

Chapter 1 : Book Review: Existential Psychology East-West | An Existential Vision

The author brings together insights from existentialism in the West and Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism in the East to explore new perspectives on eternal questions.

Kaklauskas, and Albert Chan Eds. University of the Rockies Press, Wong I have a profound admiration for the editors of Existential Psychology East-West EPEW for their courage and vision of embarking on this ambitious international project. I have done something similar before and know firsthand the difficulties involved. I also know the risk of having such international projects reviewed. Having learned that painful lesson, I have vowed to advocate the need for cross-cultural competency in academic psychology, especially in peer review. The editors of EPEW realize that the English written by some native contributors maybe less than perfect, with their awkward expressions and different academic styles. I give the editors credit for trying to maintain the original voice and writing style of the indigenous contributors. I hope that my review of EPEW measures up to my ideal of cross-cultural competencies. Interestingly, even today, the fundamental differences between East and West in terms of attitudes, values and belief systems remain largely unaltered. From an existential perspective, two nations can never meet in the sense that two individuals can never fully know understand each other. The meeting of the mind between two nations is made even more difficult because of layers of contextual and cultural differences. For example, the unique history of China has created such a huge divide between East and West that it cannot be bridged by meetings, no matter how frequent. I even question whether a prolonged period of close interactions can penetrate the inscrutable Chinese psyche with all its contradictions and complexities. The important truth is that what unites us is more important than what divides us. Our common humanity and shared universal givens are more important than our unique cultural characteristics. These thoughts need to be kept in mind as we review EPEW or any other international project. Towards an International Existential Psychology Cross-cultural psychology needs to pay equal attention to both universal principles etic and culture-specific emic aspects. The assumption of universality in the constructs and assessments in mainstream psychology has long been questioned. True international psychology calls for equal partnership from conceptualization to implementation. EPEW falls short of this ideal, in spite of the best intentions of its editors. This edited volume was based on a project of dialogue between East and West around the topic of existential psychology. However, it was rooted in Euro-American existential psychology as the frame of reference for Asian existential thoughts. Thus, the editors of EPEW exhibit the same ethnocentric bias as the common practice of translating instruments developed in America as a way to study cross-cultural psychology. Death, Freedom, Relationship, Meaning and Embodiment. He proposes that East and West differ primarily in how they react to these existential givens. But the cultural differences go deeper and broader than that: But in the Chinese feudal systems, personal responsibility is not predicated on freedom; individuals are held responsible for performing socially prescribed duties within their assigned roles and there is no much wriggle room for personal choice. Under a ruthless authoritarian regime, citizens risk imprisonment for standing up for their beliefs and publicly criticizing the government. I wonder how many of these citizens really perceive freedom as terrible curse, from which they want to escape. But is it possible that by adopting Euro-American existentialism as a template, we may be close off existential thoughts from other cultures? I propose that some Chinese cultural beliefs about the human condition Wong, a may not fit in a Euro-American mold of existential psychology. Here are some examples: This belief recognizes the co-existence of good and evil, happiness and suffering, strength and weakness. The two opposites complement each other and make the existence of each other possible. When the negative and positive are seen as an integrated whole, problems and stress are reduced. Belief in duality is the key to understanding how the Chinese people adapt to the harsh conditions of life. Such a view will lead to tolerance and accommodation of the contradictions and vicissitudes of the human condition. It enables people to embrace all of life, both negative and positive. It favors the middle path, integration and holistic thinking rather than the either-or kind of linear dichotomous thinking. Duality is the key to understanding the seemingly contradictory beliefs and behaviors of Chinese people, who are both fatalistic and fiercely independent entrepreneurs. The Inevitable

Suffering of Life While Euro-American existential psychologists are preoccupied with ontologically based anxieties, such as freedom, alienation, meaninglessness, and death Yalom, , Chinese existential thinkers are more concerned with suffering everyday livingâ€”the real suffering that comes from the painful blows from lifeâ€”tragedies, poverty, losses, oppression, and physical conditions. The Buddhist First Noble Truth of Suffering Dukkha acknowledges that life is full of suffering, not just from pain, but from mental vexation, frustrations, disappointments, and worries that come from greed, ignorance and attachments to worldly possession. Whatever the sources or interpretations, suffering constitutes a big part of human existence. The average person is more concerned about abuse, violence, brutality, hunger, terminal illness and natural disaster more than ontological concerns of being. An international existential psychology needs to recognize the prevalence of suffering and the importance of having this tragic sense of life.

Fatalism It is the belief that spiritual and cosmic forces are deciding the fate of individuals and their daily affairs. Since the world is uncontrollable and unpredictable from the perspective of individuals, belief in fatalism seems to be inevitable. Divining and fortune telling remain popular among Chinese people since the ancient days of I-Ching. One benefit of belief in fatalism is that it makes adversities more bearable. Even relationships, both good and bad, are frequently attributed to Yuan, which has the connotations of providence and fate. Fatalism leads to the strengths of acceptance, faith and transcendence. It recognizes that the rationality has its limitations and acknowledges the significant role of myths and religious beliefs in coping with the unexplainable problems of human existence. Confucianism has also instilled into the Chinese mindset the imperative of collectivist beliefs as a way of maintain social order and achieving world peace. Belief in collectivism is largely responsibility for the longevity of the Chinese civilization. Chinese collectivism has deeper and broader implications than the Western concept of relationship. Collectivism is more concerned with harmony than ontological loneliness. It extends from intrapersonal harmony to harmony with God and the Cosmos. The Chinese reference to Sky is more like our reference to a personal God. This is the essence of harmony. Chinese culture and collectivism has been built upon this foundation. Perhaps only through the notions of harmony and being in collective can humans survive. In the Chinese literature and folk beliefs, Sky symbolizes the Higher Power, Providence or fate, which affects every aspects of life. In sum, the Chinese collectivism is the key to survival and flourishing for both the individual and humanity. It places the individuals on a global stage with the responsibility to world peaceâ€”an essential step in developing international existential psychology. Yet, the relational imperative of American existentialism is yet to incorporate the expanded Chinese construct of collectivism.

Utility of Efforts and Endurance The cultural belief in the utility of effort and endurance rescues the individual from being a victim to all the external forces threatening his or her psychological and physical integrity. It helps maintain a sense of efficacy and personal responsibility even when life is largely controlled by external factors. This cultural belief may be an illusion, but it leads to conscientiousness, persistence and a tragic sense of optimism Wong, b. This construct captures two existence givensâ€”both the need to accept our limitations and the responsibility to make something of our lives in spite of these limitations. Chinese people tend to hold a long view regarding the utility of efforts and endurance. When people are repeatedly kicked and stepped on by powerful and corrupt officials without the ability to fight back, how could they do to survive? Bowing to the oppressors and absorbing the punishment may be an effective survival strategy. He observed with sadness that people were sound asleep in the Iron House without windows. He really wanted to shout out and wake them up and warn them about their impending death from suffocation. But awakening them only makes them suffer the agony of realizing the irrevocable death, because there is no hope of breaking out of the iron house. Thus, the existential dilemma is the people either die in ignorant stupor or die with agony with awareness of the futility of trying to be free. Lu Xun chose the path of authenticity by shouting outside the gate of the Iron House. This story partially explains why Chinese people silently endure suffering and oppression with servitude and passivity. They are realist and they have learned from history the futility and hopelessness of fighting against the powerful and oppressive feudal system. Their endurance is a useful survival strategy, but there is another side to their endurance: They may even try to make their lives better even within the confines of the iron house. This life goal gives him hope and meaning for playing qin. Even after discovering that reaching this goal fails to cure his blindness, he

continues to prescribe the same cure for his blind students. This tale shows that people are able to endure and survive because of a life goal, even if it is a myth, an illusion. Goal persistence represents a major existential theme in Chinese literature and psychology. This happens to be a major area of my own research Wong, Given the constant gap between ideal and reality and the multiple external and internal obstacles to our life goals, the utility of efforts and endurance is an existential given relevant to all culture. I am wondering whether greater Chinese input to the EPEW project may have resulted in a more balanced integration between East and West with respect to the core tenets of existential psychology. Equal partnership is essential to developing a truly international existential psychology. According to the list of contributors to EPEW, there is a clear imbalance between East and West in terms of scholarly and clinical accomplishments in existential psychology. I do hope that future East-West dialogue in existential psychology will correct this imbalance. An Existential Vision of the Good Life Existential psychology is inherently international, because it is about the universal story of human struggle for survival and happiness in spite of hardships and impending death. This human struggle goes on in different cultural contexts. I have argued that a truly international positive psychology PP needs to have an existential perspective Wong, c , because existential PP is rooted in the inevitability of suffering and the innate human capacity to achieve something positive in the worse of circumstances. If we minimize or deny human limitations and the dark side of the human condition, we will see evil and injustice abound. The reality of death poses a constant threat and terror, but at the same time challenges us to live fully and authentically. Is it even possible to conceptualize life satisfaction without factoring in death anxiety and death acceptance? But ultimately, life is the psychology of human existence—the arts and science of human struggles for survival and flourishing against incredible odds.

Chapter 2 : Existentialism - By Branch / Doctrine - The Basics of Philosophy

*East of Existentialism: The Tao of the West [Ray Billington] on calendrierdelascience.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. The author brings together insights from existentialism in the West and Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism in the East to explore new perspectives on eternal questions.*

Sartre, like most of his existentialist colleagues, was too much the individualist to accept the idea of being part of a movement, no matter how exclusive. Both Heidegger and the writer Albert Camus rejected the label, offended by being so linked to Sartre. But the name stuck, and Sartre, at least, accepted it with reservations. And so existentialism came to name one of the most powerful intellectual and literary movements of the last century and a half. Thus some key figures who might be considered existentialist, Camus and Friedrich Nietzsche, for example, are sometimes excluded because they are not sufficiently Sartrean. Existentialism can be defined as a philosophy that puts special emphasis on personal existence, on the problems and peculiarities that face individual human beings. It tends to distrust abstractions and overgeneralized formulations of "human nature," on the grounds that each of us, in some important sense, makes his or her own nature. The first conception of a movement should be credited to Karl Jaspers " , a German philosopher-psychiatrist who noted the similarities between Kierkegaard and Nietzsche and identified them as early practitioners of what he called "existence-philosophy" Existenzphilosophie. Kierkegaard and Nietzsche differed radically, most famously in their approach to religion Christianity in particular. Kierkegaard was devout while Nietzsche was a blasphemous atheist. But so, too, twentieth-century existentialism would include both religious and atheistic philosophers. Twentieth-century existentialism was greatly influenced by phenomenology, originated by Edmund Husserl " and pursued into the existential realm by his student Heidegger. The "ontological" problem for Heidegger, "the problem of being," was to find out who one is and what to do with oneself or, as Nietzsche had asked earlier, how one is to become what one is. Oddly enough, the existentialists, perhaps the most moralistic or in any case moralizing philosophers of modern times, often seem to avoid ethics. Kierkegaard noted that ethics was one choice among several. Heidegger emphatically insisted that he was not offering any ethics, and he continued to speak with disdain about those who confusedly worry about values. Being and Nothingness, would be followed up by an ethics, which never came. Instead, they were after an ethic of a larger kind, an ethics of "authenticity" or what we would call personal integrity. They called for responsibility, even heroism, in the face of the bourgeois modern world. They rejected traditional philosophical and scientific rationality and typically resorted to literature, prophecy, pamphleteering, and ponderous obfuscation, any means necessary to wake up the world from its boring bourgeois and at the same time brutal and irresponsible behavior. Thus existentialism tends to be a solitary philosophy. Kierkegaard, in particular, wrote at length about "subjective truth" and saving "The Individual" from the crowd, the "public," the Hegelian collective "Spirit. Heidegger calls mass-man Das Man "inauthentic" and urges us to discover our own unique "authentic" self. Camus exploded onto the literary and philosophical scene with his novel *The Stranger*, whose protagonist had only the most tenuous connections with other people, lost as he was in his own sensuous experience. Sartre focused on individual consciousness as "being-for itself" and treated "being-for-others" as a continuous threat. In his play *Huis clos* ; English trans. *No Exit* , he even tells us "Hell is other people. The existentialists share a concern for the individual and personal responsibility whether or not they embrace " free will ". They tend to resist the submersion of the individual in larger public groups or forces. Thus Kierkegaard and Nietzsche both attacked "the herd," and Heidegger distinguished "authentic existence" from mere social existence. Sartre, in particular, emphasizes the importance of free individual choice, regardless of the power of other people to influence and coerce our desires, beliefs, and decisions. Here he follows Kierkegaard, especially, for whom passionate, personal choice and commitment are essential for true "existence. He was a pious Lutheran who once defined his task in philosophy as "a Socratic task," to define or redefine what it is to be a Christian. At the time, the rationalist influence of Immanuel Kant " and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel " dominated the Lutheran church, but Kierkegaard insisted that faith was by its very nature irrational, a passion and not a provable belief. Against Hegelian Holism, Kierkegaard insisted

on the primacy of the individual and the profound "Otherness" of God. And against the worldly Lutherans, Kierkegaard preached a stark, passionate, solitudinous, and unworldly religion that, in temperament, at least, would go back to the monastery. To properly and passionately choose to be a Christian—as opposed to merely being born into the church and mindlessly reciting its dogmas—was to enjoy true existence. To be or become a Christian, according to Kierkegaard, it is necessary to passionately commit oneself, to make a "leap of faith" in the face of the "objective uncertainty" of religious claims. One cannot know or prove that there is a God; one must passionately choose to believe. Kierkegaard formulated the seemingly self-contradictory notion of "subjective truth" in opposition to the idea that all life choices have a rational or "objective" resolution. In choosing the religious life, for example, Kierkegaard insists that there are no ultimately rational reasons for doing so, only subjective motives, a sense of personal necessity and a desire for passionate commitment. Similarly, choosing to be ethical, which is to say, choosing to act according to the principles of practical reason, is itself a choice, which is not rational. The notion of subjective truth does not mean, as it may seem to mean, a truth that is true "for me. More important than what is believed is how it is believed. Against the calm deliberations of so much of the history of philosophy, in opposition to the celebration of reason and rationality, Kierkegaard celebrates angst and the passions, the "leap" into the unknown, and the irrationality of life.

Friedrich Nietzsche — Nietzsche was a German philosopher whose writing was flamboyant and deliberately provocative, repudiating the whole Judeo-Christian tradition and liberal ethics. While the Judeo-Christian tradition sought the explanation of misfortune in sin, the ancient Greeks took profound suffering to be an indication of the fundamentally tragic nature of human life. Nietzsche applauded the ancient Greeks for their ethical outlook, which stressed the development of excellence and nobility in contrast with what he saw as the Judeo-Christian obsession with sin and guilt. In contrast with the morality of the Homeric Greeks, a morality of heroism and mastery, Christian morality made the mediocre person of no great enthusiasm or accomplishments the moral exemplar. A good person, on this view, is someone who does no harm, breaks no rules or laws, and "means well. Instead of urging self-improvement in earthly terms, the Christian moral vision emphasizes abstaining from "selfish" action. The person who does essentially nothing with his or her life but has avoided "sin" might merit heaven, in the Christian view, while a creative person will probably be deemed "immoral" because he or she refuses to follow "the herd. Accordingly, Nietzsche suggests that we go "beyond good and evil," beyond our tendencies to pass moralistic judgment and toward a more creative and naturalistic perspective. Nietzsche denied the very idea of the "otherworldly" and the idea of an all-powerful benign deity. As an antidote to the Christian worldview, which treats human life as a mere path to the afterlife, Nietzsche advocates a revival of the ancient view of "eternal recurrence," the view that time repeats itself cyclically. But it is life, this existence, that alone counts for anything.

Martin Heidegger — Heidegger was a theology student before he became a phenomenologist, and his concerns were existentialist concerns, questions about how to live and how to live "authentically," that is, with integrity, in a politically and technologically seductive and dangerous world. His philosophy falls into two parts. His early work as a phenomenologist, culminating in his great tome, *Sein und Zeit*; English trans. *Being and Time*, , suggests that he deserves to be counted among the existentialists. Like Kierkegaard, he investigates the meaning of authentic existence, the significance of our mortality, our place in the world and among other people as an individual. His philosophy seeks a new openness, a new receptivity toward the world, one that turns out to be very much in line with the program of many radical or "deep" ecologists and, as Heidegger himself later discovered, with several non-Western cultures, which had never been distracted by humanistic arrogance of his own philosophical tradition. But the question emerges, because we are the "ontological" self-questioning creatures we are, just who this *Dasein* is. In contrast to the Cartesian view of the primacy and importance of knowledge, Heidegger suggests that what attaches or "tunes" us to the world is not knowledge but moods. It is in our moods, not the detached observational standpoint of knowledge, that we are "tuned in" to our world. What *Dasein* cannot be is what Descartes called "a thinking thing. It is, at first, merely the roles that other people cast for me, as their son, their daughter, their student, their sullen playmate, their clever friend. That self, the *Das Man* self, is a social construction. There is nothing authentic, nothing that is my own, about it. It is not enough to acknowledge that "we are all going to die. Jean-Paul Sartre — Sartre developed his

existentialist philosophy during the difficult years of World War II and the Nazi occupation of Paris, where he lived and spent virtually his entire life. At the center of his philosophy was an all-embracing notion of freedom and an uncompromising sense of personal responsibility. In the oppressive conditions of the Nazi occupation and during the embattled years following the war, Sartre insisted that everyone is responsible for what he or she does and for what he or she becomes or "makes of oneself," no matter what the conditions, even in war and in the face of death. Sartre later insisted that he never ceased to believe that "in the end one is always responsible for what is made of one" *New Left Review*, an only slight revision of his earlier, brasher slogan, "man makes himself. The self, Sartre suggests, is out there "in the world, like the self of another" *Transcendence of the Ego*. Sartre defines his existentialist ontology of freedom in terms of the opposition of "being-in-itself" and "being-for-itself," which in us as individuals is manifested in the tension between the fact that we always find ourselves in a particular situation defined by a body of facts that we may not have chosen—our "facticity"—and our ability to transcend that facticity, imagine, and choose—our transcendence. We may find ourselves confronting certain facts—poor health, a war, advancing age, or being Jewish in an anti-Semitic society—but it is always up to us what to make of these and how to respond to them. We may occupy a distinctive social role as a policeman or a waiter, but we are always something more; we always transcend such positions. When we try to pretend that we are identical to our roles or the captive of our situations, however, we are in "bad faith. We are always trying to define ourselves, but we are always an "open question," a self not yet made. Thus, Sartre tells us, we have a frustrated desire to "be God," to be both in-itself and for-itself, defined and free. Sartre also defines a third ontological category, which he calls "being-for-others. Our experience of other people is first of all the experience of being looked at, not spectatorship or curiosity. Someone "catches us in the act," and we define ourselves in their terms, identifying ourselves with the way we appear "for others. In his *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Sartre turned increasingly to politics and to a defense of Marxism in accordance with existentialist principles. He rejected the materialist determinism of Marxism, but he contended that political solidarity was the condition most conducive to authenticity. Not surprisingly, Sartre found the possibility of such solidarity in revolutionary engagement. Simone de Beauvoir — Simone de Beauvoir deserves special mention as a philosophical novelist who shared with Sartre this emphasis on freedom and responsibility for what one is and "what one makes of what is made of one. Beauvoir advanced the important thesis shared with Merleau-Ponty that the "ambiguity" of situations always undermines the wishful thinking that demands "right" and "wrong" answers. Beauvoir was appalled that her society, and virtually all societies, gave very little attention to the problems and inequities afflicting women. Later in life, she attacked the unsympathetic insensitivity to the inevitability of aging. *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir initiates a discussion on the significance of gender. Hers is a powerful existentialist perspective in which gender becomes a matter of choice and imposition being-for-others and not a matter of mere biological facticity. Albert Camus — Camus borrowed from Heidegger the sense of being "abandoned" in the world, and he shared with Sartre the sense that the world does not give meaning to individuals. But whereas Sartre joined Heidegger in insisting that one must make meaning for oneself, Camus concluded that the world is "absurd," a term that has wrongly come to represent the whole of existentialist thinking. Indeed, one of the persistent errors in the popular understanding of existentialism is to confuse its emphasis on the "meaninglessness" of the universe with an advocacy of despair or "existential angst. *The Myth of Sisyphus*, With those two books, he became a spokesman for the new modern morality, the ability to face life in the face of "the Absurd," a metaphysical a sense of confrontation between ourselves and an "indifferent universe. This is the fate of all of us, Camus suggested.

Chapter 3 : The meaning of "existential" | Ask The Editor | Learner's Dictionary

The author brings together insights from existentialism in the West and Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism in the East to explore new perspectives on eternal questions. He assumes no previous knowledge of philosophy and demonstrates how apparently abstruse themes relate to real-life situations.

Though Heidegger would repudiate the retrospective labelling of his earlier work as existentialism, it is in that work that the relevant concept of existence finds its first systematic philosophical formulation. And while not all existential philosophers were influenced by phenomenology for instance Jaspers and Marcel, the philosophical legacy of existentialism is largely tied to the form it took as an existential version of phenomenology. According to Husserl, consciousness is our direct openness to the world, one that is governed categorially normatively rather than causally; that is, intentionality is not a property of the individual mind but the categorial framework in which mind and world become intelligible. In turning phenomenology toward the question of what it means to be, Heidegger insists that the question be raised concretely: According to Heidegger, the categories bequeathed by the philosophical tradition for understanding a being who can question his or her being are insufficient: One can find anticipations of existential thought in many places for instance, in Socratic irony, Augustine, Pascal, or the late Schelling, but the roots of the problem of existence in its contemporary significance lie in the work of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. Subsequent existential thought reflects this difference: A focus on existence thus led, in both, to unique textual strategies quite alien to the philosophy of their time. In Kierkegaard, the singularity of existence comes to light at the moment of conflict between ethics and religious faith. How does philosophy conceive this meaning? In doing so I lose my individuality since the law holds for all but my actions become meaningful in the sense of understandable, governed by a norm. Abraham has no objective reason to think that the command he hears comes from God; indeed, based on the content of the command he has every reason, as Kant pointed out in *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, to think that it cannot come from God. His sole justification is what Kierkegaard calls the passion of faith. Since it is a measure not of knowing but of being, one can see how Kierkegaard answers those who object that his concept of subjectivity as truth is based on an equivocation: Responding in part to the cultural situation in nineteenth-century Europe—historical scholarship continuing to erode fundamentalist readings of the Bible, the growing cultural capital of the natural sciences, and Darwinism in particular—and in part driven by his own investigations into the psychology and history of moral concepts, Nietzsche sought to draw the consequences of the death of God, the collapse of any theistic support for morality. Unlike Dostoevsky, however, Nietzsche sees a complicity between morality and the Christian God that perpetuates a life-denying, and so ultimately nihilistic, stance. Nietzsche was not the first to de-couple morality from its divine sanction; psychological theories of the moral sentiments, developed since the eighteenth century, provided a purely human account of moral normativity. On the account given in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, the Judeo-Christian moral order arose as an expression of the resentment of the weak against the power exercised over them by the strong. The normative is nothing but the normal. Yet this is not the end of the story for Nietzsche, any more than it was for Kierkegaard. In such a situation the individual is forced back upon himself. On the one hand, if he is weakly constituted he may fall victim to despair in the face of nihilism, the recognition that life has no intrinsic meaning. He has understood that nihilism is the ultimate meaning of the moral point of view, its life-denying essence, and he reconfigures the moral idea of autonomy so as to release the life-affirming potential within it. If such existence is to be thinkable there must be a standard by which success or failure can be measured. To say that a work of art has style is to invoke a standard for judging it, but one that cannot be specified in the form of a general law of which the work would be a mere instance. Rather, in a curious way, the norm is internal to the work. For Nietzsche, existence falls under such an imperative of style: As did Kierkegaard, then, Nietzsche uncovers an aspect of my being that can be understood neither in terms of immediate drives and inclinations nor in terms of a universal law of behavior, an aspect that is measured not in terms of an objective inventory of what I am but in terms of my way of being it. Neither Kierkegaard nor Nietzsche, however, developed this insight in a fully systematic way. That would

be left to their twentieth-century heirs. In contrast to other entities, whose essential properties are fixed by the kind of entities they are, what is essential to a human being—what makes her who she is—is not fixed by her type but by what she makes of herself, who she becomes. It is in light of this idea that key existential notions such as facticity, transcendence project, alienation, and authenticity must be understood. At first, it seems hard to understand how one can say much about existence as such. Traditionally, philosophers have connected the concept of existence with that of essence in such a way that the former signifies merely the instantiation of the latter. Having an essence meant that human beings could be placed within a larger whole, a kosmos, that provided the standard for human flourishing. Entities of the first sort, exemplified by tools as they present themselves in use, are defined by the social practices in which they are employed, and their properties are established in relation to the norms of those practices. A saw is sharp, for instance, in relation to what counts as successful cutting. Entities of the second sort, exemplified by objects of perceptual contemplation or scientific investigation, are defined by the norms governing perceptual givenness or scientific theory-construction. An available or occurrent entity instantiates some property if that property is truly predicated of it. Human beings can be considered in this way as well. However, in contrast to the previous cases, the fact that natural and social properties can truly be predicated of human beings is not sufficient to determine what it is for me to be a human being. This, the existentialists argue, is because such properties are never merely brute determinations of who I am but are always in question. It is what it is not and is not what it is Sartre Human existence, then, cannot be thought through categories appropriate to things: In this sense human beings make themselves in situation: If such a view is not to collapse into contradiction the notions of facticity and transcendence must be elucidated. Risking some oversimplification, they can be approached as the correlates of the two attitudes I can take toward myself: Facticity includes all those properties that third-person investigation can establish about me: From an existential point of view, however, this would be an error—not because these aspects of my being are not real or factual, but because the kind of being that I am cannot be defined in factual, or third-person, terms. Though third-person observation can identify skin color, class, or ethnicity, the minute it seeks to identify them as mine it must contend with the distinctive character of the existence I possess. There is no sense in which facticity is both mine and merely a matter of fact, since my existence—the kind of being I am—is also defined by the stance I take toward my facticity. An agent is oriented by the task at hand as something to be brought about through its own will or agency. Such orientation does not take itself as a theme but loses itself in what is to be done. Thereby, things present themselves not as indifferent givens, facts, but as meaningful: It may be—the argument runs—that I can be said to choose a course of action at the conclusion of a process of deliberation, but there seems to be no choice involved when, in the heat of the moment, I toss the useless pen aside in frustration. But the point in using such language is simply to insist that in the first-person perspective of agency I cannot conceive myself as determined by anything that is available to me only in third-person terms. Because my projects are who I am in the mode of engaged agency and not like plans that I merely represent to myself in reflective deliberation, the world in a certain sense reveals to me who I am. For reasons to be explored in the next section, the meaning of my choice is not always transparent to me. Existential psychoanalysis represents a kind of compromise between the first- and third-person perspectives: In the first place, though it is through my projects that world takes on meaning, the world itself is not brought into being through my projects; it retains its otherness and thus can come forth as utterly alien, as unheimlich. This experience, basic to existential thought, contrasts most sharply with the ancient notion of a kosmos in which human beings have a well-ordered place, and it connects existential thought tightly to the modern experience of a meaningless universe. In the second place, the world includes other people, and as a consequence I am not merely the revealer of the world but something revealed in the projects of those others. I am not merely looking through a keyhole; I am a voyeur. I cannot originally experience myself as something—a voyeur, for instance. It is because there are others in the world that I can take a third-person perspective on myself; but this reveals the extent to which I am alienated from a dimension of my being: This has implications for existential social theory see the section on Sartre: Existentialism and Marxism below. Finally, the self-understanding, or project, thanks to which the world is there for me in a meaningful way, already belongs to that world, derives from it,

from the tradition or society in which I find myself. This theme is brought out most clearly by Heidegger: The idea is something like this: Practices can allow things to show up as meaningful—“as hammers, dollar bills, or artworks—“because practices involve aims that carry with them norms, satisfaction conditions, for what shows up in them. But norms and rules, as Wittgenstein has shown, are essentially public, and that means that when I engage in practices I must be essentially interchangeable with anyone else who does: I eat as one eats; I drive as one drives; I even protest as one protests. To the extent that my activity is to be an instance of such a practice, I must do it in the normal way. If such standards traditionally derive from the essence that a particular thing instantiates—“this hammer is a good one if it instantiates what a hammer is supposed to be—“and if there is nothing that a human being is, by its essence, supposed to be, can the meaning of existence at all be thought? Existentialism arises with the collapse of the idea that philosophy can provide substantive norms for existing, ones that specify particular ways of life. Authenticity—“in German, *Eigentlichkeit*—“names that attitude in which I engage in my projects as my own *eigen*. What this means can perhaps be brought out by considering moral evaluations. In keeping my promise I act in accord with duty; and if I keep it because it is my duty, I also act morally according to Kant because I am acting for the sake of duty. But existentially there is still a further evaluation to be made. But I can do the same thing authentically if, in keeping my promise for the sake of duty, acting this way is something I choose as my own, something to which, apart from its social sanction, I commit myself. Similarly, doing the right thing from a fixed and stable character—“which virtue ethics considers a condition of the good—“is not beyond the reach of existential evaluation: But such character might also be a reflection of my choice of myself, a commitment I make to be a person of this sort. In both cases I have succeeded in being good; only in the latter case, however, have I succeeded in being myself. Some writers have taken this notion a step further, arguing that the measure of an authentic life lies in the integrity of a narrative, that to be a self is to constitute a story in which a kind of wholeness prevails, to be the author of oneself as a unique individual. *Nehamas ; Ricoeur* In contrast, the inauthentic life would be one without such integrity, one in which I allow my life-story to be dictated by the world. Even interpreted narratively, then, the norm of authenticity remains a formal one. Thus to be authentic can also be thought as a way of being autonomous. Being a father authentically does not necessarily make me a better father, but what it means to be a father has become explicitly my concern. It is here that existentialism locates the singularity of existence and identifies what is irreducible in the first-person stance. At the same time, authenticity does not hold out some specific way of life as a norm; that is, it does not distinguish between the projects that I might choose. The possibility of authenticity is a mark of my freedom, and it is through freedom that existentialism approaches questions of value, leading to many of its most recognizable doctrines. Freedom and Value Existentialism did not develop much in the way of a normative ethics; however, a certain approach to the theory of value and to moral psychology, deriving from the idea of existence as self-making in situation, are distinctive marks of the existentialist tradition. Existential moral psychology emphasizes human freedom and focuses on the sources of mendacity, self-deception, and hypocrisy in moral consciousness. The familiar existential themes of anxiety, nothingness, and the absurd must be understood in this context. Rather, it is located in the breakdown of direct practical activity. Both Heidegger and Sartre believe that phenomenological analysis of the kind of intentionality that belongs to moods does not merely register a passing modification of the psyche but reveals fundamental aspects of the self. Fear, for instance, reveals some region of the world as threatening, some element in it as a threat, and myself as vulnerable. In anxiety, as in fear, I grasp myself as threatened or as vulnerable; but unlike fear, anxiety has no direct object, there is nothing in the world that is threatening.

Chapter 4 : Diverse Lineages of Existentialism II

Existentialism definition is - a chiefly 20th century philosophical movement embracing diverse doctrines but centering on analysis of individual existence in an unfathomable universe and the plight of the individual who must assume ultimate responsibility for acts of free will without any certain knowledge of what is right or wrong or good or bad.

Existence precedes essence Sartre claimed that a central proposition of Existentialism is that existence precedes essence, which means that the most important consideration for individuals is that they are individuals— independently acting and responsible, conscious beings "existence" —rather than what labels, roles, stereotypes, definitions, or other preconceived categories the individuals fit "essence". The actual life of the individuals is what constitutes what could be called their "true essence" instead of there being an arbitrarily attributed essence others use to define them. Thus, human beings, through their own consciousness, create their own values and determine a meaning to their life. His form must be just as manifold as are the opposites that he holds together. The systematic eins, zwei, drei is an abstract form that also must inevitably run into trouble whenever it is to be applied to the concrete. To the same degree as the subjective thinker is concrete, to the same degree his form must also be concretely dialectical. But just as he himself is not a poet, not an ethicist, not a dialectician, so also his form is none of these directly. His form must first and last be related to existence, and in this regard he must have at his disposal the poetic, the ethical, the dialectical, the religious. Subordinate character, setting, etc. The setting is not the fairyland of the imagination, where poetry produces consummation, nor is the setting laid in England, and historical accuracy is not a concern. The setting is inwardness in existing as a human being; the concretion is the relation of the existence-categories to one another. Historical accuracy and historical actuality are breadth. Instead, the phrase should be taken to say that people are 1 defined only insofar as they act and 2 that they are responsible for their actions. For example, someone who acts cruelly towards other people is, by that act, defined as a cruel person. Furthermore, by this action of cruelty, such persons are themselves responsible for their new identity cruel persons. This is as opposed to their genes, or human nature, bearing the blame. As Sartre says in his lecture Existentialism is a Humanism: The more positive, therapeutic aspect of this is also implied: A person can choose to act in a different way, and to be a good person instead of a cruel person. In a set of letters, Heidegger implies that Sartre misunderstood him for his own purposes of subjectivism, and that he did not mean that actions take precedence over being so long as those actions were not reflected upon. This way of living, Heidegger called "average everydayness". Absurdism The notion of the Absurd contains the idea that there is no meaning in the world beyond what meaning we give it. This meaninglessness also encompasses the amorality or "unfairness" of the world. According to Albert Camus, the world or the human being is not in itself absurd. The concept only emerges through the juxtaposition of the two, where life becomes absurd due to the incompatibility between human beings and the world they inhabit. These are considered absurd since they issue from human freedom, undermining their foundation outside of themselves. The notion of the Absurd has been prominent in literature throughout history. It is in relation to the concept of the devastating awareness of meaninglessness that Albert Camus claimed that "there is only one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide" in his *The Myth of Sisyphus*. The possibility of having everything meaningful break down poses a threat of quietism, which is inherently against the existentialist philosophy. The ultimate hero of absurdism lives without meaning and faces suicide without succumbing to it. Facticity Facticity is a concept defined by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* as the in-itself, which delineates for humans the modalities of being and not being. This can be more easily understood when considering facticity in relation to the temporal dimension of our past: As an example, consider two men, one of whom has no memory of his past and the other who remembers everything. They both have committed many crimes, but the first man, knowing nothing about this, leads a rather normal life while the second man, feeling trapped by his own past, continues a life of crime, blaming his own past for "trapping" him in this life. There is nothing essential about his committing crimes, but he ascribes this meaning to his past. Another aspect of facticity is that it entails angst, both in the sense that freedom "produces" angst when limited by facticity, and in the sense that the lack of the possibility of having facticity

to "step in" for one to take responsibility for something one has done, also produces angst. Authenticity Many noted existentialist writers consider the theme of authentic existence important. Authentic existence involves the idea that one has to "create oneself" and then live in accordance with this self. This can take many forms, from pretending choices are meaningless or random, through convincing oneself that some form of determinism is true, to a sort of "mimicry" where one acts as "one should". How "one should" act is often determined by an image one has, of how one such as oneself say, a bank manager, lion tamer, prostitute, etc. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre relates an example of a "waiter" in bad faith: The Other and the Look[edit] Main article: Other philosophy The Other when written with a capital "O" is a concept more properly belonging to phenomenology and its account of intersubjectivity. However, the concept has seen widespread use in existentialist writings, and the conclusions drawn from it differ slightly from the phenomenological accounts. The experience of the Other is the experience of another free subject who inhabits the same world as a person does. In its most basic form, it is this experience of the Other that constitutes intersubjectivity and objectivity. To clarify, when one experiences someone else, and this Other person experiences the world the same world that a person experiences – only from "over there" – the world itself is constituted as objective in that it is something that is "there" as identical for both of the subjects; a person experiences the other person as experiencing the same things. This is because the Look tends to objectify what it sees. Suddenly, he hears a creaking floorboard behind him, and he becomes aware of himself as seen by the Other. He is thus filled with shame for he perceives himself as he would perceive someone else doing what he was doing, as a Peeping Tom. Another characteristic feature of the Look is that no Other really needs to have been there: Angst and dread[edit] See also: Living educational theory "Existential angst", sometimes called existential dread, anxiety, or anguish, is a term that is common to many existentialist thinkers. It is generally held to be a negative feeling arising from the experience of human freedom and responsibility. The archetypical example is the experience one has when standing on a cliff where one not only fears falling off it, but also dreads the possibility of throwing oneself off. Angst, according to the modern existentialist, Adam Fong, is the sudden realization of a lack of meaning, often while one completes a task that initially seems to have intrinsic meaning. While in the case of fear, one can take definitive measures to remove the object of fear, in the case of angst, no such "constructive" measures are possible. There is nothing in people genetically, for instance that acts in their stead – that they can blame if something goes wrong. Therefore, not every choice is perceived as having dreadful possible consequences and, it can be claimed, human lives would be unbearable if every choice facilitated dread.

the Power of Existentialism in John Steinbeck's "East of Eden" Existentialism is A philosophy that emphasizes the uniqueness and isolation of the individual experience in a hostile or indifferent universe, regards human existence as unexplainable, and stresses freedom of choice and responsibility for the consequences of one's acts.

Existentialism, true to its roots in Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, was oriented toward two major themes: Thus, its chief theoretical energies were devoted to ontology and decision. Nature of existentialist thought and manner According to existentialism: With respect to the first point, that existence is particular, existentialism is opposed to any doctrine that views human beings as the manifestation of an absolute or of an infinite substance. It is thus opposed to most forms of idealism , such as those that stress Consciousness , Spirit, Reason, Idea, or Oversoul. Second, it is opposed to any doctrine that sees in human beings some given and complete reality that must be resolved into its elements in order to be known or contemplated. It is thus opposed to any form of objectivism or scientism , since those approaches stress the crass reality of external fact. Third, existentialism is opposed to any form of necessitarianism; for existence is constituted by possibilities from among which the individual may choose and through which he can project himself. And, finally, with respect to the fourth point, existentialism is opposed to any solipsism holding that I alone exist or any epistemological idealism holding that the objects of knowledge are mental , because existence, which is the relationship with other beings, always extends beyond itself, toward the being of those entities; it is, so to speak, transcendence. Starting from such bases, existentialism can take diverse and contrasting directions. It can insist on the transcendence of Being with respect to existence, and, by holding that transcendence to be the origin or foundation of existence, it can thus assume a theistic form. On the other hand, it can hold that human existence, posing itself as a problem, projects itself with absolute freedom, creating itself by itself, thus assuming to itself the function of God. As such, existentialism presents itself as a radical atheism. Or it may insist on the finitude of human existenceâ€™i. As such, existentialism presents itself as a humanism. From on, with the diffusion of existentialism through continental Europe, its directions developed in keeping with the diversity of the interests to which they were subject: That diversity was rooted, at least in part, in the diversity of sources on which existentialism draws. One such source is the subjectivism of the 4thâ€™5th-century theologian St. Augustine , who exhorted others not to go outside themselves in the quest for truth , for it is within them that truth abides. Still another source is the nihilism of the Russian author Fyodor Dostoyevsky , who, in his novels, presented human beings as continually defeated as a result of their choices and as continually placed before the insoluble enigma of themselves. As a consequence of the diversity of such sources, existentialist doctrines focus on several aspects of existence. They focus, first, on the problematic character of the human situation, through which the individual is continually confronted with diverse possibilities or alternatives , among which he may choose and on the basis of which he can project his life. Third, the doctrines focus on the intersubjectivity that is inherent in existence and is understood either as a personal relationship between two individuals, I and thou , such that the thou may be another person or God, or as an impersonal relationship between the anonymous mass and the individual self deprived of any authentic communication with others. Fourth, existentialism focuses on ontology , on some doctrine of the general meaning of Being, which can be approached in any of a number of ways: There is, in the fifth place, the therapeutic value of existential analysis that permits, on the one hand, the liberating of human existence from the beguilements or debasements to which it is subject in daily life and, on the other, the directing of human existence toward its authenticityâ€™i. The various forms of existentialism may also be distinguished on the basis of language, which is an indication of the cultural traditions to which they belong and which often explains the differences in terminology among various authors. The linguistic differences, however, are not decisive for a determination of philosophical affinities. Historical survey of existentialism Many of the theses that existentialists defend or illustrate in their analyses are drawn from the wider philosophical tradition. But our whole groundwork cracks, and the earth opens to abysses. In early 19th-century French philosophy , it was defended by a reformed ideologue of the French Revolution , Marie Maine de Biran , who wrote: I was

already led by instinct to look within myself in order to know how it was possible that I could be alive and be myself. The theme of the irreducibility of existence to reason, common to many existentialists, was also defended by the German idealist F. Understanding, according to Dilthey, consists in the reliving and reproducing of the experience of others. Hence, it is also a feeling together with others and a sympathetic participation in their emotions. Understanding, therefore, accomplishes a unity between the knowing object and the object known. Immediate background and founders The theses of existentialism found a particular relevance during World War II, when Europe found itself threatened alternately by material and spiritual destruction. Under those circumstances of uncertainty, the optimism of Romantic inspiration, by which the destiny of humankind is infallibly guaranteed by an infinite force such as Reason, the Absolute, or Mind and propelled by it toward an ineluctable progress, appeared to be untenable. The negative aspects of existence, such as pain, frustration, sickness, and death—which 19th-century optimism refused to take seriously because they do not touch the infinite principle that those optimists believed to be manifest in humans—became for existentialism the essential features of human reality. The thinkers who, by virtue of the negative character of their philosophy, constituted the exception to 19th-century Romanticism thus became the acknowledged masters of the existentialists. Against Hegelian necessitarianism, Kierkegaard interpreted existence in terms of possibility: Emergence as a movement Modern existentialism reproduced such ideas and combined them in more or less coherent ways. Human existence is, for all the forms of existentialism, the projection of the future on the basis of the possibilities that constitute it. For others such as Sartre, the possibilities that are offered to existential choice are infinite and equivalent, such that the choice between them is indifferent; and for still others Abbagnano and Merleau-Ponty, the existential possibilities are limited by the situation, but they neither determine the choice nor render it indifferent. The issue is one of individuating, in every concrete situation and by means of a specific inquiry, the real possibilities offered to humans. For all the existentialists, however, the choice among possibilities is. Among the risks, the most serious is the descent into inauthenticity or alienation, the degradation from being a person into being a thing. Against that risk, for the theological forms of existentialism e. Existentialism has had ramifications in various areas of contemporary culture. Kafka, FranzFranz Kafka, c. From Jaspers and Binswanger, the existentialist current became diffused and variously stated in contemporary psychiatry. On the other hand, there was the requirement to demythologize the religious content of faith, particularly of the Christian faith, in order to allow the message of the eschatological event of salvation to emerge from among human existential possibilities. Methodological issues in existentialism The methods that existentialists employ in their interpretations have a presupposition in common: The two terms coincide in existence: That common ground notwithstanding, each existentialist thinker has defended and worked out his own method for the interpretation of existence. Phenomenology is thus capable of disclosing the structure of Being and hence is an ontology of which the point of departure is the being of the one who poses the question about Being, namely, the human being. Reason is possible existence is. Thus, when the impossibility of its achievement is recognized, it is changed into faith, into the recognition of transcendence as providing the only possibility of its final achievement. According to Sartre, the foremost philosopher of mid-century France, the method of philosophy is existential psychoanalysis is. Roger-Viollet Finally, according to humanistic existentialism, as represented by Abbagnano and Merleau-Ponty, the method of philosophy consists of the analysis and the determination—by employing all available techniques, including those of science—of the structures that constitute existence is. Page 1 of 3.

Chapter 6 : ISIS Is an Existential Threat, but Not to the West - Cicero Magazine

Existentialism is a philosophy that emphasizes individual existence, freedom and choice. It is the view that humans define their own meaning in life, and try to make rational decisions despite existing in an irrational universe.

Other Works Cited 1. Key Themes of Existentialism Although a highly diverse tradition of thought, seven themes can be identified that provide some sense of overall unity. Here, these themes will be briefly introduced; they can then provide us with an intellectual framework within which to discuss exemplary figures within the history of existentialism. Philosophy as a Way of Life Philosophy should not be thought of primarily either as an attempt to investigate and understand the self or the world, or as a special occupation that concerns only a few. Rather, philosophy must be thought of as fully integrated within life. To be sure, there may need to be professional philosophers, who develop an elaborate set of methods and concepts Sartre makes this point frequently but life can be lived philosophically without a technical knowledge of philosophy. Existentialist thinkers tended to identify two historical antecedents for this notion. First, the ancient Greeks, and particularly the figure of Socrates but also the Stoics and Epicureans. In this, the existentialists were hardly unusual. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the rapid expansion of industrialisation and advance in technology were often seen in terms of an alienation of the human from nature or from a properly natural way of living for example, thinkers of German and English romanticism. The second influence on thinking of philosophy as a way of life was German Idealism after Kant. Partly as a response to the 18th century Enlightenment, and under the influence of the Neoplatonists, Schelling and Hegel both thought of philosophy as an activity that is an integral part of the history of human beings, rather than outside of life and the world, looking on. Later in the 19th century, Marx famously criticised previous philosophy by saying that the point of philosophy is not to know things "even to know things about activity" but to change them. The concept of philosophy as a way of life manifests itself in existentialist thought in a number of ways. Let us give several examples, to which we will return in the sections that follow. First, the existentialists often undertook a critique of modern life in terms of the specialisation of both manual and intellectual labour. One consequence of this is that many existentialist thinkers experimented with different styles or genres of writing in order to escape the effects of this specialisation. For Kierkegaard, for example, the fundamental truths of my existence are not representations "not, that is, ideas, propositions or symbols the meaning of which can be separated from their origin. Rather, the truths of existence are immediately lived, felt and acted. Likewise, for Nietzsche and Heidegger, it is essential to recognise that the philosopher investigating human existence is, him or herself, an existing human. Third, the nature of life itself is a perennial existentialist concern and, more famously in Heidegger and in Camus, also the significance of death. Anxiety here has two important implications. Second, anxiety also stands for a form of existence that is recognition of being on its own. Alternatively, it might be a more specifically theological claim: Finally, being on its own might signify the uniqueness of human existence, and thus the fact that it cannot understand itself in terms of other kinds of existence Heidegger and Sartre. As we shall see, the authentic being would be able to recognise and affirm the nature of existence we shall shortly specify some of the aspects of this, such as absurdity and freedom. Not, though, recognise the nature of existence as an intellectual fact, disengaged from life; but rather, the authentic being lives in accordance with this nature. The notion of authenticity is sometimes seen as connected to individualism. However, many existentialists see individualism as a historical and cultural trend for example Nietzsche, or dubious political value Camus, rather than a necessary component of authentic existence. Individualism tends to obscure the particular types of collectivity that various existentialists deem important. For many existentialists, the conditions of the modern world make authenticity especially difficult. For example, many existentialists would join other philosophers such as the Frankfurt School in condemning an instrumentalist conception of reason and value. The utilitarianism of Mill measured moral value and justice also in terms of the consequences of actions. Later liberalism would seek to absorb nearly all functions of political and social life under the heading of economic performance. Evaluating solely in terms of the measurable outcomes of production was seen as reinforcing the secularisation of the institutions of political,

social or economic life; and reinforcing also the abandonment of any broader sense of the spiritual dimension such an idea is found acutely in Emerson, and is akin to the concerns of Kierkegaard. Existentialists such as Martin Heidegger, Hanna Arendt or Gabriel Marcel viewed these social movements in terms of a narrowing of the possibilities of human thought to the instrumental or technological. Freedom The next key theme is freedom. Freedom can usefully be linked to the concept of anguish, because my freedom is in part defined by the isolation of my decisions from any determination by a deity, or by previously existent values or knowledge. Many existentialists identified the 19th and 20th centuries as experiencing a crisis of values. This might be traced back to familiar reasons such as an increasingly secular society, or the rise of scientific or philosophical movements that questioned traditional accounts of value for example Marxism or Darwinism , or the shattering experience of two world wars and the phenomenon of mass genocide. It is important to note, however, that for existentialism these historical conditions do not create the problem of anguish in the face of freedom, but merely cast it into higher relief. Likewise, freedom entails something like responsibility, for myself and for my actions. Given that my situation is one of being on its own " recognised in anxiety " then both my freedom and my responsibility are absolute. The isolation that we discussed above means that there is nothing else that acts through me, or that shoulders my responsibility. Likewise, unless human existence is to be understood as arbitrarily changing moment to moment, this freedom and responsibility must stretch across time. We should note here that many of the existentialists take on a broadly Kantian notion of freedom: This means that freedom, rather than being randomness or arbitrariness, consists in the binding of oneself to a law, but a law that is given by the self in recognition of its responsibilities. This borrowing from Kant, however, is heavily qualified by the next theme. Although my freedom is absolute, it always takes place in a particular context. My body and its characteristics, my circumstances in a historical world, and my past, all weigh upon freedom. This is what makes freedom meaningful. Suppose I tried to exist as free, while pretending to be in abstraction from the situation. In that case I will have no idea what possibilities are open to me and what choices need to be made, here and now. This concrete notion of freedom has its philosophical genesis in Hegel, and is generally contrasted to the pure rational freedom described by Kant. Situatedness is related to a notion we discussed above under the heading of philosophy as a way of life: For example, many 19th century intellectuals were interested in ancient Greece, Rome, the Medieval period, or the orient, as alternative models of a less spoiled, more integrated form of life. Nietzsche, to be sure, shared these interests, but he did so not uncritically: Heidegger expresses a related point in this way: Many existentialists take my concretely individual body, and the specific type of life that my body lives, as a primary fact about me for example, Nietzsche, Scheler or Merleau-Ponty. I must also be situated socially: My freedom is always situated with respect to the judgements of others. Situatedness in general also has an important philosophical antecedent in Marx: One point on which there is agreement, though, is that the existence with which we should be concerned here is not just any existent thing, but human existence. There is thus an important difference between distinctively human existence and anything else, and human existence is not to be understood on the model of things, that is, as objects of knowledge. But these distinctions appear to be just differences between two types of things. Whether the existentialist characterisation of Plato or Descartes is accurate is a different question. The existentialists thus countered the Platonic or Cartesian conception with a model that resembles more the Aristotelian as developed in the Nichomachean Ethics. The latter idea arrives in existentialist thought filtered through Leibniz and Spinoza and the notion of a striving for existence. Equally important is the elevation of the practical above the theoretical in German Idealists. Accordingly, in Nietzsche and Sartre we find the notion that the human being is all and only what that being does. My existence consists of forever bringing myself into being " and, correlatively, fleeing from the dead, inert thing that is the totality of my past actions. For many existentialists, authentic existence involves a certain tension be recognised and lived through, but not resolved: In the 19th and 20th centuries, the human sciences such as psychology, sociology or economics were coming to be recognised as powerful and legitimate sciences. To some extent at least their assumptions and methods seemed to be borrowed from the natural sciences. While philosophers such as Dilthey and later Gadamer were concerned to show that the human sciences had to have a distinctive method, the existentialists were inclined to go further. The free, situated

human being is not an object of knowledge in the sense the human always exists as the possibility of transcending any knowledge of it. First, many existentialists argued that nature as a whole has no design, no reason for existing. Thus, the achievements of the natural sciences also empty nature of value and meaning. Unlike a created cosmos, for example, we cannot expect the scientifically described cosmos to answer our questions concerning value or meaning. Moreover, such description comes at the cost of a profound falsification of nature: Human beings can and should become profoundly aware of this lack of reason and the impossibility of an immanent understanding of it. Camus, for example, argues that the basic scene of human existence is its confrontation with this mute irrationality. A second meaning of the absurd is this: Even if I choose to follow a law that I have given myself, my choice of law will appear absurd, and likewise will my continuously reaffirmed choice to follow it. Third, human existence as action is doomed to always destroy itself. A free action, once done, is no longer free; it has become an aspect of the world, a thing. The absurdity of human existence then seems to lie in the fact that in becoming myself a free existence I must be what I am not a thing. The Crowd Existentialism generally also carries a social or political dimension. That is the positive side of the social or political dimension. However, leading up to this positive side, there is a description of the typical forms that inauthentic social or political existence takes. Notice that these are all collective terms: These terms often carry a definite historical resonance, embodying a critique of specifically modern modes of human existence. The theme of the crowd poses a question also to the positive social or political dimension of existentialism: The 19th and 20th century presented a number of mass political ideologies which might be seen as posing a particularly challenging environment for authentic and free existence. For example, nationalism came in for criticism particularly by Nietzsche. Aristotle in book 5 of his Politics distinguishes between democracy and ochlocracy, which latter essentially means rule by those incapable of ruling even themselves. Nietzsche and Ortega y Gasset both espoused a broadly aristocratic criterion for social and political leadership. Key Existentialist Philosophers a. The issue of pseudonymity has been variously interpreted as a literary device, a personal quirk or as an illustration of the constant tension between the philosophical truth and existential or personal truth.

Existentialism. Existentialism is a catch-all term for those philosophers who consider the nature of the human condition as a key philosophical problem and who share the view that this problem is best addressed through ontology.

How existential counselling could help Existential therapy background The roots of existential psychotherapy lie in philosophy from the s, and more importantly with philosophers whose work dealt with human existence. While the two influential thinkers were in conflict regarding the ideologies of their time, they were committed to the exploration of reality and how it was experienced. Kierkegaard theorised that human discontent could only be overcome via internal wisdom, while Nietzsche introduced the idea of free will and personal responsibility. By the s, philosophers like Sartre and Heidegger had begun exploring the role interpretation and investigation had in the healing process. Existential counselling takes directly from existential philosophy. The broad tenets of existentialism can include uncertainty, an awareness of the absence of defined structure in life but with an acknowledgement of personal accountability and responsibility. The approach does take the past into consideration and together, the therapist and individual can understand the implications of past events. Coming to the realisation that you are not defined by your history and that you are not destined to have a certain future is often a breakthrough that offers liberation. An existential therapist will avoid any form of judgement and instead help the individual speak from their own perspective. The therapist should enter sessions with an open mind and be ready to question their own biases and assumptions. A belief that lies at the heart of existential counselling is that even though humans are essentially alone in the world, they long to be connected with others. This belief can help to explain why certain concerns appear and may help the individual understand why they feel the way they do sometimes. These givens were noted by influential psychotherapist Irvin D. Certainly, we are all guaranteed to die. This can provoke intense anxiety in us, or an avoidance of the topic altogether, consciously or otherwise. Yet to face our death anxiety when necessary, to work through it, and to come to terms with the fact of our eventual demise can be extremely liberating. Once the issue has been conceptualised by the therapist, a method of treatment can be developed. Due to the all-encompassing nature of existential therapy, it is near impossible to identify one single cause for psychological upset. The therapy instead treats each person as an individual, exploring their experience and relating it to the experience of all humankind. The four realms Within existential psychotherapy, there is a description of four different levels of experience and existence with which people are inevitably confronted. These can often help individuals understand the context of their concerns. There are various names for the four realms within existential therapy, however, the following are perhaps the best-known: The physical realm This world or realm is centred around physicality. It is the world we share with animals, the world of bodily needs. The social realm Within the social realm lies everything to do with relationships. Culture, society and language are here as well as work, attitudes towards authority, race and family. Emotions, friendships and romantic relationships are also part of the social world. The personal realm The personal realm is concerned with issues of the self. This includes intimacy with self and others , identity, personal characteristics and overall sense of self. Personal strengths and weaknesses are also important as well as the question of being authentic. Included within it are religion, values, beliefs and transformation. This is the dimension where we make sense of our lives and is considered the realm of transcendence. How existential counselling could help One of the primary aims of existential therapy is to help people face anxieties of life and to embrace the freedom of choice humans have, taking full responsibility for these choices as they do so. Existential therapists look to help individuals live more authentically and to be less concerned with superficiality. They also encourage clients to take ownership of their lives, to find meaning and to live fully in the present. Individuals who are interested in self-examination and who view their concerns as issues of living rather than symptoms of a psychiatric illness are more likely to benefit from this approach. Existential therapy is also well suited to those facing issues of existence, for example, those with a terminal illness, those contemplating suicide , or even those going through a transition in their life. If you want to find out more about the existential approach, speaking to a professional with experience in this area is advised. What our experts say.

Chapter 8 : Existentialism (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

Existentialism, any of various philosophies, most influential in continental Europe from about the mid-19th century, that have in common an interpretation of human existence in the world that stresses its concreteness and its problematic character.

This period was characterised by small bands of hunter-gatherer-fishers using flint technology. Sweden is first described in a written source in Germania by Tacitus in 98 AD. In Germania 44 and 45 he mentions the Swedes Suiones as a powerful tribe distinguished not merely for their arms and men, but for their powerful fleets with ships that had a prow at each end longships. Which kings kuningaz ruled these Suiones is unknown, but Norse mythology presents a long line of legendary and semi-legendary kings going back to the last centuries BC. As for literacy in Sweden itself, the runic script was in use among the south Scandinavian elite by at least the 2nd century AD, but all that has come down to the present from the Roman Period is curt inscriptions on artefacts, mainly of male names, demonstrating that the people of south Scandinavia spoke Proto-Norse at the time, a language ancestral to Swedish and other North Germanic languages. Jordanes describes the Suetidi and Dani as being of the same stock and the tallest of people. He later mentions other Scandinavian tribes as being of a same stature. The Icelandic historian Snorri Sturluson also wrote that the Swedish king Adils Eadgils had the finest horses of his day. The Vikings See also: The Swedish Viking Age lasted roughly from the 8th century to the 11th century. Their routes passed through the Dnieper south to Constantinople , on which they carried out numerous raids. The Byzantine Emperor Theophilos noticed their great skills in war, and invited them to serve as his personal bodyguard, known as the Varangian Guard. The Arab traveller Ibn Fadlan described these Vikings as follows: I have never seen more perfect physical specimens, tall as date palms, blond and ruddy; they wear neither tunics nor caftans, but the men wear a garment which covers one side of the body and leaves a hand free. Each man has an axe, a sword, and a knife, and keeps each by him at all times. The swords are broad and grooved, of Frankish sort. There was also considerable participation in expeditions westwards, which are commemorated on stones such as the England runestones. The last major Swedish Viking expedition appears to have been the ill-fated expedition of Ingvar the Far-Traveller to Serkland , the region south-east of the Caspian Sea. Its members are commemorated on the Ingvar runestones , none of which mentions any survivor. What happened to the crew is unknown, but it is believed that they died of sickness. The Kingdom of Sweden This section possibly contains synthesis of material which does not verifiably mention or relate to the main topic. Relevant discussion may be found on the talk page. Sweden and Gothia were two separate nations long before that and since antiquity. It is not known how long they existed: The island of Gotland was disputed by other than Swedes, at this time Danish, Hanseatic, and Gotland-domestic. The south-west parts of the Scandinavian peninsula consisted of three Danish provinces Scania , Blekinge and Halland. But there were Swedish settlements in south-west Finland, and along the southern coastline of Norrland. Gamla Uppsala Old Uppsala , a site of religious and political importance in the early days of Sweden During the early stages of the Scandinavian Viking Age, Ystad in the Danish province Scania and Paviken on Gotland were flourishing centres of trade, but they were not parts of the early Swedish Kingdom. Remains of what is believed to have been a large market dating from to AD have been found in Ystad. Between and , trade brought an abundance of silver to Gotland, and according to some scholars, the Gotlanders of this era hoarded more silver than the rest of the population of Scandinavia combined. During the 11th century, Christianity became the prevalent religion, and from Sweden is counted as a Christian nation. The period between and was characterised by internal power struggles and competition among the Nordic kingdoms. Slavery also called thralldom was not common in Sweden, [29] and what slavery there was tended to be driven out of existence thanks to the spread of Christianity as well as to the difficulty to obtain slaves from the lands east of the Baltic Sea, and by the development of cities before the 16th century. Former slaves tended to be absorbed into the peasantry, and some became labourers in the towns. Still, Sweden remained a poor and economically backward country in which barter was the primary means of exchange. For instance, the farmers of the province of Dalsland would transport their butter to the mining

districts of Sweden and exchange it there for iron, which they would then take to the coast and trade for fish, which they consumed, while the iron would be shipped abroad. The final battle outside the walls of Visby in 1363 ended with a massacre of 1,000 defenders of the city. In the middle of the 14th century, Sweden was struck by the Black Death. The population at same territory did not reach the numbers of the year again until the beginning of the 19th century. One third of the population died in the triennium of 1350-1353. During this period, the Swedish cities began to acquire greater rights and were strongly influenced by German merchants of the Hanseatic League, active especially at Visby. King Christian II of Denmark, who asserted his claim to Sweden by force of arms, ordered a massacre of Swedish nobles in Stockholm in 1520. Shortly afterwards the new king rejected Catholicism and led Sweden into the Protestant Reformation. The League sought civil and commercial privileges from the princes and royalty of the countries and cities along the coasts of the Baltic Sea. Having their own navy, the Hansa were able to sweep the Baltic Sea free of pirates. They sought agreement to be free of all customs and taxes. The main exports from Sweden were iron and copper. Consequently, when Gustav Vasa or Gustav I broke the monopoly power of the Hanseatic League he was regarded as a hero by the Swedish people. The foundations laid by Gustav would take time to develop. Furthermore, when Sweden did develop, freed itself from the Hanseatic League, and entered its golden era, the fact that the peasantry had traditionally been free meant that more of the economic benefits flowed back to them rather than going to a feudal landowning class. Before the emergence of the Swedish Empire, Sweden was a poor and scarcely populated country on the fringe of European civilisation, with no significant power or reputation. These German provinces excluded themselves from Swedish power one by one, leaving Sweden with only a few northern German territories: Swedish Pomerania, Bremen-Verden and Wismar. Stockholm in mid-17th century. In the middle of the 17th century Sweden was the third-largest country in Europe by land area, only surpassed by Russia and Spain. Sweden reached its largest territorial extent under the rule of Charles X after the treaty of Roskilde in 1658. After more than half a century of almost constant warfare, the Swedish economy had deteriorated. His legacy to his son, the coming ruler of Sweden, Charles XII, was one of the finest arsenals in the world, a large standing army and a great fleet. This gave Russia time to rebuild and modernise its army. After the success of invading Poland, Charles decided to make an attempt at invading Russia, but this ended in a decisive Russian victory at the Battle of Poltava in 1709. The defeat meant the beginning of the end for the Swedish Empire. In addition, the plague raging in East Central Europe devastated the Swedish dominions and reached Central Sweden in 1710. The Battle of Poltava in 1709. In the years following Poltava, Russia and her allies occupied all the Swedish dominions on the Baltic coast and even Finland. Charles XII attempted to invade Norway in 1718, but he was shot dead at Fredriksten fortress in 1719. Forced to cede large areas of land in the Treaty of Nystad in 1721, Sweden also lost its place as an empire and as the dominant state on the Baltic Sea. As the war finally ended in 1721, Sweden had lost an estimated 100,000 men, 10% of those from the area of present-day Sweden and 50,000 from the Finnish part of Sweden. In interest of re-establishing Swedish dominance in the Baltic Sea, Sweden allied itself against its traditional ally and benefactor, France, in the Napoleonic Wars. He launched a military campaign against Norway on 27 July 1814, ending in the Convention of Moss, which forced Norway into a personal union with Sweden under the Swedish crown, which lasted until 1905. The campaign was the last time Sweden was at war. It is thought that between 1880 and 1900 more than one million Swedes moved to the United States. Despite the slow rate of industrialisation into the 19th century, many important changes were taking place in the agrarian economy due to constant innovations and a rapid population growth. As the Industrial Revolution progressed during the 20th century, people gradually moved into cities to work in factories and became involved in socialist unions. A communist revolution was avoided in 1917, following the re-introduction of parliamentarism, and the country was democratised.

Chapter 9 : Existentialism | Definition of Existentialism by Merriam-Webster

A central proposition of Existentialism is that existence precedes essence, which means that the most important consideration for the individual is the fact that he or she is an individual—“an independently acting and responsible, conscious being (“existence”)—rather than what labels, roles, stereotypes, definitions, or other preconceived.

Back to Top Existentialism is a philosophy that emphasizes individual existence, freedom and choice. It is the view that humans define their own meaning in life, and try to make rational decisions despite existing in an irrational universe. It focuses on the question of human existence, and the feeling that there is no purpose or explanation at the core of existence. It holds that, as there is no God or any other transcendent force, the only way to counter this nothingness and hence to find meaning in life is by embracing existence. Thus, Existentialism believes that individuals are entirely free and must take personal responsibility for themselves although with this responsibility comes angst, a profound anguish or dread. It therefore emphasizes action, freedom and decision as fundamental, and holds that the only way to rise above the essentially absurd condition of humanity which is characterized by suffering and inevitable death is by exercising our personal freedom and choice a complete rejection of Determinism. Often, Existentialism as a movement is used to describe those who refuse to belong to any school of thought, repudiating of the adequacy of any body of beliefs or systems, claiming them to be superficial, academic and remote from life. Although it has much in common with Nihilism , Existentialism is more a reaction against traditional philosophies, such as Rationalism , Empiricism and Positivism , that seek to discover an ultimate order and universal meaning in metaphysical principles or in the structure of the observed world. It asserts that people actually make decisions based on what has meaning to them, rather than what is rational. In the s and s, French existentialists such as Jean-Paul Sartre , Albert Camus - , and Simone de Beauvoir - wrote scholarly and fictional works that popularized existential themes, such as dread, boredom, alienation, the absurd, freedom, commitment and nothingness. Existence, then, is prior to essence essence is the meaning that may be ascribed to life , contrary to traditional philosophical views dating back to the ancient Greeks. As Sartre put it: Only afterward will he be something, and he himself will have made what he will be. Sartre saw rationality as a form of "bad faith", an attempt by the self to impose structure on a fundamentally irrational and random world of phenomena "the other". This bad faith hinders us from finding meaning in freedom, and confines us within everyday experience. Kierkegaard also stressed that individuals must choose their own way without the aid of universal, objective standards. Friedrich Nietzsche further contended that the individual must decide which situations are to count as moral situations. Human beings are therefore subjects in an indifferent, ambiguous and absurd universe, in which meaning is not provided by the natural order, but rather can be created however provisionally and unstable by human actions and interpretations. Existentialism can be atheistic , theological or theistic or agnostic. Some Existentialists, like Nietzsche , proclaimed that "God is dead" and that the concept of God is obsolete. Others, like Kierkegaard , were intensely religious, even if they did not feel able to justify it. The important factor for Existentialists is the freedom of choice to believe or not to believe. History of Existentialism Back to Top Existentialist-type themes appear in early Buddhist and Christian writings including those of St. In the 17th Century, Blaise Pascal suggested that, without a God, life would be meaningless, boring and miserable, much as later Existentialists believed, although, unlike them, Pascal saw this as a reason for the existence of a God. His near-contemporary, John Locke , advocated individual autonomy and self-determination, but in the positive pursuit of Liberalism and Individualism rather than in response to an Existentialist experience. It can be argued that Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Arthur Schopenhauer were also important influences on the development of Existentialism, because the philosophies of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche were written in response or in opposition to them. However, unlike Pascal , they considered the role of making free choices on fundamental values and beliefs to be essential in the attempt to change the nature and identity of the chooser. Martin Heidegger was an important early philosopher in the movement, particularly his influential work "Being and Time", although he himself vehemently denied being an existentialist in the Sartrean sense. His discussion of ontology is rooted in an analysis of the mode of

existence of individual human beings, and his analysis of authenticity and anxiety in modern culture make him very much an Existentialist in the usual modern usage. Existentialism came of age in the mid-20th Century, largely through the scholarly and fictional works of the French existentialists, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus - and Simone de Beauvoir - Maurice Merleau-Ponty - is another influential and often overlooked French Existentialist of the period. Sartre is perhaps the most well-known, as well as one of the few to have actually accepted being called an "existentialist". In "The Myth of Sisyphus", Albert Camus uses the analogy of the Greek myth of Sisyphus who is condemned for eternity to roll a rock up a hill, only to have it roll to the bottom again each time to exemplify the pointlessness of existence, but shows that Sisyphus ultimately finds meaning and purpose in his task, simply by continually applying himself to it. Simone de Beauvoir, an important existentialist who spent much of her life alongside Sartre, wrote about feminist and existential ethics in her works, including "The Second Sex" and "The Ethics of Ambiguity". Although Sartre is considered by most to be the pre-eminent Existentialist, and by many to be an important and innovative philosopher in his own right, others are much less impressed by his contributions. Heidegger himself thought that Sartre had merely taken his own work and regressed it back to the subject-object orientated philosophy of Descartes and Husserl, which is exactly what Heidegger had been trying to free philosophy from. Logical Positivists, such as A. J. Ayer and Rudolf Carnap, claim that existentialists frequently become confused over the verb "to be" which is meaningless if used without a predicate and by the word "nothing" which is the negation of existence and therefore cannot be assumed to refer to something. Marxists, especially in post-War France, found Existentialism to run counter to their emphasis on the solidarity of human beings and their theory of economic determinism. Christian critics complain that Existentialism portrays humanity in the worst possible light, overlooking the dignity and grace that comes from being made in the image of God. Also, according to Christian critics, Existentialists are unable to account for the moral dimension of human life, and have no basis for an ethical theory if they deny that humans are bound by the commands of God. In more general terms, the common use of pseudonymous characters in existentialist writing can make it seem like the authors are unwilling to own their insights, and are confusing philosophy with literature.