

An Understanding of Sartre's Conception of The Absolute Freedom

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Abstract

According to Sartre, humans are ontologically distinctive beings not because of any predetermined essence, but because of their absolute freedom. His ontological inquiry of being leads him to claim that human existence precedes his essence. Sartre argues that this unique existence grants humans absolute freedom. For Sartre, the proper knowledge of "being" can be achieved through an analysis of two fundamental types of being i.e., "being-for-itself", and "being-in-itself". According to Sartre, "being-in-itself" is the stuff of the world. It is essentially objecthood. Whereas, "being-for-itself" is a conscious being who can change himself through his freedom. "Being-for-itself" is fundamentally a human self that always finds itself in "facticity" or given situations. For Sartre, the most important aspect of the human self is his act of negation of facticity. This means that a human constantly negates his given situation through "his absolute freedom and constantly re-interpret or re-define it. The question that arises here is how a human can truly be considered a "free being" in the absolute sense, given that he always finds himself in a specific social situation and physical circumstances that restrict his actions and undermine his freedom. This study aims to focus on this question. It explores Sartre's argument that human freedom cannot be undermined by specific social and physical situations or "facticity". This study examines how Sartre relates the human act of negating facticity with his ontological structure and thus constructs an ontological ground for absolute freedom.

Keywords: *being-for-itself, being-in-itself, Facticity, negation, "ontological structure of world-man relation".*

Introduction

"How is a human being ontologically distinctive being" is the main question that Sartre probes. Traditionally, it has been assumed that man is an ontologically distinctive being because of his rational soul which is assumed to exist prior to his existence. However, Sartre disagrees with this view. According to him, man is an ontologically distinctive being not because of any supposed prior essence, but due to his absolute freedom. For Sartre, "freedom" is a phenomenon of the existential

structure of a human being. It is a fundamental part of human existence. His ontological inquiry of being leads him to say that man's existence precedes his essence. This unique type of existence makes humans absolutely free. One of the most important aspects of Sartre's ontological inquiry is not only comprehending the "being" but also an understanding of the relation between "being" and "nothingness". Sartre believes that through an understanding of "being" and "nothingness" we can better understand the existential structure of "being" and thus can apprehend the ontological status of human beings. For Sartre, the proper knowledge of "being" can be achieved through an analysis of two fundamental types of being i.e., "being-for-itself", and "being-in-itself" as Reynold explains (Reynolds, 2006, p. 52). According to Sartre, "being-in-itself" is the stuff of the world which cannot change itself. Whereas "being-for-itself" is a conscious being that can change itself through freedom. Humans are fundamentally "being-for-itself". Humans always find themselves in "facticity" or given situations. For Sartre, the most important aspect of a human is his ability to negate facticity. This means that a human constantly negates his given situation through his absolute freedom.

The question that arises here is how a human can be considered a "free being" in the absolute sense, given that he always finds himself in a specific social situation and physical circumstances that restrict his actions and undermine his freedom. This study aims to focus on this question. In the first section of this study, we investigate how Sartre argues that human freedom cannot be undermined by specific social and physical situations or "facticity". Here we see how Sartre derives absolute freedom from the ontological structure of human existence. In the second section of this study, we examine in what way Sartre's notion of absolute freedom contains some ambiguities. We assess these ambiguities and conclude that Sartre's primary focus is not on the constraints that limit human freedom, but rather on deciphering the ontological structure of man, which causes individuals to bear sole responsibility for giving meaning and interpreting the world and themselves. In this sense man is free.

1. The Priority of Existence over Essence and Human Freedom

The concept of priority of essence over existence implies that existence must adhere to a specific plan or purpose. Sartre compares the case of the existence of humans with the concrete existence of a pen and a triangle. He agrees that a triangle has an essence that is prior to its construction. A triangle has a form that precedes its existence. One draws a triangle with a prior idea of a plane figure having three sides and three angles. In the same way, a pen is made with a prior

idea that it will potentially be able to perform the function of writing. That is its essential function. However, Sartre does not agree with the idea that there is an essence that is prior to human existence (Reynolds, 2006, pp. 53-54). He argues that the essence of a human can only be considered prior to his existence if his existence is either a result of a prior plan made by a "mind" or if his existence originated from a permanent substance. Alternatively, human essence can also be prior to his existence if existence is merely a manifestation of a permanent reality. However, Sartre's position is that none of the aforementioned cases can be established. He agrees that there may be things or objects whose forms or essence may be prior to their existence but as far as human existence is concerned it cannot fall into such kind of essentialism. Human existence is prior to essence. We first exist and then are defined or interpreted. Rational soul or thinking substance as the essence of men is a mistaken idea for Sartre.

Criticizing Descartes' thinking substance, Sartre thoroughly discusses the notion of consciousness and believes that it is misunderstood by Descartes. According to him, Descartes takes for granted that consciousness has a single mode, which is the consciousness of "I think". It ultimately endorses a predefined or transcendental separated self. Consequently, Descartes assumes that essence precedes human existence. What Sartre argues is that consciousness of self cannot establish the existence of a permanent self which is prior to existence. He contends that consciousness has two fundamentally different modes which cannot be reconciled. For him, consciousness may be "pre-reflective" and "reflective". Pre-reflective consciousness is the original and primary mode of consciousness. That is consciousness of existence or more properly consciousness of "am-ness". In this state, we directly experience the world without the concept of soul or ego. This occurs when we do not consider our past experiences or for-granted notions. However, in the reflective mode of consciousness, we reflect on our past experiences, which leads us to develop a sense of "self". Here the concept of soul or ego is the requirement for reflection of past experiences. Hence according to Sartre, the self is not an ontologically separate substance, but rather a product of cognition or recollection of memory (Reynolds, 2006, pp. 54-55). We can say that "self" is simply a requirement for unity of experience. Sartre firmly believes that consciousness of existence is an original or prior mode of consciousness. This means that there is no need to reconcile "pre-reflective" and "reflective" modes of consciousness. Sartre's critique of Cartesian cogito leads him to assert that "existence precedes essence". He concludes that there is no predefined-permanent self. There is no prior plan or essential rules that human has to follow. Humans are absolutely free.

1.1 CORRELATION BETWEEN HUMAN EXISTENCE AND FREEDOM

The idea of the priority of existence over essence leads Sartre to conclude that there is neither an absolute being nor absolute moral law that exists as an authority over humans. Man is solely free to pursue whatever essence he desires as Reynolds explains Sartre's position (Reynolds, 2006, p. 56). For Sartre, essence is simply a concept that is created and chosen by a human, rather than an external principle that must be followed. In his book, *Being and Nothingness* Sartre explains that the essence of a thing is always set a limit. This means that essence defines things, which in turn, determines what they can and cannot be. However, according to Sartre, since there is no prior essence that defines "human reality", human beings are absolutely free and unbounded. There is no way to set a limit for a human. In other words, man is the only being that has no predetermined essence. For Sartre, man is freedom and freedom is man in a sense for Sartre (Sartre, 1956, pp. 24-25).

The question that arises here is how a human can be a "free being" in the absolute sense. This is because a human always finds himself in specific social situations and physical circumstances that restrict his action and hence undermines his freedom. Sartre responds to the question by stating that even though we are born in specific social and physical situations or "facticity"¹, it cannot undermine our freedom for two reasons. First is that without restrictions in life, we cannot be free. Freedom is a rebellion against these restrictions. We cannot have freedom without context. Helstrom better explains it. According to him, Sartre's notion of freedom presupposes that freedom can only be possible through its facticity. Sartre's literary work claims that man is always subject to the constraints imposed upon him by his "facticity". Despite this, it does not affect his ability to make free choices. For instance, however, war is a compulsion that restricts our freedom, it simultaneously provides a ground for our freedom. Without compulsion, there will be no possibility of freedom. Our response to war is entirely based on our own choices, and we cannot excuse to take responsibility for those choices. What Sartre has been of the view in his literary works is that "facticity" is the context in which a human chooses his options (Helstrom, 1972, p. 111). The second reason is that there are always choices available for us that we may have against restriction, even if they are just on a level of intention or belief. For example, as Sartre explains, even when someone is being tortured, he still has options. He can be completely immersed in his pain or he can ignore it by looking into the eyes of the persecutor. In this case, physical pain is there but he is free to respond to this pain. In

¹ "Facticity" is defined as our social situation and physical circumstances (2006, p. 56)

elaborating on Sartre's position, Landau explains that while certain aspects of human beings may not be free, humans are still free to choose their fundamental projects in life and to give meaning to situations in which they find themselves. For instance, a person having no legs is not free to walk. However, Sartre argues, he is free to give meaning to his disability. This disability is not a limit in the absolute sense. There will still be choices for him and he will be responsible for choosing them (Landau, 2012, p. 2). We can say that in a sense freedom is always there in human existence. Sartre believes that freedom is constitutive of human existence (Reynolds, 2006, p. 56). Freedom primarily differentiates between a human existence and the existence of other beings. Freedom is man and man is freedom. In Sartre's words, "Man does not exist first in order to be free subsequently; there is no difference between the being of man and his being free" (Sartre, 1956, p. 25).

In order to explain the constitutive role of freedom, Sartre explicates that human existence is not simply the sum of his facts of life. It is a continuous resistance against facts of life or "facticity". A human being resists the facts of life through his freedom. A human is not what his circumstances or history are. A human being is "freedom" that negates his circumstances or history (Reynolds, 2006, p. 56). In short, for Sartre human existence has two different but inseparable aspects. One is "facticity" or facts of life. Another is freedom or revolt against "facticity". He explicates the ontology of human existence in connection with these inseparable aspects.

1.2 ONTOLOGY OF HUMAN EXISTENCE

Sartre probes human ontology through phenomenological analysis² of the nature of being. Sartre explains human ontology by differentiating two fundamental types of being i.e., being-in-itself (the en soi) and the being-for-itself (the pour soi). According to Sartre, "being-in-itself" is not a conscious being. It is pure object-hood that is found around us. It is the stuff of the world. We can properly define or interpret it as it cannot change itself. While "being-for-self" is a conscious being that is characterized by self-awareness and choices. This is fundamentally an individual human being who can change itself through his freedom. He constantly redefines himself. He never completes as he constantly shapes his life and his choices. "Being-for-itself" has no prior essence. Man exists first and defines himself afterwards. In this sense, 'being-for-itself is not an object

² In phenomenological analysis we see what exists in our immediate experience. Sartre explores what our consciousness entails about our being. In other words, Sartre's ontology of human existence deals with the question of how we are conscious about our being in our immediate experience.

but a subject as Anthony explains (Asekhauno, 2017, p. 342). For Sartre, as a conscious being the most important aspect of a human being is his act of negation. A human constantly negates his “facticity” or situation where he finds himself. He denies his past, which was constituted by facticity, and sets future goals through his free-thinking constantly. In this way, humans fundamentally transcend facticity and deny their past situation. Humans set their meaning of facts or try to transcend from them (Reynolds, 2006, p. 58).

1.3 FREEDOM, NEGATION AND NOTHINGNESS

Sartre argues that our ontological structure of consciousness, which functions through the negation of facticity, reveals our freedom. According to Sartre, negation is not just a quality of judgment that appears as a result of an assessment of a situation. Instead, negation is originated in “nothingness” (Sartre, 1956, p. 6). In other words, “nothingness” is not a result of negation; rather, negation is by virtue of “nothingness”. One can simply presume nothingness as “not-ness”. But for Sartre, “nothingness” is not merely “not-ness”. It is part of being. “Nothingness” is the “hole” of being (Sartre, 1956, p. 76). The Being and nothingness both have an ontological status for Sartre. The problem that arises here is how “nothingness” has an ontological status. Sartre addresses this question by an inquiry of tripartite themes of negation. These are (i) questioning (ii) absence (iii) destruction (Reynolds, 2006, p. 60). Through this inquiry, Sartre shows how “nothingness” as a source of negation is related to the freedom that is, in fact, a part of being of man.

Questioning as 1st theme of Negation

For Sartre, “questioning” is one of the most fundamental aspects of man. Sartre argues that man raises the question not because they are trying to discover the ultimate truth, but because of the way human consciousness is structured. This ontological structure allows humans to negate givenness and facticity. We can say that when Descartes doubted everything, he was questioning everything as Reynolds explains (Reynolds, 2006, p. 62). For Sartre, however, there is no universal essence of human, human ability of negation describes him. His “questioning” is his negation of facticity and this negation reveals that there is “nothing at all”. Questioning reveals “nothing” or “non-being” because there is always an objective possibility of replying a question in the negative. In other words, questions do not cease the possibility of “No”. Sartre argues that if someone asks “Is the Statue of Liberty elegant?” some may say “Yes”, but it is not

the only possible answer to this question. Others may answer with “No”, it is not elegant”.

Moreover, a question may involve “negation” in another way. When a genuine question is asked, we can say that there is a state of not-knowing because if it is known, it cannot be asked. In other words, questions presuppose indetermination. If one has absolute certainty about something, there will be no room for a genuine question about this thing. Interestingly, questions that have positive answers involve a negation. Every “positive” answer has its negative aspect that sets a limit to the world. For example, if we are sure that it is 8 o'clock, then it cannot be any other time except 8 o'clock; it is not 9 o'clock. This is also a negation or non-being. What Sartre meant by the human act of questioning is that a question may be formulated in interrogative judgment but it is not itself a judgment. “Questioning” is a pre-judicative attitude that is rooted in the “nothingness” (Sartre, 1956, p. 7). Sartre concludes that we are encompassed by “nothingness”. We all are covered by “nothingness” (Reynolds, 2006, p. 62). We can say that the act of “questioning” is the manifestation of “nothingness”. Thus, Sartre argues that there is a “gape” or “hole” in the totality of being, which provides an ontological ground for negation and allows humans to negate things and ideas. Nothingness is part of the ontological structure of the “human-world” relation as Reynolds explains (Reynolds, 2006, p. 62).

According to Sartre, however, “nothingness” is a part of “being”, it is not reducible to “being”. There is a definite ontological status of “nothingness” because it exists as a category in itself. “Nothingness” is not because of our capacity to negate something, capacity to negate is possible because “nothingness” exists as an ontological category. “Nothingness” is not merely a result of our reflection of the non-existence of something. There is a “gape” or “hole” of being because of which we negate something. “Nothingness” is prior to our reflection because of which we negate.

Destruction as 2nd theme of negation

For Sartre, “destruction” is not also known through merely reflective judgments like “questioning”. It is also pre-judicative or pre-reflective. Sartre believes that men introduce “destruction”, but it is not through his act of judgment or reflection of the situation, as reflection can only entail “change”, which is not the same as destruction. Change is just a re-arranging of things, whereas “destruction” is more than just a redistribution or rearrangement. For instance, a storm only redistributes things. There is no less after the storm than before as Sartre says (Sartre, 1956, p. 8). Thus theoretically, “destruction” is a human thing

that is produced by his consciousness (Sartre, 1956, p. 9). It is also rooted in “nothingness”. “Nothingness” is an ontological part of men-world relation because of which humans have a pre-reflective idea of the fragility of the world and comprehend “destruction”. In other words, a man does not say that as some objects are disassociated, so there is destruction. Rather, he says that some objects are disassociated because the world is fragile. He is free to negate the robustness of the world.

Absence as the third Theme of Negation

Is the absence of something known through reflective judgment or known through a pre-judicative way? According to Sartre, we find “absence” through pre-reflection, as reflective judgments can only deal with things that are located somewhere. Whereas, “absence” is not something that is located at a specific place. For Sartre, “absence” is constructed by consciousness. He argues that when someone anticipates the presence of something somewhere and discovers that it is not there, then “absence” pervades everywhere. Here Sartre uses an example to explain that when his friend is absent from the café, the “absence” is no longer just related to the precise place of the café; it infuses the whole café. If some other persons come into the café, he nihilates them as he does not see who they are rather he just sees they are not his friends (Reynolds, 2006, p. 64). In Sartre’s perspective, the “absence” of his friend is the non-being of his friend that encompasses the whole café. That is why Sartre considers the “absence” to be more than just a psychological state. For Sartre “absence” is because of the ontological category of “nothingness”. “Nothingness” allows us to take “absence” everywhere. In this connection, our being or consciousness is free to transcend the realm of being (the world as there). That is why “absence” is the third theme of negation.

All three above manifestations of negation imply that humans are free. Human consciousness is not bound to accept reality as such, as human consciousness is separated from the realm of things in a sense as Reynolds explains (Reynolds, 2006, p. 65). Consciousness that functions through negation is grounded in ‘nothingness’ and provides an ontological ground for human concrete freedom. In other words, negation is not just a reflective act. It is made possible by “nothingness or non-being”. Our act of negation upon which our absolute freedom stands is an ontological part of our being. In this way, we are not free because we make choices, as choices are a matter of conditions. Rather, we make choices because we are inherently free. Choices are because of our freedom; freedom is

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not because of our choices. This is why, Sartre argues that man as “being-for-itself” is absolutely free (Sartre, 1956, p. xviii).

According to Sartre, if man is not absolutely free, he will be bound to see reality in a specific way. Whereas, man can perceive reality in his unique way (Reynolds, 2006, p. 66). He explains his point by stating that human freedom is absolute in the sense that no limit to freedom is absolute. For example, a cliff may be seen as a barrier or a limit to freedom if we want to displace it. But it is not a limit rather it is valuable if we want to see the countryside from its top. What Sartre explains is that the cliff in itself is neither a barrier nor a facilitator. It is our freedom that allows us to make it into whatever we want it to be. One can think that climbing the cliff is difficult, but with practice, he can gain expertise and the same cliff becomes easier to climb. There is no absolute limit in the way of humans (Sartre, 1956, p. 482).

2. The Assessment of Some Ambiguities in Sartre's Notion of Absolute Freedom

Sartre's notion of freedom carries some ambiguity. On the one hand, he declares that humans are absolutely free, which suggests that humans do not need freedom since they are already free. On the other hand, in his concept of “facticity,” Sartre also talks about how humans always try to escape “facticity”. So, they are not absolutely free or they are un-free in a sense. In other words, however, Sartre argues that humans are absolutely free, he also maintains that “facticity” imposes limitations on human choices. This apparent ambiguity can be resolved by understanding that Sartre does not define human absolute freedom by analyzing the limits of freedom. We have seen that Sartre does not view the limit of freedom as an absolute limit. For him, limitations are the necessary context of freedom which gives meaning to freedom. “Facticity” is the givenness of humans. however, it is not an absolute limit. For Sartre, freedom should be explained by the fact that human consciousness is absolutely free; no essence can determine human consciousness. We have seen that even though humans find themselves in facticity, their absolute free consciousness can negate facticity. Human consciousness is not bound to take facticity as a limit.

We have seen how as a “being-for-itself” human consciousness has no limit in its way. Halstrom focuses on this issue. He explains that Sartre's thought involves two aspects of human existence. First is our “facticity” which imposes limitations on us by the environment where we find ourselves. The second is our transcendence or consciousness to negate facticity. In one we are not absolutely free and, in another way, we are absolutely free (Helstrom, 1972, p. 117).

According to Halstrom, however, human freedom is finite because our choices are determined by “facticity”, this does not mean that we are completely unfree in a sense, facticity cannot dictate which of the available choices are made. We can still be free to choose the option from the available options. Moreover, our consciousness is not bound to accept “facticity” as such. Man can define facticity for himself and can shape his own freedom (Helstrom, 1972, p. 118). We have seen how Sartre argues that humans have the ability to interpret reality in various ways. They are not bound to accept reality as it is. According to Sartre, this grants humans absolute freedom. For instance, Sartre explains that a man without legs obviously cannot walk, which limits his freedom, but he is absolutely free to cope with this disability and give it meaning. This disability is not an absolute barrier to his project of life. But here it should be noted that the project of life is also determined by facticity. Paradoxically, we are free but exercising freedom is defined by facticity. In other words, we are absolutely free to give meaning but are not absolutely free to act. Thus, absolute freedom is empty as Halstrom believed (Helstrom, 1972, p. 118).

Sartre’s concept of human freedom can be interpreted as absolute in another sense. It can be said that since Sartre does not derive human freedom from any foundation, it is absolute. Landau focuses on this issue. He explains that Sartre’s notion of freedom rests upon the idea of the priority of human existence over any essence. Therefore, it has no foundation (Landau, 2012, pp. 1-2). We have seen that the idea of the priority of human existence over any for-granted essence leads Sartre to argue that man is freedom himself. Thus, in Sartre’s thought, freedom cannot be based on any external foundation. According to Landau, Sartre has been of the view that humans choose a value without any external justification. We can say that humans have no objective justification for their choice of value. Instead, they only emphasize their consent. In other words, humans cannot objectively determine “what to choose” as there is no objective justification for their choice. There is only a subjective criterion. Moreover, because the choice of value is entirely subjective, humans are absolutely responsible for their choice. Thus, it leads Sartre to say that humans are absolutely free as he cannot shift his responsibility for their choices to others. Sartre believes that this absolute freedom is a defining characteristic of human beings.

Not having a criterion to objectively justify our choices leads to serious moral implications according to some critics of Sartre. Sartre believes that if one does not take responsibility for his act and shift responsibility for his act to others, he would be acting immorally. However, the question that arises is whether taking responsibility of own actions is enough. In other words, is someone only morally

accountable for not taking responsibility for his action or is he also accountable for the choice that he makes? What someone has done is always relevant to moral accountability. Detmer focuses on this issue. Detmer argues that accountability or responsibility would be meaningless if we did not determine whether a choice is good or bad. According to Detmer, whether a choice is good or bad can only be determined by objective value. He explains that when Sartre blames Nazis, he presumes objective value and believes that the Nazis are responsible for their worst choice (Detmer, 1988, pp. 170-172). However, we see that Sartre also declares that our choices are absurd, as there is no reason that can justify choices as either right or wrong. If choices are absurd, how can responsibility be meaningful? This shows how Sartre's conception of freedom involves serious moral implications.

To explore the moral implications of Sartre's conception of freedom, Detmer identifies an ambiguity. On the one hand, Sartre believes that freedom is the highest value because it allows humans to make their own values. This position presumes that choices are prior to values. On the other hand, Sartre also explicates that freedom is the highest value because it is necessary to improve human life. Detmer points out that this statement contradicts Sartre's earlier statement. Here choices are not prior to values, but rather they are determined by such values that improve human life. According to Detmer, Sartre's earlier statement suggests that freedom is the highest value in the subjective sense because here choices of individuals are prior to external values. In contrast, Sartre's latter statement suggests that freedom is the highest value in an objective sense because here external values are prior to choices (Detmer, 1988, p. 203). Detmer contends that freedom can only be considered the highest value if we understand how it is necessary for humans. We must require freedom for the fulfilment of our empirical desires, goals, and other needs. What Detmer believes is that some basic or essential human needs are valuable and that in order to fulfil these needs, we need to have freedom. Freedom is the highest value because without it human necessities cannot be achieved.

According to Detmer, freedom is a substantial and non-vague value because it is to improve the essential human needs or the "universal human condition". In his latter position, Sartre seems to accept the idea of the "universal human condition". Here Sartre considers "values" that improve the "universal human condition" and assumes these values precede human choices (Detmer, 1988, p. 181). However, as we have seen, Sartre also believes that human choices are prior to values. There are no external conditions that can dictate or bind humans to choose a specific value. Humans are absolutely free to make their own values. If

that is correct, everyone will invent his own moral principles or ends and no one will admire other's principles. To admire others' principles we must admire others' freedom. Detmer identifies that Sartre is intuitively inclined to admire the freedom of others (Detmer, 1988, p. 186). However, in principle, we cannot admire others' freedom unless we set a limit of freedom. We cannot allow others to have absolute freedom. To set a limit, some agreed or objective principles must be set. As we have seen earlier, there is no absolute limit for Sartre. Hence, when we set a limit, we set it for a practical purpose. There is no absolute or rational limit because human consciousness cannot accept a limit in an absolute sense. Humans are always capable of denying or negating it. There is no limit for humans because there is no solid reason or ground that can dictate consciousness to not deny something.

We have seen how Sartre argues that negation is always possible for human consciousness. One can deny any proposed universal principle as a "being for itself". Sartre's notion of freedom is entirely based upon his understanding of the ontology of humans. For him, the ontological structure of humans makes them radically free. It is better explained by Braddock who argues that man is radically free not because of the reason that he is not created by God or because he faces no constraints in the world. Man is free because he has the capacity to interpret himself and the world where he is thrown (Daigle, 2006, p. 92). According to Braddock, there is always a gap between facts of the world and the meaning we give to those facts. He is absolutely free to give meaning or interpret facts. Similarly, he is also free to deny or accept any proposed meanings. Humans can interpret facts and choose what suits them. For humans, no fact of the universe and proposed principle has an explicit sense or meaning (Daigle, 2006, p. 98). Humans are always responsible for making choices based on their interpretation. In this sense, man is absolutely responsible and absolutely free. Braddock argues that even written commands of God are open to interpretation and the believer is free to interpret it. Believers are free to act upon God's command by their understanding and radical freedom. Radical freedom is because of the existential structure that man. It allows humans to negate any interpretation or meaning of facts. Human consciousness is not determined by any absolute nature or law that can dictate a particular choice (Daigle, 2006, pp. 99-100). It is absolutely free to negate any meaning and any interpretation.

Conclusion

By examining Sartre's concept of human freedom and its apparent ambiguities, we can conclude that the primary concern of Sartre's apprehension of

human freedom is not to focus on the constraints that limit human freedom. It is to decipher the ontological structure of man. Sartre firmly believes that the ontological structure of man makes him solely responsible for giving meaning and interpreting the world and himself. In this sense, man is free to choose. According to Sartre's inquiry into the ontology of man, though man is born in certain circumstances and is subject to various constraints, his existence is not solely determined by those circumstances or facticity alone. His existence is not merely the sum of his facts of life. Instead, his existence is a continuous resistance against facts of life or "facticity". We can conclude that there are two main ideas upon which Sartre's concept of absolute freedom rests. First, he believes that human consciousness is not determined by any absolute nature or law. In other words, human consciousness has no predetermined essence. It is "nothingness" in this sense. This means that humans are absolutely free to impose their own meaning upon the facts. Humans are free to redefine the world and themselves. The second idea is that the possibility of human freedom is related to the ontological structure of the "men-world relation". For Sartre, there is a "gape" in the totality of being that provides an ontological ground for negation. This means that humans are free to negate the robustness of the world. It can be said that humans fill the "gaps" by interpreting the facts of the world. Humans are always responsible for choosing based on their interpretation. That is what Sartre means by humans are absolutely free.

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