

Chapter 6.1 - 6.4 & 2.2.9

Team 3

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§6.1 - Kierkegaard and the Origins of Existentialism

Kierkegaard was a Danish Philosopher who focused on how real people actually live and choose.

Existentialism

Definition: Existentialism is a 20th-century philosophical movement emphasizing individual freedom, responsibility, and subjectivity, arguing that “existence precedes essence”

Kierkegaard argued that “any religion or philosophy by which we are meant to live has actually to be *lived* by. Whatever the *objective* truth of Christian teaching, those who live by it have to accept its truth *subjectively*.”

It’s not just enough to *understand* a philosophy. It’s not enough to *agree* with it. You must actually live according to it.

Kierkegaard used pseudonyms on purpose to show different ways of living

Kierkegaard published many of his major books under fake authors, each representing a different voice or way of seeing life.

His reason for this was because he didn't want to stand over the reader and say: "This is the correct philosophy". Instead, he wanted his readers to imagine what it was like to live in a certain ways that were in different existential positions

§6.2 - Sartre and Radical Freedom

- Existence comes before essence
- Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself
- Sartre's atheism leads to rejection of a human nature
- We are responsible for who we become

Freedom, Choice, and Responsibility

- Abraham and Isaac
- Even God wouldn't remove a need to choose
- We are condemned to choose
- Choice creates anguish and responsibility for all

Pure Logic vs Individual choice

- Philosophical ideas like "How should I live life?" are purely abstract. They are not "real" until an individual chooses to live their life that way
- Existence precedes essence: There are no fundamental duties or oughts that exist before human choice
 - Logic alone cannot determine how one ought to live. The decisive factor is the choice of the individual

§6.3 Anguish and Bad Faith

Anguish:

- Has two sources
- **Absurdity and Immense Responsibility**

Absurdity:

- Recognizing that we are “nothing, literally no thing” due to our radical freedom
- “Nothing can fully determine our choice of life for us, and hence nothing can explain or justify what we are”
- French-Algerian writer Albert Camus poses “the one truly serious philosophical problem,” suicide.
- Sartre believes that existence is always a matter of brute, inexplicable fact which is why nothing can explain our existence

§6.3 Anguish and Bad Faith

Immense Responsibility:

- "Acknowledgement of our freedom to make choices makes us, literally, the creators of the world of value, and as a consequence we bear all the responsibility that brings with it, and this turns out to be immense."
- "When we say that man chooses himself, we do mean that everyone of us must choose himself; but by that we also mean that in choosing for himself he chooses for all men" - Sarte
- Having the freedom to create and assign values also comes with the responsibility of choosing those which are best for yourself. If the values you create and assign are best for yourself then they are also what must be best for everyone else.

§6.3 Anguish and Bad Faith

Bad Faith

- Attempting to escape the anguish of radical freedom by denying your freedom and responsibility to live authentically
- This is done by lying to oneself and maintaining false beliefs (Self-deception).
- By suppressing one's personality and individuality and thinking of oneself as an object with a defined role, one adopts a fixed identity to avoid the burden of choice
- Sartre's waiter example:
 - The waiter pretends his thoughts and movements are determined by what it means to be a waiter
 - The waiter knows that his role determines his behavior only because he chose his role, and that he can also choose to stop being a waiter

§6.4 The Absurdity of Existence

Why do humans exist?

Rationalists

- Everything has a reason
- World must be logical
- Existence=necessary

Empiricists

- Knowledge comes from experience
- Science explains how things happen
- No necessary reasons
- Existence=contingent

§2.2.9 - *From Dialectical to Transcendence*

Dialectical : subject to or driven by the interaction of the contradictory or opposing forces or impulses held to be inherent in the world; of or relating to this phenomenon

- This form only used in 1874+
- From Greek word **διαλεκτικός** (dialecticos)
- Meaning: of or relating to discourse or discussion

§2.2.9 - *From Dialectical to Transcendence*

“For existential thinkers, knowing the object is a form of self-awakening, a form of a dialectic in confronting the being-in-itself when the object of investigation is consciousness for-itself”

This can be understood as:

- A fight against the world to achieve transcendence
 - The world is filled with desires limiting transcendence
- A “union of self and not-self”
 - Leading to the self becoming fully destroyed

§2.2.9 - The Union of Subject and Object

Sufism:

- Religious practice by sufis with the goal of undergoing tazkiyah (self-purification)
- Has outward and inner dimensions
 - Heavily devoted to exploring their inner dimensions and connection with god
- Many important philosophers like Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Suhrawardi, Al-Ghazali, ibn Arabi, and Mulla Sadra were influenced by Sufism

§2.2.9 - The Union of Subject and Object

Ibn Sina:

- His terminology:

Wujūd

Wajd

Mawjūd

Wijdān

Etymology:

- w-j-d (finding)

- When accepting the dialectic it allows one to transcend self-enclosure

- Grounded in knowing and guided inwardly, rooted in innate moral values