



# Sartre's Human Freedom and its political consciousness

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## Abstract

Jean-Paul Sartre was a French philosopher and political activist who raised the problem of human existence through the model of critique to claim that humanity is being monitored and motivated by others to fulfil its goals. He had critiqued the model of capitalism and considered them bourgeois and destructive for social life. He believed that man must be free and should allow choosing his boundary of freedom by his own will not by the influence of state and others. In this paper, I will try to engage with the academic scholarships of Sartre while arguing for the freedom of man by critiquing the model of bourgeois state, capitalism, illegal occupation and violence of the state to control the masses by establishing the foreign colonies in foreign territory like French colonies in Algeria. I will also try to establish the relationship between human freedom and human choice through the writings of Sartre to claim that man is responsible for what he chooses for himself, which can lead the man towards both directions whether to choose freedom or to be the voice of other.

Keywords: Human existence, Capitalism, Bourgeois, Illegal occupation, Violence, Foreign colonies.

## Introduction

Jean-Paul-Sartre is being considered as one of the main pillars in the philosophy of existentialism and phenomenology. His contribution in the field of philosophy is being considered very productive to raise the notion of freedom with firm determination for the post-colonial period along with the critical approach for the cause of individual freedom and state suppression. Sartre's philosophy can be understood by his book "*Being and Nothingness*" in which he had raised many

core issues like social philosophy and free will. He had criticised very openly government policies and advocated that people should participate in the practice of political movement to practice the notion of resistance against the state policies. His notion of resistance wants people to enjoy the voice of unity with an expression of morality in actions to enjoy the real freedom that is to be practised only in the process of resistance not before or after the war. He criticised the policies of German occupation very strongly by framing the intellectual engagement towards political Marxism as a solution but he officially did not join the Communist Party. Sartre believed that the Soviet Union was basically a model of a revolutionary state which works only for the cause of humanity and sovereignty. His notion was that the state can be claimed to fail if it did not meet the ideals of social betterment and uplift of ideas. In the late 1940s, Sartre compares French nationality with provincial identity and in 1949 essay called for a “United States of Europe”.<sup>1</sup> In the 1949 edition of the journal *Politique étrangère*, an essay was written by Sartre in that journal where he wrote:

If we want French civilization to survive, it must be fitted into the framework of a great European civilization. Why? I have said that civilization is the reflection of a shared situation. In Italy, in France, in Benelux, in Sweden, in Norway, in Germany, in Greece, in Austria, everywhere we find the same problems and the same dangers... But this cultural polity has prospects only as elements of a policy that defends Europe's cultural autonomy vis-à-vis America and the Soviet Union, but also its political and economic autonomy, to make Europe a single force between the blocs, not a third bloc, but an autonomous force which will refuse to allow itself to be torn into shreds between American optimism and Russia's scientific world.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bondy, François. “Jean-Paul Sartre and Politics.” *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1967, pp. 26,29., doi:10.1177/002200946700200204.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pp.29-30.

National liberation Front (FLN) is a nationalist political party in Algeria. It plays an important role during the time Algerian War; the FLN successfully played its role for the legal and political rights of Algerian state at the times of French colonisation in Algeria.

Manifesto of the 121 was an open letter signed by 121 intellectuals and published on 6<sup>th</sup> Sep 1960 in the magazine *Verite-Liberte*. It called on the French government, and then headed by the Gaullist Michel Debre, and public opinion to recognise the Algerian war as a legitimate struggle of independence.

Organisation Armee Secrete (OAS) was a far-right French dissident paramilitary organisation during the time of Algerian War. The OAS carried out terrorist attacks, including bombing and assassinations in an attempt to prevent Algeria's independence from the French rule.

Sartre was very critical to both the power blocs and stated that we are suffering because of the American and Soviet bloc. The scientific temperaments of both blocs have made us dependent on their mercy because there is no other bloc that can claim us autonomous and free from bloc identity. He has also commented on the status of the Korean War and has written that “I fully believe on the status of the South Korean feudalists and the American imperialists that they have promoted the war and have no doubt about it. But I do not doubt that it was begun by the North Koreans.”<sup>3</sup> His dedication towards the freedom and autonomy of the state motivates him to take an active participation role in the anti-colonialist movement of Algeria against French rule. He criticises the French occupational administration strongly over its use of heinous torture and concentration camps in Algeria. His criticism shook the roots of French colonisation when he became the strong and eminent ally of the National Liberation Front (FLN) during the Algerian War. He was also one of the signatories of the Manifesto of the 121, which declares him an open enemy of the French colonisation in Algeria. Sartre has been warned and targeted many times by the French Organisation Armee Secrete (OAS) for its support towards the independence of Algeria which results in him escaping from two bomb attacks in the times of early 1960s.<sup>4</sup>

## Discussion

Sartre stated that the legacy of authenticity and individuality have to be earned only not learned. He believes that we need to experience the stage of “death consciousness” to wake up ourselves for knowing what really important is. The authenticity in our lives is only that we can experience life lively, it is not a second source like literature to have knowledge of it.<sup>5</sup> He defines death as the final end of life as a being because we became permanently the object for the outside world because we reach the final end which is death.<sup>6</sup> He was much inspired by the phenomenology of Franz Adler because Alder had said that, “Man chooses what he did in his life and defines himself by his actions. His way of action defines him that he is on the right way under the situation not only for the one who is acting but also for others who are in the same situation.” Which motivates one to claim that, Man can nothing unless he has first understood that he must count on no one but himself; that he is alone, abandoned on earth in the midst of his infinite responsibilities, without help with no other aim than the one he sets himself, with no other destiny than the one he forges for himself on this earth.<sup>7</sup> By all this one can define its process of existence that man is responsible for his actions because he chooses his division of life by itself to claim his position practically in society. Sartre believes that we are free

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, pp. 34.

<sup>4</sup> Mészáros István. *The Work of Sartre: Search for Freedom and the Challenge of History*. Monthly Review Press, 2012, pp. 16.

<sup>5</sup> Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness*. 1943, pp. 246.

<sup>6</sup> Gordon Hayim. *Dictionary of Existentialism*. Greenwood Press, 1999, pp. 105.

<sup>7</sup> Adler, Franz. “The Social Thought of Jean-Paul Sartre.” *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 55, no. 3, 1949, pp. 284–294., doi:10.1086/220538.

to choose for us and we become who we are through freedom of choice and moral responsibility, his belief is that we are born into existence that has no divine purpose; life is often absurd or horrible and the only true values are the ones we create for ourselves.

### Conclusion

This all discussion makes us realise that Sartre believes that we should be very critical and challenging to accept the notion of others because whatever comes to us is always a notion of others, to accept that is to accept the notion of others that makes us the voice of others. The others always think about their own existence, they will never allow the notion of opposition to be the voice of critique so it is our life and we are the ones to decide our destiny and meaning of life for ourselves. He believes that before our birth we were nothing as we have no life, it is up to us to give it a meaning, otherwise, the value is nothing else but the meaning that we choose.

