest; since an all-powerful police tried to keep us silent, every word became precious like a declaration of principle; since we were watched, every gesture had the weight of a commitment... The very cruelty of the enemy pushed us to the extremity of the human condition by forcing us to ask the questions which we can ignore in peacetime.<sup>8</sup>

Freedom was such a powerful notion for Sartre and freedom for Sartre is not the freedom to do something. He says "you are free" because you always have a choice, "therefore choose". But because this creates anxiety and anguish, individuals flee in self-deception and continue leading inauthentic lives. Man is free when his consciousness acknowledges that something is lacking, when he makes a purpose of himself, and when he commits.

In Sartre's words, this is when he "transcends" himself. This was done well under occupation because what was lacking then was evident, almost palpable. Consequently, he argues, every action became a commitment. Man was thus asserting his freedom. He does not seek to say that individuals in peacetime are under illusory freedom. In peacetime they simply do not think about the same issues, and they are much less likely to realize what to be human truly means.

E.U. Ezedike in his article titled: Sartre's *Existentialism: A Critical Exposition*, said that Sartre identifies a central claim that is common to all. By this, he meant that human being first of all exists and then through subsequent thinking, willing, choosing and acting, he defines himself or herself. The essence of a thing or a person, on the other hand, is the set of its defining properties that actually makes it the sort of thing it is.

To say that existence precedes essence is a radical affirmation of human freedom, a visitation of Heidegger's phenomenology and a reverse of traditional metaphysics which holds that essence precedes existence<sup>9</sup>. Sartre says that Man first of all exists, encounters himself surges up in the world and defines himself afterward. He maintains that we cannot explain human nature in the same manner as we do a manufactured article. Before any article is made, we must first conceive of such as having a definite purpose for which it is produced and a definite production process. In this case, an entity's essence can only precede its existence. But if human beings, on the other hand, are not divinely created as Sartre claims, then there was no purpose and plan of what we were determined to be. He criticizes philosophers like Diderot and Voltaire who despite their atheistic inclination retained the notion distinctive of the theists-that man possesses a constitutional universal "human nature". These early philosophers

believe that all human beings possess the same essence that precedes their concrete or historic existence which they confront in experience. Sartre faults these atheistic philosophers for supposing that they could remove the idea of aid from their system and still go on with the concept of human nature and objective human values. He claims that “there is no human nature, because there is no aid to have a conception of it ... man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself”<sup>10</sup>. This simply means that man merely exists and afterwards becomes his essential self. He is the author of his essential self. Existence therefore, has primacy over any essence imposed upon it. Although there is no pre-determined human essence or human nature, Sartre however, says that there is a universal human condition. In his view, we face the same challenges, the same limitations and the same questions.

Sartre’s subjective humanistic existentialism implies that each man can personally set out to make himself anything he desires. Freedom is an intrinsic quality and ineluctable fact about man apprehended as subject. Man is not just free, man is freedom; man first exists and then freely makes himself to be whatever he essentially wishes to become. Man is condemned to be free because he finds himself thrown into the world yet free because as soon as he is conscious of himself, he is responsible for everything he does and there is no determinism.

Elijah Okon John in his article titled: Jean Paul Sartre: *the Popularizer of Existentialism. A critical Essays on Phenomenology and Existentialism*, said that existentialism is concerned with the primary and uniqueness of existence that is of the opinion that man must have the immediate expression of self awareness. The personal awareness constitutes what Sartre classifies as the fundamental drive to exist and to be recognized as an individual.”<sup>11</sup>



Thus, he rejects abstract thinking that portrays impersonality and lack of consideration of the subjective nature of existence and human situation. Man is a self-creating being, or a being that makes meaning to his life and then makes himself what he is or what he wants to be. In Sartre's valid opinion, man is a being whose existence precedes essence. In other words, man does not have any essence prior to his existence.

Man exists first and foremost and then creates his own essence. Sartre's existentialism subscribes to be a strong inseparable and dialectical relationship between man and the world<sup>12</sup>. This symbiotic relationship between the world and man is so strong that Sartre sees both of them as one and the same thing. To Sartre, man gives meaning to his existence. It means that without man the world as we know would not have existed and without the world there would be no person or selfhood and vice-versa. The world therefore, exists basically for man and the things therein are mere instruments which man needs for his existence to be actualized. Standing in strict opposition to Cartesian subjectivity which is an isolated one that considers it alone and presents itself as a being that is not aware of the existence of other things beside itself. Sartre subscribes to the existential subjectivity. Which is an isolated issue rather; it is a level in which it discovers itself, the world and others. This means that though man is very much concerned with his individual existence, which on the same token necessarily implies the existence of others because the individual person could not exist without others.

In other words an individual is meaningful only in the community of other beings or, the existence of a man is fundamentally for the sake of others. This does not; in anyway, suggest that the individual man is lost in the crowd. Instead, the individual who discovers his existence in the midst of others is first and foremost, an individual person with his unique life to live and unique death to die. According to him, every

man is uniquely different from another and his history is irreversible<sup>13</sup>. This means that, since two men are essentially the same, Sartre holds that no man should be lost in the crowd as that would amount to living an inauthentic life. An authentic life, in Sartre's parlance is a life that is lived by free choices of the individual who is fully aware of the responsibilities that weigh on him. On the other hand, inauthentic life is a type of life in which "Our preferences and choices would be given hence unfree". This is a situation in which another person dictates to one's life<sup>14</sup>.

Adapted from the Kantian thing – in – itself, Sartre coined the term being – in – itself to support his idea of the subjective being and make nonsense of Kant's objective being. Though Sartre at a point actually agrees with Kant that man cannot exceed the bounds of experience but he also rejects Kant's thing – in – itself because of its character which is basically massive, uncreated and lacking in becoming.

It is a being that is devoid of potency and without any reason for existence. Thus Sartre perceives being in – itself as that which makes existence superfluous. That is, Sartre rejects Kant's thing – in – itself in that concrete phenomena could be assigned any ontological status. Sartre does not only reject Kant's thing – in – itself but he equally frown at Husserlian idealism. He classified Husserl's transcendental ego as a form of solipsism<sup>15</sup>. On this score, therefore, Sartre repudiates Husserl's intentionality as an object outside the realm of the individual's subjective consciousness. Moreover against the Kantian view, Sartre partly agrees with Husserl in his phenomenological assertion that nothing exists beyond phenomena. But he goes further than Husserl and asserts that being is more than the phenomenal appearances. This observation naturally leads Sartre to be satisfied with the subjective individualism. Accordingly, he substitutes being – in – itself for being – for – itself.

This development constitutes the core of Sartre's existentialism. As earlier noted, the core of Sartre's existentialized ontology is embedded in his concept of being – for – itself. This refers to the subjective human consciousness, shown as having characteristics of potency and incompleteness and an indeterminate structure. In this dimension, Sartre maintains that man is without any essence or given nature. That means there is no universal idea of human nature because there is nothing or no God to conceive it.

The implication is that man simply exists, turns up, appears on the scene and only afterwards defines himself and creates meaning or purpose to his existence and the things around him. Thus, man has to depend on his own resources since he is left without any external support. From here, it can be deduced that man has to make himself and the conditions of his existence. That takes Sartre to his battle cry; Man's existence precedes his essence. In as much as man is thrown into the world and abandoned by all or since man is without God to rely on, Sartre holds that man must face the world and choose for himself. He can choose to be either a useful or useless individual. Man has rights of responsibility beyond mere making of himself. In other words, man is also responsible for the making of the world around him by his free choice.”<sup>16</sup> His decision invariably affects all mankind. Sartre's existentialism places a high premium on subjective experience, that is, on an individual inner life, model and experience. “The things that matter most to man are the immediate and subjective, awareness of himself and his environment.”<sup>17</sup> Undoubtedly then, Sartre is of the view that man is inescapably faced with his words, anxieties and decisions. As a result Sartre rejects objective givenness and impersonality of life; because the hitherto classical posture only helps to make man sub – human and life a meaningless affairs.

In Sartre's existentialized philosophy facticity of human existence has a lot to do with the impossibility of what man can become or what man can make of himself. This is, the facticity of human existence are the limiting factor of human life. This view translates to the fact having been "thrown into existence" man finds no meaning in life. Life becomes absurd to him. According to Sartre, man is not the author of life, he is only thrown into it, yet he is compelled as it was his mode of existence. Facticity of human existence further reveals the finitude of human life. That means that man is limited to be free" in the first place, man is not free not to be free. But, in the second instance, the freedom of another man constitutes the limit of his freedom.

In Sartre's words "My freedom on this level finds its limit also in the existence of the other's freedom". Furthermore, the realization of man's powerless and finitude in human existence as expressed through the structure of disappointment and sorrow, sickness and disease, death and delay constitute the facticity of human existence. Since man is without a nature, Sartre holds that man's essence is nothingness. That is, man is nothingness or that man is in a state not Beingness, or of no Beingness.

In the same line of observation the character, the character of nothingness is what Sartre refers to as freedom or free consciousness. This implies that man's basic nature is fundamentally freedom, for "man is condemned to be free", a fate which he cannot escape. In fact, freedom is regarded as the very structure of man. According to Sartre, man exists first and then creates his own essence through his free choices and actions. By virtue of his freedom, man chooses for himself whatever personality or nature he wants. Man also creates his value by his free choice. This shows that man's nature, according to Sartre consists of three parts, his past which he has freely chosen, his present in which he chooses his essence and his future which is always in the making.

Putting these three parts together, it becomes evident that man is never at end until death. In a work quoted earlier, Sartre insists that man cannot avoid choosing.

He cannot refuse to choose because a refusal to choose is in itself a choice. He cannot choose not to choose<sup>18</sup>. The extended import of this statement is that through man has unmitigated freedom at his disposal and is responsible for what he chooses to become, but this exercise of responsible freedom constitutes what Sartre calls authentic decision.

It should be stated that in Sartre's view man's freedom is inseparably tied to responsibilities. In other words, a person is free to engage himself in any activities of his choice or to make himself what he wants to be, but he must be responsible for whatever comes out of his freely chosen actions. It means, therefore, that human freedom is the very source of values, that there is nothing like objective but subjective values, for it is man who confers value and meaning on things and into existence by reason of his responsible choices. What ultimately creates fear in man is the understanding that he is responsible for his actions. This is also the source of anguish experienced by man each time he is about to choose because he is fully aware that he will be responsible for whatever his decisions will bring. In his critique of Dialectical Reason, Sartre openly declares: "Every age always has a thinker. There was the moment of Descartes and of Locke, that of Kant and of Hegel, finally that of Marx. Of these three epochs of real philosophical investigation, Marxism is the living philosophy of our age". From the above quotation it is apparent that Marxism is so dear to the heart of Sartre than any other philosophy. This explains why Sartre singles out Marxism as the only living and dominant philosophy of our age that cannot be surpassed by any other philosophy. But unfortunately, Sartre's regrets the fact that

Marxism has failed to live expectation in its self – assigned role by not really growing thereby degenerating into a dogmatic system in which human dimension is alienated from it.

Sartre also finds fault with Marx's concept of dialectical materialism in that the doctrine anchored on nature and not man, the centre of gravity and measure of all things, consequently, freedom was destroyed. In the words of Sartre, Marxism stands in need of humanized existentialism. Thus, Sartre's major aim is to work out a fusion of existentialism and Marxism in order to achieve a rejuvenation of ossified Marxism. According to Sartre, once this important fusion or infection of existentialism into Marxism is achieved, existentialism can then cease to exist. In this way, Marxism becomes existentialized or humanized. This hybrid philosophy or existentialized Marxism would become what Sartre calls "a living philosophy" that "is not a totality or finished whole like a fully constructed machine but rather a unifying or synthesizing process that brings together the past and the present oriented to be a future which is not determined in advance.

Olatunji .A. Oyeshile in his article titled: Sartre's *Ontology and the Subjectivity of the Individual*, said that ontology is the study of 'Being' and the place of being occupies a prominent place in the whole of Sartre's existentialist thought. He said that Sartre's being and Nothingness provides us with a medium through which we can get to the subjectivity of the individual."<sup>19</sup> He asserts that his ontology just like phenomenology is descriptive in reference to extra phenomenal realities in the manner of Descartes and Kant. To appeal to extra phenomenal realities in explaining human experience, according to him, Sartre is to be doing metaphysics and not ontology is different and superior to phenomenology because it is concerned with the concept of being and non

being. Sartre is not only concerned with existence as having primacy over essence, he is mainly concerned with modes of existence. There are two kinds of entities in existence, Sartre argues, Being in themselves, and Beings for themselves are non-conscious things. They possess essence since they exist independently of any observer. They constitute the inanimate objects in the world. On the other hand, Being – for – themselves are conscious beings and it is their consciousness that renders them different from other things and their relations to one another. Sartre is concerned to describe the modes of existence of these two beings and their relation to one another in the world. Sartre identifies the being – for – itself with being of consciousness.”<sup>20</sup>

The chief characteristic of the being – for – itself is its activity. It is incapable of being acted on from without, and it consists in and is exhausted by its own intentional, meaning conferring acts. On the other hand, being in-itself or being of things is characterized in terms of a complete incapacity for any relationship to itself. It is in Sartre’s metaphorical language “opaque” and it coincides exactly with itself. All that can strictly be said about it is that it is. It should be noted that the being-for -itself must be with the being-for-itself. Without the in – itself, it a kind of abstraction, it means that it cannot exist without a form. A consciousness has to be consciousness of something; a consciousness which is consciousness of nothing is an absolute nothing. It is consciousness which is essentially man’s subjectivity, that defines being and man is the being through which nothingness comes into the world. Consciousness consists in the activities of man to ask questions and receive negative answers. These negative judgments themselves are said to require, as a condition of their being possible at all, an extra-logical. Or ontic counterpart which is none being. In fact, he agrees with

Heidegger that the notion of non – being is a kind of circumambient medium in which being is contingently suspended.

However, Sartre criticizes Heidegger for failing to show how non – being can appear in particularized or local form within the world. Sartre argues that this is possible if there is a being that generates its own nothingness. That being which generates its own nothingness is human consciousness and this is done when the self – defeating activity of human consciousness creates a hole in the being – in – itself and subsequently, the horizon that surrounds. This focus of negation becomes a world<sup>21</sup>. Accordingly, Sartre believes that consciousness is its own foundation but it remains contingent in order that there may be a consciousness rather than infinity of pure and simple in – itself. This means that as conscious beings we cannot avoid depending on other beings for our livelihood. This is because our consciousness had to be anchored to something outside of itself through which it realizes its project of self transcending. Nothingness, according to Sartre can be constructed in two senses. In the first sense, nothingness is a gap or separation which lies between a man and the world, that is, between a man's consciousness and the world of objects of which he is conscious.

The second sense of nothingness is that of almost futility, of the vanishing and evaporating of objects in the world. Without the awareness of nothingness, man cannot begin to move, from inauthentic to authentic existence. Sartre is more interested in the epistemological aspect of nothingness. Sartre however insists that man must adopt some emotional attitude towards nothingness.

Sartre connects nothingness and negation and shows that the two concepts are related. Negation is defined by Sartre in terms of man's proneness to ask questions, and



therefore be ready for negative as well as positive answers to his questions. Sartre believes that the absence of someone whom I had expected to see is a perceived absence, an actual experienced negation or nothingness, which simply, by its clarity, illuminates the general fact that negation can and does enter our perceptual experience of the world.”<sup>22</sup> A significant point to note here is that we are nothingness because it is through us that nothingness comes to the world. To Sartre nothingness cannot come from something because beings only produce beings, then nothingness can only be produced by nothingness. And since it is through human beings that nothingness appears in the world, then human beings must be a sort of nothingness themselves. Sartre shows that bad faith (self-deception or inauthentic existence) is an avenue through which we hide our subjectivity because we want to act in the ways others do without wanting to be ourselves. Bad faith is a concept that arises from what Sartre calls the facticity of human existence. By facticity of human existence, Sartre means that certain facts are given about us as human beings.

These facts include our being born by certain parents, the environment in which we are born, which has its influence on us and so forth. This structure of the world sometimes makes us to conceal our freedom and subjectivity and believe that there is and of causal determinism. Sartre rejects this attitude. This is because if people are committed to some kind of structure of the world, their freedom will become a mirage. To Sartre, bad faith and good faith or honesty are different ways of taking flight from reality, which is possible and likely because of the incomplete, empty and nothing like nature of human being. It is a nature which goes inevitably with their intelligence and ability to describe and discuss about the world. However, Sartre believes that there is no use for man to try and evade the responsibility entailed in total freedom. Anyone

that attempts to conceal his freedom through bad faith is living an authentic existence and such a person loses his subjectivity which is his main defining attributes.

Sartre points out that the life of man is characterized by obstacles which result from the existence of other beings among other things. These obstacles prevent us from realizing our subjective or personal projects most of the time. Hence, there is absurdity in human existence. We must always try to project our subjectivity in order to overcome the absurdity of human life. Life is constantly seen by Sartre as a futile struggle. This is noticeable in Camus' *Myth of Sisyphus*. Love plays multifarious roles in Sartre's thought. Sartre writes that since man's-relationship with the others is characterized by such ill feelings as jealousy and hatred, then love is a veritable avenue through which human relations can be made positive. In a love affair, Sartre asserts that man projects his individuality as well. This is because one man steals the liberty of the other person which the victim does not know because he has an implicit trust on the person who has stolen his freedom. The lover is designing to possess the other, not only does he turn him into an object, he also occupies his freedom and exists through him. Love in this light is a kind of constant struggle between two consciousness with each trying to use the other as a stolen freedom in order to assert its own freedom. Here, love is being used to project further the individuality of man.

He wants the other to see the world through him. For instance, what is good for Mr. 'X' is what should be good for Mr. 'Y' who is being loved by Mr. 'X'. Once this aim has been achieved, once the lover's 'for – itself' has absorbed or annihilated the other's 'in – itself', he has no other activity for his 'for itself', and he must begin again, and so on, unless someone reverses the roles and applies the same process to him.

The constant struggle between lovers can be construed in three patterns of behavior concerning, our relationship with others. To Sartre, first, a lover may either become a sadist or seek to appropriate the other completely and by violence. Second, he may become a masochist, and consent to be nothing but a thing; simply an object for the consciousness of the other and third, he may adopt the attitude of indifference, which amounts to evading the conflicts altogether. According to Sartre, “shame is shame of oneself before the other, these two structures are inseparable. I need the other to realize fully the structures of my being. The ‘for – itself’ refers to the ‘for others’. The concept of shame which Sartre uses can be illustrated through the anecdote of a man eavesdropping through the keyhole. On hearing footsteps behind him he becomes conscious that somebody is watching him and he feels ashamed of his act. In fact, he is dissolved in the act, this proves to him that there are other conscious beings like him around. Shame can also serve as the basis for bad faith. This is because my consciousness of other people as watching me will sometimes prevent me from exercising my freedom in the proper way. Death, Sartre believes like many others, is considered as the final boundary of human life. However, Sartre stresses that it is characterized by absurdity. He uses the analogy of the condemned man to show the inability of man to determine the time of his death. According to Sartre, we are in the situation of a man who has been condemned to death and who is bravely preparing for this ultimate penalty. Sartre is of the view that one can expect a particular death, for example dying through motor accidents and so forth, but one cannot expect death itself. Death according to Sartre, is annihilation of my possibilities and since the time of death is not fixed by us, it will not be proper to say that death confers a meaning on life from the outside. This is because a meaning can only come from subjectivity. And

since it is the case that death does not appear of the foundation of our freedom; it only removes all meanings from life. Sartre attempts to compare life and death, life; he believes decides its own meaning because it is always in suspense. Death or dead life is the end of all possibilities. The death being is acted upon and cannot act. In Sartre's words to be dead is to be a prey for the living. This means therefore that the one who tries to grasp the meaning of his future death must discover himself as the future prey of others<sup>23</sup>.

Sartre believes that death does not limit our freedom. Death, he says, haunts me at the very heart of each of my projects as their inevitable reverse side. This is because the freedom which is my freedom remains total and infinite, Death therefore is not an obstacle or hindrance to my projects and it is just a destiny of these projects elsewhere. The reason is not because death does not limit my freedom, Sartre notes, but because freedom never encounters this limit.

He concludes that, I am not free to die, but I am a free mortal since death escapes my projects because it is unrealizable, I myself escape death in my project. Since death is always beyond my subjectivity, there is no place for it in my subjectivity. Sartre's existentialism like that of Nietzsche tends to emphasize self interest over objective morality<sup>24</sup>. According to Sartre, existentialism is a doctrine that renders human life possible and it also affirms that truth and action imply both an environmental and human subjectivity. To Sartre, atheistic existentialism of which he is a representative declares with greater consistency that if God does not exist, there is at least one being whose existence comes before its essence, Man that being. To say that existence precedes essence is to say that man first of all exists; encounters himself surges up in the world and defines himself afterwards. To Sartre, "man is nothing else but that

which he makes of himself". Sartre argues further that when a man is said to be responsible, he is not responsible to himself alone, but he is responsible to other men. He believes that there are two uses of the word subjectivism. It means the freedom of the individual subject and on the other hand, it means that man cannot pass beyond human subjectivity. It is the latter use of the word which is the deeper meaning of existentialism. Sartre believes that choice between one thing and other affirms the value of what is chosen. This is because we do not choose the worse alternative but better one, and nothing can be better for use unless it is better for others. Therefore, my action is in consequence a commitment on behalf of all mankind. Sartre argues that when he says that his existentialism is humanism, he does not mean the view which sees man as an end possible because man is always making himself. The kind of humanism which Sartre is a legislator for himself, he decides for himself because there is no God to choose for him. Sartre believes that it makes no difference to them if God exists or not since is self – transcending and a creator of his own values. He says that existentialism is an optimistic doctrine of action.

Sartre's "existentialism is a Humanism" attempts to put existentialism on an optimistic ground. It insists that when man chooses for himself, he chooses for others and as a rational being, he always tries to make a good choice through his freedom<sup>25</sup>. Sartre's defects, first, it is strongly contended that there could not be anything like existentialist morality if all that man does is to evaluate the world from his subjective position. Also Sartre is said to have repudiated most of his views in this lecture in the latter part of his life. Another defect is that by giving room for a kind of moral inter – subjectivity is a manifestation of bad faith. Hence, the attempt by Sartre to allude to some Kantian objective moral categories does not help his case.

T. E.Ogar in his article titled: *Humanism of Existentialism: the Sartre's Perspective* said that, it is without doubt that the key term in Sartre's philosophy like in other existentialist philosophy is the word "existence". Existence as we have seen is not the same and does not mean to be alive in this regard. Animals and plants could be said to be alive and to exist, yet they do not have to think about what it implies to exist. "Man is therefore the only being that is conscious of its own existence."<sup>26</sup> According to him, a material thing like stone is simply "in-itself, but the human being is for-itself". The being of man is, so to say not the same as the being of things. Throughout the entire history of philosophy, philosophers have sought to discover what man is, that is, the fundamental nature of man. In his view, a search for human nature in whatever dimension is futile. It is therefore useless to search for the meaning of a given essence of human life in general. The implication here is that man is condemned in Sartre's parlance to re-create himself in whatever situation he finds himself. Man in this situation could be likened to actors who are forced into the stage to perform without laid down guidelines and their mode of operation. It could also be likened to footballers dragged into a football pitch without having previously learned their line of action. Man must therefore decide on how to live. So from the beginning of Sartre's thought, man is seen to be nothing else than that which he makes of himself. This according to Sartre "Appears to be the first principle of existentialism, however, is it not true to say that man is of a greater dignity than a stone or chair."<sup>27</sup> According to Sartre, we cannot explain the nature of man in the same way we describe an article of trade. For instance, when we consider a clay pot, we know that it was made by an artist who had in his mind, a conception of it, including what it would be used for and how to protect it from damage. If by the essence of the clay pot, we are concerned

about the procedure of its manufacture and the purpose it was made, then the essence of the pot for Sartre, could be seen to be prior to its existence<sup>28</sup>. When man is seen from this perspective, we tend to describe him equally as a product of an artisan or a God; who knows what he has put together and by implication its essence. Man, in this conception, is simply the ultimate fulfillment of God's understanding. It is however true that some of the philosophers of the 18<sup>th</sup> century like Kant were either atheists who suppressed the notion of God, they nevertheless retained the idea quite different from that of the atheists. This is conception of man. The idea of these thinkers is that the level and stage of development attained notwithstanding, all human beings have the same basic qualities that are contained in the same definition of men. The idea of human being having a basic essence notwithstanding, their concrete existence is rejected by Sartre while at the same time he embraced atheism. He believed that if there is no God, there is no given human nature precisely because there is no God to have a conception of it.

J. I. Okonkwo, in his book titled: *Absolute Freedom and the Ethical Question on Suicide: A Critique of Sartre's "Being and Nothingness."* says that, Sartre's concern on human freedom is more or less ambiguous<sup>29</sup>. Sartre sees man's essence simply dependent on freedom or if you like on his indeterminateness and what should be called his absolute nature. Sartre draws explicit structures of freedom by attempting a conception of "Action". For Sartre freedom is the first condition of action, the concept of an act contains, in fact numerous subordinate notions. In Sartre's view to act is to modify the shape of the world. On the other hand through action one arranges means in view of an end. An action is to be understood according to him on the principle of intention. Therefore, the fundamental condition of every intentional act is

precisely freedom. Sartre says that “Human reality can choose itself as it intends but is not able not to choose itself. Man is condemned to exist above his essence, and therefore, above his causes and motives and acts just for the very fact that he is condemned absolutely to be free. This should mean that there is no limit to my freedom. It really means that no limit can be found in my freedom except my freedom itself. One must be conscious in order to choose, and one must choose in order to be conscious. Choice and consciousness are in the views of Sartre one and the same thing, freedom claimed by human reality is the organization of these different notions:

- i. The man is free who determines himself rationally to perform an act.
- ii. The man is free, who in as much as his act is fully understood, by the very nature that he committed the act. Sartre uses the example of Adam to express the nature of freedom.

The problem of freedom is therefore placed on the level of Adam’s choice of himself. Freedom as the first condition of action is the totality of my being – in – the – world because being – in – the world is free choice, freedom knows no contingency and is therefore for Sartre absolute. Freedom is choice. Existence is therefore a free – choice. Sartre tries to catch a glimpse of this paradox of freedom by postulating that “There is freedom only in a situation, and there is a situation only through freedom.” The technical and philosophical concept of freedom which we are considering in the views of Sartre here means only the autonomy of choice in the face of any situation. To be free is to be the foundation of freedom and it would be necessary through his freedom to decide the existence of its being. This means that it is necessary according to Sartre that freedom should decide its being – free; that is, not only that it should be a choice of an end, but that it should be a choice of itself as freedom. In this paradox of



freedom Sartre underlined the fact that freedom is originally a relation to a given datum in a given situation. Thus, the world in its complex coefficients of adversity reveals to me the way in which I should stand in relation to the end and actions which I assigned myself.”<sup>31</sup>

David R. Law in his book titled briefly: *Sartre's Existentialism and Humanism*. Said that despite the fact that there is no universal human nature, there is “A human universality of condition” This universal human condition consists of “all the limitations which a priori define man's fundamental situation in the universe’. Whether a person is born a slave, feudal baron, or proletarian, what will remain constant in these radically different lives are ‘the necessities of being in the world, of having to labour and to die there’. Despite the widely differing historical circumstances in which human beings live, they thus share a universal human condition. The limitations of human existence are both subjective and objective. They are objective ‘because we meet with them everywhere and they are everywhere recognizable’. They are the same time subjective, however, ‘because they are lived and are nothing if man does not live them’. That is, they are subjective because each and every individual human being must ‘freely determine himself and his existence in relation to them’.

A further indication of a universal human condition is that no human condition is that no human purpose is wholly foreign to other human beings, ‘since every human purpose presents itself as an attempt either to surpass these limitations, or to widen them, or else to deny or to accommodate oneself to them’. Even if we do not ourselves adopt purposes chosen by other people, we can nevertheless acknowledge these purposes as human beings’ attempts to live in relation to their objective limitations<sup>32</sup>.

Consequently, 'In every purpose there is universality, in this sense that every purpose is comprehensible to every man'. No purpose defines a human being forever, however, for a human being can always decide to choose him or herself anew. Consequently, although there is a human universality, 'it is something given,' but 'is being perpetually made'. The universal human condition consists of the task of choosing oneself within the limitations imposed by human existence, but, 'this absoluteness of the act of choice does not alter the relatively of each epoch'. Central to existentialism is 'the absolute character of the free commitment, by which every man realize himself in realizing a type of humanity'. It is only this commitment that is absolute, not the forms in which the human being expresses his or her commitment. The cultural forms which human beings' commitment and choices may create are always only relative. This means there is no difference between free being and absolute being. Free being is 'being as self-committal, as existence choosing its essence'. This free being is also 'absolute' being, because self-commitment and self-choice are fundamental and universal to all human beings. Consequently, 'there is no difference whatever between being as an absolute, temporarily localized-that is, localized in history-and universally intelligible being'. Absolute being and universally intelligible being are identical, because every human being can recognize and understand the absoluteness of the commitment of every other human being, even though every human commitment always takes place in a concrete historical context and leads to a temporally localized form of being<sup>33</sup>. This argument however,' does not completely refute the charge of subjectivism', as can be seen from the fact that this charge reappears in new guises. First, existentialism stands accused of advocating anarchy because it allegedly teaches 'it does not matter what you do'. Second,

existentialism stands accused of having no standards to judge between right and wrong, for, the critic claims, and ‘you cannot judge others, for there is no reason for preferring one purpose to another’. A third accusation is: ‘Everything being merely voluntary in this choice of yours, you give away with one hand what you pretend to gain with the other’. None of these accusations should be taken seriously. The first criticism, namely, that it does not matter what one chooses, fails to recognize the seriousness of choice.”<sup>34</sup> The seriousness of choice is indicated by the fact that it is impossible not to choose. Even if I choose not to choose, that is itself. It is important to recognize this point, because it brings to our attention the fact that choosing takes place in a real situation and imposes a ‘limit to fantasy and caprice.’ For example, the fact that I am a sexual being capable of having sexual relations and producing children confronts me with the demand to choose my attitude to this situation. Furthermore, in choosing this attitude I am simultaneously choosing for all human kind, for in choosing one course of action over another I am implicitly affirming my conviction that this is the way all human beings should behave. Since in choosing for myself I am choosing for all human beings, my choice is not arbitrary or capricious, because it is always accompanied by my responsibility for others.

The human being cannot avoid choosing, for the decision not to marry and have children, for example, is itself a choice for which she must take responsibility. Consequently, although existentialism holds that the human being ‘chooses without reference to any pre-established values;’ it is unjust to accuse existentialists of advocating choice. The nature of existential choice is best understood by comparing it with ‘the construction of a work of art’.

This should not be taken to mean that existentialism affirms an ‘aesthetic morality’, but only that art provides a useful way of grasping what is distinctive about the existentialist notion of choice. No one reproaches an artist for not painting a picture according to a priori rules, nor do we define in advance what picture the artists should paint. It is the artist who decides what and how she will paint. Furthermore, although ‘there are no aesthetic values a priori’, values are nevertheless present in a work of art, namely, ‘in the coherence of the picture, in the relation between the will to create and the finished work’. In addition, we cannot know in advance ‘what the painting of tomorrow will be like’, nor can we judge a painting until it is finished.”<sup>35</sup> A similar state of affairs pertains to morality. Like art, morality is a creative and inventive act. In morality, ‘we cannot decide a priori what it is that should be done’. This has already become clear in the case of the young man seeking advice on whether he should stay with his mother or join the resistance. He was unable to find any sort of guidance and consequently ‘was obliged to invent the law for himself’. In neither course of action open to him could we accuse him of choosing moral irresponsibility. What this example shows is that the human being ‘makes himself; he is not found readymade; he makes himself by the choice of his morality’. And the human being cannot avoid this self-creative choice of morality, for he constantly lives in a situation that demands s/he choose. The insight of existentialism is that the human being is defined ‘only in relation to his commitments’. Consequently, the charge of irresponsibility leveled by the critics of existentialism is simply ‘absurd.’<sup>36</sup> The second objection leveled against existentialism is that it is impossible to judge others on existentialist principles. This is both true and false. It is true because ‘whenever a man chooses his purpose and his commitment in all clearness and in all sincerity,

whatever that purpose may be it is impossible to prefer another for him'. It is true also because existentialists 'do not believe in progress. 'Progress implies amelioration', but existentialists believe that the human beings is always the same. Although the situation in which human beings find themselves may change, human beings and the task of making a choice in whatever situation in which human beings find themselves do not change. In short, the moral problem facing human beings always remains the same. In another sense, however, the critic is wrong, for it is indeed possible to judge others on the basis of existentialist principles. Judgment of others is possible because, as said earlier, one chooses in view of others one chooses oneself. First, one can make a judgment, not of value but of logic, that 'in certain cases choice is founded upon an error and in others upon the truth'. Thus one can judge someone by saying that s/he is guilty of bad faith self- If human beings live in a situation of free choice, than any human being who attempts to absolve himself of the responsibility of choice by appealing to his passions 'or by inviting some deterministic doctrine' is guilty of bad faith, because he has refused to take responsibilities for the choices he has freely made. But an objector might ask why a human being should not choose bad faith, if he so desires. There are two responses to this objection. First, the judgment that someone is guilty of bad faith that the individual is guilty of any inconsistency. He has freely chosen, but wishes to acknowledge neither his freedom nor his choice.

Thus bad faith is evidently a falsehood, because it is a dissimulation of man's complete liberty of commitment' consequently, 'one cannot avoid pronouncing a judgment of truth'. Another example of bad faith is when I claim I am obliged to observe certain values. If I claim this I am contradicting myself, for I am simultaneously claiming, on the other hand, that this values 'impose themselves upon

me'. If someone then ask what is wrong with his or her wishing to choose bad faith, then my reply is that although there is no reason why that person should not choose bad faith, I nevertheless may declare his choice to be bad faith and point out that 'the attitude of strict consistency alone is that of good faith'. This, then, is the first way the existentialist can judge the person of bad faith: he can show that the behavior such a person is inconsistent and self-contradictory, and therefore is a logical error<sup>37</sup>. The second response to the question 'why should a person not choose bad faith?' is to pass a moral judgment. This moral judgment stems from the fact that 'freedom, in respect of concrete circumstance, can have no other end and aim but itself'. The person of good faith 'can will only one thing, and that is freedom as the foundation of all values', for he knows that values depend upon himself and upon his freely made choices.

This recognition and willingness of freedom as the foundation of all values means that 'the actions of men of good faith have, as their ultimate significance, the quest of freedom itself as such'. This is the existentialist aim, namely to will freedom for freedom's sake', not abstractly, but 'in and through particular circumstances. This does not isolate us from other human beings, however, for 'in thus willing freedom, we discover that it depends entirely upon the freedom of others and that then freedom and the freedom of others are intimately connected. This stems from the concrete nature of freedom. When freedom and the understanding only abstractly, freedom as the definition of a man does not depend upon others. But when I understand freedom in concrete terms as an act of commitment in a particular, concrete situation, then I am obliged to will the liberty of others at the same time as mine. That is, because when I choose, what I believe to be the right choice for all human beings, I cannot make

liberty my aim unless I make that of others equally my aim<sup>38</sup>. The authentic human being is thus 'a being whose existence precedes his essence', who is free and freely wills his freedom in all circumstances in which he finds himself. When I recognize this, I simultaneously realize that I must will not only my own freedom but also the freedom of others. It is this recognition of the primacy of freedom for all human beings that enable me to pass judgment on the person of bad faith. Such judgment is undertaken 'in the name of that will to freedom which is implied in freedom itself'. For the sake of freedom, the existentialist judge those who seek to flee from their freedom and 'hide from themselves the wholly voluntary nature of their existence and its complete freedom'. Those who hide from their freedom 'in a guise of solemnity or with deterministic excuse' are cowards'.

Those who claim that their existence is necessary when in fact 'it is merely an accident of the appearance of the human race on earth' are scum. cowards and scum can be identified, however, only 'upon the plane of strict authenticity. This means that although the content of morality is variable, a certain form of this morality is universal. Kant was right in declaring that freedom is a will both to itself and to the freedom of others, but he mistakenly believes that the formal and the universal suffice for the constitution of s morality. Existentialists on the other hand, holds that 'principles that are too abstract break down when we come to defining action. Again, the student who is struggling to decide whether to stay with his mother or join the resistance provides a good example. What are the criteria according to which the young man could make are the decision? The problem is there is no 'authority', no 'golden rule of morality' that can help him decide. There are simply no means of judging. There is no abstract principle to which the student can appeal to guide him in

his decision. Consequently, the ‘content’ of the decision is ‘always concrete, and therefore unpredictable’. The content ‘has always to be invented’; that is, the individual decides not according to some abstract principle but always within the confines of the concrete of the situation in which he finds himself. We cannot judge the concrete of the decision, but what is important ‘is to know whether the invention is made in the name of freedom.’<sup>39</sup> To accept that human beings must invent their values is to affirm ‘there is no sense in life a priori’. “Life is what we make of it. Indeed, ‘Life is nothing until it is lived; but it is yours to make sense of, and the value of it is nothing else but the sense that you choose.’”<sup>40</sup> This makes clear that existentialism recognizes the ‘possibility of creating a human community’.

Gerald Jones et al in the book titled: *Existentialism and Humanism in Jean-Paul Sartre Philosophy in Focus*, said that, the clue to the analysis of human condition lies in the experience of anguish, through which the existentialists believe themselves to have acquired direct and intuitive insights which totally escaped traditional philosophers<sup>41</sup>. As might be expected of a movement so diverse, the experience of anguish is variously conceived. Subjectively considered, anguish is an extremely intense experience with a wholly distinctive emotional tone. On the one hand, there is a sense of dread, terror, and revulsion. On the other hand, there is a sense of awe, exhilaration, and sublimity. Sometimes they readily succeed one another, but both affective poles must be present if one is to speak of a genuine case of existential anguish.

It will therefore, be convenient for expository purposes to speak of three forms of anguish, each distinguished by its object. It must, however, be borne in mind that the features of the human condition which these three forms of anguish, each



distinguished by borne in mind that the features of human condition which these three forms of anguish are said to reveal have been acknowledged by almost all existentialists and that in most cases their individual experience of anguish has more than one of these features as its object. The anguish of being could just as well be called the anguish of nothingness were it not for the fact that the existentialist use the term ‘nothingness’ in so many different senses that one would be courting serious confusion by so doing. The anguish of being is the feeling we have whenever the thought comes to us that nothingness was and still is just as possible as being, whenever we ask ourselves how it is that there is something rather than nothing<sup>42</sup>. It is a curious fact that one cannot experience the full wonder and mystery of being without thinking of absolute nothingness. A time will come when this universe and nature itself will be extinguished. And just as of the grandest kingdoms and empires of mankind and the Marvellous things achieved therein, very famous in their own times, no vestige or memory remains today, so, in like manner, of the entire world and of the vicissitudes and calamities of all created things there will not remain a single trace, but, a naked silence and a most profound stillness will fill the immensity of space.

The peculiar liability of twentieth-century man to the anguish of being is in part a legacy of the traditional Christian, Hebraic belief in creation *nihilo* and Christian eschatological doctrine of the last judgment. There can be no doubt that meditation upon Christian mysteries was what produced this form of anguish in Kierkegaard, who of all the existentialists stresses it in its purest form. The ancients and most traditional non-Christian philosophers regarded being as eternal and necessary: eternal, because it had no beginning or end in time; and necessary because its eternity and its ultimate nature could be demonstrated by logical reasoning. Aristotle especially took this

view, and spinoza's argument on behalf of the eternity of the world can be traced back to him. Thomas Aquinas was forced to abandon Aristotle on this score and was among the most vehement of Christian philosophers in listing the act of creation as a mystery which has to be accepted on faith alone. Since God is a perfect being who lacks nothing why should he bother to create a world? The traditional technical term for a fact which defies human understanding is "contingent" although existentialist often prefers the word "absurd". And in traditional terminology it was the necessary contingency of being which St. Thomas and other Christian philosopher trying to prove. Another proof of the contingency of being has been presented by a mere recent philosophical tradition, among whose proponents the eighteenth-century English philosopher David Hume is most prominent and which includes the vast majority of philosophers in the English today. Genuine knowledge according to members of this movement is always knowledge of particular beings and the relationships which obtain between them. Still another offshoot of the movement under discussion is positivism, one of whose most notable twentieth – century representatives, Ludwig Wittgenstein, also specifically related the necessary contingency of being to the fact of anguish. "Not how the world is" , he writes "is the mystical but that it is ... "we feel that even if all possible scientific questions be answered the problems of life have still not been touched at all"<sup>43</sup> the fact that thomists, pragmatists, and positivists agree with the existentialists in regarding being as necessary of the letters views. In the first place the thomists base their position upon an agreement which includes amongst its premises certain notions about the nature of the divine being, while the pragmatists and positivists base their position upon a general theory of knowledge. If God does not exist or if he does not have the properties traditionally attributed to him, the

thomists argument loses all validity, all of us, they say, whether we have know the experience of anguish or not, have at least a dim appreciation of the absurdity of being, just as we all have a dim appreciation of the principles of logic. Apparently few, if any human beings can accept with total equanimity that being should be opaque to human understanding. The difference arises at a secondary and reflective level, in the interpretation of the experience of anguish and in the effort to time it. James experienced the anguish of being regularly and with intensity and significantly enough, he constantly complained of a sense of unreality and hollowness which accompanied him throughout his life.

Wittgenstein went even further than James; He regarded the anguish of being as a disease or observation for which a cure should be found. As he saw it, the anguish of being arises because we ask question “what is being” in the mistaken notion that this question is meaningful since other questions of the same grammatical form are meaningful. At first, we think that that “what is being”? upon reflection, however, we see that this is not so, we may not now have a satisfactory answer to other question, but the later is unlike the former in that we can at least conceive of the type of answer which would satisfy us. The solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of the problem, the riddle does not exist for doubt can only exist where there is a question; a question only where there is an answer. Unfortunately, Wittgenstein’s therapy has not been notable successful; and like James, Wittgenstein was hounded until death by fear of mental illness. The Thomists argued that since God is a perfect being that lacks nothing it is impossible to discover within the divine nature a motive for creation, and that since God is an immutable being, it is impossible to understand the act of creation. God’s ways are unfathomable; the being of man and the being of

the world are both stamped with contingency. Side by side with the conclusions of this argument, however, stands the doctrine that the world was made for man that man was made to worship God, and God will reward the individual who properly worships him. The Thomists say that God created the world and found it good, by the right use of his reason and aided revelation, man may know these laws, and by the right use of his free will he may conform to them in his behavior. The thomists find a place for the doctrines of the fall and of the divine grace, but as a rule these doctrines are kept comfortably in the background. It is impossible and unnecessary in a book of this compass to review the subtle and often ingenious reasoning by which thomists have attempted to reconcile belief in a providential divine order with belief in the contingency of being. For our purposes it suffices to point out that the existentialists Christian and atheist alike, refuse to recognize the compatibility of these two beliefs and come out boldly for contingency of being. Accordingly, the Christian existentialists place the dogma of the fall and of divine grace in the centre of their philosophy, as did Augustine and Pascal. The fall did radically affect man's nature. Since the fall of man has become an exile from the world. His natural reason has become not merely important to further God's way but also a barrier between man and God. To say that the being of the world is radically contingent and ultimately meaningless is to say that man knows not why he exists and cannot rise to knowledge of his destiny.

In the language of Heidegger it is as if man were "thrown into" the world and left there. To borrow another term from Heidegger, it is as if man were "forsaken" as Christ was forsaken on the cross. The same idea can be expressed in still other language by saying that man is "alienated" From the source of his being, to say that

the being of the world is radically contingent and ultimately meaningless is to say that its existence is inexplicable and that there is no knowable providential order either in nature or in that large realm of being which includes both man and the external world.

More specifically, it means that there is no reason to believe that the world was made for man. Immanuel Kant declared in the late eighteenth century that he had affected a Copernican revolution in philosophy by showing that the so – called universal and necessary laws of nature are not out there in things themselves, but are rather patterns of human thinking imposed upon things. To mark the distinction between things as they are in themselves and things refashioned by the human mind, Kant introduced the terms “Noumena” and Phenomena” The noumenal world is the world of things in themselves, and of it Kant declared that we can know nothing except that it exists. The phenomenal world is the world actually present to the human mind, the world of the ordinary man.

Even space and time were regarded as mere form of human sensibility and consequently determinations of phenomena or what appears to the human mind, but not of noumena or ultimate realities had Kant been able to foresee the extent to which man would retreat from God and the world to seek after meaning and value within the tortured appreciation of his own individual forsakenness, he would have recoiled in heroic certainty, he was not ready to embrace the nightmare world of Franz Kafka, who better than anyone else has illustrated in literary fashion man’s alienation from the world and from the source of his being.

Finally, The former description explains his reference to the world as a “thin crush of meaning; the latter his reference to the world as a “vanish” on the surface of being – in

– itself by a curious twist Sartre’s in – itself, though remaining radically contingent, takes on two traditional properties of platonic Being; timelessness and immutability<sup>44</sup>. The reason is that like Kant, Sartre regards time and space as properties of the man – made world rather than of being-in-itself. By another curious twist Sartre has his own problem of creation man, he says, must be posterior to the in – itself and emerge from it: but the means by which this occurs is wholly incomprehensible. So for the emphasis has been upon the dream produced by the anguish of being. By implication, however, the positive side of the experience has already been presented

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## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **JEAN-PAUL SARTRE'S EXISTENTIALISM**

#### **3.1 Development of Sartre's Philosophy**

Existentialism is a reaction against traditional philosophies, such as rationalists and empiricists that seek to discover an ultimate order in metaphysical principles or in the structure of the observed world and thereby seek to discover universal meaning<sup>1</sup>. As a Movement, Existentialism began with nineteenth-century philosophers such as Soren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche. It became prevalent in continental philosophy and literary figures Fyodor Dostoevsky and also contributed to the movement. In 1940s and 1950s, the French existentialists as Jean Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, and Simone de Beauvoir, wrote scholarly and fictional works that popularized existential themes such as “dread”, “boredom”, “alienation”. “the absurd”, “freedom”, “commitment”, “abandonment” and “nothingness.”<sup>2</sup> Although there are some common tendencies amongst ‘existentialist’ thinkers, there are major differences and disagreements as well. Jean Paul Sartre was a French existentialist philosopher. He was a leading figure in 20<sup>th</sup> century French philosophy, who was most concerned with the question of the Human Condition<sup>3</sup>. The philosophical career of Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980) focuses, in its first phase, upon the construction of a philosophy of existence known as existentialism. Sartre's early works are characterized by a development of classic phenomenology, but his reflection diverges from Husserl's on methodology, the conception of the self, and an interest in ethics. These points of divergence are the cornerstones of Sartre's existential phenomenology, whose purpose is to understand human existence rather than the world as such. Adopting and adapting the methods of phenomenology, Sartre sets out to develop an ontological account of

what it is to be human. The main features of this ontology are the groundlessness and radical freedom which characterize the human condition. These are contrasted with the unproblematic being of the world of things. Sartre's substantial literary output adds dramatic expression to the always unstable co-existence of facts and freedom in an indifferent world.

As a philosopher, Sartre had a lot of influences both from the ancient and the modern thinkers and this went a long way in shaping his thought. These influences had both positive and negative effects on Sartre. Like any other French existentialists, Sartre treats Descartes as the father of the subject: *cogito ergo sum*<sup>4</sup>. From this he came with the idea of immediate self-awareness, this self-awareness Sartre interprets to be "human freedom". Through the thinking activity, Descartes discovered the reality of the thinking self without reference to any divine being. This interests Sartre a lot and in consequence led to his atheism. Karl Marx was another major influence on Sartre. Through Marx's assertion that "man makes his own history,"<sup>5</sup> Sartre was attracted to Marxism, although, he later abandoned it for its denial of absolute freedom and for advocating that human behaviour and thinking are determined by events.

Hegel in his phenomenology remarked that self consciousness exists in itself and for itself in so far as by virtue of the fact that it exist for another self consciousness; that is, only by being acknowledged. This led to Sartre's distinction of the two modes of being namely, "being in-itself and being for-itself."<sup>6</sup> In order to ground itself, the self needs to be projected, which can be viewed as aspects of an individual's fundamental project and motivated by a desire for "being" lying within the individual's consciousness. The source of this project is a spontaneous original choice that depends on the individual's freedom. However, self choice may lead to a project of self-

deception such as bad faith, where one's own real nature as for-itself is discarded to adopt that of the in-itself. Our only way to escape self-deception is authenticity, that is, choosing in a way which reveals the existence of the for-itself as both factual and transcendent. For Sartre, the proper exercise of freedom creates values that any other human being placed in any situation that could experience; therefore each authentic project expresses a universal dimension in the singularity of a human life. Martin Heidegger was another major influence on Sartre. From him, Sartre learnt that the basic understanding of being is arrived at through the essential analysis of the human person. Hence, Sartre draws Heidegger's dictum – "existence precedes essence". Sartre's ontology also has a lot of bearing on Heidegger. Sartre's ontology is explained in his philosophical masterpiece, *Being and Nothingness*, where he defines two types of reality which lie beyond our conscious experience: the being of the object of consciousness and that of consciousness itself. The object of consciousness exists as "in-itself,"<sup>7</sup> that is, in an independent and non-relational way.

However, consciousness is always consciousness "of something," so it is defined in relation to something else, and it is not possible to grasp it within a conscious experience: it exists as "for-itself." An essential feature of consciousness is its negative power, by which we can experience "nothingness." This power is also at work within the self, where it creates an intrinsic lack of self-identity<sup>8</sup>. So the unity of the self is understood as a task for the "for-itself" rather than as a given. In a nutshell, their existentialist interpretation of the human condition led to the depressing conclusion that life is meaningless and absurd, even so, although Camus and Sartre recommended heroic defiance in the face of existential absurdity, the strong nihilistic flavor of their writings is not suitable in our contemporary world which urgently

requires that go beyond existential nihilism and constant meaning for our lives, both as individuals and as members of the global community, to promote knowledge, love, kindness, solidarity and brotherly feeling among the more than seven billion inhabitants of this planet within the context of environmental sustainability.

In my opinion, the main reason why existentialists argue for the meaninglessness or absurdity of life is because they fell into the error of thinking that the question concerning the meaning of a person's life must be posed and answered in abstract or general terms, which immediately suggests that it is either fixed before hand by some transcendental being (God) or that such a meaning must be a single overarching god common to humanity<sup>9</sup>. Sartre failed to realize that his dictum "existence precedes essence" endues that the meaning of life differs from person to person, from moment to moment, from day to day. Once a human being is born the possibility for constructing meaning and carrying out a specific vocation or concrete mission in life which demands fulfillment is thereby created. Each situation in life is a challenge or problem for a human being to resolve by deploying the productive human powers domiciled in him or her. Thus, there is need for a paradigm shift in our approach to the question of the meaning of life; instead we should begin to understand that everyone is questioned by life, and each person must answer for his or her own life.

To abandon desire is to reduce the tension which constitutes our dignity as human beings. The existentialists also agree with Spinoza in urging man to accept without regrets the ultimate and inescapable realities of life and to seek a kind of fullness of being or coincidence with himself. But for Spinoza the ultimate reality was the whole of things conceived as an harmonious and stable unit, and man achieved fullness of being or coincidence with self by merging his finite personality with infinite being, the

true ground of his being as self. The existentialists, on the contrary, conceive of being dualistically, and for them coincidence with self or fullness of being consists in joyfully accepting or assuming one's finitude.

### **3.2 Human Condition in Jean Paul Sartre**

Despite the fact that there is no universal human nature, there is a human universality of condition. This universal human condition consists of all the limitations which a priori define man's fundamental situation in the universe. Whether a person is born a slave, feudal baron, or proletarian, what will remain constant in these radically different lives are the necessities of being in the world, of having to labour and to die there. Despite the widely differing historical circumstances in which human beings live, they thus share a universal human condition. The limitations of human existence are both subjective and objective. They are objective because we meet with them everywhere and they are everywhere recognizable. They are at the same time subjective, however, 'because they are lived are nothing if man does not live them. That is, they are subjective because each and every individual human being must freely determine himself and his existence in relation to them. A further indication of a universal human condition is that no human purpose is wholly foreign to other human beings, 'since every human purpose presents itself as an attempt either to surpass these limitations, or to elude them, or else to deny or to accommodate oneself to them. Even if we do not ourselves adopt purposes chosen by other people, we can nevertheless acknowledge these purposes as human beings' attempts to live in relation to their objective limitations. Consequently, 'In every purpose there is universality, in this sense that every purpose is comprehensible to every man. No purpose defines a

human being forever, however, for a human being can always decide to choose him or herself anew. Consequently, although there is a human universality, it is not something given; but central to existentialism is the absolute character of the free commitment, by which every man realizes himself in realizing a type of humanity<sup>10</sup>. It is only the commitment that is absolute, not the forms in which the human being expresses his or her commitment. The cultural forms which human being's commitment and choices may create are always only relative. This means there is no difference between free being and absolute being. Free being is 'being as self-committal, as existence choosing its essence; This free being is also 'absolute' being, because self-commitment and self-choice are fundamental and universal to all human beings. Consequently, there is no difference whatever between being as an absolute, temporarily localized – that is, localized in history – and universally intelligible being. Absolute being and universally intelligible being are identical, because every human being can recognize and understand the absoluteness of the commitment of every other human being, even though every human commitment always takes place in a concrete historical context and leads to a temporally localized form being. This argument, however, does not completely refute the charge of subjectivism, as can be seen from the fact that this charge reappears in new guises. First, existentialism stands accused of advocating anarchy because it allegedly teaches 'it does not matter what you do. Second, existentialism stands accused of having no standards to judge between right and wrong, for, the critic claims, and 'you cannot judge others, for there is no reason for preferring one purpose to another'. A third accusation is: 'Everything being merely voluntary in this choice of yours, you give away with one hand what you pretend to gain with the other'<sup>11</sup>. None of this accusation should be taken seriously.

The first criticism, namely, that it does not matter what one chooses, fails to recognize the seriousness of choice.

### **3.3 Existence Precedes Essence**

Sartre sees the situation as completely reversed when it comes to humans. He turns the ‘essence precedes existence’, formula around and says that ‘existence precedes essence’. He writes “we mean that man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world and defines himself afterwards.∴ Our existence comes before any essence we might have.”<sup>12</sup>

Sartre denies that there is such a thing as a ‘human nature’, or a human ‘essence’, that determines or limits man’s essence. The first principle of existentialism, then, is, ‘man is nothing else but what he makes of himself. If this is so than, people are absolutely free. In other words, there is no determinism, man is free, and man is freedom. The most important thing is what man does with his freedom. Thinking, wanting, hoping may be important parts of man’s freedom. Man is nothing else than his plan, he exists only to the extent that he fulfils himself, he is therefore nothing else than the ensemble of his acts, nothing else than his life.

### **3.4 Being in Sartre**

Sartre’s masterpiece, *Being and Nothingness* was clearly influenced by Martin Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, though Sartre was profoundly skeptical of any measure by which humanity could achieve a kind of personal state of fulfillment comparable to the hypothetical Heidegger’s re-encounter with Being. In his much gloomier account in *Being and Nothingness*, man is a creature haunted by a vision of “completion,” what Sartre calls the *ens causa sui* that religions identify as God. Born into the



material reality of one's body, in an all-too-material universe, one finds oneself inserted in being. But consciousness is in a state of cohabitation with its material body; it is nothing. Consciousness can imagine that which is not (imagine the future, etc.). Sartre has basically three classifications of being - being-in-itself; being-for-itself, and being-for-others. And these shall be subsequently examined. In Sartre's scheme, man must feel responsible all the time. That can be quite a punishment, especially when man regularly tries to avoid taking full responsibility for his life. Being responsible for making solid, authentic choices at every juncture is hard to handle. Yet when man chooses not to do it, Sartre accuses him of acting in 'bad faith', lying to himself about his responsibility. Sartre illustrates 'bad faith' in *Being and Nothingness* with a story about a woman out on dates he further said that:

Women who have consented to go out with a particular man. For the first time. She knows very well the intentions which the man who is speaking to her cherishes regarding her. She knows also that it will be necessary sooner or later for her to make a decision, but wants to put it off. Then the man takes her hand and caresses it. This calls for a decision. The young woman leaves her hand there, but she does not notice that she's leaving it". She goes on talking about something intellectual, while her hand rests inert between the warm hands of her companion - neither consenting nor resisting, she denies that one is called for. She refuses to accept the responsibility for making a choice.<sup>13</sup>

For Sartre, this is a superb image of how one flies to avoid one's freedom. This woman does not even notice that the man has taken her hand. The reality is that man finds ways of acting in 'bad faith'. He does not return a telephone call from someone he wants to break up with simply because he does not want to deliver the bad news. When his friend calls back later; he tells him he was so busy that he forgot to call. He

flies out for the soccer team, but only half-hearted. When he does not make it, he tells himself, "He did not really want to play soccer anyway." In both cases, he denies reality and avoided a real decision of course, "not to decide is to decide." The woman in Sartre's story decides to do nothing. The only good way to live is to accept hand-on the responsibility that comes with man's freedom, make decisions, and face the consequences.

### **3.5 Being-in-Itself**

When Sartre considers the question of what kinds of things humans are conscious of; he concludes that there are only two kinds: the objects, and the subjects like human beings. He distinguished between these kinds of beings, namely, Being-in-itself (*etre-en-soi*) and being-for-itself (*etre-pour-soi*). He identifies being-for-itself (conscious being) with the human being, and with consciousness itself. While being-in-itself (unconscious being) is object. What is being-in-itself? The most obvious objects of consciousness are ordinary objects: tables, trees, roads, books and so on. They are beings that are independent of their being perceived. According to Sartre, these objects are always initially perceived as outside humans; as independent existences that are resistant to human will. "According to Sartre, anything that is not self-conscious is being-in-itself"<sup>14</sup>. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre maintains that being-in-itself has no within, in other words, any subjectivity. Being-in-itself is not conscious of anything, nor does it have any freedom and so it can never decide to change and become anything else other than itself. A chair cannot decide to become a stool, and a hedge cannot choose to grow into the shape of a poodle.

### 3.6 Being-for-Itself

In Sartre's parlance, "being for-itself" (*l'être pour-soi*) is the being of humans. It is a conscious being.<sup>15</sup> There are lots of examples of one's 'awareness directed inwards towards oneself. Feeling of guilt, feeling of pride, feeling clumsy, looking to remember what one was thinking in a few moments ago, and catching oneself picking one's nose, wondering what one is going to do with one's life. These are the examples of one's consciousness directed onto it. So being-for-itself is self consciousness, and Sartre believes that self-consciousness carries with it certain special qualities Sartre identifies self-consciousness (in being- for-itself) with 'nothingness'. Sartre says that self-consciousness means being able: To see ourselves as separate from the world; is to picture different possibilities for us. To imagine ourselves as different to who and what we are now. To act without being acted upon, in other words, self determination. The characteristics of the two aspects of being can be summarized as follows:

<b>Being-in-itself</b>	<b>Being-for-itself</b>
Non-conscious	Conscious
Closed/Finished	Open/unfinished
Predictable	Unpredictable
Fully realized or actual	Unrealized Potential
Complete description possible	No complete description
Has an essence	Has no essence
Determined	Undetermined
Plenitude	Nothingness

The distinction between being-in-itself and being-for-itself arises from Sartre's analysis of subjectivity of consciousness and the things one is aware of. This distinction is at the centre of Sartre's existentialism. Being-for-itself, that thing that has the capacity of self-consciousness, takes a central and special place in Sartre's philosophy. Most importantly, it is being-for-itself that turns out to be absolutely free, and it is the discovery of this freedom that makes Sartre's existentialism such an exciting philosophical theory.

Dread of our freedom and desire to coincide with the in-itself is a fundamental structure of our being and must somehow manifest itself in every project of being, however personal and individual it may be in other respects. Metaphysically stated: "The for-itself is the being who is to himself his own lack of being, and the being which the for-itself lacks is the in-itself. The for-itself comes into being as a nihilation of the in-itself, and that nihilation must be defined as a project toward the in-itself: between the nihilated in-itself and the projected in-itself stands the for-itself and nothingness. Thus, the human reality is desire of being-in-itself." The second universal and necessary structure of the human condition is complementary to the first, but tends to cancel it out. On the one hand, as we have seen, anguish reveals a dread of one's necessary existence as freedom and thus a desire to coincide with the in-itself. But at one and the same time anguish reveals a dream of being swallowed up by the in-itself. Because in anguish man sees the in-itself for what it is, he realizes that its security is a brute fact, contingent, gratuitous, meaningless, and therefore valueless. The in-itself does not have the consciousness to appreciate its positivity and fullness of being; it cannot experience it as security or value. It can, in fact, experience nothing. It is quite simply what it is. Man, therefore, whose very existence is derived

from his being as projector of values, cannot desire the in-itself as such. He stands in dread before the brute fact of the in-itself, his whole existence being revolt against it, a nihilation of its contingency and absurdity. The in-itself which the for-itself desires “could not be pure in-itself, contingent and absurd, in every way comparable to that which it meets and which it nihilates”<sup>16</sup>. It is precisely this ambiguity in Sartre’s descriptions of the in-itself. By virtue of our yearning for it, it takes on a soft and voluptuous aspect like the womb of Mother Earth. But in the act of recoiling against it, we project our firm determination to safeguard freedom and construe it as a hard and resisting solid. What man really desires is the in-itself as a value. Man wants to be a fact-value, an in-itself-for-itself without duality. It is not enough for him to be a detotalized totality; he wants to be a totality without fissure. He wants consciousness without risk, security with the consciousness to appreciate it. He wants to have, like God the Father, the properties of serenity, eternity, and immutability, but he also wants the intensely human properties and capacity for suffering of God the Son. “The being which constitutes the object of desire of the for-itself is, then, an in-self which would be to itself its own foundation.”<sup>17</sup> Thus, one may best describe the fundamental project of the human reality saying that man is the being who projects to be God ... And if man possesses a pre-ontological comprehension of the being of God, it is neither the great spectacle of nature nor the power of society which have given it to him. Rather God ... represents the permanent limits in terms of which man understands his being. To be man is to strive to be God, or, if one prefers, man fundamentally desires to be God. Man is “haunted” by the ideal of the “ens causes sui which the religions call God” in still other language: “It is as if the world, man and man-in-the-world express an abortive attempt to become God. It is as if the in-self and

the for-self reveal themselves in a state of disintegration with respect to an ideal synthesis. Not that the integration has over taken place, but precisely on the contrary because it is permanently suggested and permanently impossible. Unfortunately, “the idea of God is contradictory and we lose ourselves in vain: man is a useless passion.”. “The desire of a particular object is not the simple desire of this object; it is the desire to be united with the object in an internal relation.” Love, for instance, “is a fundamental relation of the for-itself to the world and to itself ... through a particular woman; the woman represents only a conducting body which is placed in the circuit.” The same thing holds for the acquisition of wealth. “Appropriation is nothing save the symbol of the ideal of the for-itself or value. The dyad, for-itself possessing and it-itself possessed, is the same as that being which is in order to possess itself and whose possession is in its own creation – God. My original desire of being my own foundation is never satisfied through appropriation any more than Freud’s patient satisfies his Oedipus complex when he dreams that a soldier kills the Czar. This conception of the human condition is by no means specifically in Sartre. Sartre, as the most recent of the great existentialist figures, has developed it most fully and has devised the most elaborate technical terminology to express it. The conception, however, was already present in Kierkegaard, the so called father of existentialism, for whom “the predicament of the existing individual” arises “from his being a synthesis of the temporal and eternal.

For Kierkegaard, no less than for Sartre, the temporal and the eternal are contradictory categories, and a being who is simultaneously both is indeed in a predicament. He cannot but desire the completion of being which God alone possesses, but at the same time he cannot but cling passionately to the pleasures and pains of finite existence.

This paradox in man's nature approximates to the God-Man paradox, i.e., the paradox of Christ, which is at the very center of Kierkegaard's philosophy. It is impossible that a perfect and immutable being that lacks nothing should create; but it is even more impossible that a perfect and immutable being that lacks nothing should be incarnated in flesh, walk the earth, suffer, and die. Yet Christ is not wholly divine and wholly human at one and the same time he fails to be a fit object of worship, precisely because man himself aspires to be wholly divine without loss of his humanity. It is difficult to conceive of a blacker picture of the human condition; but Sartre can no more resist the temptation of appending a theory of salvation to his analysis of the human condition than the Christians and the Marxist. Unfortunately the analysis of Sartre's theory of salvation is somewhat complicated by the fact that the theory has not to date been treated systematically and at length. It was presented dramatically in Sartre's play *the flies*, where the hero Orestes defies Jupiter in the name of freedom and heroically takes upon himself the burden of the human condition. It was also sketched briefly in the last pages of *Being and Nothingness*, where Sartre promised a separate work dealing exclusively with his "ethics of deliverance and salvation." But the promised book has not yet appeared, and the brief sketch in *Being and Nothingness* is couched in somewhat cautious terms. In fact, the clearest statement of it to be found there is in interrogative form.

### **3.7 Being-for-Others (Love/Masochism-Hate/Sadism)**

The upsurge of the other touches the for-itself in its very heart. To assimilate him; the extent that the upsurge of my being is an upsurge in the presence of the Other<sup>18</sup>. "The other is a thinking substance of the same essence as I am, and whose essential structure I find in myself. What I constantly aim at across my experiences are the

other's feelings, the other's ideas, the other's volitions, the other's character.”<sup>19</sup> This is because the other is not only the one whom I see but the one who sees me. Hegel takes his stand on the ground not of a univocal relation which goes from me (apprehended by the cogito) to the other, but of the reciprocal relation which he defines as “self-apprehension of the one in the other.”<sup>29</sup> It is only in so far as each man is opposed to the other that he is absolutely for himself opposite the other and confronting the other, each one asserts his right of being individual. Therefore being-for-itself appears as a necessary condition for one's being-for-himself.

### **3.8 Authenticity**

The authentic man for Sartre is the person who undergoes a radical conversion through anguish and who assumes his freedom<sup>30</sup>. Sartre advocates that humans must avoid bad faith and must pursue its opposite, good faith or authenticity. He further said that people who act in good faith act in the full knowledge and recognition that they have absolute freedom. They make claims and take actions for which they know they hold responsibility. In other words, they lead authentic lives, authentic because they are not deceiving themselves that they have an essence or a determined role or personality; authentic because they not only realize this in an intellectual sense but also act on it. Humans can never define or renew themselves with only thoughts; but, it is only with action that they can give their lives meaning. This is exactly what Sartre refers to as commitment; creating meaning through action. Sartre despises the sort of persons who just sit around and talk; instead, of acting. The man is the only being in the world that has relations to him as well as to other beings. He is not a ready-made being. The very law of being is to be undetermined, unfixed, and unstable. The being of man reveals itself as a possibility to become what he is not yet. Thus, man is a



being, which is not yet what he is. He always projects himself. Therefore if man chooses his own possibilities and lives towards them, he thereby decides his own mode of life, and this means that he is living an authentic form of existence. Authentic existence obeys no law from the outside world. Man is the interpreter of his own existence. He is the dictator of what happens to his existence. This type of existence does not admit any external influence. On the other hand, when existence operates from a type of pre-determined formula, external forces and influence, this cancels freedom. One is acting in bad faith or inauthentic existence if one puts oneself under the control or the dictates of other people in such a manner that one cannot freely choose the mode of life to live. A life lived in conformity to the dictates of an authority, custom, or habit is an inauthentic existence so Sartre does offer guidance on how man should live. He says that, above all, bad faith must be avoided. Humans cannot blame their actions on their circumstances, on their emotions, on signs from God, on advice from other people, on their past or their upbringing or their society. Sartre then admonished that man should live authentically, and to do this he writes: Be aware of our freedom; be committed to action; take responsibility for all you do; be engaged in creating and inventing your lives.”<sup>31</sup>

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## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THE HUMAN CONDITION IN JEAN PAUL SARTRE**

#### **4.1 Freedom and Facticity**

In this section, some of the key manifestations of the discussion of the Human Condition in existentialism shall be explored. Freedom has been widely seen as a basic character of man, it has been the subject of many investigations. However, a probe into the origin, development and nature of freedom shows that freedom means different things to different peoples. According to Jean Paul Sartre, man is absolutely free and not free not to be free Absolute freedom is the most significant impact of Sartre's theory of human live .The desire to be free has always been the goal of the human species in its history which man has thought of achieving through diverse perspectives. Freedom is therefore a heavy burden laid on man's shoulders from which there can be no escape for "I am responsible even for the very desire of fleeing my responsibility."<sup>1</sup>

As this has been pointed out, the concept of "freedom" is the root principle of the existential thought of Sartre. Man is condemned to freedom. Sartre sees man's essence as dependent on freedom. Abraham Keplan opines that freedom exists when one lives under the guidance of reason and enjoys liberty in so far as the reason is his, and also, when one acts according to one's reason and conscience such that one makes one's decisions with integrity and autonomy. Freedom seen from this perspective has to do with one carrying out all one's actions, decisions, and responsibilities without undue interferences. Freedom is characterized by the absence of force, restraint coercion and allowing each individual to act according to his reason and based on his integrity without undue interference. There have been different degrees of focus as well as

differing notions of freedom in the different perspectives. Thus, to understand the issue of freedom, it is necessary to briefly examine its history to see how it was understood in antiquity of its development till date. The ancient Greek thinkers did not give meaningful responses to the question of freedom as they gave to other fundamental issues. For them, determinism cannot be questioned as they believed in the immutability and regularity of events. The gods were in charge of every event to the last detail and things are subject to fate, an absolute will, superiors to man. Man, being part of nature, is subject to the general laws and cannot act differently. Thus, this period did not see man as free, rather as being determined by fate and controlled by a supreme intelligence. Thomas Aquinas held that the human passion is free and depends on the freedom of the will, which opposing determinism. With this in mind, man becomes the architect of his autonomy and liberty. It was no longer a question of man's relationship with God, but with the relationship with individual in the society. Man therefore, becomes the centre of forces and has been viewed as a free agent. And then in the contemporary period, the issue now becomes in what way one can still be free in the present day society in which the political system, means of communication, products of technology, have become potent to instruments of oppression. With this in mind, there are so many opinions concerning freedom, but the epitome of freedom points to the fact that one is free to the extent that one can do what one wants without any molestation, embarrassment, coercion, force, restraint and prohibitions. These are the kinds of freedom in human condition.

Factuality are those facts that we may not have choosed to be our lot for instance, one cannot choose the country which he lives, place of birth, gender and so on. But Sartre is saying that our factuality should not hinder us from developing. That is, we should not

allow those Natural conditions that we are born into to hinder us from progressing. In Sartre's view, facticity does not represent limitation rather facticity is a framework within which we must express our freedom. Freedom needs facticity as we cannot choose or act in a vacuum; we need concrete circumstances against which we can act. So facticity limits the choices available to us but does not limit freedom.

In a real life, we live in a specific context (economic, social biological, historical, culture, physical) which is beyond our control. Our specific context, our facticity limits the choices that are available to us but within it we are absolutely free to choose our attitude to the situation and make decisions. We might say that our facticity gives us a set of obstacles. For example if we are born in a country with a failing economy we face a difficult life. Our financial circumstances are huge obstacles to our projects in life. According to Sartre, in order to encounter obstacle we must first of all have some projects freely chosen which it obstructs. For example the Wright brothers saw our lack of wings as an obstacles to being free to fly they invented aeroplane to overcome the obstacle.

#### **4.1.1 Positive Freedom and Negative Freedom**

Positive freedom which in other words could be characterized as internal freedom is the kind of freedom in which one elicits his choice from multi-dimensional alternative which will make one responsible for one's actions. Positive freedom entails a kind of self-destination. This refers to the freedom of the will, of choice and personal freedom.

Negative freedom on the other hand could be characterized as external freedom. This has to do with the absence of constraints, force, or coercion. This kind of freedom

could be expressed as ‘freedom from’ or ‘freedom to.’ ‘Freedom from’ has to do with one being free from one’s environment and other social obstacles. ‘Freedom to’ on the other hand depicts the absence of restraint in one’s spontaneous response to an issue or situation.

Negative Freedom involves the external actions and it is often problematic to realize this kind of freedom in practical terms. This kind of freedom comes into play in such areas as political, social, moral, physical and psychological areas.

#### **4.1.2 Political Freedom and Social Freedom**

This refers to the conditions within the framework of any society which enables the citizens to exercise their fundamental rights such as the right to private property, freedom of speech, religion and association. It also includes the freedom of citizens to participate in the governance of their state either directly or through representation. Social freedom, this embraces some of the fundamental rights embodied in the human natural rights which every member of the society is entitled to. These rights include: freedom of worship, religion, speech, press, association, etc. Physical Freedom is the freedom from external and physical constraints such as handcuffs, imprisonment and others. To say that man is physically free is to say that there is the absence of impediment to man’s activity.

#### **4.1.3 Psychological Freedom and Moral Freedom**

This has to do with the Psyche, which is the seat of man’s freedom, as most of what he does result from his psychological disposition. Psychological freedom is that radical possibility of man to decide by himself. It is the capacity of man to choose from different alternatives and possibilities, to act or not to act when presented with all

favourable conditions which would facilitate the implementation of whatever choice he makes.

Moral freedom is a kind of freedom that makes it possible for men to be the master of himself and not the slave of his passions. It has much to do with the moral order in the constitution of the civil state. If there is no moral order, life would be uncomfortable as chaos would reign in the society. In respect of absolute freedom, Sartre says, “We were not placed on Earth for any purpose, we do not have to seek one or follow one, nor are there any moral rules that we are obliged to follow. So, humans are absolutely.”<sup>2</sup> For Sartre, freedom is the capacity of negation and nihilation which characterizes the being-for-itself. The foundation of freedom is nothingness. Sartre emphatically maintained that man is free and not only free, but absolutely free and nothing can limit his freedom. Man is condemned to freedom, that is to say, that freedom is a situation man cannot run away from. Man is the maker of himself as he makes himself to be what he is through freedom. Man is a being who learns his freedom through his lack and his choice of acts. Sartre’s notion of absolute freedom seems to be a reaction against the view that man is determined. For him, man, originates and develops himself in freedom such that nothing determines his action and nothing causes or sustains him except his freedom. Omoregbe corroborating this, states that “nothing has any meaning *a priori*, life itself has no meaning *a priori*., it is man who by his freedom, gives meaning to life and to the world around him.”<sup>3</sup> Thus, man is absolutely free having no determinism, whatsoever, be it religious, God, moral value, or inbuilt essence. Man has nothing controlling him except his freedom. Existentialism is a philosophical movement which posits that individuals create the meaning and essence of their lives, as opposed to deities or authorities creating them



for man. It emerged as a movement in twentieth-century literature and philosophy, though it had forerunners in earlier centuries. Existentialism generally postulates that the absence of a transcendent force means that the individual is entirely free, and therefore, ultimately responsible. It is up to human beings to create an ethos of personal responsibility for themselves, outside of any branded belief system. In existentialist views, personal articulation of being is the only way to rise above humanity's absurd condition of much suffering and inevitable death.

#### **4.1.4 Freedom and Choice**

This is the freedom of choice but not freedom of not to choose.<sup>4</sup>“Not to choose is, in the fact, to choose not to choose.” this means that freedom involves the inevitability of choice, for to be free is to be compelled to choose. Choice suggests the presence of alternatives by which one has to choose. Freedom of choice therefore consists in the ability of one to make one's choice without constraints or hindrance. Freedom of choice means autonomy of choice which means undetermined choice. If one has decided to be a doctor and is free to do so in the sense that there are no obstacles in one's way (one has the money, a good medical school has accepted him, there are no other commitments which take priority, etc), it would be silly to speak of anguish. But, since one must choose, it becomes anguish in the fact that one must choose. The person who decides to be a doctor is in anguish because he has made a choice. For the existentialist, freedom manifests itself in tormenting anguish to only those who have grasped the full implication of freedom.

#### **4.1.5 Freedom and Anguish**

When one becomes aware of one's true nature of freedom, with its accomplishing responsibility one is seized in "anguish". Anguish is a situation where man finds himself and from which he cannot run away. The expression "anguish of freedom" may seem puzzling. Is not freedom something wholly desirable? The bafflement will be largely dispelled by fixing firmly in mind that the type of freedom before which the existentialist stands in anguish is not the ability to achieve chosen goals. If one has decided to be a doctor and is free to do so in the sense that there are no obstacles in his way (he has the money, a good medical school has accepted him, there are no other commitments which take priority, etc), it would be silly to speak of anguish. But, even with this qualification the expression may still seem puzzling. Why should anyone be anguished simply because he has the ability to choose? The wider the range of choice, the more possible lines of conduct from which the individual may select, the greater will be his sense of power and mastery. The answer to this last question is that "anguish of freedom" is a somewhat misleading expression. What is called "anguish before the necessity of choosing". The anguish of freedom is really anguished over the fact that one must choose. And this is something that everybody can understand. Important decisions affecting the entire course of one's life are rarely made without some form of mental distress; and it is a commonplace of contemporary social criticism that modern-day men try very hard to escape this form of distress by having others (the state, public opinion, or the corporation) make decisions for them. This does not mean, however, that the anguish of freedom is to be identified with the mental distress which a responsible person experiences when he is obliged to make a crucial decision.

The anguish of freedom arises only with the realization that one must always decide for oneself and that efforts to shift the burden of responsibility upon others are necessarily self-defeating. Not to choose is also to choose, for even if we deliver our power of decision to others, we are responsible for having done so. It is always the individual who decides that others will choose for him. At times he may dull the awareness of his original and inalienable responsibility, but he can never wholly suppress that awareness. It will always be there even on the surface of consciousness as a vague sense of guilt or uneasy feeling of personal inadequacy. The relationship between the anguish of freedom and the other two forms of anguish are subtle and complex.. Since the individual is tied to a limited portion of space and time and since he is actively engaged in the historical process as a unique and irreducible factor, he must be free. For the existentialists freedom of choice means autonomy of choice and autonomy of choice means undetermined choice. But, what does it mean to say that man's choices are undetermined if not that he is a unique and irreducible part of the historical or social scene? If man makes history, it is because man himself is not made by history. The relationship between these two forms of anguish also works in reverse. If man is free to choose, then he cannot merge with the whole of being. "Every choice is a choice of finitude," as Sartre says, since every choice involves elimination. The voracious appetite for being displayed by Spinoza and Hegel cannot coexist with respect for human freedom. If one chooses to be a doctor, then one chooses the world of a doctor. Everything about one's life-the source of one's income, one's daily work, daily surroundings, relationships with others, even the odors one breathes-has a particular character and will separate one from the world of those who have made a different choice. The doctor cannot see things *sub specie aeternitatis* without ceasing

to be a doctor. His attention will have to be focused on individual human beings and their specific ailments. The relationship between the anguish of being and the anguish of freedom is also reciprocal. In rough and general terms it can be put this way: to the extent that man is free, it is by his choice or decisions that the natural and social world becomes meaningful. A shivering lump of human flesh in the agonies of death means one thing for the doctor who has chosen to take a professional interest in it, but something very different for the man who has decided to call that lump of flesh his wife. It follows from this that in so far as a man is conscious of his freedom, his natural and social environment will take on the character of a brute fact, something contingent, absurd, alien; for consciousness of freedom is also consciousness of the fact that meaning comes to being through us. In Sartrean terms the consciousness or anguish of freedom is the means by which “the world” dissolves and “being-in-itself” is revealed

#### **4.2. Freedom and Responsibility**

The freedom of man is accomplished by a heavy and inescapable responsibility in that man is responsible for the way he uses his freedom. “Man is not the author of his being, yet he has to assume full responsibility for his manner of being, because he is free.”<sup>5</sup> Therefore Sartre is merciless when it comes to human responsibility. No matter what happens in life, one can never blame anybody else. Man having been compelled to carry the weight of his whole world on his shoulders discovers that there is no way he can escape from the responsibility.

In Sartre’s view:

Thus there are no accidents in life; a community event which suddenly bursts forth and involved me in it does not come from the outside. If I am mobilized in a war,

this war is my war, it is my image and I deserve it first because I could always get out of it by suicide or by desertion; these ultimate possibilities are those which must always be present for us when there is a question of envisaging a situation. For lack of getting out of it, I have chosen it. This can be due to inertia, to cowardice in the face of public opinion, or because I prefer certain other values to the value of the refusal to join in the war (the good opinion of my relatives, the honor of my family, etc). Anyway you look at it, it is a matter of a choice.<sup>6</sup>

Sartre continues,

This choice will be repeated later on again and again without a break until the end of the war. Therefore, we must agree with the statement by J. Romain: "In war there are no innocent victims" If therefore I have preferred war to death or to dishonor, everything takes place as if I bore the entire responsibility for this war. Of course, others have declared it, and one might be tempted perhaps to consider me and by me this war should not exist, and I have decided that it does exist. There was no compulsion here, for the compulsion could have got no hold on a freedom. I did not have any excuse; for as we have said repeatedly in this book, the peculiar character of human reality is that it is without excuse. Therefore it remains for me only to lay claim to this war.<sup>7</sup>

Believing that human beings are genuinely responsible for everything around them might overwhelm them. But they could cope with that responsibility; they would also feel extremely powerful. After all, if human beings really are responsible for something, they must also have the power to change it. Ordinarily, the word responsibility means one being accountable for something or being morally or legally liable for carrying out a duty. This responsibility arises from the fact that man is free and chooses his acts freely.

### **4.3 Freedom and Determinism**

Right from the ancient period till date, there has been this fundamental question about what influences the actions of man; whether he acts from free will or he is determined in all his actions. This has attracted the attention of many philosophers and different schools of thought in different periods. In the ancient period, the early Greek philosophers were of the view that everything is subject to 'fate'. In their Cosmocentric tendencies, they expressed that, there is an absolute power that may not necessarily be God that controls both man and all his actions. Coming down to the medieval era, emphasis shifted from 'fate' to 'God'. Everything came to be looked at from the ethnocentric point of view. In this era, predestination became the order of the day, God was said to have destined what will happen at each moment and at each man, even before conception, and so whatsoever happens was attributed to divine providence. Supporting this notion, Mondin holds that during this period, "citizens placed a strong Christian imprint on all their manifestation of life; laws and customs, art and literature, music and poetry, education and morals"<sup>8</sup>. With the advent of the modern era, the mentality of man shifted from theocentrism to anthropocentrism. Man became the pivotal point and autonomy. Man tried to understand the universe through speculation and science, and this necessitated the growth of revolt against religious limitation on man's freedom and knowledge. Again, man under this period relegates the problem of freedom not in relationship with God of the medieval period or even fate of the early Greek era but in relationship with his passions, emotions, other individuals, society, and the state. This era gave rise to what we know as philosophical pluralism in a bid to do away with religion; therefore, human freedom was glorified.

The Determinists negate the existence of human freedom. For them, man is determined by forces either extrinsic. According to them, all events are necessarily consequents of antecedent factors. Determinism is synonymous with the term necessitarianism, that is, something is necessitating the other or another. This implies that, human actions, choices and behaviour are not free but are bound by certain causes and forces in nature, over which man has control. *New Age Encyclopedia Britannica*, sees determinism “As a theory which maintains, that every events, including moral choices are completely determined by previously existing causes that prelude free will<sup>9</sup>”. By implication, it means that everything that happens is caused by previously existing conditions. In the words of Donceel, Determinism is the denial of freedom of the will. It is a claim that in spite of some experiences, man is forced in all his actions<sup>10</sup>. The doctrine of determinism was Spinoza’s axiom as social a social scientist. For him, the world consists of the modes of God’s attributes, and as such, everything in the world acts in accordance with necessity, that is, everything including man’s actions are determined. Man does not act from freedom of the will, but all his actions are the outcome of certain causes. There are many thinkers who do not agree that we have free will. Many will argue in favour of determinism, in order words that all our thoughts and actions are pre-determined. There are philosophers and scientist queuing up to disparage Sartre’s theory of absolute freedom. Determinists argue that we do not have free will because all of our actions are necessitated or causally determined, by what came before.<sup>11</sup> In other words, we could not have acted in any other way except the way we did act. The traditional way of side-stepping the ‘free will or determinism’ dilemma is to take the view that they are compatible and not contradictory ideas. The so called ‘compatibilist’ accepts that our actions are caused,

but argues that a free act is one where the cause is internal to us. For example, we feel like having an ice-cold drink on a blistering summer day, so we choose to buy one. For the compatibilist, the real threat to freedom comes from people forcing us to do something, for example, to drink scalding soup on a hot day at gunpoint. But, Sartre does not need to take a compatibilist position to avoid the problems of determinism. His theory of freedom may be immune to determinism, because he is concerned only with what we may call 'phenomenological freedom'. This is our inner experience of freedom, and of being confronted by it every day of our lives. Having treated correlates of freedom, there are basically two kinds of freedom namely, positive and negative freedom.

#### **4.4 Nihilism**

Nihilism as a philosophy is widely used to denote a mood of despair over the emptiness or triviality of human existence. Absolute nihilism is willing to justify suicide and murder. Indifference of life is a mark of nihilism. Suicide and murder are thus two aspects of a single system, the system of an unhappy intellection which rather than suffer limitations chooses the dark victory - suicide which for them annihilates heaven and earth. Through suicide one then rebels against the world (i.e. earth and society) and God. This school of thought holds that in every act of rebellion, man is concerned with experiences, not only a fleeing from revolution at the infringement on his rights but, also a complete and spontaneous loyalty to certain aspects of his life. Nihilism is only asserting that the suicide is merely exercising an absolute ownership of his body. Also, "it is the claim that morality cannot be justified, and so might as well be rejected. So, nihilists do not believe in any moral values and they do whatever they want to do"<sup>13</sup>. This philosophy is generally shared by people



like Albert Camus in his book *"The Rebel"*. "Helmut Thielick in a work entitled *"Nihilism"*; and Nietzsche who saw that in the nineteenth century the "highest values" had begun to 'devalue themselves'. For instance, the Christian value of truth-telling, institutionalized in the form of science, had undermined the belief in God, disenchanting the world and excluding from it any pre-given moral meaning. In such a situation, the individual is forced back upon himself on the one hand, if he is weakly constituted, he may fall victim to despair in the face of nihilism, the recognition that life has no intrinsic meaning. On the other hand, for a 'strong' or creative individual, nihilism presents a liberating opportunity to take responsibility for meaning, to exercise creativity by 'transvaluing' her values, establishing a new 'order or rank.' Through his prophet Zarathustra, Nietzsche imagined such a person as the "overman" (*Ubermensch*), the one who teaches "the meaning of the earth" and has no need of other worldly supports for the values he embodies. He has understood that nihilism is the ultimate meaning of the moral point of view, its life-denying essence, and he reconfigures the moral idea of autonomy so as to release the life-affirming potential.

#### **4.5 Man and the World**

Etymologically, the term "world" was coined from the old English *weer-old*. *Weer* means man while *old* means era; both in synthesis means the era of man. World as a term implies a human standpoint from which everything is seen as environment.<sup>14</sup> In Sartre's philosophy of self-creation he acknowledges the usefulness of the world to man's self creative project when he vehemently disclosed: "Without the world there is no self-hood, no person, without self-hood, without the person there is no world".<sup>15</sup> This expression points to the inseparability of man from the world. Both are identical

and correlate. Man constitutes the world and the world also constitutes man. He is a being-in-the-world. As a creative being he remains the only entity that has the technique of transforming the world and his environment. Thus man uses the world as a utensil to create himself. Freedom is a “lack of being with respect to a given being.” In technical language Sartre expresses this fact by saying that the human reality is a “detotalized totality” of in-itself and for-itself. Man is both in-itself and for-itself, but the two dimensions of his being are radically different. There is a deep rent in his being, and it will never be closed. If Sartre’s theory is correct, it also follows that “man is the foundation without foundation” of his values. “Nothing” says Sartre, “absolutely nothing, justifies me in adopting this or that value, this is that scale of values. As the being through which values exist, I am incapable of justification.” The price of human existence is alienation – from God, from nature, and from society. Man is “condemned to freedom.” At this point the following problem arises. Let it be granted that man is both an empirical being and a bearer of values, that the human reality is a detotalized totality, and that only through undetermined choices by the for-itself do values and meanings arise. Let it even be granted that a realization of all this will inevitably produce psychic distress. Need we be quite as distressed about it as the existentialists would apparently have us be? Many people have faced up to the responsibility of choosing for themselves without making all this commotion about the anguish of freedom. Sartre’s answer to this question will lead us to his most thoroughly pessimistic conclusions – but also to his theory of salvation. Although Sartre denies that man has an essence or nature if by this one means that God or Nature has predetermined him to pursue certain goals to the exclusion of others, he does not deny that man has an essence or nature if by this one means that it is possible

to discern certain universal and necessary structures within the human condition. Two of these structures are revealed through the anguish of freedom.

#### **4.6 Man as a Self-Creating Being**

One of the major contentions of Sartre's from the outset of his philosophical writings is that being-for-itself (man) has greater dignity than that of the stone and all other inanimate existents in the universe which remains inert and unconscious. In classical philosophy, especially in traditional metaphysics, it was held by philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Zeno, Plotinus, among others, that man exists to fulfill some purpose in existence. They considered man as a natural being,<sup>21</sup> that is, a being constituted of an immutable essence that is given from nature, from which he derives not only the biological laws but also moral precepts. In their view, man has a universal nature, is determined and therefore lacks freedom of negation. As essentialists, they strictly affirm and hold that "essence precedes existence".

In this way they objectified the being of man and thus makes him undistinguishable from the "in-itself" which seeks not to recreate their being. Furthermore, Hegel viewed man as an enclosed reality whose actions are determined by the society he lives in. All these put together clearly portrays a static concept of man founded on the primacy of the intellect over the will, contemplation over action, nature over history.<sup>16</sup>

These provoking views swiftly ushered in the contemporary thought where-in the existentialists Jean Paul Sartre in particular, with his resounding humanistic philosophy refuted the ancient claims by first of all stating that existence precedes essence. According to him, as earlier stated, there are two categories of being; the *en-soi* (objects) and *pour-soi* (man). The latter that is the being of man is absolutely different in that it is not ready made at the start, he makes himself through choosing

his ethics<sup>23</sup>. And this he does with the help of the consciousness and of freedom he has. Man creates himself by negation. Sartre's position that man's existence precedes his essence means that according to him man first of all exists turns-up, appears on the scene, and only afterwards, defines himself.<sup>24</sup> At the initial stage says Sartre, man is indefinable simply because he is nothing but becomes something afterwards through the choice he makes. Interpreting Sartre, Gonsalves noted: "We begin with existence but not essence, my essence, what I shall be; I make for myself by every free choice."<sup>25</sup> At birth, man is just a "there-being" characterized by nothingness, meaninglessness and hence without value. He gains meaning to his life through subsequent positive choice of action. Man creates his value and essence, and by so doing he defines his reality since there is no transcendent being to conceive or define it for him. For this reason of self architecture, Sartre stated categorically that man makes himself. According to him, the cause of this striving in man is the consciousness for it creates in him the awareness of the lack in its being and this propels man into the act of projection and search for perfection as well as fulfillment. In striving for this completion, he transcends his status. The journey of self-creation is the journey of transcendence. It is a task everyone must undertake since we are a cultural being. Mondin in respect of this fact states:

Man is not a natural, but a cultural being: This means that at 'the moment of birth, nature gave man hardly the necessary minimum, the essentials to be man, and assigns him the task of making himself and forming himself so as to fully realize his being through culture.<sup>26</sup>

The above view validates the fact of man's self artifice. Realizing our being through culture means that humans create themselves through the ways of life they institute.

Hence, man was not given the essentials to be man; he is bound to authenticate his being through being a constructor. With no support or aid, man is condemned every moment to invent himself. Ponge in a fine article has noted that "man is the future of man"<sup>27</sup>. This obviously depicts a state of potency in the being of man. Every man is in the process of creating his "essence". And as a matter of fact all our actions gears towards centricity. For Sartre since man is the creator of himself. He bears the blame or the praise for whatever he makes of himself. We are responsible for whatever essence we give to our being and not the Divine entity.

#### **4.7 Sartre on the Existence of God**

Sartre rejected the existence of God, explaining that the concept of God in itself is self-contradictory. He defines God as a being-in-itself-for itself. God is "in-itself" in so far as the concept of the divine presupposes that-he is an existing entity, complete in himself and basically unrelated. In addition to this, Sartre was of the view that God must equally be a "for-itself" as he is completely free and not beholden to anything else<sup>28</sup>. In his belief, since a synthesis of the above analysis is difficult to achieve as a result of the fact that it will involve a contradiction, the conclusion implied must be the denial of the existence of such a being as God. In addition Sartre came to the point of positing that man invents the concept of God, in order to account for the meaning of the world outside of himself. This according to him, results from the fact that man is always hunted by the meaninglessness of the cosmic world, which he finds rather puzzling. This leaves him open to the domain of inventing a being which for him will be able to explain the apparent unexplainable including the origin and essence of the world. Man in this regard, becomes a useless passion for the reason that he surges towards the impossible synthesis of the "in-itself" and the "for itself". In Sartre's

view, this is the dilemma of the human condition. Rather than creating meaning out of human existence, man looks for the essence of existence. Oyeshile captured the central tenet of Sartre's atheism thus: "Sartre believes that we are all abandoned in the world because there is no God that determines our value. Hence there are no objective standards, rather there are subjective values created by man through his own subjectivity"<sup>29</sup>. From the above analysis, Sartre was to completely reject the notion of a human nature and essence as determined and fashioned out by a God. He therefore demanded that man should abandon the traditionally held notion of human beings as a designed artifact of a divine creator-God. He believed that, there are no abstract natures that man is destined and designed to accomplish. The implication here is that each human being is simply in the world and what he becomes entirely left to the individual to fashion out. Sartre's attitude to the existence of God can be likened to that of Nietzsche. His pronouncement of the "death of God" seems to have been motivated by the social condition of his time. God is usually seen and taken as the perennial solid support for man's actions, hopes and aspirations. God is conceived in this regard as a guardian on whom one can learn and depend on. But if he is dead as Nietzsche opined, the man is left to himself. According to Kadir, "Death of this traditional guardian occurred when the rapid industrialization replaced and established feudalism and old ties were snapped never to be established again. Man lost meaning in the sentiments of loyalty and faithfulness and became a spare part of a big machine"<sup>30</sup>. The industrial revolution that swept the 19<sup>th</sup> century European society was the machine in which the individual lost his significance as a moral legislator and an agent capable of making decision to becoming a mere tool in the hands of industrial machines. With this development, it is the view of Nietzsche that, man seems to be

unaware of his fate and rather depend on the grace of God whether he should be what he desires. But he noted strongly that “grace” is not possible since God is dead; man has killed him, he maintained. It is his conviction that man should remain faithful to this earth, and not to believe those who hold the “other worldly view of man has the responsibility to shoulder his affairs and grow out of seen as the source of all evaluations. There seem to be no implied relationship between existentialism and atheism as there are existentialist thinkers who are not atheists. Sartre believe however that his version of existentialism is based on the denial of God as a fundamental position. His aim, as seen by Kardir again; “is to work out an ontology, a theory of being in which the traditional concept of a supreme being finds no place. But if as Sartre has maintained, the existence of such a being as God does not exist, what social and ethical consequences can follow from one basic outcome is likely to be that any discussion about the divine source of ethical values is out-rightly meaningless. Sartre did not just proclaim that human beings have no creator as their necessary foundation, but insists that the creator of being, so to say, is impossibility. The reason given by Sartre is that, such a creator which God is always defined by, cannot come out of his subjectivity to create anything independent of himself. His suggestion in the alternative is that, if there is an absolute creator, known as God, this God can create nothing but himself <sup>31</sup>. Sartre clearly and simply states that being cannot be created. What this common prejudice for the concept of creation, Sartre has obscured the phenomenon of being. There is absolutely no need, to postulate according to him an absolute creator to explain the foundation of being, since being itself needs no better explanation beyond itself. In order to actually make clear the impossibility of creator of being, Sartre argued that if everything is a part of divine consciousness, that which exists as a mode

in the divine mind will not be aware of its existence as a separate entity”. The point to draw out here is that, in as much as every being owes its “beingness” to divine knowledge as part of his mode of knowledge, it is meaningless to talk about. In addition to the question of the impossibility of an absolute creator, Sartre equally questioned the issue of necessity attached to the creator God. His main contention is that possibilities cannot be hinged on any necessity in this regard; there cannot be a necessary being as the foundation of a contingent one. Sartre concluded that if necessity is attached to God as the foundation of being, it will mean that man cannot be without God. And since there is no necessary being, being cannot be founded on necessity<sup>32</sup>. Sartre, as has been shown developed his notion of atheism by rejecting God as the foundation of knowledge and being. In his lecture on existentialism and humanism, he asserts that his existentialism is simply an attempt to draw all conclusions from a coherent atheistic position. The conclusion drawn is that, if God does not exist, values therefore depend entirely on man, and are essentially his creation. With this conclusion on the rejection of human nature and God man is left absolutely to create a nature for himself. We shall from here look at the alternative line of action outlined by Sartre to be followed by man with this rejection of human nature and essence as a giving phenomenon.

The activity of consciousness according to Sartre is twofold. Firstly, consciousness defines the specific things in the world to attach meaning in them. On the other hand, it transcends, that is, puts a distance between itself and objects and by so doing, possesses a freedom from the things in the world, it is said to be within power of consciousness to confer alternative meanings on this. In this regard, the activity of consciousness is what is usually referred to as “choice”<sup>33</sup>. The relation between



consciousness and existentialism may seem remote but it offered Sartre with realistic basis of the self in relation to its transcendent object. The influence of philosophers like Rene Descartes and Edmund Husserl on Sartre concerning the question of the relationship of this is evident not only in Sartre's essay on the Ego, but equally in his works on Imagination and Emotions. "This was extended to the study of consciousness in the introduction to *Being and Nothingness*(1943). It is also instructive to note that Sartre makes clear the difference between his position and those of Descartes and Husserl. According to his view, the basic datum of consciousness is what he referred to as the pre-reflexive consciousness, that is, the awareness of an object out there, the world, like chair, table etc. this is the basic and starting point of the relationship between man and his objects. What Descartes began within his "cogito", for Sartre is not the pre-reflexive, but rather the reflexive consciousness. This reflexive consciousness in Sartre's understanding expresses an act where the self is constituted as the object. The projection of reflexive consciousness by Descartes would simply imply that, he would involve himself in the problem of passing from the self-enclosed ego, as object of consciousness towards the assertion of the existence of external objects and other persons. If, as Sartre contends, we go behind the reflexive consciousness therefore presents object is solved. Pre-reflective consciousness therefore presents object as that which is transcendent in the sense that it posits its object as transcending itself, as that which it reaches out to. Husserl's treatment of consciousness is somehow different from that of Descartes, in the sense that for him, consciousness and in fact, all consciousness is consciousness of something. The meaning here is that, there is no form of consciousness which does not posit a transcendent object. Maybe, an example here will make the point clearer. Suppose,

that I am aware of a tree in front of me, the tree is not in my consciousness as a content; it is however in space outside there in the field. When I “intend” the tree, it is posited as transcending, and not as immanent in my consciousness. According to Copleston: “Husserl’s policy of bracketing existence, of treating all object of consciousness as purely immanent and suspending judgment; as a matter of principle about their objective reference is misguided”. With this rejection of the notion of consciousness presented by Descartes and Husserl, Sartre took a position that as far as perception is concerned, the object of consciousness is posited as tree itself, and not a mental representation it, is my object of the intentional act.”<sup>34</sup> We have seen that Sartre insists on the distinction between reflexive and pre-reflective consciousness, as a way of making clear his position on the question of consciousness. To love apple, for 1 instance, is not the same act as to think of myself as loving apple is to think of myself as loving apple no “the intentional object, while in the second example, my-loving apples is the intentional object. But does this not show that Sartre confines self-consciousness to the level of reflection, to the extent that pre-reflective consciousness is regarded as unaccompanied by self- consciousness? Sartre asserts that the mode of Existence of consciousness is to be conscious of itself. The meaning of this statement by itself implies that self- consciousness belongs to the pre-reflective consciousness. However, Sartre is quick to add that consciousness, is consciousness of itself in as much as it is consciousness of a transcendent object. Here when we talk of pre-reflective consciousness, it means that consciousness of a chair for example is accompanied by consciousness of itself, that is, conscious consciousness. But let us come to reflect on what Sartre’s conclusion on this issue. “Self– consciousness”, which is an essential feature of pre-reflective consciousness, is in Sartre’s words, non-

positional or non-thetic in regard to the ego. What Sartre seems to be saying here is that consciousness is wholly directed to the intentional object, hence there is no self-consciousness for ego. In ordinary sense, there is no self-consciousness insofar as the ego is not posited as an object. We talk of positing of the ego only on the level of reflection.

In this way therefore, when we turn consciousness into an intentional object the ego is said to be posited. The ego seen from above is therefore the "me" posited as the unity to which all states of consciousness, experience and actions are ascribed, and posited also a subject of consciousness as in someone loving an apple. The world is seen here by Sartre, as the ideal unity of all objects of consciousness. Here the transcendental ego of Husserl is excluded,; and Sartre feels he could avoid the idealism of Husserl!. This line of reasoning also gave Sartre the head way to avoid what he calls the problem of Descartes. He encountered in his attempt at what he calls that of proving the existence of the external world. In the case of reflexive consciousness the ego and the world arise in correlation, as the subject in relation to its transcendent object. It is therefore a mistake to isolate the subject and treat it as if it were a datum which is given in isolation. "The world should not as a matter of fact, be inferred from the self, nor the self from the world as they arise together in correlation. One may feel lost in the relationship of our analysis of consciousness on existentialism, but as we earlier pointed out this elaborate analysis presented Sartre with a realist background to the understanding of the self and its transcendent object."<sup>35</sup> Consciousness, as we have already seen in Sartre's view, consciousness of something that is, something other than itself in this regard, is transcendent. The transcendent object appears for consciousness and hence can be described as a phenomenon. It would be a mistake,

Sartre insists to interpret this description as implying that the phenomenal object is the appearance of an underlying reality which does not appear in awareness. This is because for Sartre, our awareness of an object is not the appearance of hidden phenomenon which is distinct from itself, but the phenomenon being that presents itself, its essence as well as its existence. The central concern of Sartre is to examine how “man”, as consciousness, is related to the world around him. The basic issue here is that of human freedom. Sartre book, *Being and Nothingness* (1943), is an inquiry into the region of being which he call “being for itself, the region of human consciousness. We shall examine in the next section the main feature of Sartre’s ontology with a view to showing the relationship of the individual to his situation.

It is quite interesting to note that Sartre was baptized and educated in the Catholic faith. He makes regular references to his religious experiences. He said, once that he was forced to use the means of the Gospel without being given the means of the faith. Sartre is atheism is certainly a peculiar one; for he does not simply say that God does not exist, he goes further to assert that it is impossible for God to exist. He tries to ‘prove’ the nonexistence of God with arguments and to draw the implications of his non-existence. Sartre tells us that atheism is at the heart of his existentialism. ‘Existentialism is nothing else but an effort to draw all the consequences of a position of coherent atheism’. Sartre uses the fact of human freedom as an argument against the existence of God. Either God exists and man is not free, or man is free and God does not exist. If God were to exist, man would not be free, for if man was created by God he could not be free, because the world have been determined *apriori* by God through a fixed essence or nature given to man. Man would in that case be a ready-made being, a finished product that would always remain the way it was made. But

man is not a ready-made being, nor has he a predetermined, fixed nature. On the contrary, man is a self-creating being, a free being that has no fixed essence or nature. Therefore the fact, that man is free shows that he was not created and that there is no creator, no God. Man is independent and self-creating. He is not controlled by any being since he freely controls himself. God does not and cannot exist. Man is alone, alone in the world and abandoned to himself with no God to help or guide him. He has only his freedom to go by, for man is totally free and condemned to his freedom.

Sartre extends this anguish to include our fear of responsibility. With freedom comes the realization that we and no one else (no God, no nature, no id, no nothing), are actually responsible for lives: for our successes, our failures our mistakes, our bad decisions, our relationships, even our emotion. But we do not want it, we just cannot handle it, it makes us feel sick, it fills us with angst. So, our anguish arises with our recognition of personal freedom and responsibility. Sartre adds yet another dimension to anguish: the anxiety that comes from embracing our responsibility for not only our own actions but also the whole of humanity. This may seem extreme, and if it were true it would certainly deepen our anxiety about freedom. For now, let us just dwell on this aspect of anguish: whatever we choose to do, we must take responsibility for everyone who decides to do the same thing. It is as if we were a celebrity and everything we did were reported in the tabloid press and imitated by hordes of fans. So, if we lie, we must take responsibility when other people lie; if we have an affair with someone who is married, we must take responsibility for the infidelities of others. In the next chapter we shall see how most of us avoid anguish, by pretending that we are not free and are not responsible. There is another kind of terrible emotion that we must face on our journey to freedom. It arises from the realization that there is

no God, no purpose, nothing which can support us in this cruel world. When we are growing up we often believe, or are told, that there is a purpose to life or some kind of meaning to existence. It is very comforting to believe that an external authority exists, someone who is there to look after us, to support us, to give purpose to our lives and to dish out justice when we die. We also start to believe that we have an essence, either one all human share – human nature – or one peculiar to ourselves – a personality or set of character traits. Then something happens; it could be something traumatic, such as losing a loved one or being made redundant, or else attending a philosophy class or reading one of Sartre's stories. Gradually we start to look at the world differently. We may see it as meaningless, no longer finding any point or purpose to it. For Sartre, this occurs because we have made an existential realization: we have recognized that we have no essence, that there is no God, and that there is no divine plan conferring meaning on the world or offering guidance on how we should live. Why does Sartre use such an emotive and strong term as 'abandonment'? Abandonment is really a metaphor, since, to an atheist such as Sartre, there never was a God to have abandoned us. Rather, it is as if we have had a revelation and seen that our belief in God (or any sort of external purpose) was wrong and must be given up. Although, God has never existed, we still feel deeply the loss of the security brought by the idea of God. Another weak analogy is that of a child who realizes on Christmas Eve that Santa Claus does not exist. However, existential abandonment is much worse: the foundation for life's meaning and morality, in which we once had faith and trust, has now disappeared. That makes us feel alone, abandoned in so many ways if there is no God. As well as having no essence or purpose, we no longer have moral commandments to guide us through our lives. Sartre believes that ultimately it falls to

us individually to overcome our feelings of abandonment, absurdity, and disgust. In Nausea, Roquentin's feelings of disgust at the absurdity and meaninglessness of the universe are only a step on the way to recognition that if there is to be meaning and purpose in life it is we who must create them. Just because there is no God telling us how to live does not mean that there is any point in living. Rather, it means that we have to face up to the task of constructing purpose and values for ourselves. For example, if we go to the park to play football, but discover that there are no goalposts in position, we could spend ages looking for them without success and then leave the park feeling cheated and abandoned. Alternatively, we could make our own goalposts (with jumpers, say) and get on with the game. We are ultimately responsible for one life despite the fact that none of us was consulted before we were born nor given the opportunity to choose the circumstances of our birth. Now, just as we are utterly responsible for our own individual lives, we are also responsible for our own death, this means that no one can die for someone else because the phenomenon of death cannot be shifted from one person to another, for instance, even if a devoted follower of someone slated for execution offers to die in his stead and the request is granted, it simply means that the condemned man's death has been postponed for the moment and the substitute actually died his own death. It follows that the Christian dogma of Jesus dying for humanity is a delusion since each human being will die at some point and the ideal of personal immortality is an expression of the unrealistic belief in life after death. Although the old question of the meaning of life in general is a red herring, one can reasonably inquire into the specific meaning of a person's life at a given moment.

#### **4.8 Sartre's existential Marxism**

Sartre's attempt to synthesize his Existentialist Humanism with Marxist Materialism is expressed in his later work "The Critique of Dialectical Reason" (1960). Though fully aware of the glaring contradictions between his existentialism of absolute freedom and Marxist deterministic dialectical materialism. Sartre declares in this work that "Marxism is the inescapable philosophy of our time"<sup>38</sup>. Opposed to orthodox Marxism and the Hegelianism on which it is founded, Sartre does not believe Marxism is inescapable because history is determined. Rather, he is making the more modest claim that Marxism best expresses the human condition of our time. Unfortunately, Marxism has degenerated into a dogmatic doctrine that makes no provision for human freedom owing to its dialectical materialism. Marxist dialectical materialism emphasizes that all the structures of society and the existential experiences of mankind are determined by antecedent material forces. Consequently, freedom of choice is seen as an illusion and man merely a vehicle through which, the forces of history realize themselves.

Sartre considers his existentialism as a true humanist doctrine, the only suitable philosophy for a liberating politics, over against the Marxism of the French Communist Party, which was a dehumanizing materialism. He believes Marxism lacks a doctrine of revolutionary subjectivity and hence must be a rethought.

In his attempt to combine existentialism with Marxism, Sartre never deviated from his emphasis on the freedom of the individual. He, however, modifies his optimistic view of human freedom to some extent by acknowledging the fact of man's social existence. This is because it is possible for the oppressed to define their aspirations



towards individual freedom in terms of collective identity and collective liberation. Sartre thinks that Marx had succeeded more than anyone else in describing how social and economic structures develop and how they bear on human decisions. He admits that “There is no question that there is some basic change in concept of freedom but adds that” I am still faithful to the notion of freedom”<sup>39</sup>. Sartre never was a true Marxist. He admits that though a man becomes what he is in the context of what others have made of him, nevertheless within these limitations, man is still free and responsible.

#### **4.9 Sartre’s Existential Phenomenology**

The word phenomena, “that which appears” (from the Greek), refers to reality as it appears to us, as contrasted with noumena which is reality without the structures of knowledge we impose on things in order to know them. Distinction between these two concepts was elaborated on by Kant<sup>40</sup>. Phenomenology, specifically, is the study of the way the world is revealed through the structures of consciousness. It is primarily concerned with the direct investigation and description of Phenomena as consciously experienced. There are three perspectives from which we could approach phenomenology, (i) as a method, with particular reference to Edmund Husserl, (ii) as an ontology, with reference to Martin Heidegger, and (iii) as Existentialism, with reference to Jean Paul Sartre. Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness*, published in 1943 contains his existentialist Phenomenological ontology. For him, phenomenology is the modest study of phenomena, of appearance relation to the structures of human consciousness through which they appear to us as they do. In this work, he modified the key features of Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology, Heidegger’s ontological

phenomenology as well as Cartesian rationalism and conducted an existential study of being as it appears to human consciousness.

Being and Nothingness was introduced by Sartre with the title “The Pursuit of Being”, thus – indicating his intention to follow Descartes in making consciousness the starting point of philosophy. However, what he ended up doing was a reversal of Descartes. Consciousness, he argued, is not as Descartes thought it was – the consciousness of a thinking substance examining its own ideas to see if they are true<sup>41</sup>. Sartre accepts the criticism of Descartes which he learned from his study of Husserl’s phenomenology. Like Husserl, he argues, in opposition to Descartes, that my being conscious of thinking cannot be said to prove that I exist as a substance whose essence it is to think. There is no essence which fits the self. No Cartesian cogito, no thinking substance constitutes the essence congruent with my existence. Though Sartre agrees with Descartes that consciousness is always conscious of itself, he rejected the Cartesian self, the thinking substance, and insisted that consciousness is intentional, transparent and nothingness<sup>42</sup>.

Having established the foundation for his existential phenomenology as the study of being as it appears to consciousness, Sartre went further to identify two separate kinds of being:- “Being-for-itself” and “Being-in-itself”. These imply that there is the being of myself as consciousness and the being of that, which is other than me, the objects of which I am conscious<sup>43</sup>. “Being-in-itself” (“L’en soi”) is that which is independent of consciousness, casually determined and without freedom. Here, there is no awareness of anything other than themselves; they simply exist solidly, “massively” as what they are, like a chair, stone or a tree. On the other hand, “Being-for-itself”, Sartre says, is never pure consciousness but (Being self conscious) a mere transparency

through which objects are known. With the phenomenological method limiting Sartre's perspective to that of individual consciousness, Being and Nothingness ended in the defence of the individual.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 Evaluation

It seems a bit odd for Sartre to assert both that: we are free and we are not free to reject our freedom. This is sometimes called Sartre's paradox of freedom, because these two assertions seem contradictory, yet Sartre does not want to surrender either one. The paradox and the contradiction disappear once we accept freedom has limit, and there are plenty of things we cannot choose. So, in Sartre's view, facticity does not represent limitation to our freedom, rather, our facticity is the framework within which we must express our freedom, through the choices we make in life. Freedom needs facticity, as we cannot act or choose in a vacuum; we need concrete circumstances against which we can act. Freedom occurs in real life between real options which are given to us. So, facticity limits choice available to us but does not limit freedom. We can illustrate this idea with the analogy of actors on a stage. In this analogy the stage furniture and backdrop are controlled by the director. The actors can do nothing about what the scenery is or when it changes; it is their facticity. But, in front of the specific scenery that they have been given as the backdrop to their actions, the actors are free to make whatever choices are available to them. So, in real life, we live in a specific context (physical, social, economic, historical, cultural, biological) which is beyond our control. Our specific context, our facticity, limits the choices that are available to us, but within it we are absolutely free to choose our own attitude to the situation and to make our own decisions<sup>1</sup>. Having a specific context can actually make our actions more meaningful because they gain a direction and a focus. We might say that our facticity gives us a set of obstacles that limit our freedom. For

example, if we are born in a country with a failing economy, we face a difficult life: our financial circumstances are huge obstacles to our projects in life. But it is worth recognizing that, for Sartre, in order for us to encounter obstacles in the first place, we must be free. In order to see something as an obstacle, we must first have some project (freely chosen) which it obstructs. For example, the Wright brothers saw our lack of wings as an obstacle to being free to fly, so they invented the aeroplane to overcome that obstacle. Obstacles, things which prevent us from achieving our goals and which are part of our facticity, are not things which get in the way of freedom: we are able to see them as obstacles only because we are free in the first place. Our facticity throws our freedom into sharp relief. Jean Paul Sartre sets up his own picture of the individual human being by first getting rid of its ground in a stable way. Sartre later puts it in *Existentialism is a Humanism*, to be human is characterized to be existence that is to precede its essence. As such, existence is problematic, and it is towards the development of a full existentialist theory of what is to be in human.”<sup>2</sup> In relation to what will become *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre’s early works can be seen as providing important preparatory material for an existential account of being human. But, the distinctiveness of Sartre’s approach to understanding of human existence is ultimately guided by his ethical interest. In particular, this account is for his privilege of a strong notion of freedom which is fundamentally at odds with Heidegger’s analysis. One of the main features of this system, which Sartre presents in the introduction and the first chapter of part one, is a distinction between two kinds of transcendence of the phenomenon of being. The first is the transcendence of being and the second is the consciousness of being. Sartre presents the in-itself as existing without justification independently of the for-itself, and thus, constituting an absolute



‘plenitude’. It exists in a fully determinate and non-relational way. This fully characterizes its transcendence of the conscious experience. In contrast with the in-itself and the for-itself is mainly characterized by a lack of identity with itself. This is a consequence of the following. Consciousness is always ‘of something’, and therefore, defined in relation to something else. It has no nature beyond this and it is completely translucent. Insofar as the for-itself always transcends the particular conscious experience (because of the spontaneity of consciousness), any attempt to grasp it within a conscious experience is doomed to failure. Indeed, as we have already seen in the distinction between pre-reflective and reflective consciousness, a conscious grasp of the first transformation.”<sup>3</sup> This means that it is not possible to identify the for-itself, since the most basic form of identification, i.e. with itself, has failed. This picture is clearly one in which the problematic region of being is that of the for-itself, and that is what *Being and Nothingness* will focus upon. But, at the same time, another important question arises. Indeed, insofar as Sartre has rejected the notion of a ground of all beings in Being, one may ask how something like a relation of being between consciousness and the world is possible. This issue translates in terms of understanding the meaning of the totality formed by the for-itself and the in-itself and its division into these two regions of being. Addressing this issue, Sartre finds the key concept that enables him to investigate the nature of the for-itself. Sartre’s conception of choice is best understood by reference to an individual’s original choice. Sartre views the whole life of an individual as expressing an original project that unfolds throughout time.”<sup>4</sup> This is not a project which the individual has proper knowledge of, but rather one which they may interpret (an interpretation constantly open to revision). Specific choices are therefore always components in time of this time-spanning

original choice of project. With this notion of freedom as spontaneous choice, Sartre has the elements required to define what it is to be an authentic human being. This consists in choosing in a way which reflects the nature of the for-itself as both transcendence and facticity. This notion of authenticity appears closely related to Heidegger's, since it involves a mode of being that exhibits recognition that one is a Dasein. However, unlike Heidegger's, Sartre's conception has clear practical consequences. For what is required of an authentic choice is that which involves a proper coordination of transcendence and facticity, and thus, that it avoid the pitfalls of an uncoordinated expression of the desire for being. This amount is to grasp oneself as freedom and facticity. Such proper coordination between transcendence and facticity constitutes bad faith, either at an individual or an inter-personal level. Such notion of authenticity is therefore quite different from what is often popularly misrepresented as a typically existentialist attitude, namely an absolute prioritization of individual and spontaneity. On the contrary, recognition of how our freedom interacts with our facticity exhibits the responsibility which we have to make proper choices. These are choices which are not trapped in bad faith. Sartre's primary idea is that people as humans, are "condemned " to be free"<sup>5</sup>. This theory relies upon his position that there is no creator, and is illustrated using the example of the paper cutter. Sartre says that if one considered a paper cutter, one would assume that the creator would have had a plan for it: an essence. Sartre said that human beings have no essence before their existence because there is no Creator. Thus: "existence precedes essence."<sup>6</sup>

This forms the basis for his assertion that since people cannot explain their own actions and behaviour by referencing any specific human nature, they are necessarily

fully responsible for those actions. "We are left alone, without excuse." Sartre maintained that the concepts of authenticity and individuality have to be earned but not learned. We need to experience "death consciousness" so as to wake up ourselves as to what is really important; the authentic in our lives which is life experience, not knowledge<sup>7</sup>. Death draws the final point when we as beings cease to live for ourselves and permanently become objects that exist only for the outside world.<sup>8</sup> As such, death emphasizes the burden of our free, individual existence. It is evident that Sartre rejects any external guides on how man should live his life. There is no God to provide a moral law; there is no human nature which can give man a clue as to what he should be doing; there is no ethical system which can tell man how to behave. Following Sartre's position therefore, one of the easiest things to do in reaction to that question which all humans face, namely "how should I live?" or "what should I do?" is to give up; to shrug one's shoulders and think "what's the point in doing anything?"<sup>9</sup> This would be a deeply pessimistic conclusion. Sartre wanted existentialism to change the lives of everyone in the world; he wanted his philosophy to be a philosophy of action. But these goals have been completely undermined following the issues raised from above, that existentialism leads to the quietism of despair or to contemplation. According to Sartre's religious critics, existentialism is over emphasizes the ugly and "evil side" of life whilst neglecting the more positive aspects of humanity. Existentialists, from the Christian side, are reproached as people who deny the reality and seriousness of human affairs. It is true that Sartre wrote in a "realistic" style about realistic people facing realistic situations. His stories are grounded in the bars and streets of Paris, his characters face real-life dilemmas - whether to have an abortion, whether to betray a friend, to lie, cheat or steal. (His collection of short stories, "the

Wall and other stories”<sup>10</sup> gives a flavour of the ugliness to which these critics may be referring.)

This is a serious criticism made by communists against Sartre. The communist existentialists base their doctrine upon pure subjectivity - upon the Cartesian “I think”, which is the moment in which solitary man attains to himself, a position from which it is impossible to regain solidarity with the other man who exists outside of the self. The “ego” cannot reach them through the “cogito”. Existentialism, with its focus on individual freedom, helps to ensure that the middle classes maintain their power<sup>11</sup>. It does this by encouraging people to consider themselves as individuals in isolation from other people, and never as members of a wider socio-economic class. Many argue that Existentialism recognizes no form of morality and encourages individuals to act in whatever manner they please, without any fear that what they are doing is wrong, because for an existentialist, “wrong” has no meaning. Everyone can do what he likes, and will be incapable of condemning the action of anyone else. Much of the evidence for this comes from Sartre’s fiction, as his characters certainly behave without regard or concern for the normal conventions of moral behavior. If Sartre’s theory does not make any moral prescriptions telling man how he should behave, and then he is opening the door for people to use their freedom to act in bad faith.

Finally, they may say, “Everything being merely voluntary in this choice of yours, you give away with one hand what you pretend to gain with the other”<sup>12</sup> Although Sartre is interested in explaining his theory of existentialism to the audience, he is much more concerned with demonstrating that existentialism is not the threatening philosophy that the popular French press had made it out to be. It will suffice here to outline some of his positions on the criticisms leveled against him and existentialism in general. For

Sartre, existentialism is optimistic because it leads to action as it encourages one to realize one's freedom. This is the only theory that does not treat humans as if they were objects, with a fixed human nature. Instead, it treats humans with the dignity they deserve by acknowledging and respecting their freedom. It is also optimistic because it says that everyone is free to choose his own life. To say that "fate" awaits him, or that some force of nature is pushing him forward, this would be pessimistic. Sartre turns on a comparison between the advice given by existentialism and the advice given by "common sayings" on how one should live one's life.<sup>13</sup> People who condemn existentialism for its bleak view of life are often those who believe in the old sayings which encourage one to be selfish, or to keep in one's place or never to try anything new. Sartre therefore, says that existentialism is positive with its emphasis on the possibilities that freedom brings to everybody. According to Sartre, man comes to realize that he is dependent on other individuals, and others are dependent on him, both for his self consciousness and for his freedom. This intertwining of subjectivities, which humans have seen in Sartre refer to as inter-subjectivity, means that existentialism does not consider only individual in isolation. Human act in a world full of free subjects like them, and as they act, they must consider and respect their freedom, Sartre uses the human condition, which is the fundamental situation in which all humans find themselves to maintain that existentialism brings individuals together. This situation, according to him which humans share consists of two things: their freedom and their facticity. The former is that which they all encounter and deal with themselves, and the individual freedom against which they act. Sartre outlines a moral theory which tells humans that they must accept responsibility for the whole of humanity and that they must respect the freedom of others. It is true that there is no

objective morality, and so the existentialist realizes that humans must construct their own values. The only authentic morality is one in which humans acknowledge that their choices are made not just for themselves, but for everyone. Morality for Sartre, cannot be taken for granted, it is something humans must create and for which they must take responsibility. In the closing paragraph of the lecture on *Existentialism as a Humanism*, Sartre gives an impassioned summary of existentialism and its claim to be humanism.”<sup>14</sup> It should also be borne in mind that humanism, in its moral sense can be said to propose either, or both of the following positions:

- Humans are valuable.
- Values and morality have their source in humanity.

The types of humanism mentioned above hold the two beliefs to be true, but they are not authentic. That is why the existentialist humanism adds a third factor which says that the value we give to humans must be an authentic value. Sartre ridicules humanists for their blindness, their tendency to lump everyone together without ever noticing that people are individuals. If God did not create values then humans must be the source of their creation. Each individual creates his or her own values through the choices he/she make, as Sartre says at the end of the lecture; that man has ‘no legislator but himself. Sartre’s concluding remarks in his lecture on existentialism as humanism reveals not only the passion he feels for his existentialism but also the incredibly optimistic view he takes of human beings.

Sartre is saying that the value that existentialists place in humans is very different from the value other kinds of humanism place in humans. According to Sartre, other kinds of humanisms may regard humans as innately good, but Sartre does not share

this view as it is a form of bad faith. With this in mind by implication, one is born in a certain place by certain parents, in a certain cultural environment and other circumstances. One does not choose any of these factors and he is not free to change any of them. More so, one is subject to disease, suffering, death and conflict which are also limiting factors of human freedom. Sartre also treats human freedom as something absolute and inescapable, but in so doing, he divorces the concept from its everyday use and meaning. He leaves no room for the idea that freedom might be a matter of degree which can vary over time, from place to place, and between different individuals. Surely a prisoner confined to a tiny cell has more limited freedom than someone at liberty. An important point which is not really acknowledged by Sartre is that factors such as intoxication, fear, illness, emotional insecurity or psychopathology can weaken the control humans have over their actions or even remove it altogether. Sartre may also be accused of thinking that the world is made up of white, male bourgeois Parisians.

He does not seem to consider seriously the condition of people for whom social and economic constraints present formidable obstacles, not just in terms of action but also in terms of thinking of themselves as capable of action. In order to be able to act with full freedom, individuals have to recognize what options are available to them. This sounds okay for people brought up and educated in a liberal country where many values are observed and allowed. But, if one is brought up to believe that the only real option is to live the life of a dutiful wife, then the possibility of becoming, for example, a guerilla fighter, remains closed. These groups may still have choice, according to Sartre's definition, but it is important to recognize that, for them, the range of choices available is significantly restricted. Having observed all these shifts

made over the centuries, from 'fate' to 'God' and the emphasis laid on man and his free will. These camps have different tenets and have continued to oppose each other. Every event has a cause but in the light of this, where do you place human free will? If you disregard free will, how can you establish moral responsibility? What is moral responsibility? Moral responsibility is the ability to be held accountable. What is moral act? It is the act that can be judged right or wrong. If I have no free will and I act and I am defined by my act, how can I be held morally responsible for the act? That means there is something in me that pushed me to do that in the light of determinism. But you and I know that if there is something in me pushing me to act I cannot be held accountable. So it is no longer possible to hold two extreme positions, we are looking at the small positions that are imagined. To what extent is determinism possible and to what extent will moral free will be possible. Existentialism says we are the product of our actions and if we are products of our actions, we are the product of our actions because we are moral agents. Determinisms have no room for moral agent because every event has a cause. For example, a man who smokes, who decides to stop smoking. That is a moral decision, that's a mental act. But at a certain time in the days, he finds himself reaching out for cigarettes against the decisions he has taken not to smoke. When you begin to evaluate the psychological state of the man, you will see that, there are particularly elements of that product in the nicotine that excites some enzymes that elicits that decision to smoke. That is determinism. Every natural being is in-built with a particular kind of aura that drives it on its way and who sits in the centre of its own gravity. Then every artificial thing is moved by an artificial force. For instance, moving a table from one place to another, it has to do with an artificial force but if this cause were to be natural like a new born baby, growing from



childhood to adulthood, that's a natural cause of motion. According to Aquinas, whatever is caused is caused by another. With the growth of knowledge, it became important that one had to consider those small causes. It was Beckon who talked about observation before you can reach conclusion. You have to start from the small causes before you can reach your conclusion. When he talked about the Billard ball theory, the second law of the three laws describes the Billard ball, as snooker, you need to pull your stick and hit the white ball to hit the black ball, the white ball will have to hit the black ball to pot it. To do that, you must be able to not just to calculate the weight of the white ball and the weight of your stick but you have to be able to determine the speed with which you will hit the white ball for it to move in the angle of the black ball and part of the black ball to move in a particular angle again to be pot. If I know your father, know your mother, know where you were born and brought up, I can comfortably describe who you are. Therefore, we must learn to recognize the limits of our freedom, learn to identify those features of the world that we can do something about and those that we cannot. We must not get frustrated about what is beyond us, however, or cease to care about what is within our power. What we can do something about, we must do something about, what we cannot do something about we must leave. This is not a doctrine of quietism, an excuse to see the world as beyond us.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

Sartre should be given credit for expounding and maintaining such an elaborate and highly intellectual theory on human being. The value that Sartre places on human beings is the value of their potential, the value of their possibilities, and the value of their freedom. All these positive contributions notwithstanding, Sartre stands to be

criticized, for instance, on his notion of absolute freedom. The man is always and absolutely free in the face of so many contradictory empirical facts and phenomena are not defensible. For example, in the face of our ordinary ways of thinking and speaking – capacity, Sartre was born in France, worked with people, needed people for his plays and so on. He had a responsibility for the others as much as the other also has a responsibility for him<sup>15</sup>. There must have been a guiding principle (law) which was guiding this movement where he was a member. Sartre was not at this time absolutely free as should be supposed. Sartre also in an attempt to prove human freedom disproved it. The word “condemned” implies that it is not possible for man to have the contrary. That is, he cannot but be what he is called to be. What he is is not of his own making. Thus, man is not free as man condemned to be free is not free, at least from the point that he is condemned.

Generally, it is quite true that despite all the influences man encounters in life, he is still responsible for all his actions. Freedom and determinism have merits and setbacks hence one can agree with St. Thomas Aquinas the angelic doctor that “though man is free but his freedom is limited”, for virtue lies in the middle. Also, since man is a finite and limited being, it follows that, freedom of a limited being must of course, be a limited freedom. And echoing with John Paul II absolute freedom is practically impossible and theoretical absurd. Thus, there can be no such thing as absolute or unlimited human freedom as postulated by Jean-Paul Sartre. Rather, man’s freedom is circumscribed by man’s natural capacity. If we depend upon other people to value our freedom, then we value their freedom because it is only their freedom that makes it possible for us to value ours. This is a kind of ‘you scratch my back and I will scratch yours’ relationship. We value their freedom because they value ours. If what is meant

by freedom is the absolute liberty for everyone to be unrestricted and uncontrolled in his actions, there is bound to be chaos and confusion in all areas of human activities. For example, if every road user has the freedom to drive in whatever manner he wishes, then there certainly would be road accidents and misfortunes. Nonetheless there will be no basis for justification as to who was wrong or who was right. If people were allowed to act according to their whims and caprices anyhow they wished then there will be serious problem in the society. Thus, while we are free to choose, we are not free from the consequences of our choices. Consequences are determined by an inevitably bound to the choices we make. Our problem is the mentality of 'always being good', the mentality of 'being infallible', and the mentality of 'executive impunity and rascality'. When people go into authority they begin to think they are infallible but even in infallibility of the Pope the church says it is only when the Pope is with the church. But in this, our own people will now think that they are infallible at all levels both in the political and spiritual level and that is why they cannot accept that they are inefficient. For example in Nigeria, since we gained freedom from Britain the country has been grappling with several problems without finding a lasting solution to them. In the years after her independence Nigeria has been regarded as a land flowing with milk and honey but nowadays Nigerians search for greener pastures abroad. The situation has degenerated and bad. The major problem in Nigeria today is our leaders because they feel they are free to do anything. Our leaders should know that the corruption of the best is the worst (*corruption optima pessima est*).

In Nigeria corruption is a huge problem since her independence. It started with government officials and has gradually eaten deep into every other area of the economy. It is very rare to see a government official who is not corrupt nowadays.

Furthermore, Nigerian leaders at the federal state and local government levels feel invincible and disregard the rule of law, wherever they can. Leaders bend rules to their wishes and damn the consequences. The judiciary arm of the government has been toothless and only clamp down on the average citizens while top government officials who break the law are left to wander free. Most people firstly pledge allegiance to their tribe before admitting they are Nigerians. As a result, square pegs have gone into round holes and needless squabbles have degenerated into full-blown war between communities. Tribalism reigns in Nigeria and it plays a great part in the country's current problems. One of Nigeria's biggest problems lies in its lack of good leadership. Nigeria has barely managed to rule itself efficiently or achieve political stability since it gained independence 56 years ago. Due to tribalism and other ills, appointments into offices are based on nepotism instead of pragmatism. As a result, unqualified candidates are put in important positions and the result is what we have today. All these problems have risen because of executive impunity and rascality, the mentality of always being good and the mentality of being infallible. This research therefore calls for war against this mentality virus called executive impunity and rascality. There is therefore the need for man to live above his selfish or parochial interests in order to choose the right actions that would improve the lot or condition of many in the society.

## ENDNOTES

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2. J. P Sartre *Being and Nothingness*, Trans, Hazel Barnes, (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966). p. 246
3. See Gordon Hayim (Ed.) *Dictionary of Existentialism*. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press).p. 105.
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5. J. P. Sartre *Existentialism and Human Emotions*, p. 43.
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