JEAN - PAUL SARTRE
A SEARCH FOR MEANING IN A MEANINGLESS WORLD

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Abstract

For Sartre the source of all authenticity is human freedom. In the last section of Being and Nothingness, in the passage 'Ethical Implication' he proposes freedom in place of God as man's primary value. Similarly in Existentialism and Humanism, he states freedom as a moral judgment that men should accept as their ultimate goal. Similar statements have been made by Sartre in his entire philosophical and literary works. Thus, an authentic individual, according to Sartre, is one who accepts his situation as it truly is; who does not flee from it in self-delusion. He accepts the responsibilities and dangers that his situation involves fully conscious of the finality of his decision making for "he is what he makes of himself" through his actions within a situation. If we choose what our inner most being prompts us to do, we realize authenticity, if we choose in bad faith, then we fall in the trap of inauthenticity.

Key words: Freedom, Bad faith, Authenticity, Choice, Commitment, Anguish

For Sartre the source of all authenticity is human *freedom*. In the last section of *Being and Nothingness*, in the passage 'Ethical Implication' he proposes freedom in place of God as man's primary value. Similarly in *Existentialism and Humanism*, he states freedom as a moral judgment that men should accept as their ultimate goal. Similar statements have been made by Sartre in his entire philosophical and literary works. He says in an interview that "Everything that I have tried to write or do in my life was meant to stress the importance of freedom." (Cited in Anderson, 1979, p.42) Freedom as an ultimate value in Sartre's works has been emphasized and linked to his idea of authenticity for he uses freedom, commitment and authenticity interchangeably. In his essay *Anti-Semite and Jew* he says that authenticity "consists in having a true and lucid consciousness of the situation, in assuming the responsibilities and risks that it involves, in accepting it in pride or humiliation, sometimes in horror and hate". (Sartre, Anti-Semite and Jew, 1948, p. 90) Thus, an authentic individual, according to Sartre, is one who accepts his situation as it truly is; who does not flee from it in *self-delusion*. He accepts the

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responsibilities and dangers that his situation involves fully conscious of the finality of his decision making for "he is what he makes of himself" (Sartre, 1948, p. 28) in and through his actions within a situation.

Sartre's authenticity does not consist, like Heidegger, in the faithful revelation of Being but he makes it the task of the *for-itself*, which has brought the 'why' into the world, to supply the answers and the 'wherefore'. For a clear understanding of Sartre's ideas it would perhaps be worthwhile to begin with an explication of Sartre's notion of being.

He takes the analysis of *consciousness* as his point of departure. In keeping with Husserl, he too, believes that 'all consciousness is consciousness of something'. Meaning thereby that consciousness which is intentional in character is always directed towards an object. Thus, consciousness is nothing but an intentional activity; it is not an object in itself or an object for itself. It is nothing. For Sartre, this notion of consciousness, as nothing, leads to a distinction between two very different kinds of being – the being of objects for consciousness (being-in-itself) and the being of consciousness (being-for-itself).

Being for the object of consciousness simply is. Throughout the *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre emphasizes that *being-in-itself* is, and whatever can be said about it is that it simply exists. It can never be anything other than what it is. It is full in itself. It is complete and full of positivity. "In it there is no negativity; this would imply a lack of perfect identity." (Sartre, 1957, p. ixxix) It is complete and plentiful being. Thus, according to Sartre, the being-in-itself is determinate, complete, full of positivity in itself. It is an unconscious being and therefore lacks freedom.

On the other hand, in contrast to the being of the object of consciousness; the being of consciousness cannot be characterized as objects are characterized. It cannot be characterized as given as such, or as having such and such fixed characteristics. The being-for-itself is indeterminate. It is full of negativity. It is a lack in itself. It is characterized paradoxically as "not being what it is and being what it is not." (Sartre, 1957, p. 93) Therefore, this indeterminacy, negativity and lack of the being-for-itself gives it; its unique character. And this unique character is its freedom. Being-for-itself is free. And this consciousness of freedom enables man to create meaning for himself through the choices he makes.

Sartre declares that *bad faith* is a threat to being human and this is possible because consciousness, which although not the whole man is nevertheless his core, is at the same time in

its essence what it is not and not what it is. "It is an immediate permanent threat to every project of the human being." (Sartre, 1957, p. 70) For Sartre bad faith occurs when one is insincere to oneself.

Bad Faith or Inauthenticity

Sartre says that we are the creators of our own essence meaning thereby that we are what we are on account of the choices we freely make and hence become totally responsible for what we are. He affirms that we are our freedom and our 'whatness' is our choice. ***Bad faith*** or ***MauvaiseFoi*** arises when we treat the predicative 'is' as to what we are – we are a waiter, a soldier, a coward, a liar, - as if it were the 'is' of identity defining an essence, and abdicate our responsibility as to what we do by virtue of an explanation following from our supposedly fixed essential nature which is imposed upon us. The overarching exemplification of bad faith is thus to see ourselves as an object, as fixed; as a being-in-itself. Thus, according to Sartre, it is bad faith to live as though values and attitudes were derived from the world and not our own selves. According to Sartre this attitude of man is inauthentic which opposes its own freedom. Because for Sartre authenticity consists in free choice while bad faith opposes it and therefore becomes inauthentic. Bad faith is an attitude in which the being-for-itself deliberately wants to become in-itself in order to avoid the anguish of freedom and responsibility. Because "the reality of our freedom is so unbearable that we refuse to face it. Instead of realizing our identities as free conscious subjects we pretend to ourselves that we are mechanistic, determined objects. And refusing to freely make ourselves what we are, we masquerade as fixed essences by the adoption of hypocritical social roles and inert value system." (Priest, 2001, p. 204)

The problem of bad faith is the problem of describing what it is to be a human being (the human condition), and thus demonstrating the various modes of escape from what Sartre has already described as 'absolute freedom'. For Sartre the phenomenon of bad faith is clearly present in most or even all human activities, and the problem therefore, becomes a Kantian problem of explaining how such a phenomenon is possible.

Sartre declares that 'bad faith is a lie to oneself.' It should neither be identified with the lie

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as such nor with falsehood. Bad faith is *self-deception*. It is a lie to oneself. He defends this position on the provision that lying to one self is distinguished from lying in general or falsehood. The essence of lie is that the liar is actually and completely in possession of the truth which he is hiding. One cannot lie about what he is ignorant of. In a simple lie there is always two parties one is deceiver the other whom the deceiver; deceived. But Bad faith entails the unity of a single consciousness. There is no ontological duality between the deceiver and the deceived .The one who lies and the one to whom the lie is told are one and the same consciousness.

Sartre offers us an example of a woman to provide a basic insight into the mechanism of bad faith. In this typical but amusing example when a woman consents to go out with a man for the first time. She understands very well the intentions of her companion towards her. She does not want to read the underlying meaning of phrases addressed to her, like, 'you look very charming', 'I find you so attractive', etc. She decides to take these phrases on their face value as merely respectful or admiring. Since she does not quite know what she wants. She sees only the explicit meaning of his utterances and completely strips them of their sexual undertones. She takes the utterance of her companion as objective and sincere as 'a table is round' or 'the wall is white' since she wishes neither to commit herself to a future relationship nor remove all possibilities of any involvement. In doing so she gives everything the quality of being-in-itself. She is well aware of the desire she invokes in her companion. "But the desire cruel and naked would humiliate and horrify her." (Sartre, 1957, p. 97) She does not altogether want to get rid of that desire nor is she satisfied by the mere respect offered to her. The woman is clearly in two minds; she wants not only her freedom to be respected but also the charm and beauty of her body to be appreciated. But then suddenly her companion grasps her hand because he is unwilling to leave things as they are. Grasping of hand is to force a decision, i.e. to change the situation. Now this moment is very crucial for the woman. Because at this moment she is compelled to take a decision. Because leaving her hands in the warm hands of her companion implies a consent to engage herself: which she does not want. And to withdraw her hand means 'to break the troubled and unstable harmony which makes the hour charmful.' In the conflict of decision making the woman leaves her hand there. She does not notice it, because as it happens, by chance at this moment she becomes not human but all intellect. She draws her companion upto the most lofty regions of the sentimental speculations. She speaks of life - of her life and shows herself in her essential aspect a personality, a consciousness. And during this time the divorce of the body from the soul is accomplished; the

hand rests inert between the warm hands of her companion – "neither consenting nor rejecting a thing." (Sartre, 1957, p. 97)

Sartre says that this woman is in bad faith. Because "She knows that it will be necessary sooner or later for her to make a decision. But she does not want to realize the urgency. She concerns herself only with what is respectful and discreet in the attitude of her companion. She does not apprehend this conduct as an attempt to achieve what we call the first approach." (Sartre, 1957, p. 55)

Sartre says that the woman interprets whatever her companion says as devoid of sexual suggestiveness, and even responds to his physical advances by denying its intentional import. He takes her hand and she simply divorces herself from it and ignores the fact that her hand is with him. Sartre says:

> "We shall say that this women is in bad faith… she has disarmed
> the actions of her companion by reducing them to being only what
> they are, that is, to existing in the mode of the in-itself." (Sartre,
> 1957, p. 56)

The woman is deceiving herself concerning the intentions of her companion, but Sartre does not want to say that she is simply deceiving herself about him. She is deceiving herself about her own desires and intentions as well as about her own sexual nature. She is pretending that her companion's advances do not have anything (sexual) to do with her. Sartre advocates that this woman is in bad faith primarily because she denies the necessity of her own choice in the situation. By treating herself as non-sexual, she has denied the situation in which she must choose to accept or reject her sexuality and her companion's advances.

To describe this incident as *self-deception* leads to the following glib interpretation. The woman lies to herself; she knows that she is being treated as a sexual object but will not allow herself to realize this. She knows the truth, on the one hand, but refuses to disclose it to herself on the other. A lie is, in general, knowing the truth but refusing to disclose it, presenting some other proposition which one knows to be false instead. A lie to oneself, self-deception, is knowing something and hiding it from oneself.

Sartre's solution to the problem of bad faith is a careful phenomenological description of the phenomena commonly called self-deception. And the demonstration that these phenomena can be accounted for by the theory of absolute freedom of *Being and Nothingness* coupled with the

observation that man tends to 'flee this freedom', or more accurately, 'flee the anguish of recognition of freedom' by constructing excuses for himself and denying this freedom. Bad faith is a willful refusal to recognize oneself as both facticity and transcendence, as a man with a past and a future yet to be determined. The paradigm case of bad faith is thus the misinterpretation of choices which one makes for himself as facts which determine one. Bad faith is flight from anguish in the face of freedom, a denial of transcendence and of the attempt to look at oneself as a thing.

Thus, Sartre holds the view that human being is at once a facticity and transcendence both, i.e. given and possible projects remain to be associated with his freedom. And the woman in the given example to her advantage uses this double property of human reality. Though aware of the first approach, i.e. facticity, she uses the second approach i.e. transcendence. "She is aware of the desire she evokes but purifies it of anything humiliating by acknowledging it only as pure transcendence. While attempting to transform facticity into transcendence and vise-versa, she feels that she is escaping all reproaches. But she does so at the price of arresting of gluyeing down, of thing if lying, her possibilities – of objectifying her transcending freedom." (Sartre, 1957, pp. 55-57) As Sartre points out in *Being and Nothingness*:

> "The basic concept which is thus engendered utilizes the double property of the human being, who is at once a facticity and a transcendence. These two aspects of human reality are and ought to be capable of a valid co-ordination. But bad faith does not wish either to co-ordinate them or to surmount them in a synthesis. Bad faith seeks to affirm their identity while preserving their differences. It must affirm facticity as being transcendence and transcendence as being facticity, in such a way that at the instant when a person apprehends to one, he can finds himself abruptly faced with the other." (Sartre, 1957, p. 56)

The paradigm of bad faith is fleeing from my own freedom and possibilities. The characterization of bad faith, however, is not restricted to this paradigm case, and it is one of the weakness of the Sartre's otherwise brilliant analysis of bad faith that he sometimes places inordinate stress on one kind of bad faith. Bad faith is generally characterizes as a 'refusal to recognize what I am' which is genuine and 'authentic existence', namely, a being who is both facticity and transcendence. Thus, bad faith does not solely consist of the denial of one's facticity and overemphasis on his transcendence.

For Sartre, *sincerity* too, which seems to be the mark of authentic existence, comes under the heading of bad faith. Therefore, it too is inauthenticity. Sartre mentions that sincerity is a sort of determination to be for oneself and for others to be what one already is. But this is precisely the definition of being-in-itself. Man cannot be what he is in the manner of the being-in-itself. This implies that the concept of sincerity cannot represent the constitutive principle of human reality because human reality cannot be, in Sartre's system of thought, what it is, it must be able to be what it is not.

It therefore, follows that if man is what he is, bad faith is impossible forever and the project of sincerity ceases to be his ideal; it rather becomes his being. But man is not what he is because how can he be what he is, when he exists as consciousness of being. If sincerity is a universal concept, then its definition 'one must be what one is' cannot be the regulating principle for the judgements and concepts through which we express what we are. It is not an ideal of knowing but the ideal of being; it is an absolute equivalence of being-with itself as the prototype of being. In this sense it is necessary that we make ourselves what we are. But what are we then if we have the constant obligation to make ourselves what we are, if our mode of being is having the obligation to be what we are.

Sartre illustrates his point with the example of a *Café-Waiter*. The café-waiter tries to reduce himself to a being-in-itself. He is playing at being a waiter in a café. He is playing his role in order to realize it. Simultaneously, from within, the waiter in the café cannot be immediately a café-waiter in the sense that 'this glass is a glass'. It does not however, follow that he cannot reform the 'reflective Judgements or concepts', regarding his condition. But all his judgments and concepts refer to the 'transcendence – they are the matter of abstract possibilities'. And it is precisely this person who I have to be (if I am the waiter in question) and who I am not. It is not that he does not wish to be this person but rather there is no common measure between his being and mine.

It is a representation for others and for myself which means that I can be only in representation. Sartre says:

> "But if I represent myself as him, I am not he; I am separated from
> him as the object from the subject, separated by nothing, but this
> morning isolates me from him. I cannot be he, I can only play at
> being him; that is imagine to myself that I am he. And thereby I
> effect him with nothingness. In vain do I fulfill the functions of a

café-waiter. I can be he only in the neutralized mode, as the actor is Hamlet…what I attempt to realize is a being-in-itself of the café-waiter." (Sartre, 1957, p. 60)

Sartre, therefore, maintains that the Café-waiter is in bad faith because he has ignored his transcendence in the face of his facticity. The example furnished and analysed by Sartre is highly significant, because it brings out clearly the two roles of human existence i.e. its facticity and transcendence.

Sartre illustrates his point by yet another example; that of a confidential meeting of a homosexual and his friend. The *homosexual*, in this example, suffers from a feeling of guilt that he absolutely denies of being a *pederast*. Since he has not chosen such a life, he declares that 'he is not really a pederast' even though he admits to having indulged, on occasion, in homosexual relations; Sartre says that "his case is always different, peculiar; there enters into it something of a game, of chance, of bad luck; the mistakes are all in the past;… Here is assuredly a man in bad faith who borders on the comic since, acknowledging all the facts which are imputed to him, he refuses to draw from them the conclusion which they impose." (Sartre, 1957, p. 63)

The homosexual in this example is nothing different from the 'young lady' or 'the 'café-waiter' of the previous examples. They are all in the bad faith. All the three i.e. the young lady, the café-waiter and the homosexual, are absolutely right in choosing to think of themselves only in terms of their freedom. Homosexual, in the above example, is right in holding that he is not a homosexual absolutely in the way that, this table is table; implying thereby that the established patterns of conduct cannot define a man's essence. But the homosexual is absolutely wrong in applying this freedom with respect to his past activities. Sartre holds that in so far as he has committed these acts in the past, he is a pederast because he cannot disown the responsibility of what he has done, but he cannot be said to be pederast in any absolute sense, that is with respect to his present and future. What the homosexual is trying to do is to use simultaneously and dishonestly the two meanings of *to be*. He understands 'not-being' in the sense of 'not-being-in-itself'. He lays claim to 'not being a pederast' in the sense in which this table is a table. Therefore, he is too in the bad faith or in the inauthentic existence.

There is another important form of bad faith i.e. treating one self as an other instead of treating one self as oneself. To treat oneself as an other, according to Sartre, is to deny transcendence and turn oneself, not into a thing but nonetheless into pure facticity. Sartre argues

that this form of bad faith is most primitive. It is through Being-with-others (Heidegger's Mitsein) that we first learn to reflect on ourselves at all, and it is the resultant Being-for-others which forms the basis of all bad faith.

Sartre declares role playing too, as bad faith. Because a man in bad faith distracts himself from the recognition of his freedom. The most common form of his distraction is to be found, according to Sartre, in the notion of "role playing", or as he characterizes it, 'Being what I am not'.

He affirms that one is also in bad faith when he assumes a social role as his role and avoids questioning that role. Thus one pays attention to the details of his responsibilities and distracts himself from freedom to accept or not accept those responsibilities. The most obvious example of such type of bad faith is the petty bureaucrat, who focuses his attention to petty rules and regulations and simply refuses to consider even the intentions and basic principles underlying those petty roles. Attention of one's 'duties' and social role as a form of bad faith is famously illustrated in Sartre's brilliant description of the Café-waiter.

> "His movement is quick and studied, a little too precise, a little too rapid, He comes toward the patrons with a step a little too quick. He bends forward a little too eagerly; his voice, his eyes expresses an interest a little too solicitous for the order of the customer. Finally when he returns, trying to imitate in his walk the inflexible stiffness of some kind of automation while carrying his tray with the recklessness of a tightrope walker by putting it in a perpetually unstable, perpetually broken equilibrium which he perpetually re-establishes by a light movement of the arm and hand. All this behaviour seems to us a game. He is trying to link his movements together as if they were mechanisms, the one regulating the other… He is playing, he is amusing with himself. But what is he playing? We need not watch long before we can explain it; he is playing at being a waiter in a café… The waiter in the café plays with his condition in order to realize it." (Sartre, 1957, p. 59)

What the waiter attempts to be is a being-in-itself; something which is only a waiter and could not be anything else. Accepting the role hides the possibility that one could be the rich businessman waited on; it is bad faith in that one denies that he could be anything other than a waiter.

Heidegger understands the specific feature of human existence to be a kind of standing out

from the world, an *ek-stasis*, *ek-sistence*. Sartre reckons with a three foldek-stasis, the first being fulfilled with pre-reflective consciousness of things, the second with reflective consciousness, as in knowledge and the third in man's ek-stasis as an object for another. In this latter case I 'stand out from' myself in so far as I see myself as object for another.

Sartre's ontology is not limited to my consciousness and the objects of which I am conscious; there are also other people, other consciousness. He is not simply claiming that there are other people, but he claims that our relations with other people are based on bitter struggle – not necessary for each others lives but for the protection of our freedom. My relations with others are always a struggle to preserve my freedom, especially to preserve it from the objectifying looks of the others. And in order to preserve my freedom, I attempt to change the other into an object-for-me. Human relations, according to Sartre, are based on the others attempts to reduce me to an object in his eyes. And as an object, I cannot at the same time be viewed as a free subject with whom I can have true contact. Thus, my relations with other people constitute a threat to my freedom, for the other has the ability to make me into an object. I also have the ability to turn him into an object, and thus become an equal threat to him. For Sartre, the encounter with the other is a struggle for recognition, in particular recognition as freedom the realization of which is the simultaneous realization of authenticity. The other attempts to 'reduce me to an object, to define me as a fixed self; I try to do the same to the other. Thus, it leads us into bad faith, which is a departure from an authentic world into a perpetual struggle continuously leading us away from anything we may term as truth.

Part three of *Being and Nothingness*, entitled being-in-others is estimated as one of the most brilliant and intriguing sections. It has three sections. The first devoted to the existence of others, the second to the body and third to the concrete relations with others. And undoubtedly the most important is the third and conclusive section where Sartre spells out the concrete implications of his theory of *intersubjectivity.*

Sartre's description of the being of the being-for-itself and its relation to the being-in-itself had repercussions that Sartre could explicate only the being of one's consciousness with no bridge established to relate with the consciousness of others. The problem is that he has followed so closely the idealistic conception of self consciousness as of transcendental origin and 'creator' of all being that he constantly faces the danger of transcendental solipsism. In dealing with the

problem of solipsism he analyses the existence of the other and the relations between my being and the being of the other. In his analysis of the ***Reef of solipsism*** Sartre, before presenting his own view, takes into consideration the notion of the 'other' as dealt by Husserl, Hegel and Heidegger.

Sartre observes that, for Husserl, the reference to the other is a necessary condition for the existence of the world. He says that Husserl has defined the other as an 'absence'. Sartre asks the question: "how can one have a full intuition of an absence?" (Sartre, 1957, pp. 234-235) unless I arbitrarily presuppose that the other is identical with me, true knowledge of the other escapes me.

The inadequacy of the Husserlian theory of the other is that phenomenological method operates only through reducing the object via the self's analysis and through intending the object via the self's acts of intending. But since we cannot penetrate beyond the core of the self, the other escapes us. As Sartre puts it "Husserl has reduced being to a series of meanings, the only connection which he has been able to establish between my being and that of the other is a connection of knowledge. Therefore, Husserl cannot escape solipsism any more…" (Sartre, 1957, p. 235)

For Hegel the problem of the other is the problem of the consciousness of self. Sartre quotes Hegel: "The consciousness of the self is real only in so far as it knows its echo (and its reflection) in another. For Hegel, Sartre claims, the existence of my consciousness as consciousness of self depends on the appearance of the other. Self consciousness appears with the exclusion of the other. Such exclusion takes a double form: by the very fact of being myself, I exclude the other; by the very fact of being himself, the other whom I exclude me…. consciousness becomes as object for the other at the same time as the other becomes an object for my consciousness." (Sartre, 1957, p. 238)

Sartre says that "We shall marshal against Hegel a two fold charge of optimism" (Sartre, 1957, p. 240) first of epistemological optimism and second of ontological optimism. Sartre says that "it appears to Hegel that the truth of the consciousness of self can appear that is, that an objective accord can be realized between the consciousness under the name of recognition of me by the other and of the other by me." (Sartre, 1957, p. 240) The ontological optimism in the Hegel's philosophy is even more "For Hegel…truth is truth of the whole." (Sartre, 1957, p. 243) And Hegel believes that truth of all already exists. Sartre says that this optimistic assertion of Hegel permits him the claim that the truth regarding the other is possible to obtain.

The failure of Hegel's optimism is the failure to produce the basis of intersubjective knowledge. Sartre claims that he deals with a mere plurality of consciousness which cannot be properly connected. His optimism is an illusion that such a connection has been established in his arguments concerning the other. "If we are to refute solipsism, then my relation to the other is first and fundamentally a relation of being to being, not of knowledge to knowledge." (Sartre, 1957, p. 244) Hegel's failure on this particular level, according to Sartre is that… he identifies knowledge and being." (Sartre, 1957, p. 244)

Sartre says that, for Heidegger, the question of the other arises for a person only when the person has achieved authentic existence. And authenticity is achieved, according to Heidegger in the resolute decision the individual makes regarding his possibility of death. At the moment that the individual chooses his authenticity, he is disclosed to himself in authenticity, and the others around him are at the same moment elevated toward the authentic.

Sartre states that Heidegger's description of the other is an 'ontic' and psychologistic description and not a true ontological explanation, since he claims there is no warranty for passing from the idea of being-with (mit-sien) to the ontological structure of being-in-the-world. Sartre hold that Heidegger, like Husserl and Hegel, has failed to produce an acceptable theory of the other and that Heidegger leaves the problem unsolved: it leaves the self isolated in the dungeon of solipsism – as 'solitary'.

In his critique of Husserl, Hegel, and Heidegger, Sartre primarily wants to demonstrate the error which these philosophers made in affirming that my fundamental connection with the other is realized through knowledge. Indeed, the other is not purely a phenomenon of our consciousness. But through the consciousness of the other I become truly myself. Thus, Sartre asserts that neither idealism nor realism has been able to give an intelligible account of my relation to another. He says that it is not primarily a relation of knowledge and it is because they have treated it as such that these philosophies have been condemned to failure.

Sartre confers the solution of this problem of solipsism through the dynamics of ***Look***. As always, here too, he begins with cogito. A cogito which is simultaneously both the existential as well as epistemological in character. Sartre commits himself to the position that any consideration of the other must begin with the being of the self. He holds that the rapport with the other will be a relationship of being to being and not one of understanding to understanding, Husserl failed by

measuring being through understanding, Hegel failed on account of identifying understanding with being. Sartre, to the contrary, proposes to give an explanation of the relationship between my being to the Being of the other.

The basis of the original relation to the other lies in the very appearance of the other in my world. He appears to me and a shock accompanies the presentation of the other in my world. The appearance among the objects of my universe of an element of disintegration of this universe is what I call the appearance of a man in my universe. The other shocks my world in an original, unique and irreducible manner: he looks at me. At each instance the other looks at me. The basis of the solution to the problem of the other will be the look.

Sartre selects the phenomenon of *shame* to illustrate his theory of the look. He gives an example in *Being and Nothingness* of a man who is standing in a corridor looking through a key hole into a room. In so far as his whole being is engaged in the look he is not aware of himself as a physical presence located on this side of the door. Rather he has already transcended himself. He is already beyond himself in the room in which his gaze is situated. But suddenly he hears the sound of foot steps approaching the corridor in which he is present. The sound effects a transformation of his relation to himself. In so far as the implied presence of the other makes him ashamed of himself, he ceases to be a pure transcendence and becomes a ***transcendence transcended***. A transcendence transcended by the implicit presence of the one who is looking at him looking through the key hole. And he experiences this transcending of his transcendence in shame. (Macann, 1993, pp. 142-43)

Pure shame is the feeling of being an object through not necessarily some particular object. Shame exists when I recognize myself as degraded by and dependent upon the other. Sartre says:

> "Shame is the feeling of original fall, not because of the fact that I
> may have committed this or that particular fault but simply that I
> have 'fallen' into the world, in the midst of things, and that I need
> the mediation of the other in order to be what I am." (Sartre, 1957,
> p. 289)

Through the experience of shame, I seek the overthrow of the other by appropriating him as an object for my subjectivity. But in this appropriation I hope to achieve more than simply the objectification of the other. What I seek is no less than the discovery in the other of an aspect of myself: my objectivity.

Shame reveals to the self the look of the other. The other looks at me and in the look,

shocks or hemorrhages my inner unity, my inner world, my subjectivity. The recovery of this inner world of the self is possible by a relation against the other; i.e. by making the other the object of my look and destroying his inner unity. By the look of the other I have been made an object for his subjectivity, and he knows me only as object and never as subject. In the same manner, I know the other as object and never as subject.

Sartre says that I cannot be an object for an object. I must be on object for a subject. But if my being-for-other has revealed the necessity for the other, the question remains: what is the Being of the being-for-others? Sartre claims that the being-for-other is not an ontological structure of the pour-soi. We cannot even think of deriving, as a consequence of a principle, the being-for-other from the being-for-self, nor, reciprocally, the being-for-self from the being-for-other.

Thus, Sartre illustrates that because of the basic epistemological character of the consciousness, I can never attempt to prove the subjectivity, my proof founders on the reefs of the limits of my knowledge; and if I accept the facticity of the other as object, I fail to penetrate to his care.

But the other is for me not just the one through whom I lose my subjectivity, the one who takes me be what I am. In so far as I become aware of my being for the other, the other becomes the one through whom I regain my objectness, through whom I acquire a kind of being. Moreover, unlike the quasi-being which I try to make myself to be through self-objectification, the being which I acquire through the other is real being - I really am an in-itself for the other consciousness, and therefore I can be an in-itself for myself too, in so far as I am aware of myself as being for the other. But this being (in-itself) which I acquire through the other will turn out to be an 'unhappy consciousness'. For I can only become something for the other in so far as I cease to be for myself what I really am, namely, a for-itself. (Macann, 1993, pp. 143-44)

The notion of freedom and living an authentic life in the awareness of that freedom, are central to Sartre's existentialism. The notion of an 'authentic' life one lived in awareness of freedom – is increased in proportion as we are not aware of ourselves fixed as objects by others. But the strategy of evading the fixity ensuing from the look of others by in turn objectifying others is in the end self-defeating. For as I regard others as objects, so I come to regard myself as an object like them, which, according to Sartre, is the paradigm of bad faith or inauthenticity.

The passing of responsibility for what we do to something other than ourselves is, Sartre

says, inauthentic or living in bad faith. The abdication of our responsibility for what we are and do Sartre sees as a kind of self-deception; it is as if we are aware that we are responsible for what we are, through what we choose to do, but we often fail to face that uncomfortable truth. Freedom is not something we can avoid, for it is an inseparable part of being human. We cannot divorce ourselves from the situations in which choices are made, but there is always room for a free choice – even if it only consists of dissent and saying 'no'. Thus, for Sartre, living with consciousness of the truth of my freedom is to live with authenticity.

FREEDOM: (Authenticity)

At the end of *Being and Nothingness* Sartre rejects the notion of God as man's ultimate value and proposes ***freedom*** alone as the source of all value. In contrast to the man in bad faith who is considered as inauthentic because he wants to flee from the anguish of freedom and responsibility, Sartre designates the ***authentic individual*** as one who is in clear awareness of his freedom as the source of all value, accepts his responsibility and chooses freedom as his ultimate value. Thus, Sartre's distinction of authenticity and inauthenticity is rooted in man's attitude towards freedom. Recognition of one's freedom as the source of all values and accepting responsibility arising out of this freedom is authenticity and its denial is inauthenticity. Thus, for Sartre, freedom is the only source through which an individual can make his life genuine or authentic.

Freedom is the central concept in the existentialist literature. The entire philosophy of existentialist thought revolves around this central concept. Kierkegaard insisted that human being, subjectivity and freedom were equivalent, similarly Heidegger interprets Dasein as freedom. And Sartre makes the concept of freedom the defining 'structure' of the for-itself or human consciousness. He says:

> "What is at the very heart and centre of existentialism is the absolute character of the free commitment, by which every man realizes himself….." (Sartre, 1948, p. 47)

He further says that 'only freedom can account for man in his totality'. Maurice Natanson in his book named *A Critique of J.P. Sartre's Ontology*, has summarized Sartre's concept of freedom in the following lines:

> "Freedom is the condition of the Pour-Soi, and since the Pour-Soi exists as "lack", its freedom is the expression of its nothingness. The pour-soi is what it is not and is not what it is. This instability defines its' freedom. Again, since this is the condition of the pour-soi, man is condemned to this freedom. Man is condemned to be free because man is freedom." (Natanson, 1973, p. 75)

Sartre's concept of freedom is unique, like all other concepts, his concept of freedom too, is grounded in is distinction between being-in-itself and being-for-itself. Sartre affirms that being-in-itself has no possibility of extension or detaching itself from what it is; being-for-itself or consciousness, having an absolute possibility of nihilation, is in a continuous search of itself which it never attains. The search, through negation of itself, at each and every breath of its existence, is nothing but a continuous activity of consciousness. This activity, this necessity of choosing at every instant a perspective for viewing the world constitutes freedom.

Freedom is, therefore, a condition of pour-soi. It however constitutes nothing other than the negation of itself by for-itself. It is through this freedom that man is not what he is and is what he is not. Only the awareness of freedom forces man to surpass towards an exploration of his possibilities. He says:

> "To say that the for-itself has to be what it is, to say that it is what it is not while not being what it is, to say that in it existence precedes essence… all this is to say one and the same thing: to be aware that man is free." (Sartre, 1957, p. 439)

What Sartre wants to establish is that the very existence of man implies his freedom. Freedom is not something which is given to him or that it has an accidental character which is assigned to him. But he is freedom. "Man is free, man is freedom" (Sartre, 1948, p. 34) both are synonymous. He lives it from birth till death. Freedom, therefore, become inevitable to man. It is 'indefinable' and 'unnamable'. For-itself is always in the process of 'making', hence it refuses to be confined to any definition. That is why Sartre identifies consciousness with freedom. But freedom is not being but the being of man' that receives nothing from outside or from inside.

"He was free, free from everything, free to act like an animal or like a machine, free for accepting, free for refusing, free for shuffling… He cold do what he wanted to do, no body had right to advise him. There would be neither right nor wrong unless he invented them. He was alone in a monstrous silence, free and alone, without assistance and without excuse, condemned to decide without any possible recourse, condemned for ever to be free." (Sartre, 1986, pp.242-

243)

Thus, for Sartre living with the consciousness of the truth of my freedom is authenticity, and to take refuge in the external circumstances and denial of freedom is inauthenticity.

Sartre proposes that man is absolutely free. But the absolute freedom is not the exaggerated popular claim that 'a man can do anything he wants to do', but rather that man is always free within his situation to confer significance upon that situation. Absolute freedom is thus, according to Sartre, the freedom of intention. Freedom is limited by one's situation, and freedom is absolute only within these limitations.

The choice we make within the *situation* depends on how we see that situation, how we interpret it, what significance we place on it. The significance we impose on our situation would be the determinant of our choice within our situation. The significance we impose and the choices we make are inseparable.

It is our ultimate choice of projects or ends which determines our view of the situation. There is no 'brute existent' which presents itself to us for interpretation and subsequently as a basis for choice. Sartre says:

> "[The] Situation…. Is revealed to this freedom only as already illuminated by the end which freedom chooses." (Sartre, 1957, p. 596)

Our situation is an interpreted text with goals and demands for action imposed on it by us. This interpreted situation is found by us as a complex of facticity and imposed possibilities. It makes no sense to say we are in an 'unfortunate' situation apart from any projects of our own which make this situation unfortunate for us, and it makes less sense to have projects in isolation from the situation in which these projects can be realized.

Thus, Sartre asserts that man has absolute freedom. But the absolute freedom does not mean that we can act wildly or capriciously. These acts are only one of the choices which one can make. What is important is that whatever choice we make is accepted as our choice; we must take responsibility for it and its consequences. It is in this way an individual's life is said to be authentic according to Sartre.

Absolute freedom is the freedom of choice, freedom of intention, or freedom of significance and not freedom of success in action.

> "To be free does not mean to obtain what one has wished but rather
> 'by oneself to determine oneself to wish (in the broad sense of
> choosing). In other words, success is not important to freedom."
> (Sartre, 1957, p. 591)

There is no denial that external circumstances may thwart action or cause actions to formulate, but Sartre does maintain that all such external circumstances are such only in view of the goals we seek to achieve.

> "Human-reality everywhere encounters resistance and obstacles which
> it has not created, but these resistances and obstacles have meaning
> only in and through the free choice which human reality is." (Sartre,
> 1957, p. 599)

Absolute freedom thus refers us to choice; trying, and adopting a conduct. My freedom is my awareness that nothing can compel me to adopt that (particular) conduct. One choice of conduct which is almost always open to us, of course, is the choice of obliterating our situation by killing ourselves. Even such 'desperate' conduct is always a matter of choice and a matter of the projects we choose for ourselves:

> "If nothing compels me to save my life, nothing prevents me from
> precipitating myself into the abyss. The decisive conduct will emanate
> from a self which I am not yet." (Sartre, 1957, p. 39)

Sartre asserts that it is in the acts of nihilations, specially acts of self-nihilation in which human freedom is born. It is because consciousness – human freedom – is nothing that he is 'outside' of the causal order of the world. Man is not an object in the world. But he moulds the world or interpret it in his own way through the freely made choices.

Sartre bases his nihilism on the rejection of the belief in God, just as Nietzsche does in his *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Like Nietzsche, Sartre sees the incredible consequences of atheism, and in *Existentialism and Humanism*, he reinterprets the concept of **abandonment.**

> "(by abandonment). We only mean to say that God does not exist, and
> that it is necessary to draw the consequences of his absence right to

the end… Dostoyevsky once wrote, "if God did not exist, everything

would be permitted"; and that for existentialism, is the starting point."

(Sartre, 1948, pp. 32-33)

It is in the basis of this absence of transcendent meaning or value that existentialism becomes a form of nihilism, but this nihilism is to be replaced by a new source of values, for the existentialists, this new source is human freedom. The ethics based on human freedom is an ethics of commitment and not an ethics of whim or caprice;

"Even if my choice is determined by no a priori value whatever, it can

have nothing to do with caprice." (Sartre, 1948, p. 48)

Thus, for Sartre authenticity means to assume ones *responsibility* and *engage in actions*. "By February 1940 Simone de Beauvoir felt compelled to note in her diary an important change of which she and Sartre had come to feel that they could no longer remain aloof from political involvement. The concept of authenticity at which he had arrived demanded that he assume his situation in the world, and he could do so only by transcending it and engaging in action. Simone de Beauvoir found herself in full agreement, and the deliberations of the two friends were followed by Sartre's engagement in political activities. Though the very concept of existential authenticity prevented him from adhering to any rigid party-line, it led him directly towards his view of literature as 'engage'." (Cited in Kern, 1963, p. 12)

Thus, the authenticity at the basis of Sartre's existentialism is essentially the freedom of choice, freedom of intention, the freedom to interpret the world and assign values to it of one's own choosing.

The freedom of which Sartre has been concerned with is the freedom of pre-reflective consciousness. Consciousness is freedom even before it has been made aware of its freedom. It is in anguish that man becomes conscious of his freedom. In other words, we must presuppose freedom in order to describe the feeling of *anguish*. Sartre says:

"We wished only to show that there is a special consciousness of
freedom, and we wished to show that this consciousness is
anguish." (Sartre, 1957, pp. 40-41)

Sartre distinguishes anguish from ordinary fear by noting that fear` is fear of particular objects while anguish is, according to Kierkegaard, a nameless *dread*, and according to Sartre,

anguish is the fear of being oneself.

> "Anguish is anguish before myself. Vertigo is anguish to the extent that I am afraid not of falling over the precipice but of throwing myself over. A situation provokes fear if there is a possibility of my life being changed from without: my being provokes anguish to the extent that I distrust myself and my own reactions in that situation." (Sartre, 1957, p. 35)

Sartre says that anguish occurs as we recognize our own responsibility – for what we do and what we are. Anguish also occurs, however, at our own responsibility for our values and projects, and for the absence of such values as absolutes;

> "There is ethical anguish when I consider myself in my original relation to values….It is the anguish before values which is the recognition of the ideality of values." (Sartre, 1957, p. 46)

Sartre affirms that because anguish arises with (or is) the recognition of one's freedom, and because freedom is consciousness and consciousness always must have the ability to know itself, there can be no escape from the possibility of anguish. For Sartre, as for Kierkegaard and Heidegger, anguish is an essential characteristic of man. This is not to say that it is a constant experience. On the contrary, Sartre maintains that it is rare, but nearly all the existential philosophers agree that anguish is not simply one more human emotion, but entwined in the definitive structure of human being. As Tillich says in *Courage To Be*:

> "The anxiety which is despair is not always present. But the rare occasions on which it is present determine the interpretation of existence as a whole." (Tillich, 1952, p.51)

The discomfort of anguish drives man to attempt to 'flee from anguish', and it is in this flight that man searches for excuses for himself, interpretations of his situation which limit his freedom and responsibility. It is in this search for excuses that bad faith is born which according to Sartre is inauthenticity. Because the possibility of anguish is always with us, the tendency to bad faith is always with us as well. The attempted escape from anguish takes on the character of the attempt to see ourselves as things to see ourselves not as ourselves but as an other would see us;

> "Thus we flee from anguish by attempting to apprehend ourselves from without as an other or as a thing." (Sartre, 1957, p. 52)

Thus, in his notion of authenticity Sartre wants to demonstrate that no rule or criterion or

any ideal personality (may be God) has so far been discovered which could tell us what is ultimately most dear to man. He says that we can not decide an issue by merely obeying our inclinations and feelings, because we can neither measure nor verify them. It is ultimately, the choice of our inner being that can decide the issue. The moment we choose, we become responsible for our act, because it is our being that chooses to become what it has not been till now. If we choose what our most inner being prompts us to do, we realize authenticity, if we choose in bad faith, we fall in the trap of inauthenticity.

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