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| Sartre, Jean-Paul (1905-1980) |
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| Jean-Paul Sartre was a French philosopher, left-wing political activist, playwright, and novelist. A graduate of the École normale supérieure in Paris, Sartre rose to prominence in French artistic and literary circles after the Second World War, when existentialism gradually replaced surrealism as the major trend of the French avant-garde. He was part of a group of artists and intellectuals that included Alberto Giacometti, Jean Genet, Boris Vian, and his lifelong partner Simone de Beauvoir. Sartre remained a key figure of French political and intellectual life until his death his 1980. Influenced by Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Marxism, he was a major theorist of existentialism. For Sartre, human nature is not a given but derives from a personal choice. Based on an ontological reflection, Sartre’s existentialism thus leads to the practical realm of ethics and politics, by laying emphasis on the moral responsibility of the individual cut off from things in themselves and condemned to be free. Accordingly, Sartre was both the author of major philosophical treatises, such as *Being and Nothingness* (1943), and an indefatigable political activist for decolonization, women rights, and social justice. He was also a prolific novelist, playwright, and literary critic. |
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