

Thrownness as Reliable Path to the Genuine Existence of Human Beings

Chenglinkuan Jiang *

Canadian International School of Beijing, 100125 38 Liangmaqiao Rd, Chaoyang District, Beijing, China

* Corresponding Author Email: Lincolnjiang85@gmail.com

Abstract. The philosophical movement of existentialism has been significantly influenced by the contributions of Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre, who are considered to be pivotal figures in this field. Although they both address fundamental aspects of the human condition, their philosophical methodologies differ significantly. Examining these divergent viewpoints is essential for understanding the depth and intricacy of the existentialist perspective. This article employs a comparative methodology to analyse the perspectives of Heidegger and Sartre on the fundamental aspects of human existence. The discussion will focus on Heidegger's notion of Dasein, which refers to the fundamental state of human existence. It will examine how his concepts of finitude and *geworfenheit* (thrownness) influence our comprehension of authenticity. The text will analyse Sartre's fundamental principle, which states that existence comes before essence. The concept emphasises the significance of individuals assuming responsibility for their actions and recognises the potential risks associated with making decisions in an uncertain environment. An analysis of Heidegger and Sartre in connection with Albert Camus and Simone de Beauvoir may reveal further nuances of existentialism. Through analysing these inquiries and exploring the interplay between existentialist philosophy and modern existence, researchers can develop a more profound understanding of the fundamental nature of humanity in a world where freedom and responsibility are intertwined.

Keywords: Existentialism; Human Existence; Thrownness.

1. Introduction

The concept of existence has been a cornerstone of philosophical inquiry for centuries [1]. What does it mean to be human? How do we define ourselves in relation to the world around us? These fundamental questions have led philosophers down diverse paths, each offering unique insights into the nature of our being. Existentialism, a prominent 20th-century philosophical movement, stands out for its emphasis on individual freedom and responsibility [2].

Two key figures within existentialism, Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre, have profoundly shaped our understanding of human existence [3]. Despite sharing a core concern with the human condition, their philosophical approaches diverge in significant ways. Analyzing these contrasting perspectives is crucial to grasping the richness and complexity of the existentialist outlook.

This article takes a comparative approach, examining how Heidegger and Sartre view the fundamental aspects of human existence. It will delve into Heidegger's concept of Dasein, the "being-there" that defines human existence, and explore how his ideas of finitude and *geworfenheit* (thrownness) shape our understanding of authenticity [4]. In contrast, it will examine Sartre's central tenet – "existence precedes essence [5]." Here, humans are not born with a predetermined essence but rather forging their own through choices and actions. By analyzing both perspectives, we can gain a nuanced understanding of freedom and responsibility in the existentialist framework. Ultimately, this article aims to illuminate the contrasting paths these thinkers take in addressing the question of existence. Their divergent views on the nature of freedom, authenticity, and our relationship with the world offer valuable insights into the human condition and its complexities.

2. Heidegger's Dasein: Thrownness and Authenticity

Heidegger's existential philosophy centers on the concept of Dasein, which translates to "being-there [4]." Dasein is not simply a human being, but rather a way of being that is fundamentally in-the-world. Unlike other entities, Dasein is not pre-defined or fixed. It is constantly thrown (geworfenheit) into existence, facing a world full of possibilities and anxieties.

This thrownness highlights a crucial aspect of Heidegger's thought: finitude. Dasein is aware of its own mortality and the limitations of its existence [4]. This awareness can lead to Angst (anxiety), a fundamental feeling of dread in the face of nothingness. However, for Heidegger, Angst is not something to be avoided. It is through confronting Angst that Dasein can achieve authenticity.

Authenticity, for Heidegger, involves taking responsibility for one's existence. Dasein can choose to live in an inauthentic way, conforming to societal norms and avoiding the anxieties of thrownness. However, this is a form of self-deception. Authenticity requires facing one's finitude and actively engaging with the world.

One way human being engages with the world is through care (Sorge). Care refers to the constant concern and preoccupation that defines our being-in-the-world. We care for ourselves, for others, and for the things around us. Through care, the living existence shapes its being and gives meaning to the world.

3. Sartre: The Anguish of Absolute Freedom and the Burden of Choice

Jean-Paul Sartre's existential philosophy hinges on the concept of existence preceding essence. Unlike a pre-programmed machine, humans are not born with a predetermined nature or preordained purpose. We exist first, thrust into the world without a script. It's only through our choices and actions, big and small, that we define who we are [5]. This means we are not bound by societal expectations or pre-set roles. We are utterly free. However, this freedom comes with a heavy and sometimes paralyzing burden – we are condemned to be free. We cannot escape the responsibility of shaping our own existence through the choices we make. Every decision, from the seemingly insignificant act of choosing breakfast cereal to the life-altering choice of career paths, is a declaration of who we want to be. This absolute responsibility for self-creation can be overwhelming and lead to a state of bad faith.

Bad faith arises when we attempt to deny our freedom and the responsibility that comes with it. We may cling to pre-defined roles, blaming external forces for our choices or deceiving ourselves into believing we are not free. This can manifest in various ways, like the person stuck in a dead-end job who blames the economy or lack of opportunities rather than acknowledging their own choices in staying there. Bad faith, for Sartre, represents an inauthentic way of being.

In contrast, authenticity entails embracing our freedom and taking full responsibility for our actions. We must acknowledge that we are constantly choosing, moment by moment, who we want to be. This ongoing process of self-creation, through the choices we make, defines our essence. The complexities of encountering the "other" with their own independent choices, a source of potential anxiety in Sartre's philosophy, will be explored in the next section.

4. Freedom and Authenticity: A Comparative Look at Heidegger and Sartre

Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre, titans of existentialism, though united in their exploration of human existence, arrive at distinct conclusions [6]. Examining their views on freedom and authenticity reveals fascinating divergences. Both philosophers acknowledge the human capacity for freedom. However, freedom isn't merely about indulging whims. It comes with the weighty burden of responsibility. People are the architects of their own existence, shaped by the choices we make. Additionally, both reject determinism, the notion that biology or social circumstances predetermine us. We are not simply products of our upbringing or genes.

While freedom and responsibility are shared ground, the source and focus of these concepts differ. For Heidegger, freedom stems from our "thrownness" into existence. We are cast into a world of possibilities and limitations, and our freedom lies in how we choose to respond to this situation. Sartre takes a more radical stance. Freedom for him is absolute and precedes essence. We aren't born with a predetermined nature, but rather define ourselves through our choices. This absolute freedom becomes the foundation for authenticity.

The focus of authenticity also diverges. For Heidegger, authenticity involves confronting our finitude and anxieties like Angst (dread). We must accept these limitations and take responsibility for being-in-the-world. Sartre emphasizes embracing our absolute freedom and taking full responsibility for shaping our essence through choices. Denying our freedom leads to "bad faith," an inauthentic existence where we avoid responsibility for our choices.

Our relationship with the world takes on different forms in each philosopher's work. Heidegger introduces the concept of Umwelt. This refers to our environment, not as a separate entity, but as a world in which Dasein ("being-there") exists [4]. We are not separate from the world, but rather "in-the-world." Our engagement with the world happens through care (Sorge), a constant concern that defines how we relate to everything around us. Sartre doesn't use a term like Umwelt, but the world is still the context in which we exercise our freedom. A key aspect of encountering the world in Sartre's thought is the "other." Every individual we meet embodies their own independent choices, which can be a source of anxiety or connection.

Heidegger emphasizes confronting limitations and taking responsibility for our existence within a world we are thrown into. Sartre focuses on the absolute nature of our freedom and constantly redefining ourselves through choices. While their approaches differ, both thinkers offer valuable insights into the complexities of human freedom, responsibility, and our relationship with the world. They provide alternative paths through the labyrinth of human existence, each illuminating different facets of the human experience.

By comparisons above, this article has discovered that Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre have different perspectives on the nature of human existence, particularly in relation to the ideas of freedom and authenticity, as a result of our analysis of their respective philosophical philosophies. In spite of the fact that both of these philosophers are well-known figures in the field of existentialism, their philosophies are strikingly different from one another. Acquiring an understanding of these distinctions sheds light on the complexities of human existence as well as the myriad of facets that comprise freedom and accountability. When individuals find themselves thrust into existence, they are confronted with a world that is full of potentialities and apprehensions. This is what Heidegger means when he talks about the state of "being-there," which is in reference to Dasein. Heidegger is of the opinion that freedom can be attained by confronting the circumstances that we are born into and acknowledging the limitations that are inherent to us. Anxiety, which can be defined as a profound and persistent fear of emptiness, acts as a catalyst for the genuine expression of one's true, authentic self.

The concept of authenticity entails acknowledging these limitations and taking responsibility for our existence in the world (Umwelt) by means of care (Sorge), which is the ongoing preoccupation that shapes our relationship with our surroundings [4]. Sartre proposes a radical interpretation of the concept of freedom. As far as he is concerned, the state of being is more important than the fundamental nature or purpose of something. The decisions that we make throughout our lives are what ultimately determine who we are; our inherent nature is not something that is predetermined at birth. Having said that, alongside this unrestricted liberty comes the responsibility of being accountable for one's actions. In the event that this liberty is not acknowledged, one is said to be acting in "bad faith," which is a state of being that is not genuine and is characterised by self-deception. Sartre's idea of authenticity entails fully embracing our freedom and actively shaping our essence through the choices that we make on purpose. There is a possibility that the presence of individuals who are able to make their own independent decisions can cause feelings of unease; however, there

is also the possibility that this existence can stimulate personal development and establish meaningful relationships.

5. Conclusion

The philosophies of Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre demonstrate contrasting perspectives on the concepts of freedom and authenticity. Heidegger's concept of Dasein, which refers to the state of "being-there," involves the immersion of an individual in a realm of potentialities and anxieties. Heidegger discovers freedom by directly facing the concept of "thrownness" and our limited existence. Angst, which is the persistent fear of emptiness, motivates the pursuit of authenticity. Authenticity refers to the recognition of these limitations and the acceptance of responsibility for our existence in the world (Umwelt) through care (Sorge), which is the ongoing concern that influences our interactions with everything in our surroundings. Nevertheless, Sartre promotes absolute autonomy. According to him, the state of existing comes before the fundamental nature or purpose of something. Our identity is shaped by the decisions we make, rather than the circumstances of our birth. Unlimited freedom is accompanied by the need to be accountable. Refusing to acknowledge this freedom results in "bad faith," self-deception, and a lack of authenticity. Sartre posited that authenticity entails embracing one's freedom and actively shaping one's essence through deliberate choices. The presence of individuals who make different choices can elicit feelings of anxiety, but it can also facilitate personal development and the establishment of meaningful relationships. Heidegger and Sartre's ideas are significant beyond the realm of philosophy. Existentialism questions the inherent meaning and purpose of life. The concept highlights the importance of individuals taking accountability for their actions and acknowledges the potential hazards associated with making choices in an unpredictable environment. An examination of Heidegger and Sartre in relation to Albert Camus and Simone de Beauvoir may uncover additional existentialist subtleties. By examining these inquiries and the connections between existentialist philosophy and contemporary existence, we can gain a deeper comprehension of the essence of humanity in a world where liberty and accountability are inseparable.

References

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