

EXISTENTIALISM, MAN AND SOCIETY: A PHILOSOPHICAL APPRAISAL

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ABSTRACT

The problem of existence of the individual self and the other is consequently predicated on the related issues of conflict, freedom, choice, responsibility, authenticity, alienation, anxiety, nothingness, absurd, commitment, and value. Existentialism did not develop much in the way of a normative ethics; it therefore, requires a certain systematic approach to the philosophical theory of freedom, value and to moral psychology of human existence, deriving from the idea of existence as self-making in situation. A philosophical analysis of an existential account of meaning and value must recognize the possibilities of a certain absurdity to the existence of man; although reason and value have a foothold in the drama of the world of existence but they however, lack any ultimate foundation in human existence. This paper is saddled with the onerous task of unraveling man as a free moral agent tasked with multiplicity of factors such as commitment, responsibly, authenticity, anxiety, freedom, choice and value and his phenomenological and existential imports to his immediate political society. This paper concludes that the idea of freedom is the origin of value and that freedom is defined not in terms of acting rationally (Kant) but rather existentially, as choice and transcendence are the ideas most closely associated with the foothold or hallmark of existentialism. This paper concludes that the existentialist's everyday practical engagement is the source of meaning and value. This paper adopts the method of analysis in conceptualizing and contextualizing the existential account of man's freedom, choice, and responsibility – his deliberate human actions and everyday practical engagement to his social, historical and political world. The existential-dialogical engagement is ultimately the basis for an authentically meaningful life that is, one that answers to the existential condition of being human and does not flee that condition by appeal to an abstract system of reason or Divine will. Transcendence represents my radical freedom to define myself, while facticity refers to that other aspect of my being which represents the situated character of this self-making.

Keywords: Existentialism, Man, Freedom, Society, Responsibility

INTRODUCTION

Existentialism is the doctrine which makes human life possible, real and authentic; it has to do with deliberate human actions. According to William V. Spanos (1966:276) the very beginning is that by existentialism we mean a doctrine which makes human life possible and, that every truth and every action implies a human setting and a human subjectivity. Like

rationalism and empiricism, existentialism belongs to intellectual history. Its definition is to some extent one of historical convenience. The term "existentialism" was explicitly adopted as a self-description by the Existentialist – Jean Paul Sartre. The term gained ground through intellectual momentum and through the wide dissemination of the postwar literary and philosophical output of Sartre. In the world of existentialism, modern man is being threatened with cultural chauvinism thereby making man to be empty and his life meaningless. According to Paul Tillich cited by Frank N. Magill (p.646) all cultural contents which previously gave man security no longer afford satisfaction and meaning. Modern man is threatened with the attack of emptiness and meaninglessness.

Existentialism is a philosophical movement for man's quest for meaning and hope even in the midst of despair. The term existentialism does depicts a cluster of philosophical problems in the 20th and the 21st century philosophical inquiry. The philosophical legacy of existentialism is largely anchored on the moral psychologism of man's quest for freedom and value. Existentialism as a philosophical movement appears as a matter of some immediate desire for meaningful human existence.

The first principle of existentialism is that man is nothing else than what he makes of himself. Man is being described from the existentialist viewpoint, as a subjective being and that freedom as the absence of constraint or impediment is characterized as man's very essence. This paper shall x-ray the historical trajectory of existentialism, the existential psychologism of man and his immediate society, the conceptualization and the contextualization of existentialism, the various themes of existentialism, the notion of facticity and transcendence in existentialism and Sartre's conception of existentialism such as his notion of freedom, choice and responsibility.

Furthermore, having x-rayed the philosophical analysis and appraisal of the existentialism of man, we shall draw up a concluding consideration as far as this paper on the existentialist account of man is concerned.

EXISTENTIALISM: AN HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The definition of existentialism is to a greater extent that of historical precedence. Existentialism became identified with a cultural movement that flourished in Europe in the 1940s and 1950s. The philosophers, identified with existentialism are Simone de Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau Ponty, Albert Camus, Karl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger, Miguel de Unamuno. The nineteenth century philosophers Soren Kierkegaard, and Friedrich Nietzsche, came to be seen as precursors of the existentialist movement. Existentialism was as much a literary phenomenon as a philosophical one. Sartre's own ideas were and are better known through his fictional works (such as *Nausea* and *No Exit*) and through his more purely philosophical ones (such as *Being and Nothingness*) and critique of Dialectical reason. The term "existentialism" does pick out a distinctive cluster of philosophical problems and helpfully identified with a relatively distinct current of twentieth and now twenty first century philosophical inquiry, and one that has had significant impact on fields such as theology. According to the *Stanford*

Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2010), what makes this current of inquiry distinct is not its concern with “existence” in general, but rather its claim that thinking about human existence requires new categories not found in the conceptual repertoire of ancient or modern thought; human beings can be understood neither as substances with fixed properties, nor as subjects interacting with a world of objects. On the existential view, to understand that human being is not enough to know all the truths that natural science - including the science of psychology could tell us.

Existentialism does not deny the validity of the basic categories of physics, biology, psychology, and the other sciences (categories such as matter, causality, force, function, organism, development, motivation, and so on). It claims only that human beings cannot be fully understood in terms of them. Existentialism also captured the categories of moral theories such as intention, blame, responsibility, character, duty, virtue, and the like do capture important aspects of the human condition. Existentialism, therefore, may be defined as the philosophical theory which holds that a further set of categories, governed by the norm of authenticity, is necessary to grasp human existence. According to Kaufmann (1968:12) cited by the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2010:2), the idea that philosophy cannot be practiced in the disinterested manner of an objective science is indeed central to existentialism; it is equally true that all the themes popularly associated with existentialism—dread, boredom, alienation, the absurd, freedom, commitment, nothingness, and so on find their philosophical significance in the context of the search for a new categorical framework together with its governing norm. Sartre's existentialism drew its immediate inspiration from the work of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger (*Being and Nothingness*, 1927), an inquiry into the “being that we ourselves are” and which Heidegger termed “Dasein” a German word for existence.

This German term “Dasein” introduced most of the motifs that would characterize later existentialist thinking: the tension between the individual and the public; an emphasis on the worldly or situated character of human thought and reason; a fascination with liminal experiences of anxiety, death, the “nothing” and nihilism; the rejection of science, (and above all causal explanations) as an adequate framework for understanding human being and the introduction of authenticity as the norm of self-identity, tied to the project of self-definition through freedom, choice, and commitment. The philosophical legacy of existentialism is largely tied to the form it took as an existential version of phenomenology. Husserl's efforts in the first decade of the twentieth century had been directed towards establishing a descriptive science of consciousness, by which he understood not the object of the natural science of psychology but the “transcendental” field of intentionality i.e that whereby our experience is meaningful, an experience of something as something.

The existentialists welcomed Husserl's doctrine of intentionality and according to Husserl, consciousness is our direct openness to the world, one that is governed categorically (normatively) rather than causally; existentialism reflects on the question of the meaning of being as such and the question of what it means for me to be. According to *Standard Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2010):

Existential themes take on salience when one sees that the general question of the meaning of being involves first becoming clear about one's own being as an inquirer. A focus on existence, has become a unique textual strategies quite alien to the philosophy of their time and ours. In Kierkegaard, the singularity of existence comes to light at the moment of conflict between ethics and religious faith. Existence as a philosophical problem appears as a matter of some immediate desire for meaningful human life. From the Kierkegaardian tradition, "subjectivity is the truth", an idea that pre figures the existential concept of authenticity.

To exist is always to be confronted with this question of meaning. According to Kierkegaard, existence emerges as a philosophical problem in the struggle to think the paradoxical presence of God; for Nietzsche, it is found in the reverberations of the phrase "God is dead" in the challenge of nihilism. Nietzsche sought to draw the consequences of the death of God, the collapse of any theistic support of morality. Nietzsche's overriding concern is to find a way to take the measure of human life in the modern world. Nietzsche's idea reflects the moral prescriptions that lies nothing but the "will to power". Thus, Nietzsche arrived at Kierkegaard's idea that "the crowd is untrue". The normative is nothing but the normal. Nietzsche saw that in the nineteenth century the highest values had begun to devalue themselves" for instance, the Christian value of truth-telling, institutionalized in the form of science, had undermined the belief in God, disenchanting the world and excluding from it any pre-given moral meaning. Nietzsche sees the overman (ubermensch), the one who teaches "the meaning of the earth" and has no need of otherworldly supports for the values he embodies. The overman represents a form of life, a mode of existence, that is to blossom from the communalized, moralized "lastman" of the nineteenth century. According to Nietzsche, existence falls under such an imperative of style; to create meaning and value in a world from which all transcendent supports have fallen away is to give unique shape to one's immediate inclinations, drives, and passions, to interpret, prune, and enhance according to a unifying sensibility, a ruling instinct, that brings everything into a whole that satisfy the non-conceptual, aesthetic norm of what fits, what belongs, what is appropriate.

Sartre's slogan "existence precedes essence" may serve to introduce what is most distinctive of existentialism. Existence is "self-making –in-a-situation" (Fackenheim; 1961:37). The fundamental contribution of existential thought lies in the idea that one's identity is constituted neither by nature nor by culture, since to "exist" is precisely to constitute such an identity. It is in light of this idea that key existential notions such as facticity, transcendence (project) alienation, and authenticity must be understood. Philosophers have connected the concept of existence with that of essence in such a way that the former signifies merely the instantiation of the latter. According to *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2010:5) if

“essence” designates what a thing is and existence that it is, it follows that what is intelligible about any given thing, what can be thought about it, will belong to its essence. It is from essence in this sense say, human being as rational animal or "Imago Dei" that ancient philosophy drew its prescriptions for an individual's way of life, its estimation of the meaning and value of existence. Having an essence meant that human beings could be placed within a larger whole, a kosmos, that is, a kosmos, that provided the standard for human flourishing. Modern philosophy retained this framework even as it abandoned the idea of a “natural place” for man in the face of the scientific picture of an infinite labyrinthine universe. In what looks like a proto-existential move, Descartes rejected the traditional essential definitions of man in favour of a radical, first-person reflection on his own existence. The “I am” Heidegger proposes that “I am” an entity whose what (essence) is precisely to be (Heidegger 1985:110; 1962:67). Of course, there is a sense in which human beings do instantiate essences, as Heidegger's phrase had already pointed out but what matters for existential thought is the manner of such instantiation, the way of existing. Human beings can be considered in this way as well. Human existence, then, cannot be thought through categories appropriate to things: substance, event, process.

Existential philosophers try to capture in the categories of facticity and transcendence. To be is to coordinate these opposed moments in some way and who I am, my essence, is nothing but my manner of coordinating them. In this sense, human beings make themselves in situation: what I am cannot be separated from what I take myself to be. According to Charles Taylor (1985:45) cited by the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "human beings are self-interpreting animals" (2010:6). Existentialism has a broader or a far reaching perspectives such as the facticity and transcendence, the social facts of man, the historical facts of man, the psychological properties of man, for instance, facticity includes all those properties that third person investigation can establish about us: natural properties such as weight, height, and skin colour; social facts such as race, class, and nationality; psychological properties such as web of beliefs, desires, and character traits; historical facts such as my past actions, our family background, and our broader historical milieu; and so on.

Transcendence refers to that attitude towards myself characteristic, of my practical engagement in the world; the agent's perspective. Transcendence means to indicate that the agent goes beyond what simply is toward what can be: the factual- including the agent's own properties always emerges in light of the possible where the possible is not a function of anonymous forces (third person or logical possibility) but a function of the agent's choice and decision. Existentialists, tend to describe the perspective of engaged agency in terms of “choice” and they are sometimes criticized for this. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2010) concludes that: Because existence is co-constituted by facticity and transcendence, the self cannot conceive as a Cartesian ego but is embodied being-in-the-world, a self-making in situation. It is through transcendence or what the existentialists also refer to as my projects that the world is revealed, takes on meaning: but such projects are themselves factual or situated not the product of some antecedently constituted “person” or intelligible character but embedded in a world that is decidedly not my representation.

The world in a certain sense reveals to we "who we are". The meaning of my choice is not always transparent to me because it necessarily reveals the world in a certain way, that meaning, my own "identity" can be discovered by what Sartre calls "existential psycho-analysis". Alienation as an existential term means, the estrangement of the self from the world and from itself. This experience is basic to existential thought, and it contrasts most sharply with the ancient notion of a kosmos in which human beings have a well-ordered place or society, and it connects existential thought tightly to the modern experience of a meaningless universe. The world includes other people, and as a consequence I am not merely the revealer of the world but something revealed in the projects of the others. Existence is consciousness and care. According to Kenny Anthony (2010:819) "Heidegger purported to examine the data of consciousness and that Dasein is caring about. Human freedom creates a fissure in the world of objects" (Kenny Anthony; 2010:823).

Moreover, when we become aware of being looked at (that is, when our subjectivity is invaded by the subjectivity of another for whom we are merely part of the world, an item for our existential projects), we become aware of having a "nature" a "character" of being or doing things. The self-understanding, or projects, thanks to which the world is there for me in a meaningful way, already belongs to that world, derives from it, from the tradition or society in which I find myself. My very practical engagement in the world alienates me from my authentic possibility (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*; 2010:8). The self is defined first of all by its practical engagement, it entails that this self is not properly individual but rather indistinguishable from anyone else (das man). Practices can allow things to show up as meaningful and deviations can be recognized as deviations only against societal norms. Self-making is largely a function of not distinguishing myself from others. Existentialism arises with the collapse of the idea that philosophy can provide substantive norms for existing, ones that specify particular ways of life. Existentialism is also defined within the ambit of authenticity and for the sake of duty-moral evaluations.

In keeping promises we act in accord with duty; and if we keep it because it is our duty, we also act morally (according to Kant) because we are acting for the sake of duty. Similarly, doing the right thing from a fixed and stable character which virtue ethics considers a condition of the good is not beyond the reach of existential evaluation. Such character may simply be a product of my tendency to "do what one does", including feeling "the right way" about things and be taking myself in appropriate ways as one is expected to do. But such character might also be a reflection of my choice of myself, a commitment; I make to be a person of this sort. Thus, the norm of authenticity refers to a kind of "transparency" with regard to my situation, a recognition that I am a being who can be responsible for who I am and for others. In choosing in the light of this norm, I can be said to recover myself from alienation, from my absorption in the anonymous "one-self" that characterizes me in my everyday practical engagement in the world. Authenticity, indicates a certain kind of integrity and moral cogency.

The norm of authenticity which constitutes a kind of wholeness remains a formal, normative and a distinctive one. Authenticity defines a condition on self-making and can be thought to be as a way of being autonomous in choosing resolutely, that is, in committing myself to a certain

course of action, a certain way of being in the world. Thus, existentialism's focus on authenticity leads to a distinct stance towards ethics and value theory generally. The possibility of authenticity is a mark of my existential freedom, and it is through my existential freedom that existentialism approaches questions of ethics and values. Existential moral psychology emphasizes on human freedom and focuses on the sources of mendacity, self-deception and hypocrisy in moral consciousness.

AN EXISTENTIAL PSYCHOLOGISM OF MAN AND SOCIETY

Man is faced with the burden of existence characterized by plethora of societal and human crises such as pollution, man's inhumanity to man, killings, moral crisis, kidnapping, armed banditry, prevalence of improvise explosive devices (IEDs), ethnic crises, global warming issues, prevalence of human hunger in the 21st century, the problem of low life expectancy in the African continent, political and economic crises facing various African governments. Man's existence has been characterized by an existential burden and the drum beating menace. The term existence has a menace of existences understanding and meaning. To exist is to be. It means to be there. Existentialism means to be personally involved in the drama of life (existence) as an actor and not as a spectator. To be personally committed to certain ways of life out of free choice or freewill.

Existentialism means being conscious of the problems of human life with the choices open to as actors. Existentialism anchors on being responsible for deliberate human actions and choices. It is also a reaction against idealism. The crux of the existential psychology of man is that the truth of philosophy should not be generalized but personalized. This research tends to explore the hallmark of subjectivity against objectivity, concreteness against abstractness, individuality against mass culture, freedom against determinism, and authenticity against inauthenticity. Man is a being for himself and a being for others as revealed by Jean Paul Sartre. This research reflects on the comparative analysis of the existentialist conception of man and his society; it explores how man can actually address his existential burden or his drumbeating menace of existence. Freedom entails in our everyday usage the absence of constraints, impediments or the absence of force. This research at a critical analysis of existentialism, man and society and the need for existential interaction of man in his immediate society.

A CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF EXISTENTIALISM

Existentialism started with the Danish Philosopher and theologian- Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855). Existentialism as a movement has a great influence and hold in Denmark, Germany and reached its highest peak in France with the work of Jean Paul Sartre. Existentialism has double linens

(1) As a result of Kierkegaard; a passionate Christian and (2) The other is as a result of Sartre, an equally intensed atheist, we therefore have

- (1) Theistic Existentialism
- (2) Atheistic Existentialism

A good representation of the Christian is Soren Kierkegaard. While Kierkegaard embraces and runs to God, and encounters God, Sartre employs us to run away from God in order to make a meaningful life. The term existentialism is derived from the term “existence” But as used in Existentialism, the term Existence has a peculiar meaning. In our ordinary usage, to exist is to be, to be there, so in the light of this we say stones, books, light, chairs etc exist. In existentialism, the aforementioned items do not exist. Existence is simply applicable to human existence alone. Existentialism is therefore the philosophy of human existence because it is pre-occupied with human existence. Existence in existentialism means

(1) To be personally involved in the drama of life as an actor, because Epictetus believe that we all are actors participating in the drama of existence. We are actors rather than as a spectator

(2) To be personally committed to certain ways of life out of free choice or free will.

(3) Being conscious of the problems of human life with the choices open to us and filling empty for the one we so desire. In order to express our freedom, or to exist freely or to exist, means freely choose ones ways of life and to be personally responsible for the deliberate choice and action that we take. It means living your life yourself and nobody is dictating your life.

(4) To be conscious of your human condition. To be conscious of the fact that you have your life to live and your fulfillment by death. From this reason, it is as clear as crystal that it is only human being that can exist. So, to the existentialist, human beings are trapped in the drama of existence. So existentialism is a reaction against idealism especially Hegels idealism. Hegel is accused of completely living man out of the system with his abstract philosophy that has nothing to do with human life. Hegels philosophy is said to be too impersonal and with too much objectivity. So, Existentialism decided to make philosophy more concrete by emphasizing on human person as the centre of philosophy. So, what existentialism does is to bring in subjectivity in place of objectivity, and also brought in concreteness in place of abstractness.

It is a reaction to Christian theology. Existentialism believes that philosophy should be a thing of personal commitment. So the truth of philosophy should not be generalized but personalized. We should not be asking whether something is true rather it should be whether it is true for you.

Soren Kierkegaard, Karl Jaspers, Jean Paul Sartre, Merleau Pointy, Albert Camus, Gabriel Marcel, Martin Buber are all existentialist philosophers. Although all these Existentialists do not agree especially because we have two dominant school of thought which are the theistic and atheistic school.

But in spite of their diversity of form and content, there is still unit of thought and common approach to existentialist philosophy and other areas of interest.

A number of themes run through Existentialism as a thought.

The hallmark of existentialism are;

(1) Subjectivity against objectivity

(2) Concreteness or experience against abstractness or consciousness

(3) Individuality against mass culture

(4) Freedom against determinism

(5) Authenticity against inauthenticity or inauthentic existence.

These are the broad themes but we shall look at particular themes of existentialism, the character of Existentialism. The existentialist themes or features are as follow;

THE THEMES OF EXISTENTIALISM

(1) **Man and the world:** The existentialist see man as inseparable from the world. To Kierkegaard, for example, man is a being in the world. Part of the very essence of man is to be in the world. For it is in the world that man is able to define his existence. There can be no human existence without the world. Although, man is linked and cannot be separated from the world, he nevertheless transcends the world. This is why man must resist the temptation or tendency to become completely absorbed in the world because it is man that gives meaning and value to the world. So man should use the world as an instrument for self-fulfillment.

(2) **Others or the Theme of Others:** This is influenced by Descartes and Berkeley. Although, existentialism is primarily concerned with the individual, it nonetheless maintains that the existence of the individual implies the very existence of others. That the individual cannot exist without others. He denies his existence through his existence with others in the world, because man is not just in the world but a being into others (the philosophy of intersubjectivity). So the problem of existence of the individual mind (solipsism) is not there. Consequently, an existentialist like J.P Sartre distinguished Existential Subjectivity and Cartesian Subjectivity. The former's subjectivity "I" in the midst of others (inter subjectivity) otherwise known as inter subjectivity. The other is an isolated ego.

Furthermore, it is germane to note, that the existential relation or the inter-subjective encounter is basically an ethical relation. According to Robert Gibbs, (1992:187) "man's ethical relation to the other is thus ultimately prior to his ontological relation to himself or to the totality of things that we call the world. This inter-subjective encounter is the essential challenge of self-hood, for as we recognize the other, the Infinite, the non-self, we discover ourselves".

(3) **The Theme of Authentic and Non Authentic Existence:** An authentic existence by the existentialist is a life lived out of free choice of the individual who assumes responsibility of his choice. A non- authentic existence is a life lived in imitation of others. Non-authentic existence is doing things because others are doing them or doing things because it is the tradition and custom, so non-authentic existence is an action that does not spring from one's choice. To submit one's life to the direction or dictates of other is to live a non-authentic life or kind of existence. And to live authentic life, you must be one who works out his or her own without copying the works of others. Here we notice a tension between the individual and the social nature of man.

(4) **Freedom, Choice, Responsibility and Personal Commitment:**

The most important theme in the existentialist philosophy perhaps is the theme of freedom. The existentialist tells us that we are confronted with awful or dreadful freedom. Freedom, according to them is the very structure of man's being and the basic condition of human existence. According to the existentialist philosophers, man is free by nature. They disagree with Hegel that man acquired freedom. Jean Paul Sartre an avowed advocate of human freedom maintains that freedom is the ability to make a choice. The capacity for self-determination, the capacity to decide what to do and not to do. Freedom means that there is no

fixed human nature. There is no condition man finds himself that he cannot improve upon. To give impetus to his theory, Sartre further maintains that "existence precedes essence". Again, this is against the traditional philosophy which holds that essence precedes existence. The meaning of this according to Sartre is that there is no universal law, no human nature, no fixed human essence by which man must live. Therefore, man is free since man is free, he must commit this freedom to choose. He must decide what to do and not sit on the fence. Inability to do this, Sartre says such a being is a coward. Once one has made a choice, he is now a responsibility of his own self and deliberate action. He is now responsible for the choice he has made. So, to the existentialists, freedom, choice and responsibility are inseparable because, once you are free you must always make a choice. He says we cannot even avoid making a choice. We cannot also avoid escaping consequences of our choices. In-fact, a refusal to choose is a choice already made because you have chosen not to choose. Sartre uses this idea of freedom to deny the existence of God.

(5) The Facticity of Human Existence: The first thing about facticity is that it tries to talk about the limitations of human existence. For example, man would have wanted to fly but cannot. The facticity of human existence refers to the limiting conditions of human existence which limits the freedom of human existence. For example, one of this facticity is that man is thrown to the world for existence without making a choice, and even in making choices, man has limited choices. Again, man is not the author of his life. Man did not create himself yet he is made to be responsible for his own actions. Another facticity is in the exercise of human freedom in which man chooses one cause of action thereby opening one door but then chooses another against himself. Another facticity of human existence that limits one's choice and freedom is that we are not free to exist, freedom is not freedom not to be free, freedom is not freedom not to exist. Another is that man becomes in him an emptiness which he strives all his life to fill but he never succeeds because this emptiness is part of his beingness.

(6) What is this Emptiness?

This emptiness is man's inability to fully become what he wants to be because on one hand he is free, on the other hand, he is constrained. Another facticity of human existence is that man has one basic desire, a burning desire and passion, which he tries all his life to attain and fulfill, which is impossible. This is the desire to become God. This desire is a futile one.

(7) Irrationalism: This theme is an off shoot, an attack of traditional philosophy which holds that man by nature is bound to reason. They hold that man is also irrational being. Passion plays a vital role in him. This reason cannot tell man everything. Emotion and passion also are part of his being. We are saying that irrationalism came about as a reaction against rationalism where the power of the human reason has been exaggerated. Human reason has failed to a greater extent. Now, in irrationalism, passion, emotion will replace reason. One existentialist that uses this is Friedrich Nietzsche who holds that man is not as rational as he is passionate and emotional. The existentialists argued that human reason is limited that man is not always guided by reason in everything he does but also by feelings, emotion, and passion. That is why they say that logically man is not only rational but emotional and cultural. All these emotions, passion are all part of human nature and existence.

Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980) was a French Philosopher who popularized and brought existentialism to its very climax. His major work is his philosophical masterpiece titled

"Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology". In this work Sartre devoted his time to the question of human freedom. Sartre happens to be an atheist. And he used the fact of human freedom as an argument against the existence of God. Sartre tells us that he knows that there is no God. Because if there is God man would not be free man will be dictated by God, and God will be working on man. But since there is no God we are free to do whatever we like.

To argue this, his atheism further and his belief in human freedom Sartre maintains the dictum "existence precedes essence". That is, man first of all exist and there after freely creates his own essence the way he wants. It means that man is not a ready-made rather man is the architect of his own fortune and misfortune. Man can make or unmake himself. The implication of this is that there is nothing like human nature, no determinism, no fatalism and no human destiny. The past does not determine the present or the future. The implication again is that man has no excuse before him, and he has no excuse behind him. You cannot say this is how God created me, this is my nature, we cannot say we have no choice. To Sartre there is nothing that has a meaningful "apriori". It is you that give meaning to life.

- (1) Human Nature
- (2) Fatalism
- (3) Determinism
- (4) God.

FACTICITY AND TRANSCENDENCE IN EXISTENTIALISM

Freedom to Sartre is not something that we have rather it is something we are. There is nothing like compulsion, there is nothing by accident, you can confront your own situation through your world of possibilities. Sartre says even though there is what we called the facticity (limiting condition) man's existence is characterized by transcendence. Transcendence is the root of our freedom. Transcendence is the way we created our future, not the way it is dictated. It is our possibility. According to Sartre, man's freedom is a very heavy burden on him because he goes with a lot of responsibility. Man realizing the important of his responsibilities vis-a-vis his freedom embraces it with a lot of anxiety, anguish, burden and fear. Human freedom confronts man and his responsibility is an anguish.

In life, there is limitation to everything we do. Sartre says that because of the responsibilities of human freedom, man decided to device ways and means to circumvent or escape from freedom and thereby refusing responsibility. This attempt by escaping from one's freedom and responsibility is what Sartre called "Bad faith". Another word for bad faith is called self-deception. Sartre is full of illustrations and analogies. He gives us an example of a waiter. Sartre says that the behavior of a waiter is ritualistic, it is like playing a game. Sartre says that the waiter has duties, condition of service and expectation.

So the waiter cannot say that she has no choice because that is the condition of his service. Sartre says that the waiter has a choice. The waiter could choose to be himself and get fired that he did not do this and it is not because he had no choice but because he chooses not to do so. Sartre says the waiter is not sincere. When you do one thing and do another it is "bad faith",

it is immoral. Sartre believes in ethics. Sartre says there are so many examples of "bad faith". The believe of man is a bad faith, man can develop what he wants to believe. Sartre says conformity to norms and custom is bad faith. Bad faith, he says, is the postponement of decisions or refusal to make a decision is bad faith, and pretense is also part of bad faith. Some people pretend, Sartre says there is an example of a girl who agrees to go out with a boy, the girl in agreeing pretending not to know what the boy is driving at. The boy held the girl with his hand, still, the girl pretends not to know what the boy is driving at. She even pretends not to know what the boy is driving at in caressing her hand.

Freedom, Sartre says, must be committed into action. Sartre says that the girl cannot avoid taking a decision because she is free. Any attempt to avoid taking a decision is a decision already taken. That is why, Sartre says, we must always commit our choices into action. We should always assert our values. Asserting our values is making a moral choice. Sartre says we may be tempted to ask the question of what relevance is "Bad faith". Bad faith is relevant to morality and decision making. Admittedly, we can recognize the type of self-deception and posing involve in bad faith. But someone may ask is Bad faith really bad? Has the waiter done anything wrong in playing his part as he did? Perhaps the worst we can say to him is that he is real about himself or he is not real about himself.

In answer to the above observation, Sartre will tell us that the waiter was wrong but not harmful because an essential feature of existentialism is that pretense, and blind adherence to conventions are all wrong, because they are obstacles to freedom and free choice and they deny us our responsibility. And therefore, have no moral worth. Sartre says that any decision we make in life unless it has a free choice it has no moral value. Here lies the crux of Bad faith. We can therefore say that Sartre's concept of bad faith is problem- ridden. The problem is that it leads to a gulf in man's way of looking at himself and other people's way of looking at him and the wider the gulf between the view of ourselves and other peoples' way of looking at us the more we are in danger in losing our human identity, in example, if other people say I'm X and all my actions and my taste are predictable along that X my opinion of myself is likely to look unreal.

Furthermore, Sartre 's statements that "existence precedes essence" has been described as blurred. Critics says we cannot have existence first before we have essence or human nature. When we exist normally, we become part and parcel of nature or essence, that is, it is this nature or essence that makes man different from a bird or animal of the lower strata. There is human nature so Sartre is accused by the confusion between the ontological and the moral meaning of essence

SARTRE' S CONCEPTION OF FREEDOM, CHOICE AND RESPONSIBILITY

In other words, Sartre confuses existence with essence. He reads a moral meaning to human nature. A person can create his character but cannot create his essence. The main weakness of Sartre's theory is the exaggeration of human freedom, choice and responsibility by thinking that they are applicable everywhere. Sartre has a narrow and limited concept of freedom. Freedom is not just the ability to choose, the way, Sartre wants us to believe. Freedom entails

in our everyday usage, the absence of constraint or impediments, and it also entails the absence of force. Man is in the centre stage of society, hence existential issues in the society is pointed out to man. Existentialism is the philosophy of despair and the quest for freedom. Man is entirely the architect of his own deliberate actions.

Man is described from the existentialist viewpoint as a “subjective being”. Man's freedom is one of the hallmarks of an existentialist worldviews. Total freedom and human subjectivity are key absolutes in the existentialist doctrine. Freedom is characterized as man's very essence and it is one of the most driving concepts in philosophical problems and analysis, and the subject of debates and counter debates. According to Robert Solomon (1972: 278) "freedom is seen as existence and it is existence that then proceeds to essence". Sartre observed that although man is condemned to be free, human freedom has objective value. Freedom as a concept has its context and structure. This law is intended to structure and contextualize freedom in order to maximize individual's rights, without unfairly minimizing another's rights (Geisler; 1981:20). The existential encounter of man although, is characterized by an ethical relation, man's existence is predicated on nothingness and this recognition of nothingness encourages man to search for meaningful existence and man is nothing else than what he makes of himself in his immediate environment.

Man is aware of this nothingness and it is from this awareness of nothingness that spurs man to search for meaning, freedom and the quest for hope. Man's desire for freedom is often calculated by social, political, economic and psychological pressures. The existential question is that to what degree is man's freedom? The existentialist's stand point is anchored on having total freedom and human subjectivity. Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself such is the first principle of existentialism. It is also what is called subjectivity (Stumpf and Abel; 2002:419).

It is not possible for society to function without a set of laws and people are answerable to these set of laws in any functional society. If there are no laws in society, society is bound to destroy and there will be a state of anarchy. The Existentialist standpoint of the concept of freedom rests on feelings, values and desires. Choice is a major component of humanity's freedom. Freedom of choice entails commitment and responsibility. Man is a holistic being and his very existence is reliant on God and society at large. Existentialism has an ethical strand. Existentialists believe that ethical issues are based on good action and this good action is any consciously chosen action. There is need for social cohesion in society and the need for cohesion to occur in society, humanity was created with a fundamental desire to communicate with fellow human beings; hence the need for dialogical communication. Man lives as part of a social environment to which he is bound by remembered and prospective ties. Men do not exist as isolated units

(William V. Spanos; 1966:307).

According to Ruch E A and Anyanwu K.C (1984:255) the existentialists believed that life is absurd. These scholars believed that:

Even if these statements merely tell us that existence is absurd. Precisely, this theme of absurdity in Existentialism seems to arise from the existentialists refusal to accept human life as an essentially unfinished symphony. They call existence absurd because they rightly diagnose that life cannot be framed from the rationalistic correction that everything must be subject to a neat rational packaging and that anything which is not rationally intelligible must be absurd. Existence presupposes concreteness and individuality.

According to Robert C. Roberts (1998:178) in his essay, "*Existence, Emotion, and Virtue: Classical Themes in Kierkegaard*", believed that "existence (existents) denotes the concreteness and individuality of a life lived in time and the requirements on personality that are implied by these features of selfhood. To be an individual is to be so constituted as to be able to act and feel with a high degree of social independency – that is, not to be so subject to the approval and disapproval of one's significant peer as to be emotionally enslaved by them". According to Hazel E Barnes (1992: 13) human being is not the same as the rest of being but is distinguished from it by a separating nothingness. Sartre's Ontology: the revealing and making of being in existence is predicated on man's mortality. According to the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (1998: 307) "Heidegger argued that mortality is our defining moment, that we are thrown into limited worlds of sense shaped by our being – towards – death – and that finite meaning is all the reality we get".

ACRITICAL EVALUATION

"Man is a free being. Man first of all is the being who hurls himself towards a future and who is conscious of imagining himself as being in the future. But if existence really does precede essence, man is responsible for what he is. man is free, man is freedom" (Stumpt E.S and Abel C.D., 2002:419-422) . Existentialism is a philosophical movement for man's quest for meaning and hope even in the midst of despair. According to Wogu Ikedinachi (2011:204) "existentialism is a philosophy of despair, bemoaning the lack of meaning or pre-ordained purpose in life. Existentialism is a contradictory unstructured cauldron of the supernatural in the form of theism and atheism, and politics in the form of communism. Human existence is anchored on care. Care makes human existence more meaningful and authentic". For it is care that makes human existence meaningful and makes a person's life really matter to them, and it is care which ultimately directs us to the mystery of Being itself (Michael Watts; 2001:46).

In human existence, we are face by personal choices. According to Ikedinachi Wogu (2011:358-359) in his book, "*Problems of Minds: A New Approach to Age- Long Problems*

and *Questions in Philosophy and the Cognitive Science of Human Development*", believed that "in human existence, to think in terms of existence meant for Kierkegaard to recognize that we face personal choices. Kierkegaard distinguished between the spectator and the actor, arguing that only the actor is involved in existence. Man is truly a driver. Mathematics and science have no place for the general and the universal. Mathematics and science can undoubtedly solve some problems, as an ethics and metaphysics". Man's freedom has possible limits.

"Human freedom is absolute, but it is also alarming, and we try to hide it from ourselves, and adopt some predetermined role offered by morality, society, or religion, but our efforts at concealment are bound to fail and we end up double minded, tacitly aware of our freedom while striving to reduce ourselves to mere objects. This is the condition that Sartre calls bad faith. there are physical limits to our possible actions" (Stumpt E., S; *A History of Philosophy*, 2003). In *Being and Nothingness*, in addition to the en-soi and the pour-sour, Sartre had introduced the notion of being- for- others. The original meaning of being for others ...is conflict. Conflict or if you like difference is part and parcel of our humanity. The keystone of existentialism is absolute freedom (Anthony Kenny; 2010:824). The concept of existentialism has a lot to do with human society in terms of everyday practical existence of man and the common good. Society should minimize the undue interference with functions and institutions essential to human freedom. According to Bernard Berofsky (1995:18-19) "society must, therefore, forbid interference with functions and institutions essential to the individual' s ability to foster the common good and if autonomy is self-realization, we must decide whether the self is directed to God or the common good".

CONCLUDING CONSIDERATIONS

Jaegwon Kim and Ernest Sosa (1995:145) asked one very pertinent question that "what sort of concept is existence"? and that existential philosophy undertakes to comprehend human existence from the standpoint of one involved in living it (Jaegwon and Sosa; 1995:152). In short, my acting is situated both socially, psychologically, politically, ethically or morally and historical and existentially. Existentialism has an ethical stance. According to Scott Kakures Dion e tal, (1993:343) "the ethical is precisely that which is not to be violated in choosing. We have the connection between nothingness and freedom. The subject of consciousness is a concrete nothing. The most poignant moments in life are personal, where we become aware of ourselves as a subject. Subjectivity is what makes up each of our unique existences. For this reason, objectivity cannot give the whole truth about our individual selves" (1993:357-359). Jaegwon and Sosa (1995:153) observed that existential philosophy thus differs fundamentally from other forms of inquiry into our nature focusing upon any or all of the elements of the classical definition of a human being as a rational and social animal.

Sartre's fictional works are full of explorations of moral psychology of some sort of illustrations and analogies. Commitment or engagement is thus ultimately the basis for an authentically meaningful life. If authenticity is the category by which I am able to think what it means to "exist", the existential account of authenticity cannot neglect the social, historical and political aspects of human existence. Furthermore, the existential philosophers are unequivocal and unanimous in their existential account of the importance of historical factors or in their estimation of the political affairs of the world in existence. For Heidegger, to exist is

to be historical.

To be historical is to be temporal and existential temporality is not a sequence of instants but instead a unified structure in which the “future” (that is, the possibility aimed at in my existential project) recollects the 'past' (that is, what no longer needs to be done, the completed) so as to give meaning to the present (that is, the things that take on significance in the light of what currently needs doing). Existentialism holds that to be authentic means we must understand our choice in the light of the potential wholeness of our existence. Our choice of existence has a political dimension even social and historical. That this choice has a political dimension stems from the fact that existence is always being with others. On Sartre's model, social reality is in perpetual conflict; an Hegelian dialectics in which for ontological reasons, no state of mutual recognition can ever be achieved. The “we” the political subject is always contested, conflicted, and unstable. Existentialism just like Marxism serves to orient political engagement. Marxism is unsurpassable; therefore, it is the most lucid theory of our alienated situation of concrete un-freedom, oriented towards the practical political overcoming of our un-freedom.

The emergence of existence as a philosophical problem reflects on an adequate framework for understanding human being. The relevant concept of existence finds its first systematic philosophical formulation from the Husserlian tradition of existence as consciousness. It is our direct openness to the world one that is governed categorically and normatively rather than causally. To exist is always to be confronted with the question of meaning, values and freedom. As Heidegger puts it “existence” is care (Sorge): to exist is not simply to be, but to be an issue for oneself. As a predicate of existence, the concept of freedom is characterized simply as a given of practical self-consciousness. The evidence of freedom is the breakdown of direct practical activity (*Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1998:307-308). The existence of man as a rational being is an historical one of temporality. According to Michael Watts (2001:74) "Heidegger describes *Being* as a continually evolving phenomenon and Dasien's structure is temporal-inextricably linked to the passage of time". Being remains forever shrouded in oblivion-its deeper and richer meaning neglected and forgotten (Michael Watts; 2001:86).

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