Jean-Paul Sartre: Existential "Freedom" and the Political

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Freedom

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. This is an important concept because we must decide whether individuals are free, whether they should be free, what this means and what kinds of institutions we are to build around these ideas.

In political thought, the notion of freedom can be looked at through the lens of Isaiah Berlin's renowned essay "Two Concepts of Liberty". He begins with stating that in political philosophy, the dominant issue is the question of obedience and coercion. Why should an individual obey anyone else? May individuals be coerced? Why should we all not live as we like? These are all questions of freedom. In a long and detailed discussion, Berlin then makes the distinction between *positive* and *negative* freedom.[1] Carter clearly and concisely explains the distinction; "negative liberty is the absence of obstacles, barriers or constraints… Positive liberty is the possibility of acting … in such a way as to take control of one's life" (2008).

Key to negative freedom[2] is the notion of non-interference. One only lacks political liberty if he/she is "prevented from attaining a goal by human beings" (Berlin 1969, 122). Simply being incapable of achieving a goal (such as not being able to fly like a bird or not being able to walk because of an injury) does not count as being un-free in this sense. There are numerous political philosophers who fall under this category outlined by Berlin. They agree on the definition of freedom but disagree about how wide it should be. Two of these philosophers are Thomas Hobbes and John Locke.[3] Because in the state of nature human goals cannot be harmonised, these classical thinkers assumed that human freedom must be limited by law. However, they also recognised that a minimum area of human freedom should also be protected in order to allow for the basic human capacities/qualities to develop. For Hobbes, individuals must surrender all of their rights to the Leviathan under a social contract, except for one fundamental right – the right to self-preservation (Hobbes 1651). For Locke, the 'minimal' area of protected freedom for each individual is a bit broader in that individuals have rights to their property and to the fruits of their labour (Locke 1689). There is infinite debate in that "we cannot remain absolutely free, and must give up some of our liberty to preserve the rest. But total self-surrender is self-defeating" (Berlin 1969, 126).

Positive freedom is 'positive' in the sense that individuals will want to be their own masters. In Berlin's words, by virtue of positive freedom, one will "wish to be a subject, not an object" (1969, 131). Jean-Jacques Rousseau's notion of 'true liberty' may be placed under this category. Individuals should pursue an ideal of 'true liberty' in which they will be able to achieve their full human potential and live virtuously. True liberty is achieved when individuals can let go of *amour propre* (the love of oneself) and instead become possessed by *amour de soi* (the desire for self-preservation and self-mastery) (Rousseau 1762). Positive freedom therefore is less about what individuals are forbidden from doing, and more about what individuals can do to reach their full human potential. Under a state of positive freedom "I wish, above all, to be conscious of myself as a thinking, willing, active being, bearing responsibility for my choices and able to explain them by references to my own ideas and purposes" (Berlin 1969, 131).

The point I would like to make is that Berlin's approach in dealing with the concept of freedom is not enough. All the thinkers I have mentioned relate to something which we can call *political* freedom as opposed to philosophical freedom.[4] Jean-Paul Sartre discusses the latter. In his essay, Berlin claims that "conceptions of freedom directly derive from views of what constitutes a self" (1969, 134). What Sartre does is precisely this; he begins with an understanding of the subject and of 'human nature' that is different from all the aforementioned ones, and he arrives at a conception of freedom that is just as different.

I argue that Sartre's concept of freedom should not have been omitted from debates in political thought. I am not arguing that Sartre's conception of freedom should be inserted into Berlin's framework, nor am I arguing that Berlin overlooked him. I am arguing that Berlin's discussion is not enough. We need a conception of freedom that operates at the level of the *political*, because it is on top of the political that everything else in politics is built.

I take the political to be the field of relations below 'politics'. This is where the conditions for understanding politics are shaped. Chantal Mouffe makes a similar distinction; she borrows Heidegger's vocabulary and claims that "politics refers to the *ontic* level, while 'the political' has to do with the *ontological* one"[5] (Mouffe 2005, 8). The *ontic* generally refers to physical or factual reality, while the *ontological* refers to 'being', or the first-person phenomenological experience (Heidegger 1927). In this case, the two terms are slightly adapted to the theory. Politics is at the ontic level because it has to do with the conventional practices and policies, while the political is at the ontological level because, for Mouffe, it concerns the 'being' of society, or in her words "the very way in which society is instituted" (2005, 9).

Existentialism and Jean-Paul Sartre

Existentialist[6] 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[7]. 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. I 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.

What is primarily worth noting is 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 (Flynn 2006). Philosophy had to return to its origins; 'what do we know and how do we know it?' was the question. Existentialists answered 'all we really know is that we exist'. Existentialism therefore revolves around questions of existence and the human experience. We will start from the same position – notions of existence and subjectivity.

Existentialists maintain that we cannot know anything if not from our subjectivity. The first and only real thing we know is that we exist and that we experience everything subjectively. This leads us into questions of *being*. Hegel distinguished between the being of objects (being-in-itself), and human Being (or *Geist*) – this provided one of the bases for Sartre's later distinction (Hegel 1807). Heidegger provided a second contribution, which in a sense defines the core of this philosophical tradition. He claimed that we cannot reflect on the meaning of being in relation to our existence, if we do not first understand it philosophically[8] (Heidegger 1927). Heidegger especially critiqued the Cartesian question of existence, claiming that such a question arises from an ontologically inadequate beginning (*Ibid*, 83). He criticised the notion of substance, and he argued that individuals are *Dasein*, or 'beings-in-the-world'.

Inherent in the existentialist tradition are also ideas of meaninglessness and angst. Sartre, as an atheist, rejected the idea that there is a divine meaning to one's life or that there is a purpose for which each individual is born. In *The Myth of Sisyphus* (2000), Camus introduced the notion of absurdity which arises from the clash between the world's

resounding silence (meaninglessness) and the individual's expectation of purpose or direction. Heidegger also accepted this, and in *Being and Time* he maintained that the realisation of this meaninglessness leads to a feeling of *Angst* (1927, 173).[9] "What oppresses us is not this or that, nor is it everything objectively present together as a sum, but the *possibility* of things at hand in general, that is, the world itself" (*Ibid*, 175). For Heidegger, *Dasein* is not only 'being-in-the-world', but also 'potentiality-for-being'. Sartre, in a similar fashion, claims that individuals can surpass themselves and pursue possibilities outside of themselves (Sartre 2007, 66).

A last notion which is worth mentioning is primarily a Sartrean one; that of authenticity. "Existence is authentic to the extent that the existent[10] has taken possession of himself and… has moulded himself in his own image" (Macquarrie 1972, 206). When the individual does not allow himself to be moulded and bound by outside rules and morals, when he "*exercises freedom* rather than being determined by the prevailing public tastes and standards"[11] (*Ibid*, 207), then he lives an authentic existence.

In the coming section, where I will examine Sartre's conception of freedom in detail, the bond between these existentialist concepts will become much clearer. In his *magnum opus*, *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre gives a highly complex, interesting and compelling account of existentialist freedom. In addition, he is one of the only philosophers who openly endorsed the existential philosophy, accepting the term 'existentialist'. The existential notion of freedom is worthy of consideration in political thought because it is a "doctrine of action" (Sartre 2007, 56), which pushes man to find himself again. In Sartre's words, the intention of existentialism "is not in the least that of plunging men into despair" as it is to allow them to realise themselves as 'truly human' (*Ibid*).

But what does this mean and is it relevant to political thought? I argue that it is. It is precisely because Sartre's philosophy seeks to allow men to realise themselves as truly human that he should not be omitted in political thought. Philosophers such as Rousseau, Locke and Hobbes have all attempted to provide an account of human nature upon which to build a notion of freedom and politics. Sartre situates the notion of freedom at that first, philosophical level.

Jean-Paul Sartre's "Freedom"

"*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 previous 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" (Sartre in Gerassi 1989).[12]

Freedom for Sartre is not the freedom to do something. He says "you are free" because you always have a choice, "therefore choose" (Sartre 2007). 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 realise what to be human truly means.

Possible critics of this approach to freedom[13] might point out that Sartre's conception of freedom does not ensure actual freedom for individuals. In addition, it may be misinterpreted (perhaps even purposefully) to justify the restriction of political freedoms.[14] This, for Sartre, stems from "a misunderstanding: the empirical and popular concept of 'freedom' which has been produced by historical, political, and moral circumstances is equivalent to 'the ability to obtain the ends chosen.' The technical and philosophical concept of freedom, the only one which we are considering here, means only the autonomy of choice"[15] (Sartre 1943, 483). I interpret this to mean that Sartre is not declaring that we should dismiss the 'empirical and popular concept of freedom', but rather that we should first structure a good understanding of the 'technical and philosophical concept of freedom', upon which one may then build a political concept of freedom.

I will begin my analysis of Sartre's notion of freedom by introducing three ideas from his first novel; *Nausea* (1938). First, Roquentin – the protagonist – realises that freedom is existence. "At this very moment… if I exist, *it is because* I hate existing. It is I, *it is I* who pull myself from the nothingness to which I aspire: hatred and disgust for existence are just so many ways of *making me* exist, of thrusting me into existence" (Sartre 1938, 145). Roquentin realises that he is absolutely free. And *freedom is existence*. By aspiring to nothingness he realises that he is still making a choice. And by making this choice, he pulls himself away from nothingness and asserts his existence and his freedom. As he says, this is but one of many ways. Second, he asserts that existence comes before essence, and that the universe is meaningless. "Existence is not necessity. To exist is simply *to be there*… no necessary being can explain existence… everything is gratuitous" (*Ibid*, 188). Here Roquentin is saying that what exists appears, and you can never deduce it. This is a comment on the notion that there is no substance; that existence comes before any essence. To escape this, some people invent a necessary, causal being.[16] But the truth is, according to Roquentin, that there is no necessity and no purpose in life. One simply *is*. Third, he accepts his absolute freedom and decides to live in virtue of it. "I am free: I haven't a single reason for living left… I am going to outlive myself" (*Ibid*, 223). In the novel, this scene takes place after Roquentin realises that he had been hoping for his old friend Annie to save him from himself. He had made her his reason for living. Now he no longer has a reason for living, and here he claims to be free.[17] Not much later, he decides that he is going to accept this reality and live in virtue of his freedom: he is going to outlive himself. The word 'outliving' I interpret in relation of the recurring notion of transcendence. By reaching outside of himself, by seeking to become what he is not, he will perpetually assert his freedom.

Having introduced Sartre's guiding ideas on freedom; I will proceed to examine them in detail. I will first analyse the key concepts[18] that compose Sartre's notion of freedom, I will then proceed to evaluate the implications of this notion of freedom, and lastly I will consider what the acceptance of this philosophy, for Sartre, truly means.

In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre from the beginning introduces a discussion on consciousness. Consciousness is always consciousness *of* something; it is not an abstract substance (Campbell 1977, 65). We should immediately understand that for Sartre, consciousness, existence, freedom, nothingness, are all synonymous terms. Consciousness, which is always consciousness of something, is also consciousness of itself, and therefore *consciousness of being* and *consciousness of freedom* (Sartre 1943, 40). In more concrete but no less convoluted terms, an individual *is* consciousness, and this revelation occurs in anguish. One realises that his condition implies the possibility of change, when one realises that "every action is a venture into non-being" (Caws 1979, 112). Sartre rejects determinism because he holds individuals to be outside of the world. There are no excuses which can be rooted in the idea of 'human nature'. "Anguish is the revelation to us of our conduct, our being, as *possibility*" (Campbell 1977, 69).

This leads us into Sartre's 'duality of being'. He distinguishes between "human consciousness, and everything which is outside human consciousness: *being-for-itself*… and *being-in-itself*" (Campbell 1977, 65). To discuss being-in-itself, Sartre provides three propositions. First, *being is what it is*. This is a rejection of the idea that the world was created for a purpose, or that God is behind its creation. Being-in-itself is nothing other than that which it is. Second, *being is in itself*. Being is full of itself, "it does not refer to itself… as consciousness does… it has no potency since it cannot become what it is not" (*Ibid*, 66). A crass example of this would be that of a chair. Since the chair is what it is, it is full of itself. It does not refer to itself; it does not ponder its 'chairness'. In addition, the chair has no potency; it cannot become what it is not and it exhausts itself in its 'chairness'. Third, *being is*. Again in reference to the chair – since there is no potency, the chair simply is. 'The possible' is a structure of consciousness, and therefore it applies to the for-itself (Sartre 1943, xxix). It then follows that being-for-itself has potentiality and it can become what it is not.[19] The for-itself can be best understood in contrast to the in-itself, and in the idea that it is the nihilation of the in-itself. Sartre famously describes the for-itself as "being what it is not and not being what it is" (*Ibid*, xxviii). By this he means that an individual is free because he escapes from being. The for-itself being freedom, the details surrounding it will become much clearer as I continue to examine core ideas.

For Sartre, existence precedes essence, freedom is absolute, and existence *is* freedom. It has been made clear that Sartre does not believe that any essence or substance can be attributed to individuals prior to their existence. Individuals first of all exist, and there is no 'human nature' which exists outside or inside beings. Freedom is therefore limitless, but the physical limitations of the world are taken into consideration. Sartre writes "no limits to my freedom

can be found except freedom itself or, if you prefer, that we are not free to cease being free"[20] (1943, 439). However, individuals are born into the world or into a 'situation' – this is what he calls 'facticity'. The facticity of the human condition involves the limits imposed on the individual by the world. For example, I can choose to jump off a cliff and fly, but I will probably crash because I do not have wings. This does not mean that I am not free – I am still free to choose to fly, but I will have to deal with the consequences of my actions. Sartre writes that freedom means "by oneself to determine oneself to wish. In other words success is not important to freedom" (1943, 483). It is important to note the difference between choice, wish and dream. Following Sartre's example, it would be absurd to say that an imprisoned in individual is free to leave prison when he wishes to. It would be futile to say that the same individual can always dream of being liberated one day. But what is true and indicative of his freedom is that he can always choose to attempt an escape (*Ibid*). A critique of this point was made by McGill, who asserted that choice cannot be the only guiding principle of freedom (Natanson 1973). As I wrote in the second paragraph of this section, this indeed could be seen as potentially dangerous. However, as Natanson argues, "McGill desires non-ontological criteria of freedom; and with these Sartre is not concerned"[21] (*Ibid*, 80). Another possible critique is that such an extreme form of freedom leads Sartre to return to a philosophy of essence (Desan 1960). This critique is understandable in that if freedom is the 'stuff' our being, then freedom is an essence. However, if one accept Sartre's premise that existence *is* freedom, then one cannot conclude that freedom is an essence. Individuals are not free before they exist, and they do not exist before being free.

What I will discuss now are two ideas that I interpret to be 'secondary' ideas, or the implications to Sartre's conception of freedom; these are transcendence and responsibility. As Roquentin realises in Nausea, man makes himself exist by projecting and losing himself beyond himself.[22] 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 realise a conscious project.[23] Only then will he live authentically, and only then will he ever come closer to realising himself as truly human.[24] "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 realisation, that man can realise himself as truly human" (2007, 66). What this means is that in spite of the fact that an individual will probably never reach his ideal realisation, 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.

Having acknowledged Sartre's focus on subjectivity, and having noted that his focus is entirely on the individual and the 'wrongness' of the imposition of outside values upon the individual, one wonders how it is possible for society to continue and for a community to maintain itself. In *Existentialism and Humanism*,[25] Sartre seems to introduce a vague idea of community. "In willing freedom we discover that it depends entirely upon the freedom of others" and he adds that "I cannot make liberty my aim unless I make that of others equally my aim" (2007, 62). This seems to allow the idea that therefore humans will act in solidarity with each other in spite of a lack of transcendental[26] values. In *Being and Nothingness* he explains this further and states that we have a responsibility towards our freedom and the freedom of others. By responsibility, he means "consciousness of being the incontestable author of an event or of an object" (1943, 553). Because an individual is absolutely free, when he makes a choice he becomes that choice and that choice becomes him. The changes he makes in the world because of that choice also become him. In Sartre's words, "what happens to me happens through me"[27] and as a for-itself, I must "wholly assume the situation with the proud consciousness of being the author of it" (*Ibid*, 554). An example of this is war – if I am born into a war, I am born into a situation and this situation is what I am. I then have to make choices which I am wholly responsible for. If I choose to fight in the war as opposed to desertion or suicide, I have chosen to continue this war, and this war becomes mine.[28] This is what Sartre means when he claims that humans are responsible for both their own and others' freedom.

What Sartre concludes (and has been implying all along) is that each human must live *in virtue of freedom*. That is what Roquentin does at the end of *Nausea*. He no longer has a reason for living, he is no longer trying to find substance within himself, he is no longer trying to be an in-itself. By contrast, this is not what Mathieu does in the first half of *The Age of Reason* (1961). He is aware of his freedom, he is not entirely in bad faith, but he lives to conserve his freedom and not in virtue of it. He does not fly to Madrid, even if he always wanted to, for fear of creating a project and constraining his freedom. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre writes "The one who realizes in anguish his condition as *being* thrown into a responsibility which extends to his very abandonment has no longer either remorse

or regret or excuse; he is no longer anything but a freedom which perfectly reveals itself and whose being resides in this very revelation" (1943, 556).

If we relate these ideas back to the previous section, the passage about German occupation becomes clearer. Individuals then either collaborated in bad faith, or they resisted in virtue of freedom. Collaborationism is inexcusable[29] for Sartre because he does not consider the threat of an occupier to be an excuse at all. The occupier is the facticity of the situation in which the individual finds himself, but he is still free to make a conscious choice. If this choice is in virtue of freedom, Sartre claims, it will not result in collaborationism. This is when the value of this conception of freedom for political thought becomes clearer. It is an almost virtuous conception of freedom. It is not idealist in that it gives individuals no excuse for their existence and behaviour. Yet it is positive in the sense that it can inspire and empower individuals to own up to their existence and not live like Mathieu in *The Age of Reason*.

Indeed this conception of freedom does not provide a solid basis for the construction of political institutions or policies, but this is because Sartre's 'technical and philosophical' concept of freedom lies a level below the 'empirical and popular' concept of freedom. It lies at the level of what I earlier described as *the political*. Chantal Mouffe also makes a claim that is very much in line with my argument. She asserts that the "lack of understanding of the political in its ontological dimension… is at the origin of our current incapacity to think in a political way" (*Ibid,* 9). If this is the case, making this distinction can make a difference in that it provides new channels for thought.

Conclusion

The 1969 essay titled "Two Concepts of Liberty", authored by Isaiah Berlin, provides one of the most exhaustive accounts of the liberal tradition in politics. He considers most philosophers who have dealt with the notion of freedom, and divides their ideas into two categories; negative and positive freedom. However, Berlin fails to consider the existentialist notion of freedom. Because Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* deals almost entirely with questions of freedom, one must wonder why it has been omitted and whether this is acceptable.

The guiding argument throughout this paper has been that Berlin and Sartre operate on two different levels. Whereas Berlin operates at the level of *politics*, Sartre operates at the level of *the political*. I have made the distinction clear with the aid of Chantal Mouffe's *On the Political*. She states that politics is at the ontic level and thus concerns a certain set of practices and institutions, whereas the political is at the ontological level, and thus concerns the way that society *is*. She argues that making such a distinction, and having a good understanding of the political, is essential to our (as a society) ability to effectively discuss politics.

With this in mind, my argument for Sartre's inclusion in political thought becomes much clearer. His conception of freedom is, in his words, a "technical and philosophical" one, and not a "popular and empirical" one. It is rooted in questions of existence and being, due to its existentialist foundation. Freedom permeates every aspect of the human condition, because for Sartre, existence *is* freedom. Every individual has a choice and it is this choice that characterises each individual's being. In addition, freedom comes with responsibility, due to the fact that a *for-itself* must "wholly assume the situation with the proud consciousness of being the author of it" (1943, 554). Sartre's conception of freedom is therefore quite high in integrity and does not allow for excuses, while at the same time being empowering for individuals who must make their own values and their own future. His freedom should not be used to excuse totalitarianism or occupation. And neither is Sartre's example of German occupation. The point is that the individual is fundamentally free at an ontological level; as soon as he exists, he is free. If we – society – are able to grasp this, live in virtue of it, and thus realise ourselves as truly human, we will be able to build a better framework for politics (or ontic) -level freedom because we will have a more appropriate account of the human condition.

Chantal Mouffe writes that the "lack of understanding of the political in its ontological dimension… is at the origin of our current incapacity to think in a political way" (2005, 9). In line with this argument, I assert that if political thinkers make a stronger distinction between politics and the political, and if they contribute to a better understanding of 'the political'; it will be much more likely for Sartre's philosophy to be included in accounts of freedom.

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[1] He uses "freedom" and "liberty" to mean the same thing

[2] From now on I will always use the word "freedom", except when using direct quotes

[3] I mention these because they are the most commonly studied notions of freedom in political thought

[4] Sartre himself makes a similar distinction in *Being and Nothingness*. This will be discussed further in later sections of the essay

[5] My emphasis

[6] Albert Camus is one of several philosophers who never accepted any labels, including the existentialist one

[7] See, for example: Gabriella Paolucci. "Sartre's Humanism and the Cuban Revolution." *Theory and Society* 36, no. 3 (2007): 245-263.

[8] Heidegger sought to define the question of being phenomenologically

[9] Or anxiety, anguish

[10] The individual

[11] My emphasis

[12] My emphasis

[13] I would imagine especially those with a background in political notions of freedom

[14] One could argue that Sartre himself said that the French were most free under German occupation. Ideas such as these are easily taken out of context and misinterpreted.

[15] As can be seen from the subtitle in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, his concern is primarily with ontological considerations of freedom. I will assume the reader to be familiar with ontology. For a good introduction see Thomas Hofweber, "Logic and Ontology." *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy.* http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/logic-ontology/

[16] This can be interpreted in two ways. One is that they invent an actual 'being' such as God. The other is that they invent a causal 'being' in the sense that they claim their being, or their existence, to be necessary or to have a purpose.

[17] He was always free. But here is where he truly acknowledges, accepts and embraces his freedom.

[18] It is important to keep in mind that although I will attempt a discussion of each concept separately, they are highly interconnected and therefore there will have to be some space for repetition

[19] Recollect Roquentin's realisation that his aspiration for nothingness was pulling him into existence

[20] Some indeed could argue that by this statement Sartre has concluded that individuals are not free at all. But I argue that just because individuals are not free to cease being free (they are 'forced' to make choices) it does not mean that they are not free in the choices they do make. Their existence is freedom.

[21] This therefore connects back to the distinction made by Sartre between the "empirical and popular" concept of freedom, and the "technical and philosophical" concept of freedom.

[22] This language is indeed convoluted and it is borrowed from Sartre himself in *Existentialism and Humanism*, 2007.

[23] Sartre is unclear and indeed unsatisfactory in his discussion of the "project"

[24] But will he ever realise himself as truly human? Sartre seems to claim that existentialism seeks to help man realise himself as truly human, but at the same time that man never can truly do this, he can only come close. This problem seems unresolved.

[25] It is worth noting that Sartre later recanted this book. He did not intend to state that what he had said was wrong; he simply said it should be disregarded. This, I claim, is not due to the possible incorrectness of his idea, but rather to the vagueness and imprecision which stems from the fact that this book was adapted from a lecture which he gave to address some criticisms of existentialism. For this reason I find this work still worth reading.

[26] Here I use 'transcendental' not in a Sartrean sense, but in the sense of 'divine' or God-given values.

[27] This applies to human events. An earthquake, for example, does not fit into this description. One's reaction to it, however, does.

[28] For an extensive and (in my regard) highly helpful example of responsibility, please see 'Appendix two: War and Responsibility' at the end of this paper.

[29] Unless one has consciously chosen to collaborate in order to pursue his/her interests, and admits to these reasons.

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