

Existentialism is a Corporatism: The Ethical Implications of Existential Freedom at the Individual and Corporate Level

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Abstract

Traditionally, existential concepts have pertained only to the individual. This paper aims to integrate Sartre's ideas on existential freedom to the corporate world. The paper begins by defining and outlining the limitations of Sartre's main theory in "Existentialism is a Humanism" that existence precedes essence. The paper uses this foundation to consider how the same definitions and restrictions would apply to corporations using entertainment as an example with Blockbuster, Netflix, and the SAG strike. Ultimately, the paper aims to demonstrate the ways in which existential freedom can enable a company to grow and maintain its power in the face of change, while also highlighting where this freedom must be restricted to maximize not just the company's but workers' well-being.

1. Introduction

Existentialism is a philosophy focused on the individual and how they navigate an inherently meaningless world. As individualism gained popularity from the late 19th century to mid 20th century, existentialism became the predominant philosophy. While many philosophers of this time studied existentialism — Fyodor Dostoevsky, Albert Camus, Franz Kafka, Friedrich Nietzsche, Jean Paul Sartre — I will primarily focus on Sartre's work both as it relates to other philosophies and the modern day corporate world.

I begin by defining existential freedom through Sartre's "Existentialism is a Humanism," where Sartre examines the relationship between essence and existence, a relationship that serves as the basis for his ideas and this paper. Section 3 considers the limitations and subsequent solutions to Sartre's concepts. Section 3.1 discusses the drawbacks of total existential freedom, namely the anxiety of choice. I will primarily use Barry Schwartz's text *The Paradox of Choice*, which outlines four major problems that arise from an abundance of choice. Section 3.2 highlights the solutions to the anxiety of choice, referencing works of Dostoevsky and Camus to suggest where nihilism and absurdism find clarity amid the paradox. I close the section by

examining the shortcomings of Sartre's claim when applied to 21st century challenges, nearly a century after he published "Existentialism is a Humanism."

In an increasingly industrialized world, where corporations hold significantly more power than individuals, philosophy must extend beyond the individual. The second half of this paper therefore applies Sartre's work to corporations and finds where they operate similarly and differently to individuals. Section 4.1 considers the question of existence and essence specifically in the context of corporations using Netflix and Blockbuster to determine whether their existence should or should not precede essence. Section 4.2 then outlines the consequences of freedom for corporations, particularly on the wellbeing of workers, using the SAG strike as the main example.

2. What is Existential Freedom?

Existential freedom in the context of this paper refers to Sartre's work "Existentialism is a Humanism." Sartre argues that all people and objects have an existence and an essence, where existence is the simple fact that it exists, and essence refers to why it exists. Intuitively, for objects, essence comes before existence. For example, in the case of a butter knife its existence is there to serve its essence: an eating utensil. Without this purpose, the knife would not exist — its essence comes before its existence (Sartre & Sartre, 2007, p. 2). However, for the individual, Sartre argues that existence precedes essence (Sartre & Sartre, 2007, p. 3). We are not born to serve a higher purpose, we simply exist. Sartre then proposes that life is about finding that essence, accepting that whatever it may be does not confine or define the individual. In other words, the way one lives is up to their own discretion; at the basis of humanity, is freedom.

Philosophers have debated the concept of freedom for centuries, and while not exclusively using the terms "essense" and "existence," authors have considered similar concepts. Oscar Wilde wrote similarly to Sartre:

If you want to be a grocer, or a general, or a politician, or a judge, you will invariably become it; that is your punishment. If you never know what you want to be, if you live what some might call the dynamic life but what I will call the artistic life, if each day you are unsure of who you are and what you know you will never become anything, and that is your reward.¹

In other words, those that are confined by an essence are condemned to a life absent of freedom, while those that lead with their existence are truly free. Dostoevsky on the other hand, wrote the opposite point of view in his book *Notes from the Underground*:

¹ This quote is attributed to Oscar Wilde, but there is no specific book or essay where this quote is found.

One's own free and unfettered volition, one's caprice, however wild [...] — that is the one best and greatest good [...] for what is man without desires, without will, without volition, but a sprig on the cylinder of a barrel-organ? (Dostoyevsky, 1993, p. 34).

Dostoevsky argues that finding an essence, using it as a guiding principle, is the key to survival. Freedom comes from finding a greater purpose.²

Defining freedom plays a key role in existentialist philosophy, whether considering an individual or a group. In the next section, I will examine the implications of Sartre's work in the context of other philosophers.

3. Individual Existential Freedom — Sartre and Other Philosophers

3.1 The Anxiety of Choice

As existentialism increased in popularity, philosophers had to reconcile the costs and benefits of absolute freedom. Philosophers hypothesized that an individual who guides themselves outside of religion or a higher power would experience the “anxiety of choice:” in being the decision maker of one's own life, one is both the perpetrator and victim of any resulting consequences. This begs the question, how much freedom should the individual have?

While freedom and choice are undeniably important, illustrated in works such as 1984 by George Orwell that outline how taking away an individual's freedom has irreparable harm on themselves and on society, the relationship between choice and utility is not proportional; a substantial increase in choice eventually results in decreased utility (Orwell, 1949). Psychologist Barry Schwartz considers this phenomenon in his book “The Paradox of Choice” where he outlines four major arguments for the limitation of individual freedom (Schwartz, 2004).

Schwartz begins by highlighting the role of regret in choice. Consider a person offered a job as a software engineer at Apple, which provides high pay, benefits, and a 40 hours work week. If this was their only job offer, they would not likely feel any regrets for choosing the position. Now consider this same person had been offered the job at Apple as well as ten others at equally large-scale tech firms. If they took the job at Apple, they would still have the same benefits and same pay, and yet Schwartz argues they would feel less content. When choice is introduced, one is bound to wonder if they chose wrong. This notion applies to any choice, whether a superfluous one, such as picking a flavor of tea to drink in the morning, or a more defining one, such as a career choice. Despite his negative argument on a surplus of choice, Schawrtz believes some choice is necessary—e.g. three choices is

² This perspective on freedom is known in the field of Existentialism as Absurdism.

preferable over thirty choices. Less choice lessens the regret of each subsequent decision.

Schwartz then considers the effect of opportunity cost. Opportunity cost is the value of the next best option forgone. For example, in the morning by choosing to go for a run, one is letting go of the option to get breakfast with a friend or to get started on work early. Opportunity cost therefore increases as the amount of choice increases. Schwartz asserts that a greater opportunity cost results in decreased enjoyment of the chosen task, as one will always bear in the back of their mind the next best activity they could have been doing instead.

Moreover, Schwartz argues that with the increase of choice that came out of a post-industrial and post-modern world, expectations about quality of life have increased. By having choice over every aspect of one's life, it creates the expectation that a perfect life is tangible if all the right choices are made. Schwartz uses the example of buying jeans. Schwartz once went jeans shopping and bought the only option sold each time. They never quite fit him right, but they nevertheless did the job. Now, with the increase in sizes and style of jeans, Schwartz's expectations on how well his jeans could fit have increased. So, when he bought jeans for the first time with the new options available, even though they were the best fitting jeans he had ever bought, he left disappointed, because his expectations had increased faster than the benefits of the new styles. Higher expectations decrease satisfaction, yet these expectations are driven by the excess of choice today.

Finally, freedom is held by the individual. Each choice made is theirs alone. So, if they choose wrong, they are at fault—when buying jeans or picking between job offers, if they do not feel satisfied, which Schwartz argues is bound to happen, they will blame themselves. Perhaps if there were only three options, one can be certain that none of them were ideal. However, when there are significantly more options, it is unlikely that all can be tested, and thus, one cannot know that there was not a perfect option they missed. By not identifying the most "perfect" option, the individual is left with a dissatisfaction, an anxiety: the anxiety of choice.

The anxiety of choice is one of the major limitations to Sartre's claim. When he writes that existence precedes essence, he leaves readers with a choice. Not a small one like buying jeans, but a large one: choosing one's essence or purpose. While Sartre acknowledged that this existentialist philosophy can invoke uncertainty and anxiety in one's life in his other publications, in "Existentialism is a Humanism," he did not consider the impacts of freedom on utility, introducing the first major pitfall in his argument.

3.2 Combatting the Anxiety of Choice

Other existentialists have studied the role of the anxiety of choice and have written how to combat it: namely Dostoevsky and Camus.

Dostoevsky examines the conflict of choice in *Notes from the Underground*. He writes, “Just try giving us, for example, as much independence as possible, untie the hands of any one of us, loosen our bonds, and we ... I assure you we all immediately beg to go back to discipline” (Dostoyevsky, 1993, p. 122). He argues that the response to freedom is begging for its reduction in arbitrary constraints. In *Crime and Punishment*, however, Dostoevsky separates people into two categories: ordinary people and extraordinary people (Dostoyevsky, 1993, p. 272). Ordinary people exhibit the same response written in *Notes from the Underground*. They reduce their freedom by living by a designated set of rules, such as laws and regulations. They force themselves to stay on a “path,” usually set by those around them. Extraordinary people, on the other hand, handle their freedom by experiencing it to the fullest. They must break rules and laws and rebel against society in order to cope with their reality of freedom, because when gaining a deep understanding of freedom, it is impossible to follow superfluous rules aware of their arbitrariness. Despite the assumptions that come with the terms ordinary and extraordinary, both responses are equally reasonable and neither is a greater response than the other. Works of literature and modern media examine these two reactions. For example, Dostoevsky consolidates these two opposing viewpoints in *Notes from the Underground*: “What man wants is simply independent choice, whatever that independence may cost and wherever it may lead. And the choice, of course, the devil only knows what choice” (Dostoyevsky, 1993, p. 36).

Dostoevsky’s description of how an ordinary and extraordinary person reacts to freedom strongly mirrors the difference between how absurdists and nihilists confront freedom.³ Nihilists and absurdists both believe the universe is meaningless. There is no inherent purpose to life, and thus humans are not here to fulfill any purpose or essence. The nihilist chooses to fully embrace this freedom, neglecting that there is even an essence at all. Absurdists, while agreeing with the nihilist’s perspective, let themselves conform to the arbitrariness of societal conventions and find comfort in a guiding purpose to release themselves from the doom cycle of nihilism: “One must imagine Sisyphus happy” (Camus & O’Brien, 2018, p. 123). In this relationship, nihilists mirror the extraordinary person. The only true fact to nihilists is that we exist, and nothing more. To them existence precedes essence because no essence exists at all: “the only way to deal with an unfree world is to become so absolutely free that your very existence is an act

³ This section does not go over the relationship between Nihilism and Absurdism in complete depth, but rather just provides an example of how they address existential freedom.

of rebellion" (Camus).⁴ Absurdists mirror the ordinary person. In order to survive, they find a reason for living, despite acknowledging its absurdity. That reason is their essence. Even though absurdists follow the "ordinary" mindset, they are free and still live under the core belief that existence precedes essence. In fact, one could argue that nihilists live with too much choice. As the anxiety of choice states, this inevitably defeats the nihilist, leading to the depression and cynicism evident in many nihilistic works. Absurdism limits the choice an individual has, ultimately saving the individual from the dread of nihilism.

In response to the anxiety of choice in specific, the absurdist response appears more effective, overcoming the burden of choice built out of Sartre's argument. In other words, the absurdist mindset lets Sartre's theories excel despite their gap in argument with the anxiety of choice. Even so, Sartre's arguments carry more shortcomings. In the next section, I will argue why his argument nevertheless holds true.

3.3 Limitations to Practically Realizing Existential Freedom

In *A Happy Death*, Albert Camus examines how a man, Mersault, escapes societal confinement to achieve maximum freedom. Camus writes, "Meursault realized that his rebellion was the only authentic thing in him, and that everything else was misery and submission" (Camus, 1972, p. 53). While Sartre argues that the individual can find freedom once they become conscious of their confinement, Mersault argues that freedom is only possible when gaining the tools to escape the confinements he becomes conscious of.

In the second chapter of the novel, Mersault claims his job prevents him from realizing freedom: "With eight hours a day at the office. Oh it would be different if I was free!" (Camus, 1972, p. 38). The only way Mersault could be free of his job is by having the means to live without working. Before Mersault can escape the confinements of his life, he meets with a man named Zagreus. Zagreus extends Mersault's perspective on money, "what I am sure of [...] is that you can not be happy without money. [...] Having money is a way of being free of money" (Camus, 1972, p. 46). Zagreus explains that he therefore spent his entire youth working to become rich, yet when he achieved his goal of making two million dollars, he got into a terrible accident that left him paralyzed and in a wheelchair for the rest of his life. Even with the money he earned, Zagreus does not believe himself to be free after the accident because a healthy body is necessary to be free. Ultimately, both characters find that they cannot live in freedom until they overcome their constraints.

In this novel, Camus is not claiming that these characters' existence do not precede their essence, but instead demonstrates that one does not have complete control over their essence. Even if their

⁴ This quote is not found in any specific book, but it is attributed to Albert Camus.

essence is not predetermined for them, until they gain the tools to be completely free, they cannot live the lives they wish to lead. *A Happy Death* puts the absolute freedom Sartre describes into question. Yes, each individual may have the same amount of freedom, yet the conditions to be able to act on that freedom are different. So that poses the question: are we all equally free?

Take for example, a man living in poverty and a man who's a millionaire driving on the road. Both have the freedom to make the same turns, go on the same highways, and break the same laws while driving. If they both run a red light, they would both get the same punishment: a \$281 fine. However, this fine has dramatically different impacts on these two individuals. Both may have the same freedom to run a red light, but when considering the consequences, the millionaire would not even be impacted by the fine. In reality, the man in poverty is less free to rebel against society than the millionaire. This example stretches far beyond just running a red light.

Existential freedom claims that individuals carry equal opportunity, the same capacity for freedom. Sartre highlights this argument in "Existentialism is a Humanism":

Many people have but one resource to sustain them in their misery; to think, "circumstances were against me, I was worthy of better. I had no great love because I never met anyone worthy of me. I wrote no great book because I had no time." [...] But in reality, for the existentialist, there is no love other than that which is built, no artistic genius other than in works of art. [...] A man engages in his own life, draws his own portrait, there is nothing more. (Sartre & Sartre, 2007, p. 8)

Sartre claims that no one is a victim to their circumstances and that circumstances do not affect the ability to realize a goal.

However, no country has achieved a pure meritocracy, where the relationship between effort and results is completely equal across a nation. Factors such as money, race, and religion can dramatically impact the opportunities one has access to. Inequality does not affect the claim that existence precedes essence, but still illustrates that the ability to fulfill the same essence will vary from person to person. Society does not uphold unequal distribution of freedom.

Even though Sartre's argument falls into a metaphysical and idealist perspective, it remains true. Every individual has freedom, and every individual can achieve the same goals, just at varying levels of difficulty and with different practical constraints. There are numerous examples of people who grew up in poverty and the middle class rising to become multi-millions. Stories of actors such as Jim Carrey and Leonardo DiCaprio escaping poverty due to their comedic and theatrical talent are tangible examples of this at work. Moreover, entrepreneurs such as Steve Jobs grew up middle class and later became multi-billionaires. On the flip side, there are many examples of people who lived as millionaires and ran out of their fortune before they died.

For example, Bernie Madoff ran a multi-billion dollar fund, himself being worth well over 800 million dollars, and yet died billions of dollars in debt.

Moreover, Sartre's neglect of inequality can be partially exempt when taking into consideration the time in which he was writing. Today, there is access to media which broadcasts the devastating conditions of poverty across the world which may not have been entirely apparent in 1900's Paris. News and media did exist in Sartre's time, but to a much lesser extent than today, and thus, when considering an individual's freedom, Sartre was considering that of his close community, who likely did have very similar privileges. In addition, Sartre wrote after World War II, when much of the world was living tough conditions and few people were wealthy. The distribution of wealth was undeniably much more even than today. With a more level playing field, people did in fact have slightly more equal chances to succeed, and it was up to them and their freedom to work toward their essence.

Therefore, the position of an individual at birth does not pre-determine their life and success even if factors undeniably exist that limit one's freedom. While these rules set by society may seem arbitrary, the constraints they hold are still very real. Freedom does not exist without consequences, and these consequences are defined by the privileges or lack thereof of an individual. Despite these consequences, humans exist with some level of freedom which Sartre forces us to realize to ultimately benefit from.

4. Corporate Existential Freedom

4.1 Existence and Essence in Corporations

Sartre approaches the conversation of existential freedom through the individual. He argues that for all else, essence precedes existence, like the butter knife in section 2. Therefore, for a company their essence would likewise precede their existence. A company is supposedly invented to serve a purpose, and once that purpose is decided, the company comes into existence. In this section, I will argue that companies should, too, consider their existence to come before their essence when it comes to the purpose of their company. For a company, I will define the essence to be just what the company does, aside from its values — i.e. if a retail company focuses on sustainability, then their essence is retail, not retail and sustainability.

I will use the example of Blockbuster to demonstrate how their steadfast commitment to an outdated mission — a commitment to their essence over existence — inevitably destroyed them. Blockbuster was founded in 1985 as a video store where customers could look through hundreds of DVDs and then pick out one to rent for the weekend. From 1985 to 1988, Blockbuster grew from one store to over four hundred stores. Blockbuster grew their offerings to not just renting movies, but

also renting video games and music tapes. They also gave customers an option to buy their products as well as rent them. One of their biggest revenue streams was through their late fees, which made the company over 800 million dollars (Liedtke & Anderson, 2010).

In 1997, Netflix opened, and created a new business model for lending CDs. Netflix created a subscription and mailing service, where for twenty dollars a month, customers could rent as many CDs as they wanted, and Netflix would ship them to their house. Netflix stood out from Blockbuster in two main ways: 1) there were no late fees for Netflix, which was one of the biggest complaints for Blockbuster, and 2) Netflix mailed CDs to one's address, while Blockbuster was a store one had to commute to. In 2000, Blockbuster had the opportunity to buy Netflix for fifty million dollars, but declined as they assumed their competitor would not be able to overtake them (Britannica School, n.d.). In declining the offer, they chose to maintain their profitable business model that included late fees and in store CDs. However, they did not realize that this very business model was driving them into failure.

Over the next few years, Blockbuster realized that Netflix was soon to overtake them and attempted to improve — but not change — their business model. Yet none of these attempts to adapt to changes in the streaming industry worked for the exact reason that they put their essence above their existence. Blockbuster's essence was renting and buying CDs, and no shifts they made in the company strayed from this purpose. For example, they tried to create a product called Blockbuster Express, which was similar to a vending machine but for CDs. Naturally, this was bound for failure, not only because of its competitor redbox, but because it maintained the same essence that was already failing its company. Blockbuster did try to create a streaming service with Enron, but the leadership at Blockbuster decided the project took up too much time, and they wanted to instead focus on how to keep their stores alive (Liedtke & Anderson, 2010).⁵ Around 2005, CDs became less relevant in large part due to the release of iTunes. Blockbuster, desperate to change anything in their business model other than deprioritize CD rental, removed their highly profitable late fees.

By contrast, Netflix represents a company that prioritized existence over essence. While their purpose once involved CD rental, they understood that in order to survive in a more modern era of streaming, they had to diverge from their original essence. So, in 2007, Netflix launched their now multi-billion dollar streaming service, and have remained the number one streaming platform in the world since then (Netflix Inc., n.d.). Had Blockbuster maintained their deal with Enron, they could have switched to streaming when Netflix had and maintained their dominance in the industry. But in breaking off their

⁵ Enron also went bankrupt due to fraudulent actions, but that did not actually impact the failure of their product with Blockbuster.

deal, Blockbuster further subscribed to the mindset that essence precedes existence.

This example captures a common phenomenon, not only for corporations, but in general. No matter how successful something is right now, if it becomes outdated without change, it fails: “never will man penetrate deeper into error than when he is continuing on a road which has led him to great success” (Friedrich August von Hayek).⁶ When Amazon discovered their online bookstore was no longer profitable, they changed their essence. American Express, originally founded as a mailing service, Slack, originally founded as an online video game, and Youtube, originally founded as an online dating site. For many corporations, success is maintained through change.

However, essence in this discussion does not involve company values. Existential freedom in corporations does not mean betraying values such as sustainability and fair labor practices when it gives room for higher profitability, but rather finding changes in an entire mission while maintaining company values to make room for growth. In the section, I will examine the ethical implications of existential freedom for corporations.

4.2 The Ethical Implications of Freedom

Corporations carry more power than individuals. If man has the power to rebel against society, corporations have the power to shape society. For example, in the past few decades, corporations have transformed the world completely to revolve around screens and social media. Companies such as Meta, Alphabet, and Open AI have informed many of the challenges we navigate today, such as increased screen time, decreased attention spans, and AI entering academia and the corporate world.

In the last section, I discussed the benefits of existential freedom for the corporation, using Netflix as a success story. By contrast, in this section, I will examine the downsides of freedom in corporations, using Netflix, and other major streaming services and entertainment companies, as a cautionary tale, in how they have exploited their existential freedom resulting in union strikes.

The SAG union, made up of over 160,000 workers, recently conducted a strike against a group of corporations, including Netflix, Max, NBCUniversal, Apple, and Amazon, for better pay and less exploitative working conditions (“Our Unions,” n.d.). To qualify for health insurance, actors had to make over 26 thousand dollars, and yet only 12.7 percent of all SAG actors qualified for health insurance (SAG-AFTRA, n.d.). The vast majority of actors were working year round, unable to make a decent living.

This change was largely caused by the switch from CD streaming like Blockbuster and cable TV to online streaming services like Netflix.

⁶ This quote is not found in any specific book, but it is attributed to Albert Camus.

With CDs and cable television, each project had clear metrics and analytics on viewership and revenue. So, for successful shows, networks could easily see the revenue made off its original broadcast and reruns and accordingly compensate actors. Even though streaming services have access to metrics on viewership, they cannot access metrics on revenue. It is possible to look at trends in correlation, but to find the exact number of people who bought a subscription for a specific project is near impossible, especially as people purchase subscriptions for multiple reasons, not just one show or movie. Because studios cannot find directly how much each project makes, even on the most successful projects, actors and crew receive little compensation outside of their initial pay for the money made even years after the project's release. The residuals⁷ actors make if they star in a successful project has dwindled to near zero where it used to be thousands of dollars. Now, with streaming services like Netflix, actors only get paid for their work during the shoot, and if the show is successful, the money goes back to the top executives.

This holds true for even Netflix's most successful shows. *Orange is the New Black* was one of Netflix's first original TV shows, bringing in over 105 million viewers during its run. Regardless of its success, being nominated for Emmys and bringing in massive viewership, the actors could not make a living with their wages. Actors have come forward sharing their 900 dollar per episode pay. Matt McGorry, one of the actors on the show, "kept [his] day job the entire time [he] was on the show because it paid better than the mega-hit TV show [he was] on" (M. McGorry, personal communication, May 22, 2023). Kimiko Glenn similarly shared that she was only paid \$27.30 in residuals (*Orange Is the New Black*, 2023). These payments mark a stark change from the cast of *Friends*, a show with 52 million viewers, who got paid millions in residuals. The president of SAG argued that standards must change; regardless of the state of a network, even if they are losing money, they must properly compensate their actors: "[The executives] plead poverty, that they are losing money left and right when giving hundreds of millions of dollars to their CEOs" (F. Drescher, speech, July 13, 2023).

In these networks' freedom, they decided that they would film background actors and then use AI to replicate their faces to use over and over again while only paying them for that one day of work. They chose to eliminate the choice for actors to consent to be in media or to have AI replicate them for other projects. When actors requested these standards be changed in the strike, these networks rejected them. They rejected requests for "[increased] penalties for not providing meal breaks" and "[increased] penalties for failing to allow performers sufficient rest between work days" (SAG, 2023, p. 10). Instead, studio

⁷ Residuals are the money that actors make after they have filmed the show, coming from reruns and other media tied to the show.

executives responded to the requests of SAG in the strike saying, “the endgame is to allow things to drag on until union members start losing their apartments and losing their houses.”⁸

So perhaps, freedom for corporations should not go unabridged. In the last section, I noted that existential freedom benefits the corporation, but what about how the corporation affects others? How can freedom maintain its benefits for the survival of a company, and still yield the same benefits for workers? For the individual, the limitations of Sartre’s argument can be overcome, but for corporations some regulation must be introduced. In the discussion of the benefits for freedom in corporations, values were excluded from the conversation. A company can change their mission to survive without disregarding basic decencies. Just like there are laws for the individual that partially restrict their freedom, there must be more robust laws for corporations to ensure better working conditions and fair pay.

5. Conclusion

When Sartre wrote, corporations were beginning to manifest great power, yet they did not reach the significance they carry today. While Sartre wrote about existential freedom as it relates to the individual, the same concept applies at the corporate level. Existence preceding essence is a useful guiding principle for both, yet both also require some regulation and do not experience complete freedom. Citizens have to respond to laws just as corporations do. However, just as philosophy is not as robust for the corporation, neither are laws. While countries such as the US have implemented better working standards over the years, many countries face unlivable working conditions in sweatshops and forced labor camps, where more regulations must be set in place. Moreover, the novelty of AI has saved little time for regulations to be set in place. Currently, AI is operating under few limitations, which poses a danger for how it may impact the labor force, security, and the general landscape of society.

The scope of existential freedom clearly extends beyond the examples presented in this paper, but through these examples we can learn a few key ideas about the way existential freedom extends beyond the individual. Existential freedom is a concept important for corporations in the sense of their mission, but their power cannot be unabridged. Therefore, existential freedom should and can be completely actualized when proper restrictions are set in place. With these limitations, corporations can still find a profitable niche in markets whilst maintaining ethical standards and maintaining the mindset that existence precedes essence.

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⁸ This quote is not attributed to a specific name, but is by a studio executive.

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