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Intro:

The existentialists base their philosophy on the idea that existence precedes essence. The main consequence of this concept is that man defines his own existence, his inherent freedom. Both Simone de Beauvoir, in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, and Jean-Paul Sartre, in *Existentialism is a Humanism*, take this as their basis conclude that freedom is interconnected and intersubjective. In many regards the philosopher’s arguments are almost identical, but Beauvoir does this by cautioning against the pitfalls which may cause man to deny his own freedom, while Sartre in a defense of existentialism emphasizes the freedom man has in defining himself.

Main Points:

* Both philosophers ground their arguments in the Cartesian cogito.
  + This means that the only world man can understand is his own, and that there is a separation between him and other men.
* Both Sartre and Beauvoir, as existentialists, assert that existence precedes essence.
  + This means that it is completely up to man to give meaning to his actions and the world around him.
* Man’s freedom is inherent and cannot be avoided. Even in indecision, man chooses not to decide. Willing freedom implies freedom.
  + Beauvoir delves into this concept, discussing the serious world, the sub-man, the passionate man, and more to show the flaw in not accepting one’s freedom.
* Since man is completely free, and he is aware that others are free as well, his actions speak to the way he wishes the world to be.
  + Sartre emphasizes the positive aspect of this. Man must take responsibility for himself, and knowing this gives him the tools to give his life meaning, and shape himself as he wishes.
  + Beauvoir agrees with this, describing freedom as an indefinite movement, but she focuses on the pitfalls man can fall into which deny this movement.
* As a result of man’s freedom and the lack of the existence of a god, man decides what is moral for himself.
  + Sartre emphasizes the constant change that man undergoes, and encourages him to make his own choices.
  + Similarly, Beauvoir encourages man to embrace the ambiguities inherent in his freedom instead of avoiding them, so he may make his own choices.
* Their conclusions differ only slightly in their reasoning.
  + Beauvoir says that it is our distance from others which means our freedom implies others’. I recognize as a free creature, that others are free, and without their freedom I could not assign any value to the world.
  + Sartre argues that it is not our own inherent freedom, but rather our commitments which oblige us to will others’ freedom.

Quotes:

* “In fact, in creating the man each of us wills ourselves to be, there is not a single one of our actions that does not at the same time create an image of man as we think he ought to be.” (EH 24)
* “Existentialism will never consider man an end, because man is constantly in the making.” (EH 52)
* “If I were really everything there would be nothing beside me; the world would be empty. […] by taking the world away from me others also give it to me, since a thing is given to me only by the movement which snatches it from me.” (AE 76)
* “To will oneself free, and to will that there be *being* are one in the same choice, the choice that man makes of himself as a presence in the world. We can neither say that the free man wants freedom in order to desire being, nor that he wants the disclosure of being by freedom. These are two aspects of a single reality. And whichever be the one under consideration, they both imply the bond of each man with all others.” (AE 75)
* “[Freedom] cannot establish a denial of itself, for in denying itself it would deny the possibility of any foundation. To will oneself moral and to will oneself free are one and the same decision.” (AE 24)
* “What art and morality have in common are creation and invention. We cannot decide *a priori* what ought to be done.” (EH 46)