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Reflection #2 Kant/Sartre

### Enough Freedom to Choose and to Gain Responsibility

What is freedom and how does it relate to responsibility? According to Webster's dictionary online, freedom is the quality or state of being free. In addition, responsibility is defined as moral, legal or mental accountability. However, these definitions do not do justice for the meaning that both Immanuel Kant and Jean-Paul Sartre try to wrangle around with in regards to their philosophies. In an effort to try to understand the relation between freedom and responsibility, both philosophers cover important concepts that form their philosophical views, such as freedom, morality, dignity, human nature, and choice. However, both philosophers have slight ways of thinking when it comes to how to define such concepts. Therefore perceiving the relation between freedom and responsibility differently in comparison to each other, ultimately affecting the way people think about freedom and responsibility in their daily lives.

Kant's general philosophy in understanding the relation between freedom and responsibility is determined mostly through the understanding of morality and what is moral or what can be moral. Kant sees morality as a way of living and developing character, therefore everyone is capable of understanding what can be moral because everyone has a way of living and that way of living must be based on certain rights and wrongs of the person's intentions rather than the consequences of a given situation.

For example, the intention of saving someone from their death is morally right because the intention is for good. However, Kant also explains that one's intentions must be respectful towards another's dignity. This respect or dignity of a person's autonomy or self-applied law is what Kant believes to be a moral responsibility that enables the use of such freedom, which is our ability to reason. Therefore, if a person had the opportunity to save another's life, but that person did not want to live, would it be moral to save that person's life against their wishes. According to Kant, morality is based on intentions rather than consequences so the intention of fulfilling someone's wishes is good, and if death is a consequence, there should not be emphasis on that, but rather the intention of why the person did not attempt to save that person who did not in fact want to be saved.

Another key factor in determining morality, according to Kant, moral laws are determined if the law proposed can be universal. If so, the law is moral and everyone who can rationally think can understand that the given law is either morally right or wrong. Interestingly enough both Kant and Sartre views on the idea of morality work well together in regards to setting it up as being universal across the board but not quite the same direction of focus. Sartre asked himself what if everyone did what I was doing. Sartre believed this to be unanswerable because of his understanding that what people do sets an example for the rest of the human population based on decisions and if people deny their ability to act then they are practicing bad faith because there is no utilization of their freedom.

However, Kant believes not to make you as an exception against the human population because everyone is part of a Kingdom of ends, which generally is the idea everyone has the

ability to rationalize and because of this God given gift, people are to be respected and cannot be considered as an exception. This realization and understanding, Kant supports that natural beings are bound by moral law because of their ability to reason, and this freedom is presupposed because without it people would not be able to reason or think and the idea of human would not exist. Therefore, this natural gift, referred to as reason is freedom or free will that allows humans to set them apart from animals that do not seem to possess any such gift. Sartre however, does not believe that God exists, but that existence precedes essence. Meaning that man first existed and later determines what defines him. There is no human nature; man is what man makes of him based on matters of decisions and those decisions are ultimately executing the right of freedom through such choices that are being made for him as well as rest of man. For example, man has the ability to freely jump in place. There is a choice involved and so man is free to make that choice according to Sartre.

Additionally, with freedom comes responsibility. The choices that man makes based on their freedom bears responsibility for the consequence involved. This is Sartre's understanding of how both freedom and responsibility relate, because people are responsible to make a choice and execute their own freedom. On the other hand, Kant's perspective of this relation can be seen as a cause and effect system. If someone has more freedom, more responsibility will be shown or available towards the person's expense because his or her ability to reason will grow and that person will gain maturity ultimately understanding what it means to be moral.

The differences are apparent in both philosophies, depending on what aspect or concept is being portrayed. The effects of these differences are dependent on the way people

think about certain situations. Therefore, both philosophies could actually be right because in one person's mind, they may follow Kant's beliefs, but for another, Sartre's point of view is equally applicable in their situation. However, there is common ground between Kant and Sartre that establishes the idea of humanity performing together in definition of understanding morality as universal law.

In conclusion, both Kant and Sartre understand some correlation between freedom and responsibility and the perception that can be used is dependent on various factors that offer different choices. There is always a choice and because there are choices in the world there is freedom, it is a matter of knowing that that freedom is being executed rightfully or morally. If it is, then true happiness will flourish, and if not then it is the person's responsibility to accept the consequence and realize their true intentions for making that choice. In either light, Kant and Sartre are generally looking at the same relationship, but their views are to either pick out the meaning of a consequence based on actions and choices or evaluate the process at which freedom effects responsibility for a goal of morality.