

NO HUMAN NATURE, NO OBJECTIVE VALUE: A CRITIQUE OF SARTRE'S EXISTENTIALISM

JOHNSON UGOCHUKWU OFOEGBU PhD
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS AND ADMINISTRATION
ALVAN IKOKU FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION,
OWERRI, IMO STATE, NIGERIA

UMEADI KINGSLEY MARIO-BRUNO CHUKWUMEZIEREM (Omd)
SEAT OF WISDOM MAJOR SEMINARY, OWERRI

Abstract

No human nature, no objective value: A critique of Sartre's existentialism is what this thesis sets out to unravel. Human nature is that which characterized human person as human. It is that inherent qualities of humans like thinking, feeling, and acting. These were believed as essence of humanity. Man is the one that attached meanings to the above. This demonstrated that human person is a value-laden being. This can only happen in existence. Humans can existentially define their existence, give meaning to their existence, or allow existence to give meaning to them. Whichever way, human person is at the core of existence. The idea of existence is accepted by all philosophers with erratic degree of emphasis. It has been an age long issue of controversy, as it is being analyzed in several dimensions of human experiences. An in-depth reconnaissance has revealed that great philosophers like Aquinas, Husserl, Sartre etc actually delved into existence in their discourse. To understand Sartre's view on, No Human Nature, No Objective Value, we shall expose his notion of ontology on which he posited two strands of beings, namely; conscious and unconscious beings. From the analysis of the two beings, and amongst other findings for and against, we anchored more on relevance of his submissions. Sartre's existentialism brought-forth re-awakening of man into more holistic study of his person. Being and nothingness brought about an existentialist stance in philosophy whereby man now examines his fallenness (future) as a transcendental goal which he tried to overcome in his hard works. Sartre's existentialism could also be said to have led man into self-analysis, self-awareness, self-discipline and self-hood. His existentialism could be said to have provided consciousness in man's life. Hence, we established that Sartre's subjectivity should be replaced with objectivity, and his "existence precedes essence" should as well be replaced with "essence precedes existence" since man cannot live above or below his limits or essence

Keywords: Human Nature, Objective Value, Sartre, Existentialism, Being

Introduction

It is a philosophical fact, that man is a meaning-seeking animal. This, Aristotle justified with this assertion, "All men by nature desire to know". From the beginning, it has been man's natural desire both practically and theoretically to know, understand and utilize the universe, nature and man himself. But the fact is that the more he advances in this venture, the more complex it becomes. Hence, he continues to seek wisdom. Many great thinkers have, from the beginning, preoccupied themselves with the 'whyness' of reality. Man have tinkered deep on the ultimate underlying principle or foundation of things and thus found out that reality as a whole is all that exist, both actual and unactual, necessary and contingent. In fact, every reality must be in the domain of existence. Thus, existence stands as the ultimate ground for all serious reasoning and Philosophical inquiries.

Nonetheless, in the history of Philosophy, Metaphysics is considered as the “First Philosophy” per se, this is because it is the science of the being of beings. In the life of all beings, Existence is the common feature of all beings. It is that through which whatever is, is whatever can be, can be. Deductively, one could say that it is the bed-rock of all reality. The worthiness of any philosophical inquiries depends only if it exists and /or is existable. Consequently, it is the point – de – depart of all Philosophical inquiries. The idea “Existence” is accepted by all Philosophers, with erratic degree of emphasis. It has been an age-long matter of controversy, as it is being analysed in several dimensions of human experience. A critical reconnaissance has revealed that great Philosophers like Aquinas and Sartre actually emphasized on existence. Accordingly, Aquinas in his metaphysics holds that, Existence is *Esse* or act of Existence. As self-subsisting (*ipsum essendi*) reality from which other acts or perfections exist. It is the first and pure act: God. St Thomas Aquinas, here, discovered the ultimate or the crucial principle of all reality. On another note, he holds that “Essence precedes existence”. That for created beings, each has to exist according to its determined and fixed essence. Essence guides and determines its act of existing.

In contra distinction to Aquinas' stand point, Sartre holds that, existence is meaningless, purposeless and absurd. For him, to exist is to be in a miserable State. In his understanding, man is the only being who can give meaning to his existence by living and acting authentically. Therefore, existence is ascribed only to man; only man exists; other things simply are, because they cannot act and give meaning to existence. Owing to this fact, He holds that “Existence precedes essence”, for man has to exist first before seeking self-fulfillment. Man has no fixed essence. Man is no more than a project, no more than the life he lives. Man is what he determines to be.

Therefore, in Sartre's Ontology, it is *ab initio* a phenomenological ontology, which he adopted from HUSSERL'S Phenomenology and thus existentialised it to suit his own philosophy. Based on this, he holds that “Being manifests itself exactly as it is and it does this without any intermediary”. Hence, there is no difference between being and its manifestation, none between the act and potency of being. Thereby, denying the necessity for the existence of being. And so, to understand Sartre's view of NO HUMAN NATURE, NO OBJECTIVE VALUE, we shall expose his notion of ontology which poses two kinds of beings namely; conscious being and unconscious beings.

Explication Of Some Terminology: What Is “To Be “, Existence, Ontology And Being What is “To Be”?

The word “To Be” has different connotations of its use in English Language. This, however, could either be used in terms of a noun or a verb. To understand this, one could ask; What is “to be”? Or What does it mean “to be”? In making an attempt to answer this remarkable question, the first statement search for it as a subject of all judgment, that which is the main being of beings. While the second seek out to enquire what it means to be a carrier of this. Hence, “To be” is the ultimate ground and why for being. It is the “beingness” of beings. The union of all beings.

The verb “to be” is the terminus a quo of the beingness of beings. That is the verb “to be” is

prior to the verb “To have”. According to William A. Wallace, OP; *the verb “To be” effects the composition that retains the meaning of existence even when the judgment is attributive.*¹ And it is the ultimate ground for all having. Every being bears the beingness of the verb “to be”. This is because, whatever is, is because of the intrinsic ultimate power “to be”. To buttress this, J.A. Peters assert that,

The “to be” therefore, which metaphysics attempts to approach is primarily that through which everything real is real, but it is also the possibility of the possible and the necessity of the necessary. It is the undifferentiated absolute which contains inseparately the modes of the possible, the real, and the necessary²

Existence

Perceptibly, in the meaning of existence, the word existence is derived from the Latin root word *Ex* – meaning “out” and *Sistere* – meaning “to stand”. That is to say literally that the word existence means to stand out above everything else. Furthermore, existence means to have a place in the realm of being, it can be actual or possible.

Existence is a basic feature of all beings. It is through which whatever is, is and whatever can be, can be. *Esse*, makes a being a being. Existence can be separated into actual or possible Existence, ideal or real, necessary or contingent. Obviously, being is intrinsically constituted by two principles, that of existence and essence. They are the same in the self-subsisting being, but metaphysically slightly differ. However, they need each other. In most cases, some philosophers hold that they are created together and related in the created beings. In fact, the attempt to specify the distinction between them, has occasioned long lasting controversies in philosophy. Hence, we can talk about “existentialism” or “essentialism” in philosophy. Existence is that which actualizes essence, while essence is that which determines existence. They are indispensable to each other and together they make a being.

Ontology

Ontology is a word that was coined about the middle 17th century. It was also at this time that the expression of 'philosophy of being' was used for the same thing. However, this is the most general branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being. The word ontology comes from two Greek words *onto* meaning 'being', '*that which is*' and *logy* meaning the *study or science*. And so, to understand the mystery of ontology, there is a difference in its existence. This disparity could be classified as ontic existence and existential existence.

What is Being?

The question of “being” has been the most persisting point or factor in the philosophical inquiries. Metaphysics, being the first philosophy is equally held as the science of Being as being. Whereas others study it as an aspect of being. According to William A. Wallace, *being can be defined as “what is”, or as that which exist or simply as reality*³. Hence, we can say that the question of being is ontological. In ontological study of being, we have being with ontic existence and being with existential existence. Similar to this, in German we have *das-seiende* and *da-sein*, and in French “*Le'tant*” and “*L'etre*”.

1. William A. Wallace, OP; *The Elements of Philosophy: A Compendium for Philosopher and Theologians* India: St. Paul Press. 1977, p.18

2. J. A. Peters, *Metaphysics: A Synthetic Survey*. New York: U.S.A Ad. Press Ltd. 1963, p. 60.

3. Op. Cit. William A. Wallace, OP; p.86.

Owing to the fact that being can be said to be the subject of metaphysics, it is also the first thing grasped by our human intelligence, which is always formed in our mind. If man knows anything at all, one could say that he knows being. Consequently, the concept of being is not only chronologically prior to all others; it is also analytically prior, insofar as every subsequent concept is some modification of this first concept. The recognition of the “thereness” of what is originally grasped in sense experience underlies the formation of the concept of what exists, what is there, what is present to the senses. Hence, with this concept, the mind is empowered to embrace in a confused and worldwide manner whatever can be known in perception.

However, being includes both the real and possible, ideal and logical beings. Being considered as the commonest element of existence. This is opposed to no-thing. It is above genus; it is undefinable because to define is to delimit it. The search for being started with philosophical enterprise. And in view of the ultimate being, many philosophers have posited many things as this “Being” underlying realities. The first philosopher was Thales, Heraclitus gave change- i.e. being and becoming. Parmenides posited permanence or one. Plato posited idea and form. Aristotle, substance. These varying views have resulted in-variably to different ontological theories of being; monism, dualism and pluralism.

Traditional and Scholastic Notion of Existence and Essence

Traditionally, before Sartre, the notion of existence and essence has been a prevailing issue especially at the medieval period. The general point in their view was that, St. Thomas Aquinas conceives that Essence precedes the existence. In Aquinas' view, God who is our creator, created us with a certain entities or reality. This will only manifest itself through our existence. As we understood Aquinas, he did not deny the fact that man has something to contribute, but accepted it which he therefore maintained that we achieve that which is already in our essence.

Aquinas considers existence, which is also **esse**, as the basis of all reality. It is self-subsisting. It is the first cause, God. He considered esse as the most real act of Existence. It is the act of all acts, the perfection of all perfections. Actually, Aquinas confers supremacy to **esse** over every other thing even to essence. But he on the other hand asserts that “essence precedes Existence” To understand this, Aquinas writes; although existence actualizes essence, essence determines Existence. For he holds that anything that exists or will exist, must be according to its essence and within the limit of its essence. Nothing can exist outside its essence. To support this view, William Shakespeare will write that; Nothing comes out of Nothing.

Sartre's Existentialism

In the history of philosophy, Existentialism came to its highest point in the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre. In him, we see existentialism in its most advanced and complete form. Moreover, it was Sartre who made Existentialism popular to the degree that it developed almost tantamount with his philosophy. To understand his existentialism, we shall discuss his ontology.

Sartre's Ontology

Ontology is a word that was coined about the middle 17th century. It was also at this time that

the expression of 'philosophy of being' was used for the same thing. However, this is the most general branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being. The word ontology comes from two Greek words *onto* meaning 'being', '*that which is*' and *logy* meaning the *study or science*. And so, to understand the mystery of ontology, there is a difference in its existence. This disparity could be classified as ontic existence and existential existence. The philosophical career of Jean-Paul Sartre 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 phenomenological methodology. These point of divergence are the cornerstones of Sartre's existential phenomenology, whose purpose is to understand human existence rather than the world. Adopting and adapting the methods of phenomenology, Sartre sets out to develop an ontological account of what it is to be human. In his quest to identify this ontology, he asserts that; "there is no distinction between being and its manifestation, none between the act and potency of being"⁴. Thereby, Giving a clear solution of eliminating Kantian and Aristotelian 'phenomena and Noumena' and 'Act and Potency'. This he affirms when he writes that the act of a being is everything that the being is.⁵ Above and beyond the act, there is nothing, no potency. Accordingly, Sartre believes that Being manifests itself exactly as it is and does this without any mediator. Hence, it is a phenomenon, for a phenomenon is what manifests itself. But then, Sartre rejected the theory of idealism as well as Kantian distinction between the Noumena (things as they are in themselves) and phenomena (things as they appear to us). For Sartre, there are no noumena as different from phenomena, since things are exactly as they appear to us. This does not mean that the being of the phenomenon is identical with the phenomenon of being, for we cannot simply reduce the being of the phenomenon to the phenomenon of being. To do this would mean to agree with Berkeley's *esse est percipi*-existence is perceived.

Perhaps, according to Sartre, one of the major achievements of modern philosophy is phenomenology because it disproved the kinds of dualism that set the existent up as having a 'hidden' nature (such as Immanuel Kant's noumenon); phenomenology has removed "the illusion of worlds behind the scene".⁶ Therefore, the being of the phenomenon is neither hidden, unperceived behind the phenomenon (as idealism holds) nor is it completely reduceable to the phenomenon in such a way that its existence depends on its being perceived. And to understand this, we explore however, the Contingency of Being.

The Contingency of Being

In the contingency of being, Sartre argues that there is no rational order in existence; that is to say, things have no essences which define what they are. All rationality, all sciences, all lawfulness, he postulates as our own making. Sequel to this, he opines that there is no necessity for the existence of being. All we say about the existence of being is that it simply is, without any reason for its being. By this, Sartre denies the prerequisite of the Necessary being and thus rejects the traditional explanation of the contingency of being in terms of a Necessary being who is responsible for the existence of contingent beings. Consequently, he holds that "no necessary being can explain existence".⁷ The necessary being, Sartre writes, was invented

4. Joseph I. Omoregbe, *Metaphysics Without Tears : A Systematic and Historical Study*, Lagos: JOJA Press Limited, 2011, p. 204

5. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, London: Methuen, p. xxii.

6. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*. France: Gallimard Press, 1943, p.2.

7. Jean Paul Sartre, *La Nausea*, Paris: Gallimard, Press, 1939, p. 185.

to overcome the contingency of being and absurdity of existence. And so, for him being is uncreated. Following this, Sartre outrightly delve into discourse on Existence.

Sartre On Existence

In the philosophical race, the concept of 'existence' for an existentialist like Jean-Paul Sartre, is out rightly different from the traditional meaning. For him, Existence is restricted to human beings, that is, he considers only human existence. Sartre and other existentialists regarded only human existence; they write that; all other things simply are; they do not exist. Thereby denying anything without physical appearance like spiritual beings. Furthermore, for Sartre, existence is an unconceptualisable concept. It is contingent not necessary. For him too, the existence of man has no origin, meaning and purpose. Man simply found himself existing and when and how to die, he does not know. It is possible that man does not exist. It is possible to say that man exists but not possible to say what he is and why he exists. In his 'magnum opus' Sartre speculates on existence thus: "... That is, existence itself is contingent, gratuitous, and unjustifiable. It is absurd in the sense that there is no reason for it, no outside purpose to give it meaning, no direction. Being is there and outside it – nothing...."⁸

For him, existence has no meaning, because man cannot comfortably give an account of it. Man simply knows that he exists. Hence, Sartre holds that for man's existence, to be meaningful for him, or to get any meaning from his existence, the onus rest solely on man himself (work and shop). He holds like Heidegger, that man is thrown into the world. He did not choose to exist. He did not choose his parents or siblings and even the environments. He sees existence as absurdity.

To bolster this, Sartre holds that, since there is no meaning for the existence of man, man has to give it meaning through his authentic existence. To explain this well, having established the foundation for his existence, as the study of as it appears to consciousness, he goes further to identify two separate and irreducible categories or kinds of being as being-in-itself (*L' être-en-soi*) and being-for-itself (*L' être-pour-soi*).

In his description, they could also mean non-conscious being and conscious being respectively, and later added the third one as being-for-the-other (*L' être-pour-autrui*). He completes with a sketch of the practice of 'existential psychoanalysis' that interprets our actions to uncover the fundamental project that unifies our lives. However, it is good to note that the two categories of being according Sartre have mutually, an exclusive characteristics and yet we are entities that combine both, which is the ontological root of our ambiguity.

Being – In – Itself (*L' Être-En-Soi*)

This is unconscious beings, or rather objects. This is a being which is independent of consciousness, casually determined and without freedom. It is self-identical, passive and motionless. 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. This cannot help himself, a times dead people could be used to instantiate this. Although one could say that it is for those who have a low existence. They are in-itself because nothing in them transcends what they currently are."The being-in-itself has nothing secret; it is solid (massif). In a sense we can designate it as a synthesis. But it is the most indissoluble of all: the synthesis of itself with itself. It is itself indefinitely and it exhausts itself in being."⁹

8, Jean Paul Sartre, *La Nausea*, Paris: Gallimard, Press, 1939,

9. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, London: Methuen, 1969, p. viii.

Being – for – itself (*l' être-pour-soi*).

This, he identifies as free, autonomous, responsible and conscious being, regarding to human being. Here, Sartre share a similar idea with Cartesians. For Descartes hold also that man's essence is with the 'mind'. For Sartre sees human being as something that is always more than our situation and thereby affirming the ontological foundation of our freedom. Hence, one could now understand why Sartre is most often described as a Cartesian dualist though his is vague. In his dualism, he emphasized of spontaneity and inertia. He viewed his duality as 'facticity' and 'transcendence'. This made him not to possess a “two substances” ontology like thinking thing and the extended thing (mind and matter) of Descartes.

Apparently, Sartre maintains that the being-for-itself is outrightly, anon-self-identical and dynamic in nature, a being of subject, not of object, things or ideas. And so, this is internal negation or “nihilation” of being in-itself, on which it depends. In so doing, identifies consciousness or being-for-itself with “emptiness”, 'negativity', 'nothingness'. He sees man as a being who is not what he is and who is what he is not. That is, the present is the nothingness of pure existence. Past and future are constantly being questioned by the nothingness of the present. In this case, it is clear that the essence of man is not certain. It is simply realized in the course of existence, in the course of acting, in an authentic existence.

Perhaps, Sartre characterizes man as acting and conscious as distinct from the beings of unconscious objects. It is characteristically active, self-regarding, self-affirming of its being. It is aware of its selfness. A conscious being has freedom from object or determined world. So, they have power of negation, total freedom as total responsibility for his choices.

Being – for - the Other (*L' Être-Pour-Autriu*)

In the concept of being for the others, although existentialism is very much concerned with the existence of the individual. It nevertheless maintains that the existence of individual implies the existence of the others. Since individual himself could not exist without the other. Man is not only a being-in-the-world but also a being-with-others. The question of existence of the other is therefore not a problem to the existentialists. For the existentialists, the consciousness of the existence of the other is not by inference or analogy but part of the awareness of our very existence. In the world, we realize ourselves as existence with the other people and our being as a being-with-others. This very fact of the other says Sartre is incontestable and touches him to the heart. For him, it is in the same act in which it discovers itself as both being-in-the-world and a being-with-others. In the Cogito according to Sartre, one does not discover only oneself but others as well. Thus the man who attains himself directly through the cogito discovers all others also. In contradistinction with solipsism (the theory that only one reality exists). Sartre compares the brute and inseparable nexus of relationships that must exist among beings, especially among human beings. Accordingly, he believes that any form of human relation is built on conflicts, fight or struggle. Hence, doubt the possibility of having real human relationship. To bolster this, he writes; "While I attempt to free myself from the hold of the other, the other is trying to free himself from mine; while I seek to enslave the other, the other seeks to enslave me.... The following descriptions of concrete behavior must therefore be envisaged within the perspective of conflict."¹⁰

He regards sideways though negativity. Sartre did not see the new human being (subject) as a friend, neighbour or colleague but rather as a foe. At first meeting, both are suspicious of each

10. Jean Paul Sartre, *Le sursis*, Paris: Gallimard Press, 1945, p. 364.

other. Thereby, planning on how to enslave the other in continuous existential social rivalry. Jean Paul Sartre, *Le sursis*, Paris: Gallimard Press, 1945, p. 364. For danger, conflict, shame alienation, enslavement and negativity characterized human-mutual relationships. And so, the liaison or link between us human beings exclude any real inter-subjective community. It bears radical isolation from each other in the midst of our absurd and meaningless world. To identify this conflict in human nature, some of the factors could be look, love, masochism, sadism and hate.

Existence Precedes Essence: No Human Nature, No Objective Values

The philosophical presupposition that existence precedes essence is a central claim of existentialism, which is reverse of the traditional philosophical view that the essence (the nature) of a thing is more fundamental and immutable than its existence (the mere fact of its being). Consequently, Sartre holds that, “existence precedes essence”. This means that essence can be achieved in the future, but there has to be existence first. Based on this, one could say if there is no human nature, there will be no objective values. To support this,

To existentialists, human beings – through their consciousness create their own values and determine a meaning for their life because the human being does not possess any inherent identity or value. That identity or value must be created by the individual. By posing the acts that constitute him or her, they make their existence more significant.¹¹

Sartre holding that 'existence precedes essence', meant that a human being first of all exist and then through the subsequent thinking, willing, choosing and acting, defines himself or herself. This ideology were explicitly found in the works of a philosopher Soren Kierkegaard in the 19th century, before it was later formulated by Jean-Paul Sartre in the 20th century. The essence of a thing or 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 precede essence is a radical affirmation of human freedom, a vitiation of Heidegger's phenomenology and a reverse of traditional metaphysics which holds that essence precede existence.

Sequel to this, Sartre holds that the nature (essence) of a man can only be debated of after the death of the person, because while the person exists, he is liable to change his nature (essence) or history, through an authentic Existence. By this, we say that man has no fixed nature (essence). Thus he asserts that; ...Man is the being “who is what he is not and who is not what he is”.¹² In other words, man can continually make himself. Instead of being, he has to be, his present being has meaning only in the light of the future toward which he projects himself but which he is not yet.

Consequently, Sartre's saying that “man first of all exist, encounters himself, and defines himself afterwards” simply means that we cannot explain human nature in the same manner as we do to a manufactured article. A personality is not built over a previously designed model or a precise purpose, because it is the human being who chooses to engage in such enterprise. Before any article is made, we must first conceive of such as having a definite purpose or which it is produced. And so, in this case, an entity's essence can only precede its existence. But if human beings, on the other, are not divinely created as Sartre aims, 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.

¹¹French Encyclopedia: *de la jeunesse* 1979, p. 567.

¹² Law head W., *The Voyage of Discovery*, Wadsworth, U.S.A., 2002.

Although there is no pre-determined human essence or human nature, Sartre, maintained that there is a common human condition. To explain this more, he points that we encounter the same challenges, limitations and questions. Hence, the existential structures of human beings, according to him, are the same but within these structures, every individual responds in his or her own peculiar way. And so, in the course of man's existence, he is faced with certain factors: **Nothingness, freedom, anxiety, anguish, despair, choice and responsibility.**

Nothingness, Freedom, Choice And Responsibility

Obviously, some existentialist philosophers like Soren Kierkegaard, Gabriel Marcel and Karl Jaspers were able to resuscitate or reawaken the “transcendental being” because they discovered the inadequacy and incompleteness of human existence as manifested on the finitude of man. Heidegger too, on his own part recognizes this finitude in the will, which he calls 'angst'(anxiety). Following this line of thought, Sartre refuses to end in Heidegger's 'angst' but aptly throws towards nihilism by emphasizing the paradoxical nature of human existence which nonetheless empties itself into nothingness.

Nothingness gives rise to negation of man's existence. For Sartre, “human reality is a being in so far as within its being and for its being it is the unique foundation of nothingness at the heart of being.”¹³ ...Nothingness provides the foundation for freedom.¹⁴ Human existence is a mystery where by each one of us exist, for as long as we live, within an overall condition of nothingness (nothing-ness) – that ultimately allows for free consciousness. It is obvious that nothingness is the irreconcilable difference that causes anguish, where one has a choice with a freedom of thoughts.

It is a truism for Sartre that man's nothingness evolved from his conscious existence. This we can hardly over-emphasize to stress that man remains fundamentally a 'lack'. This is a clear-cut assertion because man has never reached his ultimate end and perhaps it is inevitably that nothingness is the central philosophy of Sartre in conjunction with other factors as listed above. And so, to understand the mystery of nothingness is to say that it came about as a result of man being conscious of his being. In so doing, he discovers that he is nothing and this is found in the gap or between consciousness and something. It is only in the distinction capacities of a conscious being that you can think of what you lack, do not have, and what one is. And so, one may then say that consciousness is the pivot on which 'nothingness' revolves. Again, it is the virtue of consciousness that 'something' and 'nothing' exist.

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'. From the above statement, one could say that as a result of being nothing, man's freedom pushes him to the next level of life, to make a choice or to make himself what he wants to be, but must be responsible for whatever comes out of his freely chosen actions. This means, therefore, that human freedom is the very source of values, 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. In all this, avoidance of our responsibility is 'bad-faith' and 'false

¹³ Jean-Paul Sartre, being and Nothingness pp. 78.79.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 486.

consciousness'. A term used to refer to the attempt to deny our freedom, to see ourselves as products of our circumstances or an attempt to identify ourselves with our past choices while closing off our future possibilities. This is because facing our freedom brings with it the burden of responsibility and the experiences of anxiety, anguish and despair.

Authentic Existence and Inauthentic Existence

Here we have two major related, yet opposed concepts. One is the opposite of the other. Sartre, generally used them to express what they really mean when they talk about existence. This, showing the positive and negative aspects of existence. And to relate the type of existence proper to man. And for him, he accepted the authentic existence and rejects the other; inauthentic existence. While one is real, the other is the false. However, since they are opposites, it will be proper to consider them individually in a nutshell.

Authentic Existence

According to Encarta Dictionary, authentic means a fact of reality, original and genuine. It is not imaginary, false or imitations. For Sartre, authentic existence is the full existence which lies only in the self-discipline, the ability not to surrender to timidity. Authentic existence is possible with freedom and ability to make proper choice in the midst of facticities. We can say that random expressions of one's spontaneity are not what authenticity is all about. However, an authentic life is a life lived by the free choice of the individual who is fully aware that it is his own free choice and assumes full responsibility for it. Thus, to live an authentic life, one should not simply drift along with the crowd, doing things because he sees others do them or because it is custom of the place. Rather, one should freely choose one's way of life and do things because one has freely chosen to do them. Every action then should come from one's free choice.

Inauthentic Existence

As we said earlier before now, this type of existence is the direct opposite of authentic existence, he uses the former (inauthentic existence) to show the existence of an object, an inactive life. And so, for him this inauthentic existence is for trees, pigs, sheep, and not for man. Therefore, we can outrightly assert that this is for being-in-itself, the unconscious being.

Current Relevance

- Sartre's Existentiality could be said to bring-forth the reawakening of man to come into a more in-depth study of his person.
- Being and Nothingness brought about an existentialist stance in philosophy whereby man now looks to his fallenness (future) as a transcendental goal which he tries to overcome in his hard works.
- Sartre's existentialism could also be said to have led man into self-analysis, self-aware, self-discipline and self-hood
- Sartre's existentialism could be said to have provided consciousness in man's life.

Criticisms

- Sartre opts for subjective values in denial of objective values. For this reason, he could

be regarded to be skeptical on objective knowledge believing that everyone determines what to do. In so doing, if each man should behave as he wants and thus give meaning to his existence, there will be chaos- disorder in the society. This will lead to moral relativism.

- Using Julius Nyerere of Tanzania's *Ujamaa* principle, meaning “**the family-hood**” a term which does not involve conflict and tension for the communalism of traditional African Society. One can say that Sartre's humanism is faulty of family-hood existence.
- According to Sartre's notion of nothingness, man recognizes that he is empty, and thus searches for fulfillment in himself in order to fill the gap in him. In comparison with Augustine's notion of nothingness, man discovers that he is nothing and transcends to a higher Being- God to seek for fulfillment. Therefore, I would say that Sartre made a fallacious statement because there is no way man will help himself to an authentic life when he is nothing. Unless his help comes from someone higher to his being. And so, according to William Shakespeare, **nothing comes out of nothing**.
- On another note, Sartre could be said to have committed the fallacy of *Argumentum ad ignorantiam*; for holding the view that man has no pre-determined human nature, no substance, no essence, no inner life and no creator. This means that he denied existence of inherited genes from one's parents.
- Sartre denies the real relation that unite the individual to society through his subjectivism; believing in solipsism. In contradistinction, one could criticize him with Jeremy Bentham's utilitarianism, an ethical principle of the greatest number; universal egoism and artificial identification of one's interests with those of others.
- Sartre subjectivity can be disapproved with martin Buber's “I – Thou” relationship that exist between man and his fellow human beings. Relationship of openness, mutuality, love, freedom. The dialogue framework of I – Thou relationship, is something that is realized in the inter-subjective encounter of mutual recognition of the value and dignity of each other as person.
- Another major problem with the Sartrean existentialism is that, he provides negative values for our actions. Compelling us to avoid inauthentic life without showing the positive meaning of authenticity.
- Paradoxically, Sartre's absolute freedom became a very limited freedom since the individual does not have the freedom to influence others. And so, he could be held of imposing on man absolute freedom which is obviously fallacious. For man is highly limited. None chooses his culture. None can construct his own language. Nor can anyone fly to live in his own self-made society.
- Sartre could be held of alienating man in solitariness, conflicts, enslavement and general existential absurdity.

Conclusion

To deconstruct Sartre and his existentialized ontology, we can say that he has evidently paid the price that qualifies him as the real popularizer of existentialism. However, existentialism is not comfortably regarded as a philosophical school of thought, but rather as a powerful and complex cultural movement. This is because, they reject any sort of definition or categorization. They do not regard each other; everybody is on his own. Their thoughts are

personal and subjective. Sartre emphasizes on existential man; thus he holds that “existence precedes essence”. This he writes that man has no fixed essence. Man has no eternal and irrevocable approval of essence. Man is what he has determined to be. Man is his destiny and the world are subject to the decision of his ego. Man achieves his essence in the course of living.

With reference to being-for-others, Jaspers emphasizes the social aspect of man. Although every individual man is unique, yet the uniqueness of one individual presupposes and needs the uniqueness of the other individuals. Just as the freedom of one man requires the freedom of other man. The unique individual needs communication with others. Hence he goes on to write that, man can never become himself in isolation, for freedom does not mean self-sufficiency. Man is essentially a being with others. He is by his very nature a social being who can never live nor be conceived in isolation.

However, Gabriel Marcel, a philosopher of inter-subjectivity writes inter-personal relationship is an essential aspect of human existence. In fact, it is in the presence of the other selves that every man becomes aware of himself and becomes present to himself. Thus, the presence of the others is essential to self-discovery, self-awareness and self-differentiation. There can be no assertion of one's personality without first recognizing the personality of the other.

In summary, this view, man cannot be an island in comparison to Sartre's subjectivity. This is because the more I recognize the personality of the other, the more I enhance my own personality, and the more I am present to the other, the more I am present to myself. And so, Sartre's **subjectivity** should be replaced with **objectivity** and his “**Existence precedes Essence**” should as well be replaced with “**Essence precedes Existence**” since man cannot live above or below his limits and essence.