



Undergraduate assignment feedback form

(to be completed by marker)

Student Name: Bonbra Begum	
Module title: PTE	Student number:
For completion by marker:	
Comments: This is a plausible attempt at the question set, & you try to tackle some difficult issues. However, there's some repetition & the structure of the essay tends to break down in places. Further, more by way of fuller explanation would be beneficial as you tend to make points with out sufficiently developing them. However, overall, you reveal knowledge & understanding of the topic. * Closer attention to the English is needed.	
Marker's signature: 63	Date: 27/11/19
Provisional mark:	
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What does Sartre mean when he contends that humans are condemned to be free?

The notion of Freedom has been a heavily investigated and debated topic within philosophy for the ages. Philosophers from Rousseau to Mills have often discussed freedom in a political context and questioning what it means to be free in relation and within a society.

Gr. 20TH Century, French Philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) had been considered and referred to as the father of existentialism¹. Existentialism is a philosophy which questions and enquires the analysis of the nature of human existence itself. As well as human freedom, morality, responsibility, subjectivity and choice. The study and investigation of existentialism and freedom was within his earlier days of work and philosophy.

Sartre's essay *Existentialism is a humanism* gave an insight in to the first phase of this explanation of what it means to be 'free'. Humans are beings-for-itself, meaning existence precedes essence. Essence is derived from what a thing does and its purpose. Sartre believed human beings to be 'condemned' by this freedom. His exploration into the concept of humans bringing nothingness into the world, and our existential anguish, highlights his reasoning for his belief. It expands further on how we are believed to be free, but also how this anguish and existential anxiety condemns us in our freedom. Sartre says, "Man is condemned to be free; because once thrown in to the world, he is responsible for everything he does."²

Too big a 'leap' from previous sentences.
Gr. Be specific.
Firstly, it must be defined by what Sartre means for a human to exist. His essay *Existentialism is a Humanism* introduces the basis of existence and essence. Existentialism is based "...upon the Cartesian 'I think'...The ego cannot reach them [other people] through the cogito."³ It is the intersubjectivity rather than the subjectivity of an individual person. It is the individuals staring point in that living world. It is assumed when he refers to this Cartesian starting point of 'I', he is using first order phenomenology.

Gr. Good - could you say a bit more on this?
Sartre's description of essence follows that objects, for example a paper knife, are classed as a being-in-itself. Meaning it has an essence which was predetermined. The paper-knives maker had a conception of it, with a definitive purpose. Its production/essence precedes its existence.⁴ Humans are considered to be a being-for-itself, our existence precedes our essence, as we do not have a creator like the paper knife does, and so we create ourselves. A particular example which Sartre uses to display this notion is in his work is of the waiter in the café. Sartre contends that the waiter in the café is acting as though he is a being-in-itself, but this cannot be as the waiter cannot be a waiter, as the same as that the inkwell is an inkwell. This is because the inkwell is a being-in-itself, its essence is to fulfil its role. The waiter is deceiving himself by acting in such a way. This is bad faith. He is a being-for-itself, his essence does not exist or only exists in his death, as humans make themselves and have such a responsibility to do so.⁵

By Sartre saying we create ourselves because we have no creator, it can be correctly interpreted that

¹ Flynn Thomas, Jean-Paul Sartre (Stanford encyclopaedia of philosophy)

² Sartre, *Characterizations of existentialism*, Part 4, chapter 1

³ Sartre "Existentialism is a Humanism" p1

⁴ Ibid p2

⁵ Sartre, "Being and Nothingness" p83

But even if God exists, that does not undermine his argument (or so he says) - could you discuss?

Sartre is saying we have no God. Human essence then is explained as that "...man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up into the world- and defines himself afterwards... [man] is not definable...because to begin with he is nothing. He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself."⁶ Therefore, "...man already conceives himself after already existing – as he will to be after that leap towards existence. Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself."⁷

Therefore, humans ^{Gr.} creating ^{Ex} their own essence and creating themselves allows for the choices they make for who they are. ~~to be limitless~~. They are free. Furthermore, if man must make himself, it is solely his responsibility. It should be noted that while man is considered free, this does not apply to the facticity of man, this being the factual elements that man has no control over, an example being where one was born.

This is where we first feel the gravity of the claim by Sartre that we are 'condemned to be free'. Man's responsibility does not lie singularly with him though, "he is responsible for all men..."⁸ Here Sartre explains our moral existence in our freedom and that we are to treat such with a Kantian attitude. ^{Thrownness} ~~Explain~~.

Man is free and responsible, but not free to reject this freedom. Thus, creating a paradox of freedom. We are "condemned to be free." Sartre goes on in his essay to explain that with this responsibility and paradox, there is an anguish of this freedom. Man is free not to choose and is not free from the responsibility of the fact he is responsible. Man has this responsibility to make himself whatever he wills, but man cannot handle such responsibility. This is especially the case when man is confronted with moral dilemmas. Sartre uses the anecdote of one of his students being torn between caring for his mother or joining the resistance to avenge his brother. It is an anguish which "does not prevent their acting, on the contrary it is the very condition of their action, for their action presupposes that there is a plurality of possibilities, and in choosing one of these, they realize that is has value only because it is chosen."⁹ It is an anguish of "direct responsibility... it is a condition of action itself."¹⁰ No instinct or religious guidance can assist in this anguish of moral responsible dilemma that man must decide upon time after time throughout his life.

Day to day routines give the façade that we do not have a choice. Man deceives himself and will give excuses for why he has not willed himself a certain way or another. The inability to decide, in order to avoid choice and therefore escape our freedom, results in an inefficiency, self-deception and inauthenticity. In the example of the student either joining the resistance or caring for his mother, it could be argued he deceived himself with the expectation of another (his mother).

According to Sartre, this gives groundwork and explanation to how it is so that we exist and how we are free in our existence. His reason for why he believes "man is condemned to be free" has been highlighted, but a critical analysis of such will give a clearly, insight as to his justification. ^{Reward} ~~Gr.~~

Sartre's claim that "man is free" has been explained and his essay *Existentialism is a Humanism* has been explored throughout to further that explanation. But in order to truly grasp what Sartre meant by man being 'condemned' by this freedom, his claims must be analysed.

The main point Sartre focuses on when discussing man's freedom to be a burden, is anguish. The anguish we feel in our responsibility is a reason why our freedom condemns us. ^{Wrong word. - Reward.}

⁶ ibid

⁷ Ibid p3

⁸ Ibid p4

⁹ Ibid p4-5

¹⁰ Ibid p5

Through critically analysing the points that Sartre has presented, we are able to discover how exactly humans are condemned by freedom. Anguish must be further explored to understand, as well as looking in to opposing views of other philosophers.

Bad faith and anguish were previously mentioned in this essay, it will now be further analysed to gain a more in-depth understanding. Sartre's meaning of bad faith is when a person deceives themselves to the reality that they are free and responsible, i.e. the waiter thinking he is only a waiter, not that he is a person acting as a waiter. If he were to act in good faith then the waiter would act in a way he would when he is at home or with friends, more authentically. This could be done in the actions he does when being a waiter, so for example, there a particular parameters to do when in the role of the waiter, a particular characteristic of being a waiter and of that job could be carrying a tray a certain way. He could however carry the tray the same way he would when he is at home, thus being more authentic and not acting in bad faith.

Further developing on from bad faith, the concept of nothingness will be introduced to illustrate freedom and how it could also be a burden. Sartre says that humans bring a nothingness in to this world, a gap. He uses the example of expecting to meet Pierre in the café, however he is left with a Pierre-shaped hole. Sartre uses the term 'nihilation' to refer to nothingness. One would assume nihilation to refer to destruction, but Sartre means in it to turn in to a non-being, as though producing into nothingness.

Gr. { Another problem or critique offered by Bergson in terms of negation. Negation is the ability to view the world and us as another way than we are. Bergson claims that the example of the café and Pierre is an act of negation, in that Pierre is missing, and so there is a Pierre shaped hole in the café, and so there is an act of negating in this. Similarly, to Bergson's example of expecting to have 1500 francs, but *only* having 1300 francs. However, a response to this would be that the nothingness comes before negation because of pre-judgmental attitudes. Negation looks at the contrast of the lack of Pierre vs the presence of Pierre. The pre-judgemental attitude looks at the pre-judgement of Pierre being present within the café, but met with the reality he is not, therefore, producing a gap, a nothingness. His example of vertigo further highlights this gap. Sartre explains the anguish felt when looking down from a cliff. He says the anguish is not from accidentally falling, but from the distrust of ones own actions in that one could throw oneself over the cliff. This distrust is an anxiety and anguish. It is the nothingness between self and future self. It is seeing ourselves at the bottom of the cliff. One is not the one at the bottom of the cliff, but one is the person in the future. The fear of tat freedom creates that anguish.

Sartre explains that temptation also creates this anguish. He uses the example of the gambler to illustrate this. The gambler looks in the past and sees the man, he exclaims that e man is not him. Right then the man has good perseverance and resolution. The man in the past that he sees is not affecting him right then as he approaches the table for temptation. So, the man must resist temptation and make his own, take responsibility. Nothing prevents him. In that example, conscious is separated from its past. There is nothingness, freedom and responsibility. His own freedom puts him at a distance from himself.

20th Century philosopher Merleau-Ponty was a notable phenomenologist. A critique to Sartre's work could be argued from and with support from Ponty's work. Sartre claims we are 'condemned to be', but Ponty claims we are condemned to meaning, meaning we cannot escape the meaning of the

world. Sartre when discussing our freedom mainly spoke in terms of consciousness. Ponty meant we gained our understanding of the meaning of the world around us through our body. It is possible to argue Sartre's work as being overly intellectual. Take for example, in the instance that a person was being tortured, Sartre would claim that a person is always able to choose their attitude no matter what, that have the responsibility of themselves to act and choose who or what they are in that moment. Ponty claims that we are embodied creatures, our consciousness cannot transcend our body, meaning we are not free to do otherwise. This attitude aligns more realistically with humans as it is difficult to imagine a person being able to act in any other way while suffering torture.

The ethical implications of Sartre's work could be considered to be highly positive as it encourages one to take responsibility and accountability of ones actions. However, the discussion of a person being-for-others as opposed to a being-in-myself, does evoke a cold and objectifying view. Sartre's example of the keyhole of a person looking through the keyhole and observing people inside a room, but then this person hears footsteps behind them and is ridden with guilt and shame. The fact they are being observed creates this alienation and this fixing of them as a being-for-others. This guilt captures them and they are seen how they can never see themselves, both psychologically and metaphysically. Sartre's solution to this is to eye-ball the person back. But applying this to a different dominating relationship, i.e. capturer and civilian, if the capturer tortures the civilian, no matter how hard the civilian tries to objectify the other person, they can not assert themselves and stop themselves from being tortured. From a psychological and existential point of view this argument is sound, but on a wider ethical point of view within society and politics¹¹, this view can be rebutted as weak.

To conclude, Sartre explains that man is free, and his freedom means he is responsible for his essence. Thus, giving further cause as to why "man is condemned".

His essay *Existentialism is a Humanism* and his book *Being and Nothingness*, explore and expand on this philosophy of existentialism, and have greatly influenced thinkers of today. His impact was immense, with a following and interest from thousands of people nationwide.

However, philosophers of phenomenology may disagree with a few of Sartre's points, his attitude and philosophy of man being responsible for himself is a deeply insightful and optimistic point of view. Sartre explains that the anguish which is felt which 'condemns' us in our freedom is almost essential in being free. Existentially, his argument is sound but could be critiqued as too psychological.

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¹¹ Anderson, *Two Ethics*, p31

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There are some ✓
items here that haven't been
referenced.

