

Sartre and Existentialism

Primary Sources:

Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions*, pp. 9-51

Background:

From Bob Zunjic's Online Outline of *Existentialism is a Humanism*:

This essay was originally published in 1946 as a transcribed version of a public lecture delivered by Sartre a year before (October 29, 1945). With it Sartre intended to provide a more readable exposition of his phenomenological ontology, but the condensed and sometimes ambiguous formulations have caused some new misinterpretations so that he eventually regretted the publication of the text.

The unstated objective of the essay is to expound Sartre's own philosophy as existentialism and to explain existentialism in terms of Sartre's own philosophy. With this idea in mind Sartre is taking over an already existing and widely (ab)used term he now wants to redefine so that it can serve a serious philosophical purpose. The justification for this conceptual operation is that the term "existentialism" was at the time so stretched in different applications ("so broad a meaning") that its signification has become very elusive and sometimes even frivolous (covering sheer vulgarities). In opposition to this indiscriminate propagation Sartre is committed to take it in a very *technical* sense, which would restrict its usage to a particular (his) philosophical doctrine.

Questions:

- What are the two main kinds of existentialists? What kind is Sartre? What do all existentialists believe in common?
- What does Sartre mean by "existence precedes essence"?
- How does Sartre contend there is no human nature or human "essence"?
- What is the "deeper meaning" of existentialism?
- How is man "condemned" to be free?
- What does Sartre mean by "anguish", "forlornness", and "despair"?
- Who is a "self-deceiver" (i.e., someone of "bad faith")?
- What does Sartre mean when he says that "we invent values"?
- What kind of humanism does Sartre reject? Why?
- What other "sense of the word [humanism]" does Sartre accept? Why?