

which its onset was inevitable was an age before he could even speak.

The neurosis is responsible—but isn't the neurosis a part of *him*? We have been speaking all the time as if the person and his unconscious were two separate beings; but isn't he one personality, including conscious and unconscious departments together?

I do not wish to deny this. But it hardly helps us here; for what people want when they talk about freedom, and what they hold to when they champion it, is the idea that the *conscious* will is the master of their destiny. "I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul"—and they surely mean their conscious selves, the self that they can recognize and search and introspect. Between an unconscious that willy-nilly determines your actions, and an external force which pushes you, there is little if anything to choose. The unconscious is just *as if* it were an outside force; and indeed, psychiatrists will assert that the inner Hitler can torment you far more than any external Hitler can. Thus the kind of freedom that people want, the

only kind they will settle for, is precisely the kind that psychiatry says that they cannot have....

Let us ... put the situation schematically in the form of a deductive argument.

1. An occurrence over which we had no control is something we cannot be held responsible for.
2. Events E, occurring during our babyhood, were events over which we had no control.
3. Therefore events E were events which we cannot be held responsible for.
4. But if there is something we cannot be held responsible for, neither can we be held responsible for something that inevitably results from it.
5. Events E have as inevitable consequence Neurosis N, which in turn has as inevitable consequence Behavior B.
6. Since N is the inevitable consequence of E and B is the inevitable consequence of N, B is the inevitable consequence of E.
7. Hence, not being responsible for E, we cannot be responsible for B.



JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

Freedom and Responsibility

JEAN-PAUL SARTRE'S (1905–1980) "existentialism" features a powerful emphasis on the freedom and responsibility of each individual. The following is taken from his *Being and Nothingness*.

ALTHOUGH the considerations which are about to follow are of interest primarily to the

ethicist, it may nevertheless be worthwhile after these descriptions and arguments to return to the freedom of the

for-itself and try to understand the fact of this freedom represents man's destiny.

The essential consequence of Sartre's remarks is that man is condemned to be free; he carries the whole world on his shoulders and is responsible for the world and as a way of being. We are word "responsibility" in its sense as "consciousness (of) a contestable author of an event or object." In this sense the responsibility for the world is overwhelming; the one by whom it happens is a world; since he is also the one who makes himself be, then what the situation in which he finds himself the for-itself must wholly determine the situation with its peculiar character of adversity, even though it be favorable. He must assume the situation the proud consciousness of being the author of it, for the very worst of things or the worst threats which danger my person have meaning and through my project; and on the ground of the engagement that they appear. It is therefore to think of complaining since the foreign has decided what we live, or what we are.

Furthermore this absolute responsibility is not resignation; it is a logical requirement of the fact of our freedom. What happens through me, and I am affected by it, nor can I resign myself to it. Moreover, the thing which happens to me and this we must understand first of all, we are always equal to what happens *qua* man, for what happens through other men and through the world can be only human. The motivations of war, the worst to

choose What I Do?

they will settle for, is precisely that psychiatry says that they will.

... put the situation schematically in the form of a deductive argument.

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... more events E were events which we cannot be held responsible for. There is here something we cannot be held responsible for, neither can we be held responsible for something that results from it.

E have as inevitable consequences neurosis N, which in turn has as its consequence Behavior B.

N is the inevitable consequence of E and B is the inevitable consequence of N, B is the inevitable consequence of E.

... not being responsible for E, we cannot be responsible for B.

for-itself and try to understand what the fact of this freedom represents for human destiny.

The essential consequence of our earlier remarks is that man being condemned to be free carries the weight of the whole world on his shoulders; he is responsible for the world and for himself as a way of being. We are taking the word "responsibility" in its ordinary sense as "consciousness (of) being the incontestable author of an event or of an object." In this sense the responsibility of the for-itself is overwhelming since he is the one by whom it happens that *there is* a world; since he is also the one who makes himself be, then whatever may be the situation in which he finds himself, the for-itself must wholly assume this situation with its peculiar coefficient of adversity, even though it be insupportable. He must assume the situation with the proud consciousness of being the author of it, for the very worst disadvantages or the worst threats which can endanger my person have meaning only in and through my project; and it is on the ground of the engagement which I am that they appear. It is therefore senseless to think of complaining since nothing foreign has decided what we feel, what we live, or what we are.

Furthermore this absolute responsibility is not resignation; it is simply the logical requirement of the consequences of our freedom. What happens to me happens through me, and I can neither affect myself with it nor revolt against it nor resign myself to it. Moreover everything which happens to me is *mine*. By this we must understand first of all that I am always equal to what happens to me *qua* man, for what happens to a man through other men and through himself can be only human. The most terrible situations of war, the worst tortures do not

create a non-human state of things; there is no non-human situation. It is only through fear, flight, and recourse to magical types of conduct that I shall decide on the non-human, but this decision is human, and I shall carry the entire responsibility for it. But in addition the situation is *mine* because it is the image of my free choice of myself, and everything which it presents to me is *mine* in that this represents me and symbolizes me. Is it not I who decide the coefficient of adversity in things and even their unpredictability by deciding myself?

Thus there are no *accidents* in life; a community event which suddenly bursts forth and involves me in it does not come from the outside. If I am mobilized in a war, this war is *my* war; it is in my image and I deserve it. I deserve it first because I could always get out of it by suicide or by desertion; these ultimate possibilities are those which must always be present for us when there is a question of envisaging a situation. For lack of getting out of it, I have *chosen* it. This can be due to inertia, to cowardice in the face of public opinion, or because I prefer certain other values to the value of the refusal to join in the war (the good opinion of my relatives, the honor of my family, *etc.*) Any way you look at it, it is a matter of a choice. This choice will be repeated later on again and again without a break until the end of the war. Therefore we must agree with the statement by J. Romains, "In war there are no innocent victims." If therefore I have preferred war to death or to dishonor, everything takes place as if I bore the entire responsibility for this war. Of course others have declared it, and one might be tempted perhaps to consider me as a simple accomplice. But this notion of complicity has only a juridical sense, and it does not hold there. For it depended on me that for me and by me

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this war should not exist, and I have decided that it does exist. There was no compulsion here, for the compulsion could have got no hold on a freedom. I did not have any excuse; ... the peculiar character of human-reality is that it is without excuse. Therefore it remains for me only to lay claim to this war.

But in addition the war is *mine* because by the sole fact that arises in a situation which I cause to be and that I can discover it there only by engaging myself for or against it, I can no longer distinguish at present the choice which I make of myself from the choice which I make of the war. To live this war is to choose myself through it and to choose it through my choice of myself. There can be no question of considering it as "four years of vacation" or as a "reprieve," as a "recess," the essential part of my responsibilities being elsewhere in my married, family, or professional life. In this war which I have chosen I choose myself from day to day, and I make it mine by making myself. If it is going to be four empty years, then it is I who bear the responsibility for this.

Finally, ... each person is an absolute choice of self from the standpoint of a world of knowledges and of techniques which this choice both assumes and illumines; each person is an absolute upsurge at an absolute date and is perfectly unthinkable at another date. It is therefore a waste of time to ask what I should have been if this war had not broken out, for I have chosen myself as one of the possible meanings of the epoch which imperceptibly led to war. I am not distinct from this same epoch; I could not be transported to another epoch without contradiction. Thus I *am* this war which restricts and limits and makes comprehensible the period which preceded it. In this sense we may define more precisely the responsi-

bility of the for-itself if to the earlier quoted statement, "There are no innocent victims," we add the words, "We have the war we deserve." Thus, totally free, undistinguishable from the period for which I have chosen to be the meaning, as profoundly responsible for the war as if I had myself declared it, unable to live without integrating it in *my* situation, engaging myself in it wholly and stamping it with my seal, I must be without remorse or regrets as I am without excuse; for from the instant of my upsurge into being, I carry the weight of the world by myself alone without anything or any person being able to lighten it.

Yet this responsibility is of a very particular type. Someone will say, "I did not ask to be born." This is a naïve way of throwing greater emphasis on our facticity. I am responsible for everything in fact, except for my very responsibility, for I am not the foundation of my being. Therefore everything takes place as if I were compelled to be responsible. I am *abandoned* in the world, not in the sense that I might remain abandoned and passive in a hostile universe like a boat floating on the water, but rather in the sense that I find myself suddenly alone and without help, engaged in a world in which I bear the whole responsibility without being able, whatever I do, to tear myself away from this responsibility for an instant. For I am responsible for my very desire of fleeing responsibility. To make myself passive in the world, to refuse to act upon things and upon others is still to choose myself, and *choice* is one mode among others of being in the-world. Yet I find an *absolute* responsibility for the fact that *my* facticity (here the fact of my birth) is *irrevocable* and even *incomprehensible* for this fact of my birth never appears as a brute fact but always across a personal

tive reconstruction of my for-itself. I am ashamed of being born or I am astonished at it or I rejoice over it, or in tempting to get rid of my life I affirm that I live and I assume this life as born. Thus in a certain sense I *choose* being born. This choice itself is *integrated* affected with facticity since I am *irrevocably* not able to choose, but this facticity *itself* will appear only in so far as I surpass it toward my ends. Thus facticity everywhere but inapprehensible; I never encounter anything except my responsibility. That is why I cannot ask, "If I was I born?" or curse the day of my birth or declare that I did not ask to be born for these various attitudes toward my birth—*i.e.*, toward the *fact* that I realize a presence in the world—are absolutely nothing else but ways of assuming this birth in full responsibility and making *mine*. Here again I encounter only myself and my projects so that finally I am *abandonment*—*i.e.*, my facticity—consists simply in the fact that I am condemned to be wholly responsible for myself. I am the being which *is* in such way that in its being its being is in question. And this "is" of my being is as present and inapprehensible.

B. F. SKINNER

Freedom and the

B. F. SKINNER (1904–1990) was probably the most famous American "behaviorist." His best-known work is *Walden Two*, a community governed by behaviorist theory. He is also known for his work against the importance of what we call "free will" and the conditions influencing people's behavior.

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Under these conditions since every
event in the world can be revealed to me
only as an *opportunity* (an opportunity
made use of, lacked, neglected, *etc.*), or
better yet since everything which hap-
pens to us can be considered as a *chance*
(*i.e.*, can appear to us only as a way
of realizing this being which is in ques-
tion in our being) and since other as
transcendences-transcended are them-
selves only *opportunities* and *chances*, the
responsibility of the for-itself extends to
the entire world as a peopled-world. It is
precisely thus that the for-itself appre-
hends itself in anguish; that is, as a being
which is neither the foundation of its
own being nor of the Other's being nor
of the in-itselfs which form the world,
but a being which is compelled to decide
the meaning of being—within it and
everywhere outside of it. The one who
realizes in anguish his condition as *being*
thrown into a responsibility which ex-
tends to his very abandonment has no
longer either remorse or regret or excuse;
he is no longer anything but a freedom
which perfectly reveals itself and whose
being resides in this very revelation. But
as we pointed out . . . , most of the time
we flee anguish in bad faith.

B. F. SKINNER

Freedom and the Control of Men

B. F. SKINNER (1904–1990) was professor of psychology at Harvard and the best-known American "behaviorist." His best-known experiment, "Walden Two," was a rigidly reinforced community governed by behaviorist theory. In the following he argues his polemical thesis against the importance of what we call "freedom" and urges more scientific control over the conditions influencing people's behavior.