

Sartrean Freedom and his Idea of Concrete Liberalism

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**Abstract:** In the philosophical arena, freedom has been tackled beginning from the ancient period. It has been tackled by political philosophers like Thomas Hobbes, John Lock, Jean Jacques Rousseau, and John Swart Mill. They dealt with it from a political perspective as having political ends and means. In the contemporary world, freedom is seen not only from a political view but also from a philosophical and conceptual understanding as fundamental to politics as well. This article through descriptive and analytical methods shows the relevance of Sartrean freedom to society. It shows the ontological understanding of freedom as a principle for practical freedom. Ontological freedom was seen as basic for ontic (material) freedom and so for social freedom as well. However, Sartre's understanding of concrete liberalism was not enough for social freedom. Therefore, the article concludes that there should be trans-socio-political freedom.

**Keywords:** freedom, ontological, ontic, social freedom, Trans-socio-political freedom

### 1.0 Introduction

Sartre in his philosophical works dealt with freedom both ontologically and ontically. In his later works he concluded that there should be concrete liberalism whereby everyone is considered according to the contribution that one makes to the wellbeing of the country. In this article we will argue that Sartrean concept of concrete liberalism is not enough and is not preferable for the freedom of society. In order to have a clear picture, the article will clarify historical perspective of freedom, Sartrean notion of freedom both ontologically and ontically. It will deal with social freedom also as it extended to *trans-socio-political* understanding as an expansion of Sartrean freedom to social politics. Finally, it will show the implication of Sartrean freedom.

### 1.1 Historical Perspective of Freedom

The concept of Freedom is the matter which has occupied the world of philosophies. It has been tackled by several thinkers beginning from antiquity yet it is problematic in its practicality. In simple terms, freedom is the ability to make changes without having constraints or it is to have the power to fulfill one's end. In any society, for the individuals as well, the end cannot be perpetual sorrow or perpetual subjugation but if possible it is *perpetual freedom*<sup>1</sup> and happiness.

In today's world freedom is a concern to every society and each individual. The concept of freedom from a human perspective has developed and got a different understanding from time to time and from generation to generation. It is defined in each age accordingly. Thus, Ralph H. Lutz argues that if we want to maintain freedom, we need to tolerate and respect the rights of human reason<sup>2</sup>. As history teaches us, the first social tolerance is found in the speech of Pericles, the Athenian statesman, who was aware of individual freedom in society. Socrates and Plato also attested to freedom of contemplation and communication. They showed that man has the power to shape his own destiny<sup>3</sup>. Moira M. Walsh describes Aristotle's concept of freedom even though Aristotle never gave any definition

<sup>1</sup> None of us would need to see or imagine the generation before or after us to be in a world of oppression and unfree society. Thus the concept *Perpetual freedom* is the concept that begins in the 'now' of the society and benefits the next society as well.

<sup>2</sup> Ralph H. Lutz, "The History of the Concept of Freedom" *Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors* (1915-1955) 36, no. 1 (Spring, 1950): 19.

<sup>3</sup> Lutz, "The History of the Concept of Freedom", 19.

of freedom. However, Walsh taking from Aristotle's book on *Politics* defines Aristotle's freedom as the "capacity to direct oneself to those ends which one's reason rightly recognizes as choice-worthy"<sup>4</sup>.

Lutz noted that the later addition of Christianity to the Greek concept of Freedom is the idea of the dignity of human personality in the brotherhood of mankind. He said that Aquinas believed that the intellect and the will have authority over free will and this is what he calls true freedom. According to Aquinas, Lutz added, that true freedom is that which strives for human excellence<sup>5</sup>. Spinoza in favor of freedom describes the purpose of the states and the government as the guardian of liberty. As Lutz puts it, for Spinoza the government is ultimately neither to rule nor to restrain by fear nor to exact obedience. It is to free human beings from insecurity and to observe natural rights that are the rights to live and work freely without causing risk to themselves and others. Furthermore, in the so-called democratic creed which expresses the Declaration of Independence, the first ten amendments to the constitution make it clear that the preservation of men's inalienable rights and natural freedoms is the goal of political society. Liberty is the first of these rights, followed by the ability to oppose persecution and the security of one's property<sup>6</sup>.

According to Lutz, John Dewey sees freedom as the most practical of moral questions which is part of every event necessarily but not apart from them. In line with this Kant has described and understood freedom as obedience to moral law. Kant in *Critique of Practical Reason* said that "whereas freedom is indeed the *ratio essendi* of the moral law, the moral law is the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom"<sup>7</sup>. Hegel followed Kant in his identification of organic freedom with the mind. At this point, Hegel considered the ideal development and the progress of freedom in human society to a higher and more spiritual form. The romantic philosophers who followed Hegel identified freedom with natural law while Spinoza contrarily identified freedom with necessity<sup>8</sup>.

Karl Marx in his work tried to achieve economic freedom but it ended up failing, and it has diminished cultural freedom as Lutz observed. As it is clear in today's world, political freedom also failed and it seems the failure is growing rather than diminishing. As a result of the failure of political freedom today, in many parts of the world, freedom is violated and politician always victimizes civilian. Lutz was also concerned about the continued failure of freedom and the triumph of tyrannical collectivism<sup>9</sup>.

Thomas Hobbs sees freedom in the absence of external constraints. However, he supports absolute government rather than democracy and autonomy in a sense of self-determination<sup>10</sup>. Similarly, John Locke believed in *perfect freedom* bounded by natural freedom<sup>11</sup>. If natural freedom is considered in connection with sovereignty it remains problematic. John Swart Mill sees freedom from the well-being of the individual as having less interference with his issue by society. Sartrean freedom in contrast is more philosophical and is unhindered by others as long as one remains conscious.

## 1.2 Sartrean Notion of Freedom

Sartrean concept of freedom is two fold; it is twofold because his philosophy of freedom is guided by the principle that "existence precedes essence"<sup>12</sup>. The concept of freedom can be seen first in his earlier philosophy as ontological freedom whereby he portrays freedom as absolute and secondly in the later works where he deals with freedom from a material perspective. In his early philosophy, he asserts that freedom is simply the ability to negate

<sup>4</sup> Moira M. Walsh, "Aristotle's Conception of Freedom," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 35, no 4, (October 1997): 495-507. DOI: 10.1353/hph.1997.008.

<sup>5</sup> Lutz, "The History of the Concept of Freedom", 20.

<sup>6</sup> Lutz, "The History of the Concept of Freedom", 21.

<sup>7</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Practical Reason*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar, (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.2002), 5.

<sup>8</sup> Lutz, "The History of the Concept of Freedom", 23.

<sup>9</sup> Lutz, "The History of the Concept of Freedom", 23.

<sup>10</sup> Alan Apperley, "Hobbes on Democracy," *Politics* 19, no. 3 (September 1999): 165–71.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9256.00101>.

<sup>11</sup> John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, ed. C. B. Macpherson (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. Indianapolis. 1980), 8.

<sup>12</sup> Sartre, Jean Paul, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, ed. John Kulka, trans. Carol Macomber, (London: Yale University Press/ New heaven and London. 2007), 29.

the being of a thing (the in-itself), it is to stop being a *thing* and to start to become aware or become *conscious* of something and the self. The human reality is the non-coincidence of the being of things. Therefore, all human beings are free as long as the normal essence of the human being is concerned<sup>13</sup>. However, how this theory of freedom will be implemented in a practical world is the question since we look for the practical freedom not merely conceptual one. In the coming topics we will emphasize ontological and ontic freedom which distinguish two perspectives of Sartrean freedom, but before we give a detailed account, we will see in general as follows.

Ontological freedom according to Sartre is recognition of our existence, which affirms our difference with the other entity. Absolute freedom is equivalent to the burning desire of a human being to exist in its fullness. This has no connection with the supernatural, divine, or any other higher power or supreme authority rather; it is the realization of its isolation<sup>14</sup>. When and how it is isolated is not clear in Sartre's philosophy. But the isolation is to separate itself from the *in-itself*, then as soon as it is isolated, the being is free. This freedom is manifested in anguish, boredom, and desire. He argues that man is always in anguish because he knows that facing absolute freedom is a task that requires equivalent responsibility<sup>15</sup>.

Sartre is so determined about freedom. He said "In fact, we are a freedom which chooses, but we do not choose to be free. We are condemned to freedom..."<sup>16</sup> here he attested that we cannot not be free. Freedom is not a choice, instead, it is the reality that we are obliged to accept even though we do not like it or we do not go for it. It is something natural to man. Thus we are freedom. In addition to that, being free we have autonomy of choices. This perspective if we analyze it well is a profound foundation of political freedom. Consequently, to individual societies like Tigrayans who are condemned to face unimaginable man-made catastrophes and oppression, it is worthy to choose this human freedom to attain at least the minimum social requirements of freedom and political stability. Sartre's saying that "We are condemned to freedom," "Man is condemned to freedom,"<sup>17</sup> and "I am absolutely free" are an assertion that is based on the ontological understanding of freedom but remains fundamental to material freedom. Therefore, transcending the normal is what keeps one looking for the future. If one does not transcend the present, he cannot know the future. For instance, we understand that we are free already when we are able to see that we are in a position of choosing what to do; whether to write or to stop, to have a friend or not, to engage or to divorce, to travel or not, to think for the self or no, etc., we are not able not to be in one of these and other similar kinds of human conditions. At the same time, all these things which we just stated are future-oriented. In support of Sartre we conclude that man is made in freedom. This human condition is, therefore, the unchangeable fact of humans and it transcends the real somehow.

Freedom is the foundation of man's emptiness and his values as well. In freedom, man acts according to the project that one chooses and all the values are according to the person and his projection. The values are the creation of the person and since one is absolutely free, the values follow from his freedom. It is only revealed by active freedom but it is not something to contemplate on it. It is thus Sartre claimed "my freedom is the unique foundation of values and that nothing, absolutely nothing, justifies me in adopting this or that particular value, this or that particular scale of values. As a being by which values exist, I am unjustifiable."<sup>18</sup> Therefore, for him, freedom is an active source of values and values are the fruit of freedom. How can we see this ontology in the practical world? Is it sound when it concerns material freedom?

Material freedom is mainly dealt with in his later works. In the book *Critique of Dialectical Reason (Critique)*, it seems that Sartre is going against his earlier claims. He said;

It would be quite wrong to interpret me as saying that man is free in all situations, as the Stoics claimed. I mean the exact opposite: all men are slaves in so far as their life unfolds in the practico-inert field and in so far as this field is always conditioned by scarcity<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Storm Heter, "Sartre's Political Philosophy," *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ISSN 2161-0002, <https://iep.utm.edu/sartre-p/#>, 5/9/2022.

<sup>14</sup> Jean Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Bannett Hazel E. (Washington: Washington Square Press 1993), xxvi.

<sup>15</sup> Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, 55.

<sup>16</sup> Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 484-485.

<sup>17</sup> Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, 29.

<sup>18</sup> Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 38.

<sup>19</sup> Jean Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, trans. Alan Sheridan – Smith, (London New York: Verso. 2004), 332.

The *practico-inert* field is the world of unconsciousness where things are not able to act towards their future and it is not responsive to the needs even though the society or the group struggles to meet the need. Practico-inert is the idea that Sartre used in *Critique* to negate the praxis which is responsive and is a purposive activity of the conscious beings in their material world. Since *practico-inert* is irresponsive it can be seen as being-in-itself which is unconscious. If it is so, a man cannot be in an absolute practico-inert field as long as he lives. It is understandable that man can be conditioned by *scarcity* and is real in our world, but it is not unchangeable. Therefore, man having reason can struggle to maintain the praxis. Nonetheless, in reality, as long as *scarcity* exists, material freedom is always limited.

However, ontological freedom remains fundamental; and actually, it does not contradict material freedom. While ontological freedom is concerned with our conviction, material freedom is its application. According to Sartre freedom is *absolute*<sup>20</sup> but it does not mean that there is no obstacle or that there is nothing that hinders. Freedom is absolute only in its ontological sense. It is to say that everyone everywhere is free in terms of the ability to choose from the alternatives, to choose to do this and that. However, to be free from restrictions is not absolute because one will always go against situations that diminish the absoluteness of freedom. Therefore, there are several things that can hinder material freedom. Sartre has argued for *facticity* for instance.

Facticity is the fact of being in front of the situation or having a body as it is situated in time and space<sup>21</sup>. For instance, my birthday is a fact that is a fixed event only on the same day of my birth. I have freedom but I cannot change that day to another day. In short, my history is an unchangeable fact. Correcting the history is up to me and completely depends on my freedom of changing my history in the future. Mean to say that I can be a pilot in the future by striving to change my status of cleaner. Thus the fact of my past is the facticity which is situated as the fact to accept only. Another example is death. Death is the fact that comes which I cannot escape by any means. Yet it appears always as a future as long as I exist. Then, we need to see how Sartrean freedom is absolute and how it is limited.

### 1.1.1 Ontological Freedom

Ontological freedom is a pure category that is immaterial but grounded. The ontological freedom of Sartre can be seen from two directions. The first is the characteristics of our consciousness and the second is the interpretation of reality by the subject. How can we see the characteristics of consciousness? Why is it necessary for consciousness to be defined in certain ways? How can consciousness be described in terms of freedom? To answer these questions, we need to see Sartre understands of consciousness since his implication of ontological freedom is elucidated in consciousness.

Consciousness has its unique behavior which makes it so fundamental for underlying the absolute freedom of man. Sartre argues that consciousness is an entity that is not a tangible thing like the mind, brain, or whatsoever. According to him, consciousness is an activity that makes the being be revealed. It is neither a constituting entity nor constituted as concrete. Sartre argues that “Consciousness is not its own motive inasmuch as it is empty of all content.”<sup>22</sup> It is not subject to any concrete reality or materiality. It has no substances which actualize it in the world as that of being-in-itself. It is outside of the concrete reality. Sartre, as we have seen elsewhere, distinguishes between the two beings; being-for-itself which he attributed to the being of humans, and being-in-itself which denotes the being of things. Consciousness is the activity of the being-for-itself.

Consciousness as an activity of the thinking subject (being-for-itself) always is intentional and temporal. Intentional because consciousness for Sartre as for Husserl is “consciousness of something,”<sup>23</sup> it always makes its direction towards objects other than itself. It is temporal because its orientation or it always concerns the future. According to Sartre freedom is similar to or is a synonym of consciousness. Human reality (human being) cannot be unconscious, or natural without the ability to be aware of the objects and the self as well. Therefore, human freedom consists of consciousness and every conscious being is free.

<sup>20</sup> Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 581.

<sup>21</sup> Christina Howells “ed.,” *Cambridge Companions to Sartre*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 16.

<sup>22</sup> Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 34.

<sup>23</sup> Howells, *Cambridge Companions to Sartre*, 20.

Ontological freedom is absolute in all cases. But is different from material freedom even though it is fundamental to material freedom. Materially man is not absolutely free as long as his body is situated in time and space. If a human being is not ontologically free then physical (material) freedom will not make any change in his material freedom. The will to be physically liberated depends on ontological freedom. One has to have such quality of being free ontologically unless the one who is condemned to be the slave or to be oppressed, imprisoned, the waiter, religious, politician, etc. if they are okay with their conditions it is futile to strive to speak of freedom at all. Because it is how they want to be<sup>24</sup>.

Accordingly, David Detmer's understanding of Sartre's freedom, demonstrates that the condition for practical freedom is ontological freedom. Sartre, Detmer argues, underlines the logical consequences of the lack the ontological freedom saying "a being that lacks the power of conscious choice cannot be enslaved, nor can the freedom of such a being be enhanced or diminished"<sup>25</sup>. Ontological freedom, according to Detmer, is the potential for varying degrees of freedom. If there is a lack of that capacity to choose and longing for freedom, the enslavement to the slave, and subjugation to the oppressed, the prison to imprison, being under the master as a waiter, being religious or politician forever while having a lot of odds in life, etc., does not give any meaning at all.

However, this freedom is limited materially. The prisoner is free materially if and only if the prison bars are freely opened. Nevertheless, it does not mean that the prisoner should wait until the prison bars are left open. Ontologically this prisoner can think absolutely and choose absolutely to break and go out of prison to liberate himself. It is thus Sartre claims;

we shall not say that a prisoner is always free to go out of prison, which would be absurd, nor that he is always free to long for release, which would be an irrelevant truism, but that he is always free to try to escape (or get himself liberated); that is, that whatever his condition may be, he can project his escape and learn the value of his project by undertaking some action.<sup>26</sup>

Therefore, be it the individual or the society must have this ontological kind of freedom and must strive to have it to their best if freedom is needed. Ontological freedom then is not merely an attitude or a vain wish but demands action, the action which actualizes such freedom in reality. This considers both obtaining freedom and enjoying freedom while being in a chain or while one is surrounded by a lot of tribulations.

Gabriel Marcel even though he didn't agree with Sartre's assertion he said that for Sartre "freedom is equivalent to choice."<sup>27</sup> He summed up his understanding of Sartre's concept of freedom by saying "the choice is always absurd, since it is beyond all reasons, and since it is impossible not to choose"<sup>28</sup> and it is something which is like *free intention* which is equal to its being because Marcel argues, for Sartre *free intention* is fundamental to his project and he believes that it is his being. Truly, if we understand freedom of choice as the inseparable quality of the conscious being and free intention is equal to this being then freedom transcends all materiality, it is not subject to and of any such entity. Therefore, man as a free being has absolute freedom<sup>29</sup>.

The reality of this human freedom is ever problematic and always has limitation in its finality. Sartre understanding this, has considered in his theory of freedom both perspectives. The perspective that we have just analyzed is ontological and it transcends the materiality and material freedom. However, material freedom remains deeply linked to ontological freedom since one cannot be free unless he/she is conscious of his choice.

### 1.1.2 Ontic Freedom

Ontic freedom is what we have been discussing as material freedom. Material freedom is a freedom that is physically linked to everydayness. If freedom concerns, for Sartre, one must be different from being-in-itself. Differing from being-in-itself is to be being-for-itself which we have discussed as conscious active beings. Conscious active being

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<sup>24</sup> David Detmer, *Freedom As A Value: A Critique of the Ethical Theory of Jean Paul Sartre*, (United States of America: Open Court La Salle, Illinois, 1986): 68.

<sup>25</sup> Detmer, *Freedom As A Value: A Critique of the Ethical Theory of Jean Paul Sartre*, 68.

<sup>26</sup> Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 483-484.

<sup>27</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existentialism* (York: Citadel Press, Inc. 1970), 80.

<sup>28</sup> Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existentialism*, 81.

<sup>29</sup> Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existentialism*, 81.



then equals free being. This free being as Kierkegaard said is endowed with the gift of choice or freedom<sup>30</sup>. Therefore, just only being conscious, he/she is free. How can one be free in a chain? How can one say now, for instance, Tigray is free while seeing and experiencing the unfreedom of Tigray materially?

In *Being and Nothingness*, he has asserted that being aware of our being in a chain or our being oppressedness is itself freedom, because for one to know his situation one needs to face it. Thus the situation becomes the ground for one to realize his freedom. According to Sartre freedom and situation are interdependent and one without the other is in-existent. Human reality is subject to obstacles and resistance everywhere which it does not create but this resistance and obstacle have meaning only the by free choice of the human reality. In this sense the ontic freedom, be it easy or hard is freely chosen. For instance, to climb the rock. The rock can be hard or easy according to the way I am prepared for it, but to climb it or not is my choice<sup>31</sup>.

However, even though we agree with Sartre on the former point of view we see that in the case of oppression, it is different. In this case, the oppressor is the one who decides, makes loose, or tight the fate, to do this or that, etc. According to Sartre, in oppression freedom is against freedom. In *Notebooks for an Ethics*, he said "There is oppression when freedom turns against itself"<sup>32</sup> but from the general point of view, it does not mean that freedom is limited in this case. Nevertheless, freedom is limiting another freedom. This is quite different from the idea of masochists who may take the oppression as a chance or Stoics who asserts that one should change his goal according to the situation rather than his situation.

Ontic freedom is a sense of freedom in which achievement is a condition for one to have freedom. One needs to be practically free from oppression, prison, and chain as well as he/she needs to be free materially and economically. As we have noted above Sartre has described in his *Critique*, in the *Notebooks for an Ethics* that the one who is in the practico-inert field accompanied by *scarcity* is never free at all. Similarly, according to Heter, we can say that one can be ontically free only when one has got the assurance of his life. This can be material security, freedom from oppression, and enjoying the sociocultural values and goods which keep man and sustains him to attain his chosen end<sup>33</sup>.

According to Herter, Sartre has replaced the notion of consciousness with the Marxist notion of *praxis* in order to describe human existence. Human freedom is not only inward but it should go beyond that and a change of attitude is not enough to say one is free. According to him, Sartre gave a lot of emphasis on the situation or structural influence in his later work, to give a clear understanding of human choice. One needs to see and comprehend the situation in choosing to achieve his project. For instance, one would prefer to go to Tigray and enjoy summer weather but the current situation does not favor him/her to go there, he/she choose to remain because the situation in Kenya or America is preferable to the one in Tigray<sup>34</sup>.

Generally, ontological and ontic freedoms are oriented towards the freedom of the human being as a whole. The freedom Sartre advocates has different senses. Norman McLeod made clear that there is practical freedom in both negative and positive senses (i.e. in negative practical freedom is to be free from external restrictions and coercions, and positive freedom is the freedom to do A, B, and C) and there is existential freedom which is freedom from the casual chain and freedom to choose from the alternatives<sup>35</sup>. This understanding of freedom is it physically, psychologically, sometimes appears to be different according to the stages of human growth. There is no measure of choice between a one-year-old kid and a thirty-five years old man in serious matters. Of course that they may choose according to their situation but may not have the same mature ability of choice. Nevertheless, what matters in both of them is the ability to choose, whether a mature man or a small kid, both are free to choose accordingly to the alternatives. In their choice, while ontological freedom is substantial to ontic freedom, ontic freedom is the actuality or realization of the ontological freedom. Be it a kid or a man, both are aware of their possibilities. They

<sup>30</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling Repetition*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983), 208.

<sup>31</sup> Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 489.

<sup>32</sup> Jean Paul Sartre, *Notebooks for an Ethics*, trans. David Pellauer, (London, Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1992), 332.

<sup>33</sup> Heter, "Sartre's Political Philosophy."

<sup>34</sup> Heter, "Sartre's Political Philosophy."

<sup>35</sup> Norman McLeod, "Existential Freedom in the Marxism of Jean Paul Sartre," *Dialogue*, 7, (1968): 26-44.

have the capacity to choose from what is given in order to realize material freedom. Since we have laid the foundation of freedom in general let us now see social freedom as the main idea our argument.

## 1.2 Social Freedom

In the contemporary world, the idea of social freedom and its concern is a problem to every human being, yet human beings become its obstacle, not least, if not more than natural catastrophic phenomena. Society, one way or another strives for freedom through political means in most cases. Instead, Sartre tried to see from the individual perspective. According to him, individual freedom equals social freedom. Every individual who choose, chooses for others as well. The individual is responsible for the choice that he/she takes<sup>36</sup>.

The individual choice is also free in any circumstances as long as the individual is responsible for his choice. In *Anti-Semite and Jew* Sartre has discussed the social problem of his time portraying the individual actors each of whom is given their name and the class they represent. Anti-Semite, the authentic Jew, Democrat, and the inauthentic Jew. Anti-Semite is the proletariat with a lower middle economy class who sees Jews as the direct enemy of France. Democrat is a bourgeois who advocates for all men in general, especially for both anti-Semite and Jew. He advocates for Jew as a man but obliterates him as a Jew, he wanted him to be assimilated, and he supports anti-Semite by advocating for classlessness. An inauthentic Jew is a Jew who completely assimilated and avoids by any means the anti-Semite's construction of Jewishness by taking his identity as more French than French men even though he cannot<sup>37</sup>.

Furthermore, an authentic Jew accepts his Jewish identity but has nothing of his history of religion and his old community. He is just a creation of the time. He does not care about the Jews' values; he does not even search for them in Jewish tradition. He is simply the affirmation of a Jewish entity that is created by the anti-Semite and spirited to protect the identity within the situation but according to Sartre, he has no history at all. Political Zionism, the American Anti-Defamation League, or what he calls the "Jewish league against anti-Semitism"<sup>38</sup> are what Sartre gave as an example of this Jews interest defender. Yet, none of them are authentic according to Sartre.

Finally, Sartre in his play believes that this inauthenticity will end up there and disappear just like the authentic working-class militant anti-Semite will despise the class differences, "reject the myth of social harmony"<sup>39</sup>, and become a member of the defenders of the working class. In this new approach the authentic Jew also gives up his baseless acceptance of the creation of anti-Semite's Jewishness, the attitude of the democrat will change to the authentic understanding of his fellow men, etc. Afterward, dramatically the working class militant appears in his play to create a classless society to end up this kind of social division. Sartre there wished to have the Marxist concept of a classless society. Thus he formulated "concrete liberalism"<sup>40</sup>.

## 1.3 Concrete Liberalism

Concrete Liberalism is the theory that Sartre coined in his *Anti-Semite and Jew*. The theory supports the people who are in the country, who contribute to the country's greatness without distinction of identity. They have full rights as long as they are active participants in developing the country. This right is given to them not because they have *human nature* which Sartre takes as problematic but because of "their active participation in the life of the society"<sup>41</sup>. He thought that this will replace the social division i.e. *social pluralism*.

Sartre proposed concrete liberalism and wished for the disappearance of *social pluralism*. Social pluralism according to him creates division and leads to conflict and conflict brings necessarily oppression and hatred. For instance, the authentic Jew and his consequences are described as the problem. Sartre writes;

The choice of authenticity can, in fact, lead to conflicting political decisions. The Jew can choose to be authentic by asserting his place as Jew in the French community, with all that goes with it of

<sup>36</sup> Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, 24.

<sup>37</sup> Jean Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, trans. George J. Becker, (New York: Schocken Books Inc., 1948), ix - xiv.

<sup>38</sup> Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, xvii.

<sup>39</sup> Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, xvii.

<sup>40</sup> Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, xix.

<sup>41</sup> Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, 105.

rights and martyrdom; he may feel that for him the best way to be French is to declare himself a French Jew. But he may also be led by his choice of authenticity to seek the creation of a Jewish Nation Possessing its own soil and autonomy; he may persuade himself that Jewish authenticity demands that the Jew be sustained by a Jewish national community.<sup>42</sup>

The Jew just being authentic is problematic and the cause of the conflict and will not be unifying but dividing. Recognition then is not the ultimate solution. What Sartre looking for is not the authenticity of who one is, in consideration of what he calls 'human nature;' in this case the authentic Jewishness, but the authenticity which is given because of his participation in fostering the greatness of the country. But recognition of the Jew and other races creates social pluralism.

Therefore, this kind of social pluralism was not acceptable to Sartre even though he was not a pluralist liberal. He instead proposes concrete liberalism which is governed by the *revolutionary transcendence* whereby the differences in culture, identity, tradition, and other differences are assimilated into the universal reality like that of France. In this case, Sartre wants the Jews, Negros, Arabs, and other races after the liquidation of the anti-Semite to be assimilated and form one France where all can be measured according to their contribution to the country's greatness. This according to him would solve all the problems of divided social politics<sup>43</sup>.

However, contrary to this concept we want to propose a new theory which is a social means for freedom through a *trans-socio-political* understanding of society. In the *Trans-socio-political* theory, one only needs to be a citizen of the country. No need of provoking identity or culture or any other identifying factor in each level of the society. What is needed is to formulate a political group that unifies all without any differences and preferences. This theory depends on the *public power* policy that has its power in its hand. The real ideal democracy is its base. We can hardly get an example for this but we can take for instance Tigray Defense Force (TDF). TDF is a military force that is organized by the people without any differences in identity, religion, or political group. The organized force includes people of professions like doctors, engineers, philosophers, scientists, and peasants without differences in the profession for defending Tigray<sup>44</sup>. Thus it is preferable to both Sartre's concrete liberalism and 'fused group' theory. Sartre formulated a *fused* group by means of *interiorized mutuality* but at the end of its maturity alienation took place in his political social group. In his politics what we see is that the conception of freedom is different when it comes to the concrete situation of human beings. Existential freedom which is ontological comes together with practical freedom (i.e. the alternative of choices in both negative and positive freedom). Social freedom standing against the natural freedom of the individual is problematic for the freedom of individuals in society. His conception of social freedom however consists of the reciprocal understanding whereby everyone joins the group to maintain his/her freedom. According to Howard R. Burkle for Sartre men in the group are freer than men in *seriality*<sup>45</sup>.

However, the individual in the group is motivated by his freedom to be a part of the group to fulfill his interests. The group is revolutionary because they come together in order to be secured as individuals. Here everyone in the group is free to decide and in fact, in the fused group one can decide to disturb the group. According to Burkle, to support this group's interest and to prevent the group, it gradually changes into an *institution* whereby people create rules for themselves and they take an 'oath' even to kill in case of default<sup>46</sup>. On the contrary, the *trans-socio-political* theory depending on public power is not something that ends up in alienation but rather as long as society exists it lasts keeping the society in freedom. It has no constraints or institutionalized rules or oaths therefore it is preferable for social freedom and individual as well. It will last because society will always be its own guard and means to its freedom.

#### 1.4 Conclusion

The notion of Sartre's concept of freedom and its consequence of was all about optimistic outcome of a philosophical understanding of freedom as a basic to everyday life of the society. We have seen ontological freedom

<sup>42</sup> Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, 100-101.

<sup>43</sup> Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, 108.

<sup>44</sup> Aman – Omna Tigray Contributor, "The Rise of the Tigray Defense Forces (TIGRAY DEFENSE FORCE)," *omnatigray.org*, August 2021, <https://omnatigray.org/the-rise-of-the-tigray-defense-forces/>, accessed on 8/21/2022.

<sup>45</sup> Howard R. Burkle, "Jean Paul Sartre: Social Freedom in "Critique de la Raison Dialectique," *The Review of Metaphysics*, 19, no. 4 (Jun., 1966): 745.

<sup>46</sup> Burkle, "Jean Paul Sartre: Social Freedom in "Critique de la Raison Dialectique," 746.



as basic concept for practical freedom since one without thinking of freedom or any other issue cannot get conscious outcome of freedom or any other issue that requires our reasoning. We have seen social freedom in Sartre's perspective of Marxist praxis and fused group as a failure. In addition to that we have seen the concrete liberalism and its conception as manipulative to universal culture which denies the authentic identity of the people and its particular culture. Thus we have proposed *trans-socio-political* freedom which highly depends on the society without any difference.

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