

Existentialism

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Teacher: Mazzurco

1 The Problem of Other People

1.1 Hyperbolic Doubt

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1.2 The Look

1. Arthur Aron's study emphasizes that intimacy and trust are needed in a relationship, and can be created by stimuli, and the look facilitates this idea of trust, forced by the questions, so that the other person can properly understand about their partner, without a facade₂
 - (a) The goal of a relationship is to form a proper understanding, rather than a two-dimensional image, combining how they see themselves with how you perceive them
 - i. It is also noted that to form a relationship based on this, one has to be looked for, providing the willingness, which is one of the reasons the experiments works, by taking those willing, such that they wouldn't close off
 - (b) It is especially emphasized by the author that the interesting thing is not to look into the eyes of the other, but to be seen
 - (c) In addition, the emphasis on sharing aspects that are liked creates an atmosphere of absorbing without reflection, forced by the situation, but then a confirmation of what the other actually thinks, emphasized further by sharing three things they agree on

1.3 Photography

- 1.

1.4 Solitary Confinement

1. The effects of solitary confinement are shown to be hallucinating voices, talking to themselves₁, due to long term lack of human contact, with even automated systems to provide food₁
 - (a) Senses began to become redundant, due to the unchanging light₁ and grey walls₁, making time and sight pointless, with the exception of being able to leave for an hour each day to exercise₁
 - i. There is nothing to think about other than yourself, but no objective standard to observe based on, such that you lose the reason for existence, and lose your ability to define yourself or those around you
 - ii. Thus, people often cling to minute details of the world around₁
 - iii. Desperately working to preserve senses₁, such that on some level, he must believe it is real
 - (b) There is no method of protecting himself or confirming any information, at the mercy of the guards₁, such that he only trusts things he and others can see
 - (c) Lack of the feeling of existence, along with the space itself, due to not being perceived by anyone other than himself₁
 - i. There are no necessary actions, such that there is no reason for existing, and no way of affecting anybody outside of the cell, such that they are fully forgotten₁

- A. This leads to experiments where isolated infants eventually stop eating and starve themselves, and relates to the experiment that humans are evolutionarily strengthened through society, and are not able to survive otherwise
 - ii. Humans rely on others to confirm the existence of phenomenon, such that if nobody else can see something, there is no proof it exists in his eyes
- 2. This is related to the feeling that time moves faster during faster music and slower during slower music, such that time is observed in relation to other factors, rather than objective

1.5 Hell = Other People

1. Before Inez's entrance, Garcin emphasized both the fear of neverending awareness, but also having to live with his own thoughts 5.4
 - (a) Sleeping is a way to escape, as well as blinking, turning off sight of the world 5.4
 - (b) Harsh light that is always present, never letting one forget they have work to do, forced to remain aware 5.3
2. Life without breaks is similar to solitary confinement, without a proper passage of time, nonstop listening to one's own thoughts
 - (a) The removal of mirrors removes the last attempts to perceive other people, and prevents awareness of one's self as an object
 - (b) Lack of eyelids prevents the ability to prevent oneself from being observed, such that only others can observe
3. ****GET NOTES FROM MONDAY****
4. Inez's main function appears to be to irritate and create dissent to the point of insanity, creating dissent and provoking insecurity of other characters 5.22
 - (a) She is also the only realistic one, willing to confront the reality of being in hell, used by Sartre to show his point of view 5.26
5. The end is the basis of Sartre's idea of existence presiding essence, such that something must exist before it is thought of, rather than theorizing before executing 5.25
 - (a) Sartre argues that "a priori" is not true of humans, and the definition of self is created by ourselves through actions, rather than inherent from birth
 - (b) Garcin dreaming of being a hero doesn't make him a hero, since in his final action, he fled from real danger and became a coward
 - (c) His actions don't back up his words, so while people can make themselves by willpower, it is based on action purely, not words
 - (d) Thus, positive intentions are not valid, and emotional responses preventing actions is something to be purely overcome
6. Near the end, Garcin and Inez acknowledge that everybody is watching and the idea of a crowd, and their thoughts, breaking the first wall 5.26
 - (a) "Hell is other people" is the idea of fear of being mocked, judged by others for eternity for their actions, as Garcin is for being with Estelle and his cowardice by Inez
 - (b) Garcin is metaphoric for the French, not fighting the Nazi regime, while Inez can be interpreted as the regime not allowing them to live their lives without judgement, or just the resistance criticizing their lack of action

2 The Problem of Self-Deception

2.1 Freud's Levels of Consciousness

1. The Id is the primal part of the brain, containing the basic desires, located in the subconscious mind
2. The Superego is the part of the mind which learns from our environment, within the subconscious mind, taking in rules and morals
3. The Ego is the conscious mind, acting to balance the desires of the Id and the values of the Superego

2.2 Bad Faith

1. Bad faith is a form of self-deception, when we view ourself as an object without responsibility and free will, to escape the burdens of free will
 - (a) Sartre emphasizes that this is an active action, rather than a state
2. The structure of a lie doesn't make sense, since the liar and the lied to cannot both fool and be fooled when they are the same
3. Freud believed that certain drives are determined to be too dangerous to even be recognized by the ego, rather repressed and redirected in some other form of action
 - (a) This is the reason psychological patients give resistance as it moves closer to the repressed material, as the ego attempts to defend the repression
 - (b) This recreates the paradox of self-deception, as the ego both does not know about the lie, and must keep the lie repressed within the id
4. Sartre countered this by three patterns of bad faith, deferring the moment of decision, molding oneself to society, and becoming an object 7.55
 - (a) Thus, the first pattern is simply ignoring the urgency of the situation, ignoring implications in favor of objectivity, observing only what is present, similar to Estelle 5.9
 - (b) The second pattern is the separation of the object and subject, or the mind and body, passively allowing circumstances around them from society to control themselves
 - (c) The third pattern is taking on a role, such that oneself is the Other/object, but lose a self-image distinct from the role by which the world sees you, fully working on perfecting this role

2.3 New and Old Order

1. The Argives are free, but unaware that they are, based on the perception of the ruler and Zeus, forcing them to maintain the image to preserve their power 6.56
 - (a) Gods don't have true power over those who are already free
 - (b) Zeus and Aegestus represent the old order, while Orestes represents the new order, though Electra is seduced to the old order again
- 2.

3 The Definition of Existentialism

3.1 Tenets of Existentialism

1. This lecture was an apology, or philosophical defense, of existentialism in response to those he felt misunderstood it, even after *Being and Nothingness* 8
2. Existentialism is said to be a philosophy of wallowing and inaction, only able to be done by the wealthy, since solutions are unattainable 8
 - (a) It also can be thought to focus on the unpleasant aspects of human nature and existence, ignoring the positive
 - (b) It focuses purely on subjectivity, isolating the individual, but loses out on community
 - (c) It also has no built-in, divine moral code, such that there is no method of determining if actions are correct or not
3. Existentialism argues against the more pessimistic general notion that people must preserve the status quo and old order, to prevent anarchy, in favor of choice 8
4. Existentialism believes foremost in the idea of existence before essence, that the subjective is needed to analyze human traits 8
 - (a) It rejects the notion that to create an object, the characteristics and method of production must be known before it is created, such that the essence/nature of the object is predetermined
 - (b) While Catholic existentialism exists, atheistic states that without the existence of God, man must define himself, rather than there being human nature, unlike other objects
 - (c) Men define themselves by a series of choices by respect to others, in the process judging the traits of others to give them value, contributing to the definitions of others, due to no objective ideal value
 - (d) It also states that people are compelled to choose the trait they feel is best, not just for themselves, but for humanity as a whole
5. Man is defined to be in “anguish”, or the fear with regard to each decision, due to deciding traits of both themselves and humanity through actions, either appearing anxious, hiding it, or in denial 8
 - (a) External influences are
6. If our actions are misread, nothing can be done other than knowing our own actions, bearing in mind that our ideas were a choice behind our action
 - (a) In addition, the idea of murder seems to be in contradiction, such that it would be removing the free will of others

4 Readings

1. “The Concrete Abyss” by Lisa Guenther
2. “To Fall in Love with Anyone, Do This” by Mandy Len Catron
3. “Action Philosopher #133 - Rene Descartes” by Fred Van Lente
4. “NY Rethinks Solitary Confinement” by NYT Editorial Board; Feb 20th, 2014
5. “No Exit” by Jean-Paul Sartre, Stored PDF
6. “The Flies” by Jean-Paul Sartre, Stored PDF
7. “Being and Nothingness” by Jean-Paul Sartre, Stored PDF

8. “Existentialism Is a Humanism” by Jean-Paul Sartre