

PHENOMENOLOGY OF *FREEDOM* AND *RESPONSIBILITY* IN SARTRE'S EXISTENTIALIST ETHICS

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Freedom and responsibility in one way or another were discussed by all exorcists of non-perspective thinking, i.e., existentialists. However, the phenomenological roots of existentialist ethics still did not receive proper academic attention. In this article I explore J. P. Sartre's conception of freedom and responsibility uncovering how phenomenological insights can be subordinated and sometimes guide intentions of existentialism. On the other hand, Sartre's view delivers perfect opportunity to analyse conflation of phenomenological ontology and existentialist ethics. Although Sartre interprets key notions of Husserl and Heidegger primarily in phenomenological manner, the analysis leads away from classical phenomenology and opens up a new outlook at classical ethical dilemmas. Thirdly, the lack of clear ethical claims in phenomenology could be reduced by showing that the ethical potential of phenomenology was partly actualized in existentialism. Besides these primary goals the article opens up a possibility to critically compare the conception of Sartre's phenomenological-existentialist ethics with other ethical and ontological perspectives, i.e., stoicism, Christianity, psychoanalysis, Marxism, Kant and etc.

Keywords: phenomenology, existentialism, freedom, responsibility, Sartre.

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Introduction

As it is well-known, existentialists sketched highly original and attractive for the post-war cultural climate schemes of signification, by which human life and conduct should be viewed. The wide spectrum of creative instruments (first of all, literature), radically new vocabulary and relevant for the post-war society ideas determined that other philosophical innovations of the time were overshadowed by the long shadow of existentialism. This shadow also covered up the philosophical revolution initiated by Edmund Husserl, i.e., phenomenology.

Though rigorous forms of phenomenology differ from existentialist intentions, Herbert

Spiegelberg lists a great number of parallels between these two philosophical standpoints: first of all, it is mistaken to think that phenomenology rejects non-theoretical, namely on emotions based experience and existentialism advocates "irrational man". Secondly, *Existenz* or *Dasein* of existentialism as the structure of being may be described *qua* phenomenon like any other reduced phenomenon. Thirdly, it is oversimplification to say that existentialism deals only with concrete individuals; on the other hand, it is necessary to remember, that the one that survives phenomenological reduction has the character of absolute existence.

Moreover, Heidegger's famous pronouncement that "essence of *Dasein* is existence" grants to human the existence of an essence which is the goal of phenomenological *Wesenseinsicht* and so on. Despite these and other similarities Spiegelberg underlies (contrary to the popular opinion that existentialism is dependent but also finalizes phenomenology) that phenomenology and existentialism are not only compatible and mutually interrelated but also "essentially independent enterprises" (Spiegelberg 1960: 70).

Yet differently from its main continental ancestor – phenomenology, philosophy of existentialism was famous for the ethical issues and the deconstruction of traditionally seen moral dilemmas. On the other hand, existentialist ethics never executed the normative character which was very common for other philosophical ethics.

One of the prominent engineers of existentialism and of all intellectual climate of post-war Europe, Jean Paul Sartre, dedicated much of his intellectual efforts to the problems traditionally situated under the title "ethics". First of all, these were the questions of freedom and responsibility.

Although these notions remain at the core of every philosophy of morality, Sartre succeeded to make, I would say, revolutionary (having in mind the connotations of philosophical revolution, considering other philosophical schools and "common sense" everyday morality) approach. This radically new outlook at the problems traditionally situated in the field of ethics was based and enabled by the use of phenomenological method which Sartre elaborated one of the first in French philosophy¹.

Applying the ideas of phenomenology existentialists shifted the focus of attention from

phenomenology as strict science (defined as having a special access to its own presuppositions) to the crucial question for the existential philosophy – "what does it mean to be a person and what is its peculiar way of being?". This eventually turned intellectuals from traditional epistemological and ontological concerns to the life world (*Lebenswelt*) and lived experience (*Erlebnis*), which means a certain correction of central phenomenological doctrines such as *epoche* or *transcendental ego*.

According to Ricoeur, existential phenomenology represented "the strictest disagreement with the Platonic conversion of the here-below to the beyond" (Ricoeur 2001: 293). Revolution of perspectivism" (launched by Nietzsche and Kierkegaard) found its mightiest expression in existential thinking, proponents of which declared that consciousness can no longer be defined as passive storage of sensual data, but must be approached as active *noema* (sense giving horizon).

The problem of freedom best of all reveals how descriptive method (performed by phenomenology) is subordinated to existential intentions. The reason for the issue of freedom to become a leading theme of existential thinking was that despite its anti-metaphysical strive, most of existentialists sketched one or another ontology, and it is clear enough that freedom finally determines the ontological status of human being.

Following phenomenology existentialists approached the process of perception as the happening of signification and affirmed that neither psychological nor physiological vocabulary could not account for the problems of the owned body, intersubjectivity and all other aspects of "being in the world". In short, phenomenology encouraged all premises for philosophy "from the first person perspective" to appear. This eventually led to the rethinking of the crucial epistemological, ontological and ethical themes and this task at the very start was scrupulously undertaken by the French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre.

¹ David Carr starts his introduction to the volume of Ricoeur's works on Husserl with these words: "It is surely one of the most curious features of twentieth-century intellectual life in Europe that at the very moment when the deep and lasting enmity between France and Germany reached its most destructive point, the best young French philosophers were turning their backs on their own intellectual forebears and seeking inspiration in German thought (Ricoeur 2007: xi).

Sartre's Approach to Consciousness

Though the credits for subordinating phenomenology to the needs of existential philosophy are usually attributed to Heidegger, I suggest that Sartre purely preserved the balance of phenomenological and existentialist insights while uniting the project of phenomenological ontology with ethics (in *L'Être et le Néant* (1943), where his phenomenology flourishes) which was not done by Heidegger (although he raised some ethical issues, they were strictly subordinated to the question of authenticity, for example, critique of "vulgar" conscience (Heidegger 1992: § 59).

The ideas of Sartre were popular not only due to the intellectual weight or his extravagant lifestyle, but also for the challenging character. In a strongly individualized world it is rather strange and uncomfortable to hear such exclamations as "condemnation to freedom", or "responsibility for the whole world". But it is very important to note that this challenging character usually shadows its roots: the fact that Sartre views freedom and responsibility first and most of all from the phenomenological and not from the ethical (in traditional and everyday sense) point of view. Therefore, the focus of attention here shifts from various intellectual and automatic explanations of human conduct to the very lifeblood of the self – structures of consciousness.

Although close friend Simone de Beauvoir thought that Sartre wastes his writer's talent in philosophical discourse, his *L'Être et le Néant* (*Being and Nothingness* 1943) is regarded as one of the corner stones of existentialist philosophy in general and ethics in particular. As every great text of philosophy it had a rich intellectual context.

To begin with, Sartre borrowed from Husserl the idea that consciousness is not a natural object or a thing. From Heidegger came the situatedness of consciousness and from Hegel the dialectics of consciousness and being. To this

he added the unavoidable conflation of ethics with ontology (Heidegger). But what was really important that in the background of these influences a Husserlian notion of intentionality stood.

However, from the very beginning Sartre chose his own approach to new methodologies and used the notion of intentionality against the ideas of Husserl himself; therefore, the first step of Sartre's phenomenological project was a well-known negation of Husserlian "transcendental ego" as the collection of remains of any substantive features of consciousness². What is left after Sartre's deconstruction is the void which is more or less fulfilled by the free projects of the subject.

In Sartre's philosophy of consciousness analysis of freedom unites existential with ontological. First of all, Sartre phenomenologically captures experiences, which uncover freedom as something negative, absent, distanced, as the failure of something constant, finished. To support his picture of unstable (stream of consciousness) subject, Sartre lends from Heidegger the idea of nothingness. But when Heidegger opposes notions of being and nothingness Sartre conflates them. In this sense Sartre opposes Heidegger's analytic of existence (*analytique existentielle*) to his existential analysis (*analyse existentielle*).

Being does not disclose itself temporary, as Heidegger, but manifests itself in dialectical encounter where being for itself (*l'être-pour-soi*) encounters being in-itself (*l'être-en-soi*). First

² Famous Lithuanian phenomenologist Algis Mickunas clearly defines the essence of Sartre's critique of Husserl's conception of the ego: "According to Husserl, ego is transcendental and never can be taken to brackets. For Sartre, ego is not identical to consciousness. Rather ego is something that ego did from out of itself in the past. Sartre suggests a metaphor of the way for an ego as the sum of all concentered possibilities. This lets Sartre paradoxically state that "the nature of consciousness is to be something that it is not, and not be something, which it is" (Mickunas, A.; Stewart, D. 1994: 95).

term stands for consciousness, second designates things. Most discussions in traditional ethics unfortunately were situated in the second field (for example, traditional problem of freedom versus determinism), whereas freedom is possible only because of the first. Hence Sartre one more time (after Copernicus, Kant and others) reversed usual order of things in a favour of the subject.

When does this stream of intentional process (self) most radically break? When the Other comes up on stage (park). Though Sartre does not mention it, but there are not so innocent cases of the appearance of the other which causes mental disorders as in case of violence. Here and in Sartre's thought I am staggered because of the very possibility to become and object-thing for another subject (this understanding is disturbing and usually is repressed as every authentic insight). This also means that the reality is for a moment taken from me (victims of violence or accident often reports about the "out of body" experience, when they were approaching situation from the side. The consequence of this is that I am losing my subject position, this means the whole of the world, and this means freedom.

As I cannot exist in a pure manner at the same time with this disintegration (of my-self as my-world) the other process of constitution is forged – the Other constitutes my-self as "the Fall", which means "my-word" where I am destined to compete for my subjectivity (social, sexual and etc.). This is how we can understand the Sartre's exclamation which for others can look as sophisticated madness, that we are condemned to freedom. If the Other shows itself as the threat for my subjectivity, my own freedom appears to be not the gift or source of joy but an instrument for performance an impossible task – to overcome the distance between me, myself, my world and the other.

According to Sartre, the essential feature of consciousness is the apprehension of situation negatively, i.e. the ability to understand not

only what things are, but also what they are not (such structures of consciousness as fantasy or memory). Secondly, in every perception I apprehend my self, thought pre-reflectively. This double awareness distinguishes me from my perceptions what in turn is the basic feature of consciousness.

This distance between me and the world enables to think freely: it needs to be fulfilled and the subject does it by one or another project of thought or action. The amount of distance is equal to the degree of freedom. This means, that for Sartre, consciousness and freedom in some sense are identical.

Staying conscious means to put the world into the perspective of a potential agent. There is no pure consciousness apart from action. Contrary to the cartesian subject Sartre's self finds itself in experience and not vice versa. Therefore, all perceptions in one or another way are connected to actions and the degree of real (musical instrument in most individual cases except great hunger would be more real than spoon). World manifests itself as the space for our action, but, as I already mentioned, it resists our plans.

World sometimes raises impossible obstacles, but we cannot affirm that there is something impossible for us and this launches various strategies of consciousness. In order to avoid threat (sense of helplessness) we can change the world by picking various modes of consciousness as fantasy, memory, affection. This also means that there is no essential distinction between emotion and action. For example, if we are happy it seems that everything is possible for us in the world. This is not real but "magical" power as the fear of something that "scientifically" could not harm us (spider, facial expression), because we simply lose our attachment to common explanation of things and this void is immediately fulfilled by primitive magical thinking. Mind cannot detect freedom in reality because it is not factual, rather it is a *value* or even very process of valuing.

Phenomenology and Ontology of Freedom

Freedom isn't something that I could observe as the "outside" fact; on the other hand, the illusion of the independent existence of this "outside" forces to think about freedom in causal categories. In the same fashion free will must not be viewed as the opposition of determinism, it is found on the other dimension – transcendental realm.

Intellectual climate of contemporary society confirms Sartre's insistence that "common sense", everyday understanding of freedom is related to the inability to form the situation (life) according to one's own plans (also this means the failure to perform yourself). Social roles, success contingencies, even desires and habits remind us that life is a story of failure and tiny results can be seen only after years of hard work. In the context of personal and general history human being does not look like a master of his own destiny.

Beyond their instrumental functions ("essences") things are just absurd, but even in instrumental perspective they express the coefficient of the resistance to our projects, purposes. But inertia of reality is not enough to solve the problem of free will, first of all, because of the fundamental participation of oneself in the world. Because of *our own* projects things begin to resist and manifest particular "coefficient of resistance". We clearly need example here. The stone "in itself" is neutral, but stone becomes an obstacle only when I run or try to use it for climbing. This proves that things (or reality in its totality) exist somewhere "there" and become real only when they are illuminated by our projects (existential scenarios). The obstacles appear only when this constituted reality does not bend over our projects.

Our projects of freedom disclose the world as the set of equipment (*paraphernalia*). Stone is nothing without the technique of climbing, hammer without nails and planks and etc.; moreover, things not only presuppose other

things and actions, but also me as acting-in-the-world. Therefore, although it seems as a stone resists me, it is my freedom that constitutes the field, techniques and goals according to which things manifest themselves as obstacles. Even if the resistance of stone destroys my project (I fail to climb), it is my freedom that already made this stone potentially suitable for climbing and to set the limits which finally faced.

If we step from this phenomenological analysis of sense giving structures to the ethical problematic we can say that for Sartre the success of one or another project is not the measure of freedom. This idea strongly opposes deeply rooted everyday conviction that freedom is inseparable from the skills to reach raised goals.

Sartre is interested only in the autonomy in decision. Because the decision usually is connected with action, the sense of realization appears (as the feeling of freedom in "ordinary" sense). But for Sartre accomplishing a goal (or fulfilling desire) does not coincide with freedom – prisoner clearly is not free when he *desires* to escape prison, he is not free even not to want to escape, he usually fails to escape, but he is always free to try to escape. That is why decision must be separated from desire, which is fulfilled rather rarely, when decision is the ability to project and understand the value of a project while acting.

Further Sartre in his conception of freedom does not separate decision from action, and this resolves another problematic distinction of traditional ethics, i.e. distinction between intention and action. Intention cannot be separated from action as thought from the language which expresses it. Similarly as words inform us about thoughts, actions tell us about intentions. This perfectly fits with another famous exclamation made by Sartre, that existence (action) precedes essence (intention), and implies that a man is not (as Christians thought) a "super-intention".

Having said that freedom sketches world, which in turn determines the freedoms itself, it is clear that here ontology is at hand. Freedom

presupposes the world as *paraphernalia*. If freedom would not create obstacles it would mean the ontological priority of being-in-itself against being-for itself. And this is not true from the phenomenological point of view. Facticity, situatedness is a common product of the contingent being-in-itself and freedom. Freedom is the quest of escaping contingency in which freedom at first resided as the possibility of escape. Stone and other objects appear as something only in particular project and all projects are united under the primordial "Project" called by existentialists being-in-the-world (which you can choose freely as a project, or escape remaining inauthentic).

Hence objects, events, persons and etc. are distilled from primordially unschematized "world" due to the projects initiated by my freedom. On the other hand, my freedom cannot decide that someone that in principle can be utilized will be utilized. This is a part of nature's brutal way of being. But again, stone can resist our search for instrumental value only due to the fact that earlier our freedom brought it to the situation whose main theme is "utilization of the stone". For a traveler whose project consists of aesthetic utilization of landscape, rocks will disclose itself not as more or less suitable for climbing, but as pretty, fearfully ugly or aesthetically indifferent (not disclosed).

The givenness of being-in-itself is manifested only in the project of freedom. But the resistance is not some kind of *noumenal* feature of a being itself, but only indication of the inexpressible. Only freedom creates and shows the world, in which I can detect unbridgeable goals. And there is no neither *a priori* nor statics in this dialectics between freedom and givenness – what serves as an obstacle for me could be the assistance for the other. There is no obstacle or the assistance in the absolute sense and the coefficient of resistance or assistance of things is strictly correlated with the value that I attribute to my project of freedom. In this respect, word as a spectrum of resistance coefficient uncovers for me how exactly I qualify one or another

project or (in rare *satori* cases) the whole of my freedom (being). This means that the information about the world is about me and vice versa. For example, my inability to climb the mountains can reveal the implemented project "carrier of a scientist". I freely choose my body when after a long time is spent to build the image and lifestyle of a scientist I cannot lift weights or climb mountains³.

Now it is clear that freedom is not an object of perception or even reflection. It happens suddenly when I realise that I *participate* in a struggle with the thing-world which is massive (*massif*). This struggle is tragic (this is perfectly uncovered by Greek tragedy) but also revelatory, because it provokes the possibility of freedom.

The brutality of a thing-world consists in inertia, ipseity, essence and function quality as opposed to human condition. After this encounter with things (masterfully depicted in *La Nausee* (1938)) the consciousness of freedom is awoken. Things are not threatening until they appear as a part of equipment (*paraphernalia*) and propose itself in instrumental fashion. But the nausea emerges when I realise the sheer existence of things. What strikes here is that Sartre in opposition to every subjectivism phenomenologically shows that the nausea is not inside protagonist Antoine Roquentin but around him. Popular interpretation of Roquentin's feelings says that the awareness of the condition of things uncovers the same possibility for Roquentin to be treated (existence in absence until someone's objectifying gaze will endow me with the identity of some kind (another social role). But there is something more here.

Existence is unbearable because it is meaningless – this is clear. And this for Sartre can be displayed in such a degree that in the heat of a discussion concerning humanism you can ask yourself "why I took part in this at all"?

³ It is possible and intriguing to extend this Sartre's reasoning by question "if I dedicated myself only to the mental activity, would my body have no features at all?"

But this homelessness is not psychological. It is ontological: nausea rises in the face of the reflection of absolute contingency which is the real absolute, or in Heidegger's language – nausea is pure openness. And then follows the existentialist *satori* – the sense of adventure, as opposite to Nausea: nothing happens in essence, but everything becomes transformed, because what is transformed in the first place is the feeling of existence. Through the darkness of meaninglessness breaks a ray of “me as my-self”. For Sartre this is a sense of adventure without hope of particular events. All alone with his body Roquentin cannot hold on to memories, past slips away and only the present flow remains. Existence is “now” and this is freedom. Existence has no memory and no action, because every action deepens the burden of existence which is already too much.

Sartre's conception of freedom contrasts with rationalist approach. Rationalism starts from ratio, which is givenness and looks for a freedom. It is essential that this project from rationalist point of view is in principle realizable. In existentialist perspective what is given is freedom. Freedom is prior to every thought or action. Therefore, freedom in rationalism is a reflected necessity and in existentialism – matter of a “condemnation”. This sense of condemnation was introduced by Christian thinkers therefore existentialist conception of freedom is closer to the Christian perspective than rationalist view (to prove this we can take a look at the ideas of theistic existentialists like Paul Tillich (1952) or Rudolph Bultmann (1958)).

We can trace this intriguing parallel between Sartre and Christian thinkers even further. Another thing in common is the conflation of freedom with human being as decision making structure. In this sense human being is freedom *per se* (at least potentially for Kierkegaard) and it is not very important what he chooses, but the most important thing is the decision to choose. The decision making determinates the degree of personality and Sartre repeats it after Kierkegaard as he states that freedom is to

choose ones being, not justify (stoics, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel) it.

What differentiates Sartre from Christian anthropology in this freedom debate? The answer lies in perhaps the most famous of Sartre's sayings that “existence precedes essence” which sounds like a real heresy for Christians. From the perspective of Christian apologetics we can say that Adam made a mistake only because we know what would be the choice of a “true Adam” (Leibniz). According to Sartre, such an essence is not chosen but given, or it is chosen but not by Adam, but by God. In this sense Adam's choice is (negatively) preceded by his essence. For Sartre contrary the “essence” of individual is what is chosen and Adam perfectly creates himself for a radically different life and the whole history.

It looks like the phenomenological outlook on individual as the particular stream of intentional acts of consciousness negates Christian morality. According to Sartre, Adam uncovers himself as he is in his project and, from this point of view, his random actual choice is more ultimate than potential essence or conventional morality (remember S. Kierkegaard's interpretation of the Abraham's story (Kierkegaard 2006)). Projecting is the only solidity of personality and it is freedom not essence that is absolute because freedom and not essence pictures the future. Inescapable absolute of freedom brings us to the question of responsibility.

Absolute and Social Responsibility

As I mentioned earlier it is easy to misunderstand Sartre if we overlook phenomenological basis of his existentialism. Hence for freedom and responsibility Sartre firstly reserves a phenomenological not ethical meaning. For the question of responsibility this first of all means the awareness of the *authorship* of all events and objects as acts of consciousness. Responsibility “for the whole world” is possible because the responsible one is the (transcendental) condition of

the world which is. Human consciousness is not a passive receiver of sensual data but discloses itself as an active in every situation (constituting the structures of signification), therefore human being actively participates in every situation which he perceives and by which he creates himself. The awareness of this creative power could be the source for the sense of pride or the deepest threat for subject – disintegration.

Phenomenologically established authorship (or avoidance of it) is the reason why feelings of repent or regret are mistaken. In Sartre's conception no "outer" factors, nothing "alien" determinates my own way of being, type of emotional states⁴ and etc. It looks like here we lose a very useful tool for sorting out moral and non-moral behaviour, namely Kant's distinction between categorical and hypothetical imperatives, because of the deconstruction of the "inner" character of the first or "outer" character of the second. Responsibility ceases to be a burden or reason for resignation. This is the logical outcome of the freedom as Sartre sees it.

What happens to me happens because of me, in me, around me and through me⁵. This scheme is beyond (sceptic) objection or (cartesian) doubt – all that happens is *mine*. Even by the act of faith, when I recognise something supernatural, or by the acts of a lowest hedonism, determined by the instincts, this would remain *mine* decision, ergo, my responsibility. There is nothing that forces me from outside, for example, if I am in the heat of the battle, it is my war, because I can at any moment escape it (possibility of desert or suicide). These ultimate

possibilities, according to Sartre, should consciously accompany every situation and prove that if I am in the situation I chose it⁶. On the other hand, this perspective uncovers most common motives of action: cowardice, conformism and inertia as the elements of phenomenologically uncovered structure of decision making, which leads to major accusation in existentialist ethics – voluntary retreat to anonymity or inauthentic mode of being. The decision is absolute not only in the personal but also in temporal sense – it lasts until the war is over, and the guilt for the war repeats every day in every battle of this war (here we can hear Kierkegaard's similarly reminder about the "everyday" crucifixion of Jesus).

Sartre underlies that his conception of responsibility (I call it "phenomenological") must be strictly dissociated from juridical one. From the perspective of consequentialist ethics it is true that it is not me that launched the war. Though for Sartre, continually participating in war, no matter because of what – fear of death or dishonesty, I become responsible for it. And there is no excuse here. This absence of excuse for Sartre is the fundamental *existentialle*.

On the other hand, the war is *mine* also in the sense, that when I am in a "military" situation, my decisions about myself cannot be separated from the situation. In making a decision I affirm all situations in which I find myself. If my life was a waste of time I am responsible for it equally as I am responsible for the epoch because I affirm it by my existence in it. There is no way to think of me in another epoch without contradiction, because the epoch is necessary for my constitution, it is a part of my dialectical nature, and in this sense I am the news, wars and other "beauties" of contemporary society, or in phenomenological language, I find myself in an experience, rather than cartesian

⁴ For Sartre as phenomenologist there is no need to prove "outer" reality, though uncontrolled nature of emotions is a good argument against Descartes's doubt concerning the existence of the outer reality. Secondly, as we shall see, this fact about emotions or whatsoever does not lead to determinism (see further against this duality).

⁵ This claim also can be approached from the perspective of distinction in traditional ethics between psychological and ethical egoism.

⁶ This greatly reminds me of stoic conception of death as the gift and necessary condition of full-blooded life: life without the possibility of death would be a nightmare.

ego experiences the world. And if because of all this tightness of being-in-the-world I will ask myself in despair whether I am responsible for my responsibility, I have an intellectual duty to remember that I am thrown into the world as active, constantly making choices, never finished project, therefore even facing inability to negate responsibility I remain responsible for the desire to avoid responsibility.

Passive being in the world (Schopenhauer), apathy (stoics) and even suicide is choosing oneself or more specifically – elaborating the way of being in the world. Absoluteness of freedom and responsibility culminates in awareness that my facticity (for example, birth) cannot be grasped directly, but only projectively reconstructed by narration. If I reject my life, by this I affirm my birth as unsatisfactory way of being. According to Sartre, deep almost gnostic knowledge of this conditions is the expression of absolute freedom, that means being without excuse or regret, which is the source of various mental disorders and sociopathy.

In contrast to Heidegger, Sartre finally turned to a social responsibility. It was clear for him, that science does not throw light on society and history and freedom becomes individual decision determining how the individual will be engaged in the world.

The existence of the “outer” world as society, although for Sartre it is not a problem as phenomenologist, interestingly enough proves its existence at the times of great crisis (World war or Economic crisis) when life for individuals could appear meaningless – i.e., hostile to individual freedom. Then death becomes an objective embodiment of the emptiness of life and seems to indicate a harsh victory of the species over definite individual.

This shows how individual personality and individual consciousness are by no doubt social creations. Every step of individual growth is linked to those around. The individual and society can move hand in hand, though usually it is not going so smoothly. The greater understanding and fellow-feeling of a person with other

human beings, the richer is the content of his individual personality and society as well. For this it is crucial “to find organic links between individual happiness and the life of the species” (Finkelstein 1967: 118). Is Sartre’s existentialism capable of this?

It is not true that Sartre saw freedom as solely internal, resting on independence from any outer compulsion including that which asserted nor merely the possibility but the necessity of human cooperation. Sartre certainly has much more positive feelings about society than most “existentialists” (Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Dostoyevsky, Camus, Heidegger) and this comes from Sartre’s intersubjective insights: society is also “the Others”. The Other is necessary for me for escaping my own in authentic existence (anonymity), and on the contrary, the Other can serve as the revelation of nature of reality (objectifying gaze). On the other hand, the notion of the world as space for possibilities further implies the responsibility for the others as possibilities⁷.

But history certainly does not tell us that a man is “good”, or that he lives for the “good of society” and this seems to be a big hole in Sartre’s reasoning. But history does tell us that at decisive times human beings generally fight for their own freedom in co-activity, socially.

In the trilogy of novels *Les Chemins de la Liberté* (“Paths to Freedom”) Sartre enlarged his social engagement. Through the various protagonists Sartre depicts different responses to political events. The ideas of early existentialism are voiced by Delarua, teacher of philosophy who seeks a way to be free. He searches everywhere except in his actual social relationships.

Therefore, though Sartre also starts from individual “being” or “existence”, he emphasises actual engagement in situation in clearly

⁷ The problem of intersubjectivity is another big achievement made by Sartre as phenomenologist and deserves to be analysed alongside with such thinkers as Husserl, Merleau-Ponty or Levinas, which is thoroughly done by Dan Zahavi (Zahavi 2001).

different way than Camus, Heidegger or Jaspers. Just look how he extends the conception of responsibility, already put in treatise *Being and Nothingness*, in essay *Existentialism and Humanism* (1946):

The first effect of existentialism is that it puts every man in possession of himself as he is, and places the entire responsibility for his existence squarely upon his shoulders. And, when we say that man is responsible for himself, we do not mean that he is responsible only for his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all man... in choosing for himself he chooses for all men (Sartre 1977).

Social engagement led Sartre to the Marxism and we can say that if his social activities suggested changes in his views, he made these changes. Hence Sartre moved in the direction which was promised by Marxism – restoration of the tie between the “inner” and “outer” world in the face of a complex social situation. This presented to Sartre Marxist view as the philosophy of today. Of course he refused to see individual only as the product of economic and social conditions, but accepted basic thesis of Marxism, that human being realises himself only in action. This also depends on intentionality – which directs from within to outside and enables to develop results of freely chosen actions.

After what is said we should finally ask: is Sartre's philosophy nothing more than sophisticated pessimism and his conception of human being something other than a kind of “futile passion”? To begin with the answer, firstly remember that even most optimistic ethical theories usually started from the falsity given in human nature. The very possibility of ethics is based on the fact of constant solecism. On the other hand, there is no need for ethics for a being which has an essence – thing, animal or God. Therefore the existentialism in general and Sartre's phenomenological version in particular sounds rather optimistic – it attains the core of individual being which is beyond social or natural conditioning.

Conclusions

Sartre's philosophical project in a broader sense signifies the transition of existential phenomenology from transcendental (reduction of all to my own appearances) to the ontological (rehabilitation of the quest for the meaning of the notion “exist”).

Sartre performed one of the deepest analysis concerning the nature of consciousness in phenomenological tradition. On the other hand, he delivered elaborated documentation of the inner, mental crisis of post-war society.

A lot of misunderstandings concerning Sartre's ethics where caused by the overlooking phenomenological significance assigned by Sartre to ethical categories. In Sartre's conception of freedom phenomenological method, ontological implications of existential philosophy and counteraction to traditional ethics coexist.

Such phenomenologically uncovered structures of consciousness as fantasy, memory, future anticipation, categorisation and etc., enable to see things not as they are given by perception, therefore create a void which are fulfilled by free projects (or avoidance of freedom) of the subject. This dialectic of being and nothingness, according to Sartre, is the fundamental structure of consciousness.

Therefore what is uncovered by phenomenology as transcendental (freedom) in existential thinking becomes existential (responsibility). The analysis of these existentials at the same time is ontological because through freedom and responsibility it is shown how the being of human is. Sartre reverses traditional ontological schema: not existence is submerged into being, but degree of being is measured by the free-projecting in existence.

This means that freedom does not rise out of the recognitions of necessity. Sartre refuses to accept long tradition that laws of nature must be known and obeyed so that reality can be commanded (deconstruction of the opposition between determinism and the free will). This perspective enables collate Sartre's conceptions

with Kant (deconstruction of the distinction between categorical and hypothetical imperatives), Consequentialist ethics operating in everyday mental and juridical life (deconstruction of the any distanced interrelation of means and ends, for the means become the ends), mental disorders (deconstruction of the contemporary narcissistic aesthetic forms of self-whipping and self-regret. Mental disorders rise when one faces the obstacles in real life which in turn depends on the subject's sense giving structures, and in this sense freedom is equal to reality.

While Sartre's concerns are primarily phenomenological it has much to say, for example, about the rehabilitation of stoicism today, dialogue between the Christian and Buddhist ethics or understanding Marxism anew.

Finally, it is not true that Sartre saw freedom as solely internal, resting on independence from any outer compulsion. Sartre certainly has much more positive feelings about society than most "existentialists".

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LAISVĖS IR ATSAKOMYBĖS FENOMENOLOGIJA SARTRO EGZISTENCIALISTINĖJE ETIKOJE

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Laisvės ir atsakomybės temos vienaip ar kitaip nagrinėjo visi ne-perspektyvinio mąstymo egzorcistai (egzistencialistai). Nepaisant gausių tyrinėjimų, galima teigti, kad būtent fenomenologinės egzistencialistinės etikos šaknys kol kas nėra deramai išanalizuotos. Straipsnyje, pateikiant Žano Polio Sartro laisvės ir atsakomybės sampratą, parodoma, kaip fenomenologinės įžvalgos gali būti subordinuotos, o kartais kreipti egzistencializmo filosofijos intencijas. Kita, Sartro filosofinių pažiūrų analizė suteikia retą progą išstudijuoti fenomenologinės ontologijos ir egzistencialistinės etikos sampyną. Nepaisant to, kad Sartras interpretuoja Husserlio ir Heideggerio sąvokas grynai fenomenologiškai, šių interpretacijų analizė veda tolyn nuo klasiikinės fenomenologijos, kartu pateikiamos klasikinės etikos dilemos naujai. Trečia, straipsnyje teigiama, kad dažnai fenomenologijai prikišamas etinių temų stygius atremiamas parodant, kaip etinis fenomenologijos potencialas aktualizuojamas egzistencialistinėje etikoje. Tai puikiai rodo Sartro etika. Be šių pagrindinių tikslų, straipsnyje taip pat aptariamos galimybės kritiškai palyginti Sartro fenomenologinės-egzistencialistinės etikos teiginius su kitomis svarbiomis etinėmis ir ontologinėmis perspektyvomis, pavyzdžiui, stoikų etika, krikščionyste, psichoanalize, marksizmu, Kanto filosofija ir kt.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: fenomenologija, egzistencializmas, laisvė, atsakomybė, Sartras.

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