

## Obligation and Free Will: A Philosophical Study

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### **ABSTRACT**

Every person wants to keep the society healthy and for keeping the society healthy, various rules and regulations are necessary. But when the disciplinarian becomes a consumer rather than a protector, then people need freedom. They want to create a healthy society through free choice. Philosopher Jean Paul Sartre said in his existential philosophy about freedom that there are two types of being, being-in-itself and being-for-itself. Where being-in-itself is an entity that has no free choice, that cannot voluntarily change. Such as brick, wood, sand, stone etc. entities cannot change by themselves. But he admits another kind of being, which is being-for-itself or human being. By the free choice of human being can change themselves. By their free choice they can avoid immoral acts and does moral acts. One can choose what is universally good by avoiding what is universally evil. As a result of which a universally peaceful society can be developed. But the crucial question is whether people can choose freely? Have people choice anything freely? We observe that the freedom of one man in society is always limited to the tip of another man's nose. That is, people are bound by various chains as economic, social, political, religious, legal, etc. That is, he must choose within the limits. So, can people be truly free? Or can people be truly free to choose something? But in Sartre's existential philosophy, we notice that people are free by nature. That is, people always make free choices in one way or another or people must make some kind of independent choice every moment. For example, when my mother asks me to eat something, if I obey my mother and eat the food, then it is my own choice, and even if I do not take the food because I am not so hungry, it is also my free choice. That is, people make independent choices in every case or they must make independent choices. That is why he says that people are condemned to freedom. That is, people are forced to choose freely here. But the question: if people are forced to make free choices, is it real freedom? Such issues will be discussed critically in the said article. Again, an attempt will be made to assess such problems through Kant's concept of morality.

### **ABSTRAK**

Setiap orang ingin menjaga masyarakatnya tetap sehat dan untuk menjaga masyarakatnya tetap sehat, berbagai aturan dan regulasi diperlukan. Namun, ketika pendisiplin menjadi konsumen alih-alih pelindung, maka orang-orang membutuhkan kebebasan. Mereka ingin menciptakan masyarakat yang sehat melalui pilihan bebas. Filsuf Jean Paul Sartre mengatakan dalam filsafat eksistensialnya tentang kebebasan bahwa ada dua jenis keberadaan, keberadaan-dalam-dirinya sendiri dan keberadaan-untuk-dirinya sendiri. Di mana keberadaan-dalam-dirinya sendiri adalah entitas yang tidak memiliki pilihan bebas, yang tidak dapat berubah secara sukarela. Seperti batu bata, kayu, pasir, batu, dll. entitas tidak dapat berubah dengan sendirinya. Namun, ia mengakui jenis keberadaan lain, yaitu keberadaan-untuk-dirinya sendiri atau manusia. Dengan pilihan bebas manusia dapat mengubah diri mereka sendiri. Dengan pilihan bebas mereka, mereka dapat menghindari tindakan tidak

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bermoral dan melakukan tindakan moral. Seseorang dapat memilih apa yang baik secara universal dengan menghindari apa yang jahat secara universal. Sebagai hasilnya, masyarakat yang damai secara universal dapat dikembangkan. Namun, pertanyaan krusialnya adalah apakah orang dapat memilih dengan bebas? Apakah orang memilih sesuatu dengan bebas? Kita mengamati bahwa kebebasan seseorang dalam masyarakat selalu terbatas pada ujung hidung orang lain. Artinya, orang-orang terikat oleh berbagai rantai seperti ekonomi, sosial, politik, agama, hukum, dan lain-lain. Artinya, ia harus memilih dalam batasan-batasan tersebut. Jadi, dapatkah orang benar-benar bebas? Atau dapatkah orang benar-benar bebas untuk memilih sesuatu? Namun dalam filsafat eksistensial Sartre, kita melihat bahwa manusia pada hakikatnya bebas. Artinya, orang selalu membuat pilihan bebas dengan satu atau lain cara atau orang harus membuat semacam pilihan independen setiap saat. Misalnya, ketika ibu saya meminta saya untuk makan sesuatu, jika saya menuruti ibu saya dan memakan makanan itu, maka itu adalah pilihan saya sendiri, dan bahkan jika saya tidak mengambil makanan itu karena saya tidak begitu lapar, itu juga merupakan pilihan bebas saya. Artinya, orang membuat pilihan independen dalam setiap kasus atau mereka harus membuat pilihan independen. Itulah sebabnya ia mengatakan bahwa orang-orang dikutuk untuk bebas. Artinya, orang dipaksa untuk memilih dengan bebas di sini. Namun pertanyaannya: jika orang dipaksa untuk membuat pilihan bebas, apakah itu kebebasan yang sesungguhnya? Isu-isu seperti itu akan dibahas secara kritis dalam artikel tersebut. Sekali lagi, upaya akan dilakukan untuk menilai masalah tersebut melalui konsep moralitas Kant.

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## A. INTRODUCTION

Who wants to live without freedom? Who wants to live? Who wears the chains of slavery in foot? Who wants to wear?(Bandyopadhyay 74)

Based on the poet Rangalal Bandyopadhyay's writings, it can be said that we do not want to live subjugated in any aspect of life. That is why may be the freedom fighters freed the subjugation of India by ending almost 200 years of misrule by the British through their self-sacrifice. However, I do not want to discuss history of freedom in this article. Here the researcher will discuss the philosophical interpretation and analysis of the concept of freedom. Independence generally means not being subject to others. However, the concept of freedom has many meanings. It has been used in different disciplines (such as philosophy, political science, sociology etc.). The concept of freedom has derived from the Latin word 'liber' and the English word 'freedom'. The Latin word liber means 'free'. From which the English word 'liberty' is derived (Kienpointner, 2024). The meaning of the English word 'freedom' is also referred to the same sense. As a result, many thinkers use 'liberty' and 'freedom' as synonymous word. However, there are differences of opinion among many philosophers and political thinkers about the concept of freedom. For example, according to D. D. Raphael freedom is the absence of control or restriction or coercion (Raphael, 1990). But if this is the meaning of freedom, society will become more chaotic.

Because when the freedom of the individual does not think about the interests of others, it is not freedom but it is better to call it arbitrariness. In this regard T. H. Green says that freedom is the "positive power of doing or enjoying something worth doing or enjoying, and that, too, something that we do or enjoy in common with others"(Laski, 2000). Again, Existentialist philosopher Jean Paul Sartre said that, freedom is free choice. That is, freedom is to choose the right option (Sartre & Barnes, 1953).

But the question is, are we free? Can people live fully independent? Can people make free choices in every aspect of life? In that case my answer would be, no. Human beings are subordinate to someone in every aspect of life, in social, political, religious, etc. People are always dependent on someone in some way or the other. That is why Rousseau may be able to say that "man was born free, and everywhere he is in chains (Rousseau & Dunn, 2002)." That means, man is born free but in every aspect of life he must spend his life dependent on someone or the other. So, it is inevitable that we are subjugated in every respect. But we see the exact opposite in the Existential philosophy of Sartre. According to him, "man being condemned to be free (Sartre & Barnes, 1953)." Means, people are bound to freedom. That means, the freedom of humans is like a kind of punishment. That is, people are forced to be independent. In other words, even if the people want to make free choice, they can make free choices even if they do not want to. For example, when a married girl expresses a desire to go to a movie, it is her free choice. And if the guardian of her father-in-law's house forbids her from going to see the movie, then if she disobeys their prohibition and goes to see that movie, it is her free choice, and if she obeys their words and does not go to see the movie, then it is also her free choice. Again, if she wants to go but the people of her father-in-law's house detain her, then if she is forced to stay in her father-in-law's house, it is her free choice because she finally accepted the situation. In other words, her free choice thereby adapted to the subjugated situation. In other words, that is also her independent choice.

But the question: can such freedom be called real freedom? Because the freedom in which people are forced to make free choices cannot be real freedom. Rather, it is better to call it a subjugated state. So, we need to see whether people can be truly independent? In this article the nature of freedom from the viewpoint of Sartre and Kant will be discussed critically.

## **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative approach (Cypress, 2015) with a philosophical analysis method to examine the concept of freedom and obligation in Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist philosophy and morality according to Immanuel Kant's views. The data used in this study are sourced from literature reviews, including the main texts of Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* and Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*, as well as relevant secondary literature. This study will analyze concepts such as "being-in-itself," "being-for-itself," and "condemned to freedom" in relation to human freedom to make moral choices. A comparative approach is also applied to explore how Sartre and Kant understand the relationship between freedom, morality, and social constraints. The results of the analysis are expected to provide critical insight into the extent to which humans can be said to be truly free in making moral decisions in the context of social life.

## **C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

One of the fundamental concepts of Sartre's existential philosophy is the concept of freedom. Existentialist philosophy talks about the free choice of man. Because two kinds of existential contexts are mentioned in existential philosophy (Akinbode, 2023). One is authentic existence and the other is inauthentic existence (Carter, 2024). Inauthentic existence is that existence where there is no free choice. For example, material things like brick, wood, sand, stone etc. exist but they have no free choice. That is, they cannot become something by their own choice. Again, not

only brick, wood, sand, stone, there are some people who are dependent on others in choosing something in various aspects of life. That is, they make decisions depending on others rather than making decisions by free choice. Who are also called inauthentic (Sartre & Barnes, 1953).

But there are some people in society who want to become something by their free choice. They may not always be what they want to be. In many cases it may be different. But it is still indicative of authentic existence in the sense that there is free choice for the individual. That is the true meaning of the word existence in existential philosophy. In the context of such authentic existence or free choice, the existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre has extensively discussed individual freedom in his existential Philosophy. He divided Being into two parts, one is being-in-itself and the other is being-for-itself (Sartre & Barnes, 1953). Being-in-itself is a being that has no free choice. He cannot become anything by himself. In that sense it can be said that there is no imperfection or void in it. Such as brick, wood, sand, stone, etc. have no independent choice or possibility of becoming anything by themselves. No wood can become a chair table etc by itself or voluntarily. In that sense the wood is said to be full or there is no void in it.

However, being-for-itself is flawed, or they have emptiness in the sense that they always want to become something by their free choice (Sawyer, 2023). They do not always know what they will become or can say for sure what they will become but because of their imperfection they always want to be fulfilled or to become something. Many times, they may not be what they want to be or may be said to fail. Even after that there should be no doubt that it was a free choice in the sense that they might have wanted to be something i.e., they had a free choice but due to various obstacles might not have become that. That is, they failed. But that was an independent choice. Because they decide to be something without being influenced by anyone. For example, a person might think that he wants to climb a mountain and he starts to climb the mountain but after some time he cannot climb the mountain anymore because of his shortness of breath, that is, he fails to climb the mountain. But it goes without saying that he had an independent choice there. That is, both success and failure are indicators of independence.

In this way, Sartre wants to show that in every aspect of life, a person must make some kind of independent choice. That is, human beings are independent beings. That is why he mentioned that, man is condemned to be free. That is, people are imprisoned in freedom. It means he thinks that people's free choice is their own nature. Humans are free by nature. Man, always lives through free choice in some aspect of life. That is, according to Sartre, every human being is independent in his surroundings.

Generally, people are forced to work so many to circumstances or responsibility, where people are rather subordinate (McKeown, 2021). Naturally then questions may arise: how can it be called a free choice? In other words, is this freedom the real freedom? Because the freedom in which people are forced to make free choices cannot be real freedom. Rather, it is better to call it a subjugated state. It is like a pearl in an oyster saying, I am pearl (the Bengali terminology of pearl is free or মুক্ত) free. But, in this case free is only a name. That is not freedom. It is always surrounded by oysters but we call them free (pearl). In the same way, man is bound by various responsibilities, laws of societies but he says, "I am free or I want to be free." That is, not freedom but subjugation. Because when someone remains in captivity, the issue of his release comes. That is, there should be no doubt that people

are subordinate. If someone is free then why can he need to be free again? That is, people are trapped in various chains such as social, political, financial, religious, state etc. Encumbered by various constraints (Alexander, 2024). As a result, he wants to be released. For example, from the perspective of the state, the state is an instrument that always wants to control the citizens of the state under the guise of security. And the state citizen always wants to be free. This is how the conflict between citizens and the state continues. Where citizens do not get full freedom.

Similarly, the society or different social order controls the individual in various ways with the aim of security of the individual (Edgerton, 2022). Similarly, religious sentiments continue to control people in various ways. So, the question: are people free? Or can people always do good actions voluntarily? I think the answer will be no, cannot. That is why people want to be free.

But another question may arise: why do people want to be free? Because, man is free by nature. We can see in Kant's concept of morality that freedom lies within the individual nature of man. There the free choice of people is given in the title of moral actions. There showed that concept of metaphysics of morals that man is cognitively bound, i.e., they are always bound in various social chains but the nature of man is free in the sense that they can freely choose what they should do or what ought to do. They can understand what they should do in each situation. Although they may not be able to do so in various situations.

That is, it is known as Kant's double aspect theory. Where he wants to show that object as it is, and object known by me. Or in other words self as it is and self-known by me. According to him, the nature of objects is unknown and unknowable (Smith, 1929). Similarly, the self is inherently eternal and free but in actual situations he is always bound or liable. That is, it can be said that epistemologically self is bound by various responsibilities but metaphysically self is free. For example, people may realize that the poor should be helped but may not be able to because of economic crises. On the other hand, if a blind old man is seen crossing the road. The office passenger may think that he should help the person to cross the road. But maybe he must go to the office at a certain time. That is, there he gives up his independent thinking. He becomes subjugated to various social, religious, political, etc. situations. For example, a person may want to help the flood-affected people in an area with some daily necessities. But the political leader of that region may interrupt the work thinking that the person may be trying to be very popular. As a result of which possibility of getting his vote may decrease etc (Whitfield, 2022).

A person may be of good character but not a believer in religious practices. In that case, the bigoted person may prove his inferiority to the people around him by showing his reluctance towards his religious behaviour, etc. People are also bound by external legal controls. For example, one must drive according to the road traffic laws, no one's property can be taken illegally, etc. People are forced to move by such various controls. There is no individual freedom.

Nonetheless, the question is: whether there is a need for such external discipline in human life? If not, the society will become extremely chaotic and the society will move towards destruction. That is why it is said that the freedom of every man is limited to the tip of the nose of another.

However, we also wonder why there is a chaotic situation even under such conditions of law and order. In fact, if people are driven only by external discipline, then in some cases order is created, but in some cases, chaos will be created.

But if man is guided by the discipline of conscience i.e., if his emotions are guided by reason then no chaos will arise. But not all people can be guided by the discipline of conscience or the lack of such good education occurs in various cases, or many people are prone to crime due to genetic reasons. As a result, rule of law becomes necessary in that case. Good education promotes liberal political economy and open society. This is not theoretically important but also important in practice. Malaysia has proven the liberal political economy (Nandy, 2022). Japan also witnessed the good effect of good education which led Japan to ensure good governance and 'knowledge-based economy' (Nandy, 2024).

Consequently, just as a healthy society cannot be formed by external rules alone, man cannot be fully conscientious because he is composed of a combination of emotions and intellect (Dong et al., 2020). For that reason, just as external laws are needed to build a healthy society, so too is the constant effort of people to control their emotions with intelligence (Drigas et al., 2021). That is, people can build a healthy society by being controlled by both external and internal rules. And the main obstacle to the subjugation of man is his emotions. Various immediate desires, wants, etc. which does not allow him to be independent.

But since man can perceive that he is free, or since he can perceive what he ought to do in any given situation, he is naturally free. In other words, man is free by nature or the soul is free by nature but he becomes subordinated in various situations of reality. My opinion for this reason probably Sartre wanted to say that, man is condemned to be free. That is, since man is a free being by nature, he can free himself from subjugation by his own free choice. He can restrain himself from wrongdoing by his free choice and take the right decision. Moreover, since people must make free choices, they should make free choices that are universally good. But the question is whether people can ever choose completely freely in the real world? My answer is no. Because people are interrupted in socio-political, religious, legal, and various cogs. Although people are independent in thought, they are subject to various situations. So, free choice of people should be ideal. Free and fair thinking also precondition of liberal democracy which are maintained by the two significant democracies of the world, the USA and India (Nandy, 2014)

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

The role of free choice in building a healthy society is profound, as it enables individuals to rise above socio-political and religious barriers and make decisions rooted in reason rather than immediate emotions or desires. Although free choice often entails risks and challenges, and emotions frequently hinder individuals from exercising this freedom, it remains essential for achieving moral actions and the highest overall good. Sartre's concept of "bad faith" highlights how individuals often avoid free choice by taking refuge in false beliefs, driven by fear, anxiety, or the comfort of immediate gratification. However, by intellectualizing decisions and prioritizing reason over emotions, individuals can align their choices with universal moral values, contributing to the stability and harmony of society. Despite the conflicts between reason and emotion, the courage to make independent and morally sound choices fosters not only personal fulfillment but also the collective peace and well-being of the community.

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