

Jean-Paul Sartre  
Existentialism  
is a  
Humanism

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# Charges Against Existentialism

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1. Apathy/quietism of despair
  2. A philosophy of death and degradation – a “philosophy of death” - Being concerned with the dark side of human life
  3. Being unconcerned with human affairs – nihilism. Anything goes ...
- ❖ The common person will naturally reject the existentialist position, p. 11\*\* (para. 5)

# But What Really Scares People?

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“Can it be that what really scares them ... is that it leaves to man a possibility of choice?” (p. 12/para. 5)

Consider, again, the idea of dread, nausea, and anxiety when faced with one's own existence – you could kill yourself, you could not kill yourself.

And your choice says something definite – the responsibility is yours alone!

# The Starting Point for Existentialism

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Atheistic & Christian existentialist both hold that "existence precedes essence" (p. 13/para.) – Descartes' *Cogito*

There are some objects the essence of which come before their existential objectivity – toasters, cars, finger nail clippers, etc ... their essence is conceived before hand and later *given*.

Man, an idea in the mind of God (p. 14/para. 9)  
What can this mean for humans? A fabricated life?  
Now, *that* is terrifying!

# Human Reality is Different

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"... first of all, man exists, turns up, appears on the scene, and, only afterwards, defines himself. If man, as the existentialist conceives him, is indefinable, it is because at first he is nothing. Only afterward will he be something, and he himself will have made what he will be. Thus, there is no human nature, since there is no God to conceive it. Not only is man what he conceives himself to be, but he is also only what he wills himself to be after this thrust toward existence."

(p. 15\*\*/para. 10)

# Where does my responsibility end?

My choice is an affirmation of what is good. Thus, being a man (a member of Mankind), what I choose is what I think is good for men – I affirm all men when I affirm my choices (p. 17/para. 10)

To choose myself is to choose Mankind

But with this comes anguish, abandonment (para 13), despair, and nausea

God and Morality, pp. 22-23/para. 13

# “We Are Alone With No Excuses” (p. 23)

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Man is condemned to be free, responsible for all he does.

You do not escape your facticity, your subjectivity

“I am left in the realm of possibility; but possibilities are to be reckoned with only to the point where my action comports with the ensemble of these possibilities, and no further.” (p. 29)

If God created and patterned the world, then there can be no future, no value to the future in human terms – you will be resigned to the future as your choices will have already been determined *for you*.

# Bad Faith & Inauthenticity

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To what extent do you accept your freedom?

P. 32

“You are nothing else than your life” – “... man is nothing else than a series of undertakings, that he is the sum, the organization, the ensemble of the relationships which make up these undertakings.” (p. 33)



# The Optimism of Existentialism

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Pure subjectivity, Descartes' *Cogito* as the starting point (p. 36)

There can be no more optimistic philosophy since Existentialism provides or, rather, points out the very possibility of choice (p. 37)

It is the profound discovery of myself and of others.

# Charges Against Existentialism

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You can do what ever you want:

- Not true, your choice will always involve humanity. You cannot escape your responsibility

You can't pass judgment:

- One always make a choice in relationship to others. And should you choose dishonesty, etc., then that is what you are. With the recognition of freedom and forlornness comes the desire for freedom. But your freedom relies on others, and others', yours. (p. 46\*\*)

Values are arbitrary:

- Values comes from freedom (our very subjectivity) and the act of choosing affirms this. We, in fact, create value!