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SARTREAN FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY: A CRITICAL REFLECTION FROM THE AFRICAN COMMUNITARIAN THOUGHTS

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Abstract
This paper discusses the ideas of Jean-Paul Sartre concerning freedom and its relation to human responsibility in the context of thoughts on African communitarianism. Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist philosophy is centered on freedom as a fundamental attribute of human beings. According to Sartre, human beings constantly recreate themselves through various choices and actions. It means that freedom includes responsibility. This paper addresses the problem whether the concept of total freedom of Sartre covers all social, cultural, and historical factors influencing the actions of people. Taking into account the ideas of John Mbiti and Kwame Gyekye as African communitarianists, this paper argues that being human and being morally responsible is impossible without interactions within the community as human beings are not individuals responsible only for themselves. Therefore, the author recommends that human beings are agents with the right to choose, but they exercise this right under particular circumstances. It gives the possibility to combine African communitarianism and existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre.

Key words: Freedom, Responsibility, Existentialism, Communitarianism, Human Agency.

Introduction

The issue of freedom is a constant subject of philosophical disputes due to its relation to responsibility. It is possible to say that the freedom problem raises many philosophical questions regarding human responsibility. Such problems as how much human beings are responsible for their decisions and actions if they are free. One can also ask how human beings are responsible for their actions if they are substantially influenced by social, cultural, economic, political and historical conditions. All of these problems have been under discussion throughout the long period of time – from antiquity until contemporary existentialism. Jean-Paul Sartre answers all these questions considering freedom as the center of human existence. Human beings, according to Sartre, are not predetermined by anything or anyone as they exist first and shape their identity through their actions and choices.[1]It implies that human beings are not dependent on any force as it can dictate their actions. Instead, they create the meaning of their lives by themselves. Through their choices, then they will be responsible.

Sartre's conception is formulated clearly in his existentialist ontological statement that human beings are "condemned to be free"[2]It is necessary to understand freedom as not the capacity of the

[1]. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, trans. Carol Macomber (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 22.

[2]. Sartre, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, 29.

individual, because freedom is the structural element of human existence. Since human beings are not predetermined, both by something and particular circumstances, they are required to make choices and recognize responsibility for them.[3]It means that human beings should make a decision, and this is their existence and even the refusal to make any decision is the decision itself. However, Sartre's conception of radical freedom causes many problems when it is discussed in the context of African culture. African communities with close relationships inside the community, cultural traditions and social obligations are the base of African communities. Communitarianism of African philosophy perceives freedom as the separation of individual's autonomy. The African philosopher John Mbiti stresses that individuals are defined within community and human beings live in accordance with the nature, traditions, and values of the community.[4]It is so because human beings live in community in oneness, unity, and the sense of togetherness becomes common in African communities. It means that human beings are not isolated organisms and live in accordance with the values of community.

This paper therefore argues that Sartre's conception of freedom is a valuable addition to the problem of human responsibility, as it affirms human agency, dignity and personal accountability. At the same time, his notion of absolute freedom cannot properly cover the complexity of human responsibility in African society, as it presupposes human freedom as the absolute independence of social and material conditions. The more appropriate position is complementary one, which presupposes that individuals have their own agency and exercise it under particular circumstances.

1.1 Philosophical Background of Freedom and Responsibility

Plato and Aristotle are the ancient Greek philosophers, who tried to reveal the problem of the rational self-mastery of individuals enabling them to be responsible for their actions. For instance, *the Republic of Plato* reveals how the rational soul rules passions, making people responsible for their decisions. Aristotle connects the moral virtues of individuals with voluntary actions, becoming the basis of responsibility.[5] Aristotle connects on the other hand moral virtue with voluntary action as the basis for moral responsibility.[6] It means that in Aristotle human beings can be blamed and praised according to the nature and circumstances of actions. When people perform actions voluntarily and without being compelled, they are responsible for their actions, as the responsibility is linked to the human desire and willingness.

The great contribution to this discussion belongs to St. Thomas Aquinas, who is the medieval Christian philosopher. Applying the ideas of Aristotle, he combines the notions of human agency and divine providence. St. Thomas Aquinas claims that responsibility requires the rational deliberation implying that individuals should think critically and make rational decisions in order to be responsible for their actions.[7] The early modern philosopher Immanuel Kant raises new discussion about the problem of freedom as freedom becomes the ability of individuals to act in accordance with moral law dictated by human reason.[8]Thus, people should live morally and not to be influenced by their personal desires and

[3]. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (London: Routledge, 1943),439-445.

[4]. John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1969), 134.

[5]. Plato, *Republic*, trans. G. M. A. Grube, revised by C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992), 617e.

[6]. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999), 42–56.

[7]. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (MBS Library, 2006), L.83.

[8]. Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, trans.* Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 41-42.

impulses and other kinds of pressure.The existentialists treat freedom as the radical and basic characteristic of human existence.[9]The existentialists maintain that the choice, freedom and individual responsibility are the basic attributes of the human being. The leading existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre (1905 – 1980) argues that man is fundamentally free and that his/her existence precedes essence.Such understanding means that freedom is the intrinsic and unavoidable attribute of human existence.[10] Human beings are not predestined in any way or by any means. Instead, it means that individuals create their own essences through their decisions and actions.

Such understanding means that freedom is the intrinsic and unavoidable attribute of human existence. Individuals cannot escape taking the responsibility for the fact that they are. It means that the freedom becomes the center of moral life of human beings making individuals fully responsible for their decisions.[11]In his *Existentialism is a Humanism* Sartre claims that the human being is condemned to be free and is responsible for the decisions. It means that the freedom is not the privilege as it contains the absolute responsibility for one's decisions. Therefore, since individuals are absolutely free, there is no other authority guiding their decisions, individuals become responsible for their actions, as they do not have the opportunity to rely on either nature, God or any other external authority. They create the meaning of their lives and the implications of it.

Sartre's conception of freedom is directly linked with the notion of responsibility. According to Sartre when people make decisions for themselves, they make choices, which involve others and, accordingly, all of humanity.[12]It means that the freedom is important and its connection to responsibility is emphasized. The idea shows that according to Sartre, freedom cannot exist without responsibility. The conception of the absolute freedom of Sartre generates numerous disputes among philosophers.

Communitarian philosophers such as Charles Taylor argue that people are self-interpreting organisms and their identities are formed within the frame of shared meanings and values.[13]Taylor stresses that freedom is directly connected to social contexts where anindividual live. Such a communitarian approach realizing that an individual is not created in isolation but rather in the surrounding society and its values.

Also, Thinkers like Nyerere in his philosophy as it incorporate elements includes, participation, solidarity, cooperation, living in brotherhood, and responsibility rather than freedom from all the social constraints.[14] However, Nyerere's ideas about communal solidarity should not be interpreted as the denial of individual initiative. This implies that an individuals are exercising their freedom in the social obligation.

Kwame Gyekye connecting radical communitarianism and moderate communitarianism. The former does not see African person as the part of society in which the individual is simply absorbed. He considers the individual as the being that has some personal capacities and rights and at the same time belongs to the social order.[15] Thus, he seeks the way of

[9]. Thomas Flynn, *Existentialism: A very short introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1-3.

[10]. Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, 22.

[11]. Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, 30.

[12] . Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, 24.

[13]. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 34.

[14]. Julius K. Nyerere, *Ujamaa: Essays on Socialism* (Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press, 1968), 12.

[15]. Kwame Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 35–76.

balancing individual interest with the obligations of the community.

Laurenti Magesa, thenrecognizes the connectedness of individual to the community that African morality is all about preservation and enhancement of life, social harmony, solidarity, and well-being of the community.[16] From this point of view, the moral responsibility arises not from the abstract obligation to an individual, but from the participation in the network of social relationships including family, community, ancestors, nature and other elements of social life.

Moreover, sociologist Émile Durkheim develops the idea of the social facts as the external forces that compel individuals. Social facts become the determining elements shaping personal choice and actions.[17]They include the norms, traditions and collective beliefs, which prescribe actions of individuals and limit the possibilities of actions. Applying the Western and African philosophical perspective to the problem of freedom,the study aims to provide the understanding of human freedom. It should be shown that, freedom is not absolute, rather it should be understood accordingly.

1.2 Sartre's Existential Account of Human freedom

Sartre's conception of freedom starts from his basic understanding of consciousness. Human being is not the object of existence that exists along with other objects. People can reflect on themselves, reject the existing situation, imagine something else and pursue future projects.[18]Such capacity makes human existence fundamentally dynamic. Individuals are not completely identical to what they have already been. Thus Sartre distinguishes two different modes of existence to show how a conscious being is different to unconscious beings, that is *Being-for-itself* and *Being-in-itself.*

1.2.1 Being-for-itself

The concept of Being-for-itself is the main concept of the existentialist philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre, especially in *Being and Nothingness*. *Being-for-itself* is viewed by Sartre as the kind of existence,which belongs to the human consciousness and is different from the inanimate objects such as stones and chairs. People are not predetermined and immutable, as they are able to create their identity using actions and decisions.[19] People are not predetermined and immutable because they can form their identity using their actions and decisions.

Being-for-itself is also related to nothingness, as consciousness is not a static substance but nothingness, which separates humans from the world of objects.[20]It means that people are always aware of the lack in themselves and what they want to become, for example, a student who wants to be a doctor but realizes that he or she is not it yet.Thus, it means that consciousness is dynamic and pushes people into the future. Sartre distinguishes Being-in-itself, which is the static existence of objects, from Being-for-itself, which is incomplete and possesses many possibilities.

1.2.2 Being-in-itself

The entities in question are characterized by their completeness and immutability. It means that they are not able to question and reflect on their existence.[21] The examples of such entities are rocks, tables, trees, and machines. *Being-in-itself* is complete and immutable; it is not able to reflect on itself and change. Sartre's approach highlights the distinct nature of conscious experience compared to material existence. He critiques metaphysical systems that attempt to unify all forms of existence into a single framework.

[16]. Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion and Ethics* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1997), 1–25.

[17]. Émile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method* (New York: Free Press, 1982), p. 52.

[18]. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 56-63.

[19]. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 56–63.

[20]. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 98–103.

[21]. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 21–29.

According to Sartre, the concept of a thesis is solid and self-sufficient, meaning it does not allow for change or freedom. This implies that such entities are complete and unchangeable, lacking the potential for further possibilities. In essence, Sartre emphasizes the importance of individual consciousness and its ability to experience freedom, contrasting it with fixed, unchanging entities.[22] The approach of Sartre explores the uniqueness of conscious experience from material existence and criticizes the metaphysical systems that try to unite all existences into one.

One more feature of *Being-in-itself* is the absence of freedom and responsibility in it. Objects do not choose or determine their future. On the contrary, people have the ability to control their thoughts and behavior and to determine it using actions. Thus, Sartre claims that:

> No external cause will remove them. I alone am the permanent source of their non-being, I engage myself in them; in order to cause my possibility to appear, I posit the other possibilities so as to nihilate them. This would not produce anguish if I could apprehend myself in my relations with these possibles as a cause producing its effects. In this case the effect defined as my possibility would be strictly determined.[23]

Thus, rocks do not change, as they do not have consciousness, while people interpret and re-interpret themselves depending on their decisions and actions. It provides the basis for human freedom. It implies that human existence is the presence of many choices for human beings as they are absolutely free to choose and to determine the unconscious beings.

1.2.3 Man is condemned to be Free

Human existence means the existence of freedom involuntarily illustrating the fact that people are not predetermined in their existence, and man is the freedom. Once the existence becomes the fact, people have to make choices including the choice of not choosing. It means that even the act of not choosing is the choice.[24] Sartre provides the following strong argument about human consciousness that always refers to the possibilities, thus excluding the neutrality and passivity:

> Human freedom precedes essence in man and makes it possible; the essence of the human being is suspended in his freedom. What we call freedom is impossible to distinguish from the being of human reality. Man does not exist first in order to be free subsequently; there is no difference between the being of man and his being-free.[25]

Every moment of inaction is the choice, so the freedom is not the temporary choice but the inherent element of human existence, it means that man is responsible for everything that he or she does and forms himself or herself with the help of their actions, becoming the author of their lives and being responsible for it.

According to Sartre, in the absence of God, there are no intrinsic values or moral laws regulating human behavior; instead, human beings exist in the world and create their essences and values.[26] The fact shows the priority of personal responsibility and the active role of individuals in the creation of their lives.

1.2.4 Existence Precede Essence

Jean-Paul Sartre's famous statement that "existence precedes essence"[27] is the basis of existentialist philosophy of Sartre. The thing, which he means by this, is that humans are not born into this world with some predetermined nature or the predetermined purpose. Unlike

[22]. Flynn, *Sartre: A Philosophical Biography*, 327–333.
[23]. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 31.
[24]. Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, 44.
[25]. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 25.
[26]. Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, 22.
[27]. Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, 22.

objects, which are created for some purpose, people exist first and then develop their identities using their choices and actions. In order to prove this idea, Sartre draws the parallel between humans and objects like a paper-knife. Paper-knife is created for some purpose, while human being is not bounded by any essence.[28] It means that, according to Sartre, there is no predetermined human nature, which determines how a person will be.

Sartre's argument in the question ties directly to his rejection of the traditional doctrine about human nature that is predetermined by God or some other divinely cosmic order. In his works *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, Sartre makes the statement clearly that if God is not there, then there is no divine blueprint of human nature existing before us. This means that a person exists in the world first and shapes his or her identity using their experience and their choices.[29] It do not. Therefore, freedom and responsibility are connected notions: the greater accent that is placed on human freedom, the greater responsibility people perceive for their choices.

Sartre argues that human beings are not predetermined essence that dictate their choices, and freedom. If they could be predetermined, then it would be severely restricted, and reducing them to mere reflections of fate. Rather, Sartre holds that individuals can choose from many possibilities, that can shape their own identities in life. Essentially, he argues that a person is defined by their choices, this implies that, we are responsible for creating our own essence.[30] Freedom, is not only to have ability of choosing among many possibilities. Instead, it is the human nature that an individual embedded with, as it is the process of one's actualization.

Sartre argues that, individuals are not determined by any external circumstance or nature; instead, they materialize themselves through their choices. This implies that in choosing, there must be the realization of outcomes aligned with the choices. Sartre extends this idea further by suggesting that individual choices also represent a broader perspective on humanity. In his work, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, he argues that choosing for oneself is inherently a choice for all of humanity, emphasizing the interconnectedness of personal decisions and collective human experience.[31] Thus, freedom and responsibility are inseparable: the greater emphasis Sartre places on human freedom, the greater the responsibility individuals bear for their choices.

On the other hand, the notion that existence precedes essence may be applied to different social and cultural contexts including African continent. Sartre's concepts concerning human freedom and responsibility to create his own identity are particularly significant as they stress human being and contradict the idea that people are just products of the environment in which they live. However, African philosophical concepts usually focus on the importance of relations of people to the community.[32] The people like John Mbiti stress the importance of these relations to identify the essence of the person. Consequently, although the principle of Sartre provides a good theoretical base, its implementation to the real African life situation requires taking into account that human existence is both individual and communal.

2.1 Choice and Moral Responsibility

Sartre states that freedom lies in continuous choice in human life which means that humans are always in the process of choosing.[33] It implies that an individual is not limited to exercise their freedom, instead they are free to choose and to bear consequences following their actions. Also

[28]. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 567–568.

[29]. Sartre, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, 21–22.

[30]. Sartre, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, 22.

[31] . Sartre, *Existentialism Is a Humanism,* 24.

[32]. John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Heinemann, 1990), 106–107.

[33]. Sartre, Being *and Nothingness*, 484.

they are always aware of their choices and its outcome.

2.2 Responsibility as the Result of freedom

Sartre states that human beings are the freedom beings because they have no essence to determine their lives. On the contrary, they are the ones who create the meaning of their lives and bear the responsibility for the consequences of their choice. Sartre states: "by existence precedes essence We mean that man first exists: he materializes in the world, encounters himself, and only afterward defines himself."[34] It is evident that human choice is the results of self-creation but also a burden of responsibility – to be free means to take a full responsibility for all actions' consequences.

The reason why humans need to create their meaning and to bear the consequences of their choices is that people are left alone in the world without any power to rely on.[35] Responsibility is an inevitable component of human beings since it cannot be imposed from outside, but it is a result of human existence. In addition, people must be responsible for their actions.

2.3 Responsibility for Self-formation

Humans are conscious beings who have responsibilities and a choice. That is why self-formation occurs in concrete reality and in social, historical, physical and particular circumstances. The thing is that these factors do not define individual absolutely. As a consequence, Sartre rejects the idea that character can be viewed as a finished work and the essence of which just determines future behavior. An individual can have certain upbringing, socio-economic position.[36] It means that an individual can form his self-formation through how he responds in each circumstance.

The notion of fundamental project of Sartre can help to understand self-formation process. Individual actions reflect the larger view of how a person lives and what he views in the world rather than represents the separate incidents. In the opinion of Sartre, a person's actions can be viewed as parts of the larger way of life because the concrete actions occur in the larger project of life in which a person lives.[37] Similarly, the person who constantly acts cowardly cannot treat it as the external factor controlling him because his constant choices shape his personality.

2.4 Responsibility for others and Universal implications

In his *Existentialism as a Humanism* Sartre made a bold statement that when a person chooses himself he also chooses particular image of humanity.[38] It means that a person does not make his choice in the private moral setting. Each time someone makes a choice about how to live he promotes indirectly the particular image of what it means to be a human.

Universal aspect of responsibility appears in the idea of Sartre that in creating myself it implies creating others. It does not mean that the choice of one individual directly influences the behavior of all other people.[39] On the contrary, each choice discloses the particular conception of what the person regards valuable and desirable for human existence.

Universal aspect of responsibility does not restrain the personal freedom on the contrary it makes it ethically grounded. An individual has to act with the knowledge that the other people are also the free subjects of existence whose existence cannot be reduced to object or instrument of use.[40] Consequently, Sartre's philosophy transforms responsibility from the limited responsibility to

[34]. Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, 22.
[35]. Sartre, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, 29.
[36]. Sartre, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, 22-23.
[37]. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 479–83.
[38]. Sartre, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, 22–24.
[39]. Sartre, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, 23.
[40]. Katherine J. Morris, *Sartre* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 169–76.

oneself into the universal responsibility for the human world created by his decisions.

2.5 The Concept of Bad-faith

Here we should distinguish the issue of freedom and personal responsibility for actions. In *Being and Nothingness* Sartre states: "To be sure, the one who practices bad faith is hiding a displeasing truth or presenting as truth a pleasing untruth."[41]It is evident that the phenomenon of bad faith implies that people realize the existence of their freedom in principle but reject it. It means that to be not true to yourself internally is Bad faith. Most people who deny their freedom on themselves; and, therefore, they do not use it because although they realize their freedom, although it goes together with being true on oneself.

In Being and Nothingness, he gives a well-known example of bad faith using the case of a waiter who identifies himself with his role to the extent that he acts as the mere performer of some functions. Here is the state of bad faith because people know about their freedom but deny it.[42] It is Bad faith since Bad faith refers to the state when people pretend that they deny their ability to do something. This state shows how most of people holds to do not know, and falling into the trap of bad faith due to their precedence of not to be aware, while they aware of.

2.6 The Concept of Authenticity

People are aware of their responsibility for their actions and try not to deny it. These people have such qualities as honesty, courage, self-consciousness and readiness to deal with the uncertainty and anxiety resulting from freedom. They are ready to solve problems and not to evade them.[43] This concept implies that ethics involves not only personal principles but also impacts it has on others in a society.

Actually, the concept of sincerity and responsibility means that people are not limited by any external social norms and must bear the responsibility for their actions and consequences.[44] It holds that to be free, is to be responsible, and therefore, human beings are free and responsible for their choices. It signifies that human existence is directly connected to freedom.

3.1 Beyond Individual Freedom: An African Communitarian Critique of Sartre

Such an approach contradicts Sartre's concept of absolute freedom because in the context of Africa freedom is practiced considering social, cultural and historical conditions. It means that the freedom is the individual and communal freedom.[45] A person is free to make his choice but these individual choices are connected with his family, community and social responsibilities.

3.2 Social Aspect

People in numerous African societies perceive themselves as a part of the community, where the individual's identity is determined by his or her relations and responsibilities in the community.[46] At the same time, the idea of radical self-creation of identity presented by Sartre ignores the freedom of Africans that is a communal freedom. As in most African societies, an individual's personal choice is heavily influenced by the social and communal circumstances.

Ifeanyi Menkiti claims that an authentic personhood is built through active participation in the community, while identity and value are built through social relations and responsibilities, not through autonomy of an individual's identity creation. According to him:

> African view of man denies that persons can be defined by focusing on this or that

[41]. Sartre, Being *and Nothingness*, 49.
[42]. Sartre, Being *and Nothingness*, 59.
[43]. Flynn, *Sartre*: *A Philosophical Biography*, 112.
[44]. Mary Warnock, *Existentialism*, 67.
[45]. Menkiti, "Person and Community in African Traditional Thought," 171–181.
[46]. Menkiti, "Person and Community in African Traditional Thought," 171–181.

> physical or psychological characteristic of the lone individual. Rather, man is defined by reference to the environing community. As John Mbiti notes, the African view of the person can be summed up in this statement: "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am"[47]

The idea confronts Sartre's conception according to which an individual has unlimited right to choose regardless of external obstacles like culture and social systems of the society. In the African community, major decisions concerning life issues like wealth inheritance, marriage, and occupation are made depending on expectations of the family and community. The African concept of personhood, formulated in the idea of communal identity implies that people obtain their existence and meaning through relations with other people.[48] It means that people obtain their human existence through recognition of the existence of other community members. Therefore, moral responsibility is not reduced to individual interest, but concerns social relations.

3.3 Cultural Aspect

Moral values, culture, rituals and societal systems that regulate behavior and maintain social harmony are preserved in African societies.[49] Cultural values have the importance and significance as means of creation of individual's identity, wisdom, and morality control, instead of acting as restrictions from outside world. Instead, Sartre believes that an individual is able to make his own choice in any situation ignoring any external restrictions.

Believing in an abandonment of a person with nothing pre-determined, Sartre claims that the human being is able to create his life meaning through decisions and actions: "if God does not exist, and man is consequently abandoned, for he cannot find anything to rely on neither within nor without. First, he finds there are no excuses."[50]Sartre an concept of freedom may lead to an extreme individualism and moral relativism, which opposes African concept of personhood. In an African context, freedom does not mean freedom from restrictions, but includes making decisions and performing socially significant deeds by respecting culture and moral values.

3.4 Economic Aspect

Poverty in African societies prevents people from access to basic services like education and health care. This results in problems like income inequality and inability to make various decisions.[51] It means that freedom is an essential element of human existence and individual is the author of their actions. Nevertheless, critics believe that economic difficulties may seriously affect people's options and make it difficult to accept the above-mentioned idea of freedom. It suggests that Sartre's approach may ignore the role that economic conditions play in this regard.

In spite of difficulties that people experience in the situation of economic hardship, they remain free to choose.[52] This idea reveals a great gap in Sartre's concept of absolute freedom, especially in African community, which is in a condition of economic hardship.

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[47]. Menkiti, "Person and Community in African Traditional Thought," 171.

[48]. Bruno Yammeluan Ikuli, and Lambert Peter Ukanag. "A Study of Kwame Gyekye's Notion of Personhood and Its Relationship to Rights in African Communitarian Structure." *International Journal of New Economics and Social Sciences (Ijoness)* 14, no. 2 (2021), 215., Onebunne, Jude I., and Mirian N. Alike. "Igwebuike, Individual Freedom and Responsibility in African Ethics." *IGWEBUIKE: An African Complementary Philosophical Framework* (2020), 128–129.

[49]. Barry Hallen, "A Moral Epistemology of a Tradition-Oriented Culture," *Journal of Value Inquiry* 16, no. 4 (1982): 321–332.

[50]. Sartre, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, 28–35.

[51]. Thandika Mkandawire, "Thinking about Developmental States in Africa" *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 25, no 3 (2001): 289–314.

[52]. Sartre, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, 28–35.

4.1 Towards a synthesis of Sartrean Freedom and AfricanCommunitarian Thought

It is important to note that Sartre did not refer to selfish individuality since his idea of the absolute freedom means that every action is based on the certain interpretation of the image of man: "in choosing myself, I choose man."[53]The moral aspect of Sartre's concept of freedom implies the connection between individual freedom and social responsibility in the tradition of African philosophy. Under this aspect, freedom presupposes not only individual's right to choose but also the dignity and respect within the community. There are ideas in African philosophy that may make Sartrean concept of freedom richer, but not to undermine. One of them is the idea of Ubuntu. The traditional concept of Ubuntu is stated by Mbiti as follows "the African view of the person can be summed upin this statement; 'I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am"'[54]This statement does not mean the absence of individuality, but claims that a person is defined in relation to other people and becomes a man due to social relations.

The similar idea is represented by Sartre himself. Namely, he believed that human beings are in a relation to others; though the aspect of permanent confrontation is stressed by him, for instance in *Being and Nothingness*, in the look (*Le regard*). Then, one becomes not a free subject, but becomes an object of perception of the other people. Thus, the look demonstrates how others influence our self-consciousness and create the tension between freedom and the perception of others.[55] African philosophers transform the mentioned idea into the one that relationships with other people should be perceived as an opportunity for solidarity, compassion, and mutual development.[56] As a result, Sartrean idea of freedom may be transformed in terms of African philosophy: idea of confrontation may be transformed into the idea of cooperative life.

Conclusion

This article has analyzed Sartrean conception of freedom and its implications to human responsibility in the African context. It has been found out that the concept of freedom is an essential element in Sartre's interpretation of human existence. African communitarian view reveals a limitation in the strongest interpretation of Sartre's concept of absolute freedom. People do not act human reality apart from history, culture or society. The possibilities of people depend on the communal relations, traditions, institutions, education and historical experience. Thus, absolute freedom cannot be accepted conditionally in the explanation of human responsibility within the framework of African communitarian thoughts.

The solution of this problem is not in the rejection of Sartre's ideas at all. In this case, it will be ignored the continuous relevance of his ideas about human dignity, agency, authenticity and responsibility. Instead, Sartre's philosophy should be interpreted contextually.The African communitarian thought can enrich the idea of existentialism demonstrating that freedom is exercised in relations and responsible action has consequences on the whole community. Thus, African communitarianism can enter the reconstruction dialogue rather than be perceived as alternative ideas.This synthesis is therefore relevant not only philosophically, but also practically, demonstrating that human beings are agents and also the members of communities; their choices are exercised in the circumstances.Therefore, in the African communitarianism, the real freedom should be understood as the exercise of personal agency in

[53]. Sartre, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, 24–29.

[54]. Menkiti, "Person and Community in African Traditional Thought," 171.

[55]. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 340–400.

[56]. Mogobe B. Ramose,*African Philosophy through Ubuntu*. (Harare: Mond Books, 1999), 49–66.

the awareness of social conditions and contribution to the common good.

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