

Traces of Moral Philosophy in Jean-Paul-Sartre's Existentialism

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Abstract: During the period of world war-II the fate of human beings were at haunt. The existence of a man was valued as a weapon against one enemy. At that time few philosophers were engaged in developing a trend which will rescue human existence from the trap of brutal beings. As a result of that the philosophy of 'Existentialism' came into forefront. Among those great philosophers the name of Jean-Paul-Sartre was of great importance. Sartre has put much effort to conceptualise Existentialism as a vital philosophy. He proclaimed the freedom of man to be absolute and wanted to establish that in man's life existence precedes essence. His philosophy surrounds human life. He wanted to analyse human nature. In this respect his book "Being and Nothingness" (L'Etre et Neant, 1943) has been able to offer a great influence. In this book he tried to analyse the ontology of human reality and Sartre believed that such ontology is a preface to morality and as such in human life morality plays a great role. It is in this context the present paper intends to find out the traces of morality in Sartre's Existential philosophy.

Key words: Existentialism, Freedom, Human reality, Morality, Sartre

Objectives: 1. To analyse Jean-Paul-Sartre's concept of Existentialism

2. To find out the traces of moral philosophy in Sartre's existentialism

Methodology: In the preparation of the paper secondary materials have been used. Secondary materials have been used such as books, journals, articles etc. In writing of the paper, the historic-analytical method has been used.

Introduction: Jean-Paul-Sartre, the French philosopher is regarded as one of the chief pioneers of existentialism. He was influenced by his German teacher Heidegger and as such he propounded the concept of secular and atheistic existentialism. Apart from his book 'Being and Nothingness', his books like 'Existentialism and Humanism', 'Saint Genet', 'Critique of Dialectical Reason', 'The Idiot of the family' etc. are also contributing a lot in the development of the existential thoughts.

Sartre believed that the empirical world is divided into two parts-man and objects or consciousness and material world. Sartre in his book 'Being and Nothingness' said,

“Man can understand his own existence on the basis of difference between consciousness and material reality. When I know an object, I come to feel that I am not that object. Thus, I know that my consciousness is something, which is not an object. The objective world has nothing role to play in determining my essence. Thus, it depends on my freedom how shall I determine my future. This freedom is my existence. It does not matter whether I like to be free or not, because freedom is my birthright.”

ANALYSIS: In this context it should be mentioned that the concept of freedom which is the backbone of Sartre's existentialism, is the centre of his thoughts on morality also. In common view morality consists in man's action. Those actions which are in accordance to the welfare of human beings and society are termed as moral. According to the determinist man are determined by the moral norms, man's actions are not

indeterminate. Men do not possess freedom to chose their own course of action. In opposition to this view Sartre maintained that man has freedom to choose his own course of action. It also means that whatever man chooses has no justification. Sartre said that ‘men are condemned to be free. He has no other alternative to choose in respect to freedom’.

Sartre holds that, man is a solitary being, he is thrown into the hostile world, here he will have to earn for himself as well as will have to make way for other’s earning. He said that man has established his own existence in separation from this objective world. He thinks that this objective world creates problem for man in his every step. By the performance of right action man has to overcome these problems or obstacles. By right action Sartre wants to mean moral actions. Man will be what he has planned to be. Thus, the first principle of existentialism is to make everyman aware of what he is and to make him realize that the responsibility of his existence rest on him.

It is true that man has freedom to action. But this freedom does not mean that the man is free to do whatever he likes arbitrarily. While realizing his freedom he has to take care of other man’s welfare also. The existentialist accepts both the world and the society but according to them there is an eternal hostility prevail between them. individuals are given freedom to chose his course of action but with certain limitations. The existence of objects and other persons in the world restricts his freedom. But for the existentialists complete freedom is in the nature of individuals. In this regard Sartre said that the real value of man’s action lies in the performance of his duties by resisting the obstacles created by the objects of the world. Sartre believes that both morality and value are not objective; they emerge as a by-product of man’s actions. Sartre said that it is the human being who introduced value in the world.

Though morality and value are created by man yet being the creator they always live in the state of anguish. The anguish arose because man are solely responsible for the values of the world, neither God nor any other party take the responsibility of the values. Man gets confused among some questions like—How man will select the value? What is more valuable between two actions? Is he the right person to select values for

himself as well as for other persons too? Because of these unavoidable questions man fall into anguish. As an answer to this question Sartre said that the values are dependent on man's choice of actions. But this view of Sartre seems to be erroneous because if value depends upon man's point of view, then the struggles for the establishment of values become meaningless. Man will be the unmade creator of values and values will lose their meaning.

Sartre tries to get rid of this blame against him by further saying that though man creates value yet he always keeps in mind the welfare of the other persons too. Sartre believes that man cannot leave alone in this world; he is always in need of a society. Man, while deciding his course of action, not only decides for himself but he decides for the whole mankind. This existential thought of Sartre creates a problem in his moral philosophy. Some even opines that this view of Sartre is the weak point of his moral philosophy since what is good for a man may not be good for everyone. In this respect Sartre brought the concept of reason in man's actions. Sartre maintains that though there is rational justification for what man chooses, yet what he chooses contains the reason for those actions. Sartre wants to speak here of a rationality which is intra-choice. It has to be decided whether action is right or wrong by this rationality, which is internal to choice, not by any law, which is external to choice.

In this context Sartre said that when a man decides something for himself, he should take care of the fact that whether his course of action can be followed by other persons or not. Avoidance to this question leads him to bad faith. But here Sartre also said that this shouldering of responsibility of others throws him to a state of anguish, because there is no proof that he is the right person to impose by his own choice his conception of man upon mankind. Here comes the notion of morality. In moral philosophy it is believed that the judgment of moral value of actions if not possible. But for Sartre it is not true. According to him such action is good as has harmony with one's freedom. Sartre stated that men who deprive themselves of full freedom are cowards and they have fallen from the ideal of morality. In 'Existentialism and Humanism', Sartre has taken his theory of morality to the level of the social theory. He believed that there is no concept like individual morality.

In his existentialism Sartre stated that man has many options for the selection of his course of action open before him but he has to choose only one of them. This confusion of selection always keeps him in the state of anxiety. Man's existence dwells in between the choices he has to make in his life. No other person can help him in choosing his course of action. Sartre believed that what we choose in the intensity of experience of freedom is always in conformity with morality and whatever has no conformity is immoral.

CONCLUSION: An analysis of moral philosophy in Sartre's existentialism proves that the view of Sartre on moral philosophy in existentialism can be explained from the later section entitled moral perspectives of his work 'Being and Nothingness'. In this work Sartre discussed on human life from which one can get an idea of his views on moral philosophy, in his existentialism. It can also be submitted that the views of Sartre on the question of morality differ from other philosophers. It is because Sartre did not accept the objectivity of morality and value. According to him value develops in the activities of human life. Sartre believed that man introduced value in the world. Thus regarding Sartre's concept on morality it can be summarised that Existence is co-related with morality.

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