

# Sartre revised



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Being condemned to be free is ironic. Condemn and free are two words not usually seen together in one sentence making a coherent and firm statement. To condemn is to declare to be reprehensible, wrong, or evil usually after weighing evidence and without reservation. And to be free is to have the legal and political rights of a citizen. Joined together the words will over right their meaning. And yet philosopher Jean - Paul Sartre managed to make his point stand out and be heard by everyone, outliving 64 years of earthly, human living.

What Sartre is trying to tell us, his thoughts and ideas about life here on earth, about our responsibilities, about the trifle things and actions in our everyday lives that we tend to ignore because we think life is bigger than us, that there's a bigger picture, is what being condemned to be free is all about. In today's modern world, freedom has become a necessity and has taken on many forms. Gone were the days when women are not allowed to vote, engage in politics and other manly jobs, cannot have a career and is obliged to stay home and manage the household, and be thrown to unwanted marriages arranged by their parents.

Now everybody can choose. And many have viewed this right to choose as a form of freedom. One has the right to choose their schools, their career paths to take, their spouses, how many children are they going to have, what will they name their kids, it is just a matter of choosing and directing this freedom to what we think is the right thing to do. After all, not all of us are using this freedom to choose our actions wisely. It all starts with human beings being born free and equal in dignity and rights, the first article from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Men are created equal, and it's funny that there are people born carrying within them the royal blood. It already raises their political and monetary position above all the common men. They carry with them the noun King, Queen, Prince, Princess, Emperor, and Empress among others before their birth names. They have all the advantages in the world, not having to sit through traffic, not having to be the front liner in a war, not having to work hard to earn a living. In fact, they just sit and everything is done for them, all they have to do is make sure they keep their countries the same as it was before they were born.

Up to what extent is this equality in dignity and rights applicable? Now that everybody seems to have a complete grasp of liberty, it appears that being free is not as wanted as it was before. History taught us well enough to know that there have been a number of wars fought for freedom and religion. The tales of man then tells us how others will try to conquer the lands where they have been born, and a leader will fight for their land and in the end they either merge with the conquerors or greatly celebrate their freedom.

Religion, too, has been a great propeller of wars.

Different beliefs, different doctrines, a different God for every religion, set the plot for a more massive movement that outlasted every century up to now, still counting fatalities. " The historical reality is that where religious freedom is denied, so too are other basic human rights. " (Why Religious Freedom? ) Religious freedom is just one of the many forms of freedom people are indulging in today. There is also what we call academic freedom. " The notion of academic freedom is invoked to justify statements by faculties that offend politicians, religious leaders, corporate executives, parents of

students, and citizens. (Academic Freedom in the United States) That immediately removes your right as a person to say what you want to say, it obviously is a threat to be opinionated now a days. And it is not just academic; the press is also encountering some form of suppression.

According to the Freedom House organization, there are several reasons as to why the media is being stripped off of its independence. The media can be a source of political opposition, political upheaval, victims of violence, and finally, they can be threats to national security. (Map of Press Freedom)

With all the overwhelming talk about freedom, liberty and human rights, one man tries to summarize all this into man being condemned to be free. Jean-Paul Sartre is said to be one of the brightest philosophers of the twentieth century. " French novelist, playwright, existentialist philosopher, and literary critic. Sartre was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1964, but he declined the honor in protest of the values of bourgeois society. His longtime companion was Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), whom he met at the Ecole Normale Superieure in 1929. "(Jean-Paul Sartre 1905-1980)

An Existentialist, Sartre is known for his public lecture, Existentialism and Humanism and his magnum opus, Being and Nothingness. Sartre's greatest work, Being and Nothingness is subtitled: Phenomenological Ontology. He starts his discussion with the description of two kinds of being. According to him there is the in-itself and the for-itself. The beings-in-themselves are the ordinary objects, while the being-for-itself are the human agents. (Jean-Paul Sartre) The beings-in-themselves or ordinary objects do not have the capability to change or create.

A chair is nothing more than what it is, it cannot change its appearance on its own, nor can it create something out of its being. A human agent is a being-for-itself because it is a being with conscious plans, purposes and intentions. It is able to project forward from a given situation to a future possibility that is not yet realized. The uncertainty of human life and purpose, the venturing into the unknown is what makes and defines human life distinct from the others. As human life progresses, the things that he do, what kinds of act he gets himself involved in, becomes his definition, becomes his being.

A person is born not knowing that he will pursue a career in medicine. As he grows up and goes to medical school he is defined. He has found a definition for his life, that of a doctor. For Sartre, if a being-for-itself starts to question its purpose and meaning, it starts to have a consciousness. The consciousness makes it possible for the human to know everything around him, and everything that is not around him. As it now knows that it is not an ordinary object but something else. Something undefined, something that is not yet known to him. So starts the journey to fill in an empty palette.

In not knowing, in a human's nothingness, he is free. There is this whole notion that if you are inside a prison cell, you are not free. You are bounded by rows and rows of bars, controlled by correctional officers, undermined by more experienced inmates. But if we were to use Sartre's definition of freedom, no Alcatraz can set limits on our liberty. In fact, this will even define the person and not limit his being free. The core idea of the text is that man is condemned to be free, meaning that in this freedom that we have, we are still responsible for our actions.

We cannot evade our responsibilities and say that we did not choose it to happen, because our actions are unmistakably ours alone. Nobody does our actions but us. Even if we are not inside jail cells, we are still attached to obligations and duties which we can only be held responsible to bringing upon ourselves. " Man being condemned to be free carries the weight of the world on his shoulders; he is responsible for the world and for himself as a way of being. " Every action that we do, we know and we are conscious of us doing it. We cannot clean our hands and say that we did not want that to happen.

We are abandoned in the sense that we cannot but the blame on somebody else. We carry the burden; nobody can help us with it. Sartre pointed out a few arguments to support his view. He mentioned three reasons why human-reality is free. Human - reality is free because it is not enough. Human - reality is free because it is perpetually wrenched away from itself and because it has been separated by a nothingness from what it is and from what it will be. And finally, human - reality is free because its present being is itself a nothingness in the form of the reflection-reflecting.

Basically what he is trying to say is that our life here on earth is not enough to explore everything that this world can offer us. We continue to be free in spite and despite of the fact that there is a limit to everything. Freedom is the nothingness which is made-to-be at the heart of man, it forces human - reality to make itself instead of to be. For human - reality to be is to choose oneself. Sartre tells us that if a person should make something out of his nothingness, then he makes use of his freedom. He has to make himself

something out of this freedom. His freedom opens his world to a lot of choices.

What one would want to do, what one would make out of the small money one has, what one will do when one wakes up in the morning. These things that one chooses to do will give him the being of man. Man cannot be sometimes slave and sometimes free; he is wholly and forever free or he is not free at all. For to be wholly free is to be given responsibility. And to not be free, one is not given responsibility, which will never be the case because only the beings-in-themselves or the ordinary objects are those that cannot assume responsibility. He must assume the situation with the proud consciousness of being the author of it.

Our lives are like books. They have a plot, a setting and characters. But who makes things happen? Is it not us? We are the author of our own books, we make things happen. However bad the situation that we find ourselves in, we must assume responsibility and get through the challenge. Absolute responsibility is not resignation; it is the logical requirement of the consequences of our freedom. When free, man chooses to do things. And when man chooses to do things, these things will always have consequences. For example, man chooses to swim at high noon.

After awhile, he finds himself with his skin burning from being exposed to the sun too long. This is the consequence of his actions. His freedom to choose his actions makes him absolutely responsible for whatever it brings to him. There is no non-human situation because all decisions are human. Even if we say that man does inhuman things, like that of nuclear war, murder and

rape, this will never be a non-human situation simply because the decision to get involved is of human nature. You try to reason with yourself that maybe what you are doing is wrong and not just, and yet you still decide to do it.

It is still a human who is behind the act; hence, it is not a non-human situation. There are no accidents in life. For lack of getting out of it, I have chosen it. It is a matter of choice. Here Sartre points out that what happens in life does not happen by chance. We get ourselves involved by our choice, and if we say we do not have a choice, and we cannot get ourselves out of it, we still have chosen it. Because we always have a choice. Even if that choice is suicide or not doing our duties, it is still an option to get out of a situation. Human - reality is without excuse. Lastly, Sartre tells us that one cannot ask, "Why was I born?" or curse the day of his birth or declare that he did not ask to be born, for these various attitudes toward his birth - i. e. , toward the fact that he realizes a presence in the world - are absolutely nothing else but ways of assuming this birth in full responsibility and of making it his. When man becomes conscious of his presence and being in this world, it follows that he accepts responsibility. Because now he knows and is fully aware of the things that he is doing, his freedom, and once aware of his freedom, he is found to be responsible. I think that Jean-Paul Sartre wants to find meaning in life just like everybody else.

The answer to the question, "Why was I born?" Sartre answered simply. Unlike other schools of thought, namely the determinists and the proponents of free will, Sartre focused on man's being condemned to be free but with full responsibility. Sartre said that the proponents of free will are concerned with finding cases of decision for which there exists no prior cause or



deliberations concerning two opposed acts which are equally possible and possess causes or motives of the same weight. Hence they try to reason that a person is born with the free will to find a cause for himself.

However, the determinists reply saying that there is no action without a cause and that the most insignificant gesture refers to causes and motives which confer its meaning upon it. So for them, man is born with a cause already. Sartre simply answered this question when he said that man is born out of nothingness, and in this nothingness, he is free. And like most philosophical view points, Sartre is very much ridiculed for his existentialist values. There are objections to him mostly because of his atheistic ideals saying that he believes that we are living in a universe with no God, no morality, nothing absolute. Abandonment: Condemned to be Free) His stand on being free that leaves us with a feeling of abandonment because we are solely responsible for everything, comes from his realization that there is no supreme being, being God that guides us and supports us every step of the way. We are alone and we cannot ask for a God to help us in situations that we cannot possibly escape from. His definition of freedom permits everybody to do whatever we want, because we all have choices and responsibilities to bear. And if we have chosen to be a part of a non-human situation, we would still find ourselves deciding humanely.

For example, a man participates in murdering another man, it is his choice to participate in the killing, and nobody forces him to do so. The other man is now dead, because man is free to choose what to do; he is not judged as doing something wrong. Instead, as long as he deems himself responsible for the killing, he is free. What we do not understand much is that our being free

has to come with responsibility. Yes we get to do whatever we want, but we still have to consider the consequences and assume responsibility for it. By then, we cannot dare say that we did not want this. Nobody else is responsible for the things we do but ourselves.

We choose, even if we say that we left it all to chance. Leaving it to chance is still an option that we choose. The life given to us, it is a choice. Everything we do, we do without regrets or remorse. There should be no excuses, for we are the authors of our situation, nobody else but us. In my own opinion, I greatly value Sartre's work. He proves that there are so many reasons why we should enjoy our life here on earth and how much freedom we have. He points out a great deal of effort as to why we do things not needing a direct cause or a cause not to do it. But I do also possess a great amount of respect to the Supreme Being.

I know that there are people who believe that they do not need a God, who believes that life here on earth is just passing and not really owed to him. But for me, that is not the case. I believe that we are not alone, and that there is someone out there who gives us hope and who makes us keep our faith. Yes, we have to be responsible for the things that we do. But that responsibility comes with great respect and consideration for other people around us. We just cannot hastily do things and hope that we do not get in the way of somebody. Life is governed by rules, by the law.

If there will be none of these rules and laws, there is definitely chaos. And I do not think that suicide is neither an option nor a last resort. We cannot simply find the easy way out. What is the thrill in just killing yourself if you

cannot overcome challenges and obstacles in your life? Why do you have family and significant others to share your dilemma with? I believe that our troubles are our responsibilities, but it does not stop us from asking help. There are now numerous numbers to call in case we decide not to confide to our family members or to our closest friends, especially if we want to remain anonymous.

If other people find ways to help other people, especially those who established organizations like alcoholics anonymous, etc. , why can we not indulge in these as well? Yes we always have a choice, and suicide is not one of them. Yes we have the freedom to do that, but if you believe that everybody is given an equal and a second chance, would you do it? We do have our own burdens and crosses to carry, but everything is possible as long as we have faith. Faith in ourselves, to always have the courage to face our problems, faith in life, that it may not let us down and faith in the Supreme Being, to whom we know we are always taken care of.