SARTRE’S LA MAUVAISE FOI, THE NEGATION OF DE BEAUVOI’S MALAFIDE AND THE URBAN PHENOMENON IN THE MOVIE JULES ET JIM (1962) BY FRANCOIS TRUFFAUT

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Abstract

The intersubjectivity war between male and female individuals has long been a central issue in the realm of existentialism. Jean Paul Sartre with the idea of his La mauvaise foi demands every individual to be responsible in accepting the consequences for every decision that has been taken by man. Meanwhile, Simone De Beauvoir seeks to perfect Sartre’s idea of existentialism by focusing the object of his idea on the freedom of women as human beings. On that basis, Beauvoir introduced the idea of malafide which is an inferior form of man. More specifically, Beauvoir assumes that there are many factors that cause woman to become a malafide. In the Jules et Jim (1962) film by François Truffaut, Catherine's character is presented as a form of denial of the malafide human—more specifically, the human in this context is female. This article describes the negation of Catherine's character as a malafide female, while at the same time showing the form of human existentialism as a whole. In addition to the issue of existentialism and existentialist feminism, this article also describes the urban phenomenon of time and place in the background setting of the film: Jules et Jim (1962) by François Truffaut.

Keywords: Existentialism, Existentialist Feminism, Urban Phenomenon, Sartre, Beauvoir, Jules et Jim

Introduction

Jules et Jim is a film by François Truffaut taking the pre- and post-World War I time background, and setting the place in Paris, France. Overall, this film tells the story of the friendship of two men (Jules from Austria and Jim from France) in which that friendship, in my opinion, is tested with some major and important major events. Among those events was the outbreak of World War I which caused Jules and Jim each to be recalled into their respective country, as they were drafted into the military. The ensuing war required them to separate, each having to take a stance at two warring factions that were in opposition in the World War I. The next major occurrence was the appearance of a woman named
Catherine who was loved by both the companions, except in the end Catherine married Jules and had a daughter from their marriage. Furthermore, the surprising thing was when Catherine made the decision to throw herself with Jim into a river by driving through a broken bridge. In plain view this film shows how the sanctity of the bond of a wholesome friendship cannot be undermined by any trials, including the trial of loving the same woman. But when examined more closely, one can see some sort of oddity that takes part in the time and place of the background setting put in this film.

If in the first paragraph I stated that one of the challenge faced in the friendship of Jules and Jim was related to their owning the same feelings toward a woman named Catherine, then what actually happens in the film shows that this situation was able to be taken advantage by Catherine in fullest in making her choice of whom she wants to spend the rest of her life with. I can make this statement because in this film, Catherine's role has a wide selection of male partners. If taken from Jules and Jim’s point of view Catherine is regarded as an individual object in which they they love and they want to spend the rest of their lives with, then from the lens of Catherine's role, Catherine has many objects (men) which she likes and desires to be taken as her partner, or just as a sex partner, or as father of the child she wants, and or as someone whom she wants as her husband.

The screenshot above is taken from the movie, it is visible from the subtitle “And it is this woman we love”. “this woman” refers to Catherine. It is a proof that shows the love triangle between Jules, Jim, and Catherine.
The screenshot above is taken from the movie, it is visible from the subtitle “Jules et Jim, friends ***** (not clearly seen) by the same woman”. “the same woman” refers to Catherine. It is another proof that shows the love triangle between Jules, Jim, and Catherine.

La Mauvaise Foi in Sartre's Existentialism

In short it can be said that Catherine's role in this film shows a concrete example of the existentialist frame of thought. Jean Paul Sartre put forward the idea of human existentialism with the guidance of three important components, namely; La mauvaise foi, être pour soi, and être en soi. La mauvaise foi in English can be interpreted as a bad faith, meaning: man is responsible for all decisions and actions that have been taken consciously. Man should not complain and regret any consequences of actions and decisions that have been taken, even complaining is also considered as a form of escape from the "responsibility". If it is associated with the Sartre concept of freedom, then la mauvaise foi becomes very dilemma and becomes the reason for the emergence of "anxiety", because according to Sartre man has freedom, is free to choose any step and choice in living life to "exist" (être pour soi) as long as he is responsible towards whatever has been chosen. It is because of this freedom that man is vulnerable towards La mauvaise foi in the attainment of existence according to Sartre, and along the way will closely relate to the emergence of anxiety. In Sartre's attainment of existence, "anxiety" will arise because humans have the freedom to decide and choose their own way of life, but must be responsible for what has been chosen, even to complain, to regret, and to find a party to blame for the negative effects of what one has consciously chosen will keep man from achieving his existence.

Sartre’s existentialism negates God, God exists, but only acts as the creator of man, after which God does not interfere in worldly affairs because man has "freedom".
So according to Sartre's existentialist thinking: man is born (être en soi: arrive into existence) by God's will, then has the freedom to live by conquering his "anxiety" and is responsible for all the choices he has taken in living his life. Thus, man then acquires his existence to materialize (être pour soi).

The Negation of Simone de Beauvoir’s Concept of Malafide

*The Second Sex* is one of Simone de Beauvoir’s outstanding work that tries to describe how men always take over the role of subject in their interaction with women. In the book, Beauvoir sees the biological fate of women as one of the cause in which women can not escape herself to become the object of men. These biological evidence is considered to be one of the main causes used as a basis to discredit women, for example the size of the female’s brain volume is relatively smaller than that of the male’s, so the female brain is considered unable to perform equally to the male brain. Beauvoir’s defense in this regard is to say that one’s physicality (biological fact) can not be the primary basis in defining a person, because it is manifestation through consciousness in social activities that can be considered more valid to be used to define a person.

Then, Beauvoir sees the myths affixed to women through social construction has also become an indispensable fact in the "defeat" of women’s strive to be equal to men. For example, it’s more apparent that women become good housewives and care for children at home, so that women don’t have to go out to work. These sort of myths have for centuries been constructed almost all over the world, and in so doing holds quite a central role as the "main cause" of women’s tendency to be objectivied in their interaction with men.

In Beauvoir’s concept of existentialism there is the idea of malafide, which is a term used to describe people who loses in the process of an intersubjectivity battle with other people outside themselves. However, malafide is also regarded as a hypocritical form of a person because subconsciously malafide people enjoy the fact that they are controlled and governed by fate and and by other humans with the excuse of fear to accept any form of consequences (responsibility) for every choice that was consciously made under their freedom state as human beings.

Simone de Beauvoir describes three characteristics of a malafide woman: *The Prostitute*, women who willingly lets themselves be objectified by men, and more so that they willingly give up all rights of their bodies to be used sexually, *The Narcissist*, woman who becomes aware with everything to do with her appearance so that they make efforts to improve their natural appearance which in truth is their way to find approval from men. In other words, women in this category subcosciously have the desire to be the object of men, *The Mystic*, woman who thinks they are better than other women because they are obedient to the norms and values that apply in society, they are required to be the ideal women. This is clearly a defeat in the idea of feminist existentialists, since the
norms and values prevailing in the women-related society are the result of centuries-old social construction shaped from the masculine viewpoint.

Sartre's idea of existentialism asserts that man is born free, so that man has the full right to decide all the choices and decisions in his life. Furthermore, Beauvoir's idea of existentialism gives more emphasis to women's freedom as human beings, thus having a position equal to the idea of freedom that exists in men. It is on this basis that Beauvoir argues that another factor that takes away women's freedom is the institution of marriage, because unwittingly, women voluntarily exchange their freedom with the sense of establishment promised through the social construction found within a marriage institution.

The denial of the malafide form of woman is highlighted in the movie through the role of Catherine. Catherine uses her full rights and freedom as a human being from the point of view of existentialism. She determines which man she will spend time with, which man she will satisfy his sexual desire with, with which man she will have an offspring with, with which man she will tie herself in marriage, and also she even determines with which man she will end her life. The choices that Catherine makes are always placing men in juxtaposition as accompaniment in every decision she makes. This is conclusive evidence that Catherine's role was indeed made to accentuate Beauvoir's existentialist feminist ideas and at the same time negate the tendency of women as a malafide person.

The Phenomenon of Urban Life

Changes in traditional structures to modernity have led to changes in the demands of society's needs, including in the social and political context of a city (Chaney 1996: 32). This phenomenon can be seen clearly in Jules et Jim (1962) by François Truffaut. The changing needs of people in cultural contexts can be seen from one central figure (Catherine) and the two main figures (Jules and Jim) being the title of this film. Sartre's existentialist school of thought that was

1 See image 3. Screenshot 3
embedded in Catherine's role in the film is an urban phenomenon occurring in a particular time and place—in the context of Jules et Jim's film, in as much that it highlights the lifestyle (cultural aspect) of years in the late 50's and early 60's.

The full power of a woman in choosing a partner was not a common thing in the time period of that chosen background, especially since the coupling did not merely hold the sense of partner in sharing affection, but also related to the choice of partner in sexual context, in the choice for marriage, and the choice to father the desired child (without bonding into marriage). This was an anomaly for that period of time—actually, even today the freedom of women as human beings equal to men has not been so significant, despite positive changes - when human life is overrun by state institutions and religious institutions that tend to place women as second citizen. Catherine's role that illustrates a real example of Sartre's existentialist thinking and Simone de Beauvoir’s existentialist feminist has shown that Catherine is well aware of her whole existence as a human being, including in the existence of her mind and body, even Catherine may negate the label of malafide that is usually very easily embedded in women. On this basis, Catherine's role clearly determines the day with whom she will satisfy her passion for feelings, and with whom she will satisfy her biological desires in the days ahead. Not only that, the feminist idea - "full power over her own womb" - can also be seen clearly in Catherine's role in this movie because she solely determines who she wants to have children with.

The screenshot above is the scene when Catherine teased those two best friends which was very not common in the society at that period of time. In addition to Sartre’s existentialism ideas that stand out in this film, it turns out that this film also shows the phenomenon of city life that occurred during that period in time. Thus it can be said that the seeds of the "modern" urban European life,
particularly in the France that we know today have begun to grow in the background setting of time and place found in this Jules et Jim film.

Conclusion

Jules et Jim's film provides a real example of the idea of Jean Paul Sartre’s existentialism in regarding the human being as a subject that possesses existence in a life that is fully aware of its existence as being human. Catherine's role has demonstrated the application of être pour soi component in Sartre's idea of existentialism. This is illustrated by Catherine's role in determining her pairing of men who accompanied her at every different moments and in determining the father of the child she wants.

Furthermore, the La mauvaise foi component of Sartre's existentialism was also successfully featured in the film through Catherine's role, when Catherine decided to commit suicide with Jim by driving over a broken bridge, causing the car she drove plunge into the river and end in their death. According to Sartre's existentialism, this is a form of anxiety / disappointment of what a conscious being has chosen in full awareness that becomes the ultimate proof of a man's failure to live his existence as a human being.

Not only does it refer to the idea of existentialism by Jean Paul Sartre, Catherine's character in the Jules et Jim film also facilitates the ideal personification of woman in the idea of existentialist feminist by Simone de Beauvoir. This ideal form can be seen from the ability of the character of Catherine to negate the malafide label which, according to Beauvoir, tends to be attached to female individuals, in which case woman always loses in their escape to be objectivied by man.

In addition to the application of Sartre’s existentialism and Beauvoir’s existentialist feminist, Catherine's role in the Jules et Jim film also shows the audience about the phenomenon in urban life. The phenomenon that I mean is, the emergence of women’s full awareness in their practice for making choices in social life. This is in stark contrast to the reality of that recent past where at that time women had almost no right in determining any option.

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