
Chapter 6 - Existentialism



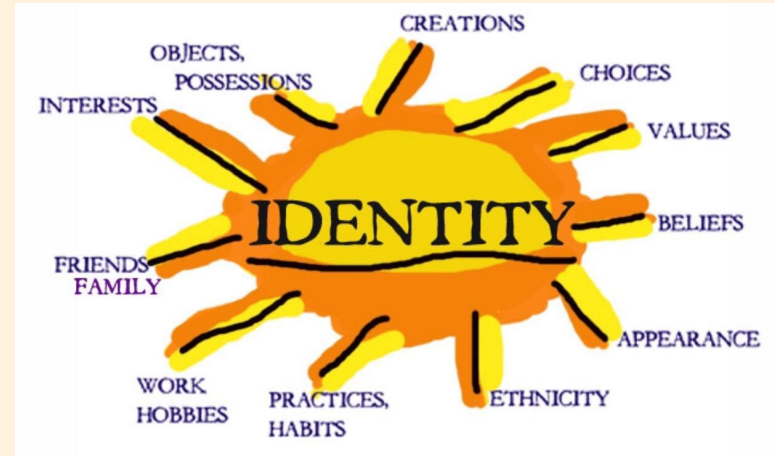
Team 1

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Chapter 6.5 - Acting in Good Faith

- Good faith: “When a choice is made in full recognition of the freedom and responsibility that attach to all choices”
- What you choose to do is not as important as the way you choose to do it.

Eg: An inquiry made out of professional courtesy v.s. An inquiry made out of friendship



The “sincere Nazi” example

- Some people joined the Nazi Party for personal advantage / monetary rewards
- Bad Faith (“Denial Nazi”): lying to themselves about the regime they were serving (following orders)
- Good Faith (“Sincere Nazi”): men and women who believed in Nazism and wanted to endorse it
 - To the point of genocide
 - Objectively (“judgement based on observable, measurable, verifiable, facts)” bad, (subjectively “based on personal feelings, opinions, emotions”) good

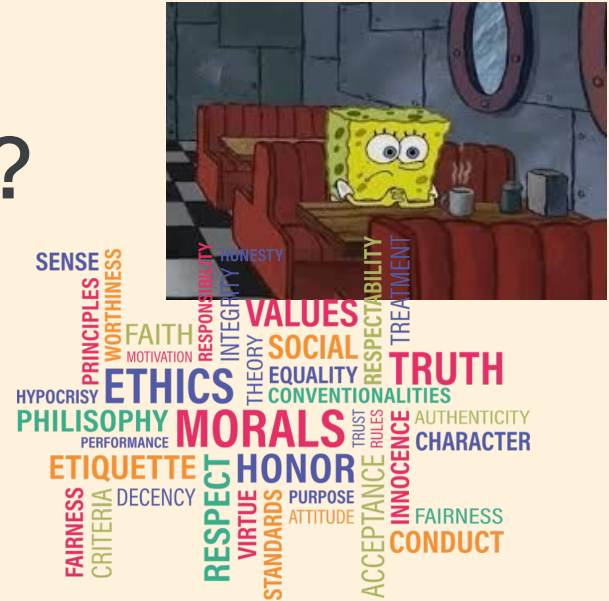
Question: Is “bad faith” (self-deception) morally worse than “good faith” commitment to evil?

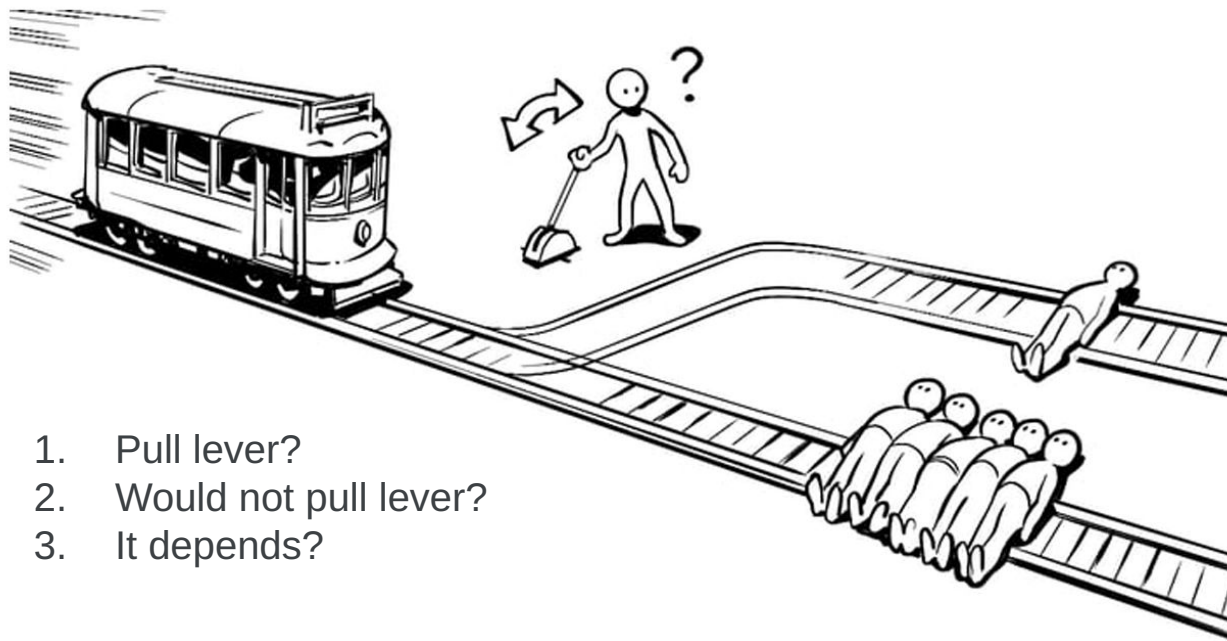
Chapter 6.6 - Can we Create Values?

- We can “act in good faith” - but what is good?
 - Kierkegaard argues there are only subjective values

“Whenever a man chooses his purpose and commitment in all clearness... it is impossible to prefer another for him”
(Sartre, 1946, 1973: 50)

- You are not choosing *between* values rather than placing value in the act of choice itself
 - We create value by realizing there are choices





1. Pull lever?
2. Would not pull lever?
3. It depends?

What was the “Good” Choice?

- Relativists need context to decide - it depends
 - a person who adheres to the doctrine that knowledge, truth, and morality exist in relation to culture, society, or historical context, and are not absolute.
- “Are we the creators of value” =
“Are values pre-established for individuals by the group to which they belong?”
- Existentialist doesn't care - it's up to you and you have to live with the consequences
- “Are we the creators of value” =
“Is each one of us a creator of value?”



Freedom of Choice

- Sartre believes that the freedom of individuals extends beyond choosing their own values from a pre-existing set
- An individual's freedom includes the ability to create value and make things valuable
 - Since there Sartre believes there is no God, humans can be the creators of value



Subjective vs Objective

- Subjective: based on or influenced by personal feelings, tastes, or opinions
- Objective: not influenced by personal feelings or opinions in considering and representing facts
- Some of the philosophies we have studied so far have argued some objective truth about humans, which determines whether they live a good life
- Existentialists believe that there is no true objective truth
 - Kierkegaard, 6.1: Some groups (e.g. religious groups) believe there is an objective truth, but those who live by it have to accept its truth subjectively
 - Sartre, 6.3: The “serious minded” fail to see is that the only way these objective external values can guide their lives is through them choosing to hold those values

Intersubjectivity

- To avoid championing complete subjectivity, Sartre appeals to “inter-subjectivity”
 - Intersubjective: existing between conscious minds; shared by more than one conscious mind

“In every purpose there is universality, in this sense that every purpose is comprehensible to every man”

Sartre, 1946, 1973: 46

- Sartre has added a new layer to living in good faith:
 - Recognize your freedom
 - Claim responsibility for your actions
 - Don't objectify yourself (don't limit your behavior to the role you adopt)
 - You exist in a shared human world and your choices are intelligible to and affect others

Are we really radically free?

Chapter 6.7

Sartre's main claim is that "we are condemned to be free"

Radical freedom essentially means:

- Nothing ultimately determines our choices
- Moral, social, and religious standards cannot eliminate our freedom

The Existentialist response to limits:

- Logical impossibility \neq restriction on freedom
- Or that *within* what is logically possible, we are inescapably free



If you cannot eat cake that has already been eaten, **logical impossibility**



If you cannot buy something because it is illegal, you can still break the law

... But is this too abstract?

Freedom Needs Qualification

- We distinguish between
 - Logical impossibility (what cannot be done)
 - Legal restriction (forbidden by law)
 - Financial limitation (lack of resources)
 - Moral prohibition (what ought not to be done)



Government criticism based arrest
“you’re still free because you have the *option* to break the law” is not freedom practically and politically
→ it’s not persuasive to say you’re still ‘free’ because you could risk jail

If breaking a law is always logically possible, does that mean laws never restrict freedom?

Rational Freedom: A Better Version



VS.



**Radical
Freedom**

“I choose this because I feel like it. No real reasoning or standards, could’ve picked the opposite and it wouldn’t matter.”

**Rational
Freedom**

“I’m free to choose, but I use reasons to guide this choice. The ‘constraints’ (logic / evidence / morality) make the choice meaningful and not random.”

- True freedom \neq doing anything at all
- True freedom = rational freedom
 - Following logic, evidence, and moral reasoning should not destroy freedom

2.2.9

Western vs. Sufi Existentialism

- Western vs. Sufi existentialism
 - Western: transcendence is defined as overcoming limitations of the self
 - Self vs. the world (object)
 - The world seems like a tool to satisfy desires
 - Sufism: union of both the subject and object
 - Ibn Arabi articulates transcendence as a “unity of Being”, annihilation in Being and through Being
 - Acknowledgement of having to lose your ego to become your true self



2.2.10

A fresh perspective: transcendence → identity

- Identity is not a frozen concept
 - “A transcendence in becoming in every breath anew, in every inhalation and exhalation, in being present”
 - True transcendence only occurs in the present
- The Sufi Perspective
 - Ibn Arabi: “From ‘i’ to ‘I’”: i is defined as your self-image, ego, preconceived notions, but ‘I’ is the true identity of the individual
 - **“Self image is the veil that covers the soul.”** Professor Nader Angha

For the Audience:

“If your ‘i’ is shaped by society, your past, and expectations, what would your ‘I’ be?”