

In Sartre's philosophy, the ideas of "freedom of the individual" and "personal responsibility" play a major role. When we were discussing the danger of subjective values, we encountered the problem that subjective values can lead to Nazism. From an existentialist's view, Nazism itself cannot be easily defended. But we are left with the question what type of government is best for existentialists? Unfortunately I am no expert in political science, so I hope I treated all systems in their right content.

My initial response was to throw away all types of autocracy (a single person governing with absolute power). But what if that person values and upholds individual freedom and personal responsibility? An 'existentialistic leader' so to speak. He cannot be a tyrant/despot/dictator since all those necessarily rule with oppression. This is of course inconsistent with individual freedom. But what if the leader oppresses no one, but ensures fair play and consistency of individual freedom and responsibility? I am not sure where this is going, so let's picture Sartre as the leader in charge. If one of his citizens would like to take over his position, then he needs to give them the freedom and opportunity to do so.

But what if several individuals would like to take over his position? Then it would seem fair to award the position based on individual competence. Therefore, a system of meritocracy (leadership based on ability) would have been created. Whether this system should consist of one or several leaders is open to debate and may depend on the size and

functions of the government. However, during the rule, the system must maintain an equal chance of freedom for its citizens.

Another question arises, namely, how can the individual citizens express their will what direction the government should take. Since all individuals are responsible for their actions, it seems most fair to provide each individual with their own voice or vote. If each citizen has a chance to vote, then this would be considered to be a democracy. It is most important that all citizens are equally allowed and able to vote.

Should this democracy be a direct democracy (citizens vote directly on each issue) or a representative democracy (citizens elect representatives who will decide for them)?

Given the importance of personal responsibility, I think direct democracy is the desired form of democracy. Each individual can remain in greater control of his will. Under representative democracy, there is a bigger chance that the elected representative will take a course of action against the voters' will.

A disadvantage of direct democracy is the unpractical application for large nations.

However, direct democracy allows greater control for the individual. This may lead to an ethical problem for each citizen. Is the participation in a representative democracy justifiable with their personal responsibility, or should they avert the danger of misrepresentation by splitting a large nation into smaller ones?

Guignon mentions in his introduction to Sartre that Sartre was a supporter of communism though I cannot see how collective ownership and individual freedom can be unified. If I execute my personal freedom to buy a piece of land just for my personal use, then collective land-ownership would certainly work against my freedom. It also seems as if the interests of the state (or the others?) are given priority to my own freedom.

Concluding, I think that a “direct meritocratic democracy” is most suitable for existentialists. It allows the greatest form of personal freedom while giving most control to the individual.

P.s.: Guignon also mentions Sartre’s participation on a committee with Bertrand Russell. I have found a website that seems to refer to Sartre’s views “Jean-Paul Sartre On Genocide”. However, I cannot verify if this was actually written by Sartre. Nonetheless, it is an interesting read comparing Vietnam and the Holocaust. This might well be taken as an example against representative democracy.

<http://www2.prestel.co.uk/littleton/v1217sar.htm>