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# Robert Jordan in Hemingways for Whom the Bell Tolls is For Freedom and Authenticity: An Existential Analysis

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***Abstract:*** ***Authentic existence is when we become what we are. Robert Jordan is an American fighting in support of the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War. He is given the task of blowing up the bridge as soon as the loyalists attack. Jordan, placed into this situation, displays authenticity in his existence as he makes choices and decisions and even puts his life into risk. Jordan succeeds in his mission of blowing up the bridge so that the Fascist forces may not use the road. Hemingway introduces a number of elements to increase difficulties in Jordan's way. But Jordan constantly proves his commitment by remaining single-minded and committed to his mission.***
***Keywords: 'Freedom' , 'authenticity,' 'being for itself,' ' Choices', 'Commitment, 'Responsibility'.***

## I. OBJECTIVE

The objective of the paper is to prove it existentially that Robert Jordan of the novel For Whom the Bell Tolls becomes what he is by making choices and decisions and thereby achieving his goal.

## II. INTRODUCTION

First World War had left Hemingway with disillusionment. Like his many characters, he too strived for some cause which might help in sustaining his existence. The experience of the Spanish Civil War as a newsman, not as a soldier, provided him with something that he had been seeking for a long time. He got involved in the lives and sufferings of the Spanish people. In this novel, Hemingway gives expression to this belief. It is his conversion from his youthful nihilism to a new belief of himself and in mankind. Robert Jordan, hero of For Whom the Bell Tolls, realizes his freedom by showing his commitment to his responsibility.

## III. ANALYSIS

Robert Jordan in Hemingway's novel: For Whom the Bell Tolls lives for a cause or motive in his mind. For him, his motive is everything. He is a man with a strong will and also capable of leading other people. He is not one being driven by circumstances. He sacrifices his life, love and everything for the cause of freedom and liberty. He is fighting in the Spanish Civil War because he 'loved and believed in the Republican (cause) and if it were destroyed life would be unbearable for all those people who believed in it'.[1] His fight is for liberty, equality and Fraternity as he himself says.

> *'You believe in Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. You believe*
> *In life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness ... if this … war*
> *is lost all of those things are lost.' (P.289)*

Robert Jordan's commitment to this cause continues till the very end as Jordan awaits death:

> *'I have fought for what I believed in for a year now. If we win here we will win everywhere.' (p.440)*

As already stated Jordan has been placed in the situation of war; to blow up the bridge as soon as the loyalists attack. Hemingway puts so many hurdles in Jordan's way that it seems impossible to complete his mission. These different hurdles or difficulties are: the precise timing of the mission, Pilar's fatal prophecy, Pablo's treacherous opposition, Maria's love (which causes other men's hostility towards Jordan), the snow, the Fascist planes, the massacre of Sordo's band, the loss of detonators, the enemy's awareness of their plans, the cavalry patrols, Andreas' inability to deliver the message to Golz.

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'In the face of danger,' writes Rene Lafarge ‘we can adopt either of two attitudes, to face or to yield to emotion. I may scream, tremble, flee or even faint. I can also turn to face the danger and stand firm at all cost.[2] Here making choices and decisions is the decisive factor. A man also yields to the emotions, begins to adopt an attitude of bad faith. While the brave one 'will consider the situation scientifically , will reject the magical and will apply itself to realizing determined series and instrumental complexes which will enable him to resolve the problem. It will organize a system of means by taking its stand on instrumental determinism.[3]
From this point of view, Robert Jordan stands for authentic existence. He is ordered to blow up the bridge and he chooses to do so. He knows that there are so many obstacles in the path of his projection. But he overcomes all his obstacles and keeps his mission or aim in his mind. He believes in commitment and action as he himself thinks: ‘ You have no responsibility for them except in action.' (P.157) He does not blame his circumstances. He does not flee away from the responsibility by thinking that these orders are impossible to carry out. His approach is that he must act and thus prove that the orders are possible to carry out. He himself says:

> ‘ He should carry them out because it is only in the performing
> of them that they can prove to be impossible, How do you know,
> they are impossible until you have tried them .' (P.158)

In Sartre's philosophy of existentialism, choice has an important place. Sartre writes: ‘In one sense choice is possible, but what is not possible is not to choose, that is still a choice’.[4]Jordan too believes in making choices.
Jordan has been placed into a situation of love. He loves Maria passionately. He can flee from his choice of mission to his beloved Maria. But he prefers to accomplish his mission. His final choice is his duty and he dies for that at the end of novel. For him, love is not a source of disillusionment or frustration because his sense of involvement in the lives of other people gives directions to his life. Jordan's authenticity is in his commitment to a broad humanitarian concern. Here his love for Maria is secondary. Jordan avoids every inner conflict that may take him away from his responsibility. He reminds himself now and again of his own responsibility. He thinks :

> ‘But my obligation is the bridge and to fulfill this I must take no useless
> risk of myself until I complete that duty. Of course, it is sometimes more
> of a risk not to accept chances which are necessary to take …. (P.63).

Again in Chapter 18, he states:

> ‘The two parts will be destroyed and the bridge be blown according to
> Golz's order that is all of the responsibility‘. (P.217)

This commitment is maintained throughout the novel. He loves Maria and spends time with her. But he continues to think of his mission. In Chapter -13, when he and Maria talk about their love, Maria feels that he is thinking of something else. She says to him, ‘You are thinking of something else.’ (P.156) and Jordan replies:

> ‘Yes, my work.' (P.156). And soon ‘… he was not there. He was walking beside her
> but his mind was thinking of the problems of the bridge now and it was all
> clear and hard and sharp as when a camera lens is brought into focus’. (P.157)

Throughout his mission, Jordan is never haunted by the fear of death. He is always ready to perform his duty even though he had to lose his own life. He speaks to Anselmo to blow up the bridge when the tanks come, even though he may be beneath it. He says, ‘Take no account of me. Blow it if though needest to’.(413) In the end of the novel he states: ‘I have fought for what I believed in for a year now(P.440)’. He expresses his contentment by saying that his life had been a good one:

> ‘And you had a lot of luck... to have had such a good life. You’ve had just as good life
> as grandfather’s though not as long. You have had as good a life as any one because of
> these last days. You do not want to complain when you have been so lucky.’ (P.440)

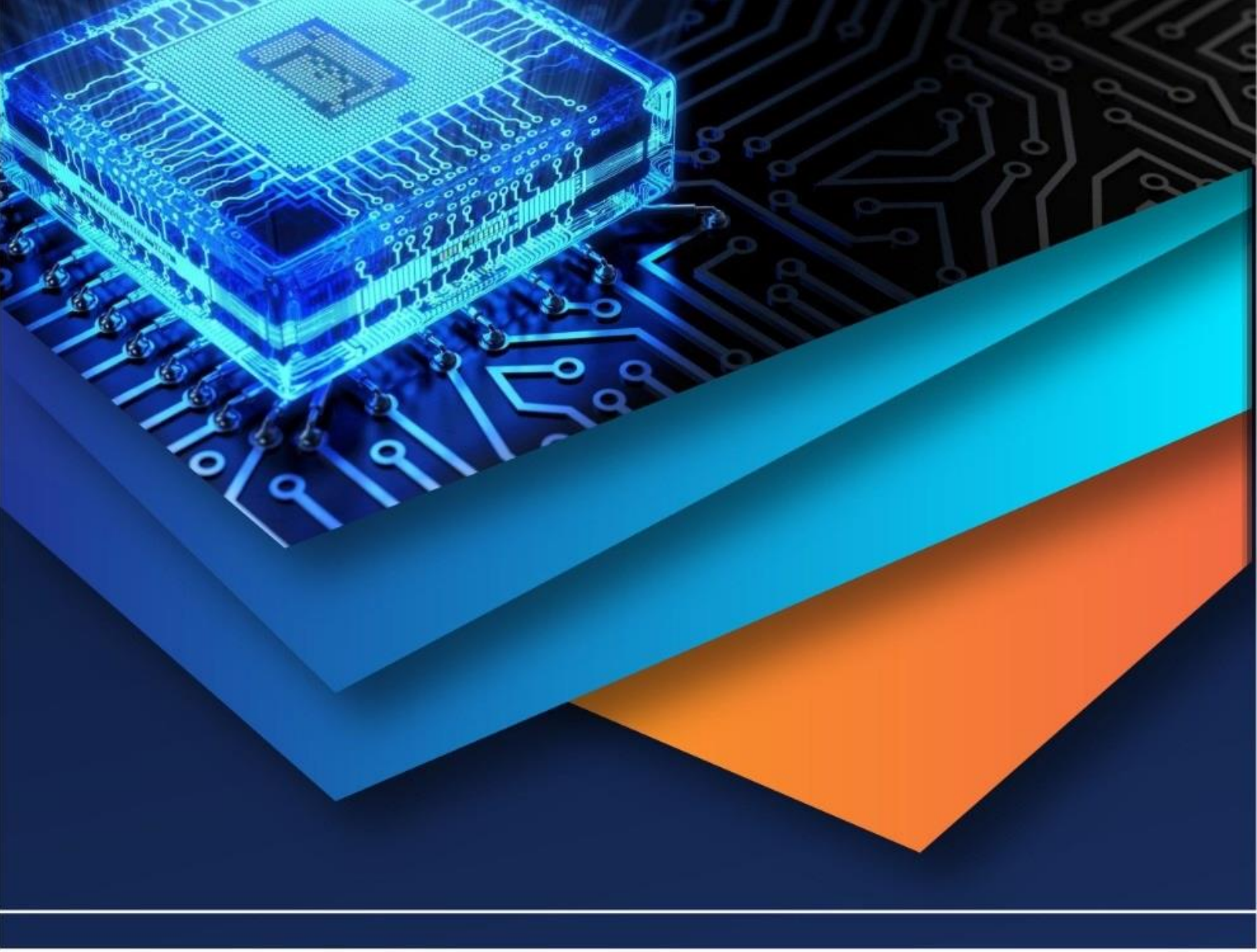
Robert Jordan never blames circumstances. When he fulfills his mission he expresses his contentment. It is because of his straight line of action. There was nothing in his way that could make him flee away from his mission.

## IV. CONCLUSION

Rabert Jordan's authenticity lies in his recognition of his freedom and his continuous involvement in these possibilities which give meaning to his existence. It is his commitment or being in action that gives sustaining power to his existence. He believes in facing his reality or responsibility. His faith and authenticity are the two factors that bring success to him to blow up the bridge. He always looks forward to renew his being. Jordan fights so that others may live. There is nothing that puts him away from his responsibility. It is only his commitment to an authentically chosen cause that raises him to a brave hero who exposes himself to greater dangers and continuously believes in taking risks so that the possibilities may be realized. The manner in which he faces the situation of death and finally the contentment he feels after achieving his mission makes him a hero who lives for freedom and authenticity.

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[1] Ernest Heming way, For whom the Bell Tolls, 1940 (London: Penguin , 1974). P.158. Subsequent references are from this edition of the novel and carry only the page number at the end.
[2] Rene Lafarge, Jean-Paul Sartre : His Philosophy trans, Martin Symthkok (New York : Macmillan, 1967), P.58.
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