

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LAW
MANAGEMENT & HUMANITIES

[ISSN 2581-5369]

Volume 4 | Issue 4

2021

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Key Figures in Existentialism: Towards a New Paradigm in Lyric Analysis

LI JIA¹

ABSTRACT

Existentialism exists in one's relation to oneself and other's. It also runs parallel to one's belief on sexuality, politics and even religion and other external forces that surround him. There are variations or different systems of thoughts that reflect existentialism and these views contain the bare essentials or subjects that an individual encounters during the course of his life. This paper targets to evaluate the key figures in Existentialism and what makes them distinct as existentialist respectively that leads to a new paradigm of Existentialism as a whole.

Keywords: *Existentialism, Kierkegaard, Sartre, Camus, Nietzsche, Heidegger*

I. INTRODUCTION

There are variations or different systems of thoughts that reflect existentialism and these views contain the bare essentials or subjects that an individual encounters during the course of his life. Existentialism exists in one's relation to oneself and other's. It also runs parallel to one's belief on sexuality, politics and even religion and other external forces that surround him. (Shelley, 2008).

II. KIERKEGAARD

Soren Kierkegaard's writings focused primarily on religious faith and the meaning of Christianity. Eventually he concluded that religious faith was irrational and was attainable only via a subjective experiential 'leap of faith'. For Kierkegaard, virtuous traits such as responsibility, honesty and commitment are subjective choices- often in response to a subjective religious conversion. The emphasis in existentialism is on the concrete nature of existence and the standard way of thinking about human beings, the conception of humans as members of a species or instances of a natural kind, generally leaves out of account such dimensions of life as passion, integrity, authenticity and commitment².

¹ International College, Krirk University, Thailand.

² John Sommers Flanagan. (2018).EXISTENTIAL SPIRITUALITY. <https://johnsommersflanagan.com/2018/01/05/existential-spirituality/>

The feeling that mainstream approaches to human phenomena leave something important out of account was expressed Soren Kierkegaard, “to be a human being means to belong to a race endowed with reason, to belong to it as a specimen, so that the race or species is higher than the individual, which is to say that there are no more individuals but only specimens.” In Kierkegaard’s view, the traditional philosophical conception of human beings as members of a species conceals something crucially important to understanding who and what man is. To counteract this concealment, man needs to reflect on his existence as an individual. According to Kierkegaard, the first thing to keep in mind is that every human being is an individual human being and is to become conscious of being an individual being. The interest in making people aware of the specific concerns associated with individuality continues to be the central theme in existentialism (Cosgrove, 2006).

Kierkegaard’s accounts the nature of authentic religious devotion. In Kierkegaardian faith, man’s intense interest in worldly goods can be combined with the most intense devotion to God. He suggests a form of faith that is not only “otherworldly” but “this-worldly”; the richest and most fulfilling form of religious life. It involves defining commitments of a non-religious sort, like to a loved one, to a political cause, or to a vocation. Louis Dupre’s essay on *The Sickness unto Death*, Kierkegaard laid his diagnosis of the spiritlessness of the “present age”. According to Kierkegaard’s critique, modern public life involves a ‘leveling down’ of everything to a point where nothing really means much of anything to anyone to anyone anymore. The result of this leveling down is an incapacity for real passion or intensity. Where there is no ability to see anything as really mattering, life is characterized by a pervasive sense of emptiness and futility, and everyone comes too blended into the shapeless mass of society³. To counteract this tendency toward spiritlessness in the present age, Kierkegaard envisions the possibility of a renewal in which individual recover from their dispirited state and come to live as individuals with the passion and intensity that is characteristic of fully realized human existence. As a religious existentialist, however, Kierkegaard sees this renewal as requiring a transformation in man’s relationship with God. In his view, the condition of emptiness and spiritlessness characteristic of modern life, a common condition he calls ‘despair’, should be seen as sin, a condition of disrelation between the self and the power that constituted it. Only by coming face-to-face with despair or sin, he suggests, can people discover their being as individuals and so become to see what is truly at stake in life. This is what meant when he said

³Christi Lyn Hemati.(2009).*The Concept of Eternity in Kierkegaard’s Philosophical Anthropology* .Phd Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Baylor University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

https://baylor-ir.tdl.org/bitstream/handle/2104/5342/Christi_Hemati_phd.pdf;sequence=1

“the category of sin is the category of the individual.” and that sin “splits men into individuals and holds every individual fast as a sinner.” Only by facing up to man’s distance from God can he encounter his true individuality, and it is only by becoming conscious of one’s individuality that one can come to achieve the right relation to God.⁴ It is expressed that man should understand the possibility of self-fulfillment and the achievement of intensity of spirit in life through non religious forms of commitment (Wartenberg, 2008).

III. SARTRE

Essence refers to the true nature of things, the humanness of man. It can be considered in an abstract way. Existentialists claim that all preceding philosophy was too much concerned with essences, ideas, concepts, and thus it became too abstract. They start from existence and keeps to it, so that the real things are kept intact, as intact as they occur in actual personal experience. To achieve true understanding of man, both essence and existence must be present. Man cannot make himself be understood without understanding his humanity, but neither can humanity be understood without paying attention to own inner experience. Life is meaningful as we live it out. We do not first find meaning and then decide to live out our lives. Our “essence” is discerned only in our “existence” as Jean Paul Sartre noted. The conception that “existence precedes essence” is often cited as a defining feature of Existentialism. “Essence” has been used primarily to characterize those features of a thing that are permanently necessary to its being. If the features are absent, the thing cannot be⁵.

In the world of objects the essence of a thing often has to be prior to its existence. But the world of human subjects is different. Man is the only being who has the intelligence to conceive of an essence. Yet for the essence of a man to be prior to his existence, a man would have to pre-exist himself, which is impossible. A man can only form the idea of his essence after he exists. He pre-exists any consciousness he has of himself. When he does not define himself, he alone is responsible for the essence that he attributes to himself. He fashions his own image and has no permanent nature. He has only the condition that he creates. Thus, for man, existence is prior to essence. Sartre explains further that if God does not exist, then there is at least one being that exists before his nature is determined- man. The concept of ‘God’ is self-contradictory insofar as it implies absolute being and absolute consciousness. If consciousness

⁴ Christi Lyn Hemati.(2009).The Concept of Eternity in Kierkegaard’s Philosophical Anthropology .Phd Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Baylor University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

https://baylor-ir.tdl.org/bitstream/handle/2104/5342/Christi_Hemati_phd.pdf;sequence=1

⁵[Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/existentialism/).First published Mon Aug 23, 2004; substantive revision Tue Jun 9, 2020, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/existentialism/>

is other than its object, then absolute consciousness would be negation pure and simple nothingness. Thus the combined concept of absolute being and absolute consciousness is self-cancelling. Man is, therefore, what he wills himself to be. His existence is characterized by freedom. Since man's acts constitute his existence, his nature or essence is the set of his acts and the freedom of those acts entails his responsibility for them. There are moreover, no a priori, intrinsic, values because there is no infinite and perfect consciousness, i.e., no God to think of them. Values are such simply because they are chosen. It is choosing that confers value upon actions. It is impossible to choose the worse and that the choices are a commitment for others as well, insofar as they are the choosers' will for everyone (Magno, 2000).

The authentic man for Sartre is the person who undergoes a radical conversion through anguish and who assumes his freedom. He recognizes himself, not as a shepherd of Being, but as the cause of there being a world and as the unique source of the world's value and intelligibility. Sartre's definition of man as a being who is not what he is and who is what he is not. This definition is intended to point up the fact that in the act of existing man transcends his past self by making it into an object of his regard. He also points the parallel fact that man both is and is not his future, or alternatively, that man is his future in the same way that he is his past: in the mode of not being it. Our past history is what it is; man cannot alter it. It is there irrevocably. It constitutes part of what Sartre calls 'facticity' and has, once it has been lived through, the same ontological status as material objects. The past is part of man's facticity, the being as an in-itself. The future however is absolutely open, absolutely undetermined either by our past self or by the external world. This supposedly follows from the fact that it is only through the for-itself or consciousness that the future comes into being. It is from this analysis of selfhood that Sartre derives his theory of freedom and authenticity. To be free is to be under the necessity of transcending one's past⁶. On the other hand authenticity or moral responsibility consists in an unwavering recognition for it, while at the same time recognizing that his future is free and that every moment he is called upon to transcend his past and to make himself anew for the future (Webber, 2009).

The Sartrean Existentialism asserts that first, there is no such thing as human nature; there is only a human condition, The human condition is expressed in the tension of opposites that man lives daily, man is both subjects and objects, he shapes his own life and is subject to external forces; and self-identity is both created by man and yet dependent upon others. The human condition is, in short, the lived ambiguity between freedom and fact. Many traditional

⁶ Tarun Mittal.(2017) To be is to be: Jean-Paul Sartre on existentialism and freedom, <https://yourstory.com/2017/06/jean-paul-sartre-philosophy-existentialism-freedom/amp>

philosophical approaches in ethics begin with a conception of man's nature and attempt to drive ethical standards from this nature. Sartre denies that humans are intrinsically good, selfish, and altruistic. Nor do humans have a natural function from which a notion of virtue could be derived. In place of human essence, Sartre offers a portrait of what it means to be human, that is, philosophical anthropology. The human condition is 'ontological' in the sense of being universal and necessary (Heter, 2006).

The primary ontological condition for humans is freedom. Ontological freedom consists in the fact that so long as man is alive he is conscious. Ontological freedom is the freedom of consciousness. The two main qualities marking human consciousness are temporality and intentionality. Also, consciousness is not subject to physical causality. Because ontological freedom is permanent quality of humans, being ontologically free is compatible with coercion, oppression and slavery. Sartre comes to depict a second type of freedom distinct from ontological freedom. Practical freedom, political freedom or liberty in the ordinary sense is limited by coercion, slavery and oppression. All humans should value both their own practical freedom and that of others.

Sartre believes that human should embrace rather than flee the human condition. Existentialism is both a clarification of human existence and an appeal to live this existence fully, openly, decidedly and authentically. If the human makes a habit of evading the human condition, then he is in 'bad faith'. Bad Faith is equivalent to a vice in the classical sense, a harmful character trait of an individual agent. Existential ethics begins with the claim that man should not evade his own freedom and moves to a richer, more complete understanding of lifestyles where bad faith is minimized or eliminated. Such lifestyles are existentially authentic. Authenticity is the primary existential value.

Sartre views the self as having both a subjective and an objective dimension. The 'social selves' or being –for –others, consist in the qualities others see in us. Being seen by others, as Sartre vividly shows with the 'look', has deep effect on man's personality. The degree to which an individual can reconcile his self-conception and the conception others impose upon him is open to debate and forms one of the most important themes in this work as a whole. In his early writings, Sartre says the subjective and objective sides of the self are always alienated. In the post –war period Sartre abandons this claim for a good reason. Humans are objectified by the look of others; but the look can be uplifting. Sartre discovers in his post-war thinking, the key to solving the riddle of the look is mutual recognition. Man establishes his own personality, projects and practical freedom only through the recognition of others. Recognition is thus the cornerstone of an interpersonal and social ethics of existentialism (Husserliana, 2009).

IV. CAMUS

Albert Camus' philosophy is built around the concept of 'The Absurd' the comprehensive description of the human condition and our predicament. The problem lies in the individual's relationship to the world. Man is not absurd, and the world is not absurd. It's interface between man and the world that the Absurd is encountered. At this interface there is discord, a friction, a grating, a destructive interaction between two surfaces that don't match. The interface is given and man is trapped. Man dream dreams that the world is not designed to fulfill. Man longs for honesty, but neither the world nor human system is equipped for honesty. He longs for indeed his nature's demand, a just world; but the world wouldn't care less about his dreams of justice. This is the absurd condition. But man does not deserve all this, it is not fair. He is born innocent, prepared to love and to live. He longs for and truly deserves a good world, but the world is not well. It victimizes and defeats the individual but the sheer weight of its sanity. Still, in the end, crying out in bewilderment and rage, man's fundamental feeling of innocence remains alive and invincible. Given this inescapable condition, the question man faces is how to live. The philosophy of the Absurd, writes Camus is a lucid invitation to live and to create in the very midst of the desert. Man should begin by accepting the interface between the inner subjectivity and the real world. He must avoid committing physical suicide, the negation of the subjective idea and the philosophical suicide, the manipulation of the perception of the world so that it appears congenial⁷.

Having accepted the Absurd, the response must be revolt, "Accepting the absurdity of everything around man is one step, a necessary experience; it should not become a dead end, a procedure, not a doctrine. It can help man discover ideas capable of restoring relative meaning to existence." Revolt means abandoning the rigid categories of thought, the parochial world views, the angular perspectives, the limiting beliefs, the defining doctrines; the conceptual and semantic distortions that make us lie; the arbitrary dos and don'ts of an immoral world in which man heretofore sought a moral existence. Revolt means refusing to cooperate with a society that would impose its dishonesties upon us and with a universe that would crush our dreams (Christian, 2008).

The results are freedom and innocence. In revolting, one becomes free; one can do whatever one wishes. There are no absolute laws, no bidding criteria for branding any act right or wrong. All is permitted, for all is equally right and wrong. And, in this condition, one recovers

⁷ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Albert Camus
First published Thu Oct 27, 2011; substantive revision Mon Apr 10, 2017
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/camus/>

innocence, because one is free to do all things without guilt. The guilt condition is part of the Absurd, and by revolting the individual frees himself from the guilt matrix. He reaffirms his innocence. Having regained innocence, the individual is then free to rely upon his senses to live a full life for himself and others. The senses and not abstractions become the essential criteria for understanding life and for living it. Camus's final challenge then is to live existentially. His ontology is a personal resistance movement against the Absurd requiring clarity and courage. It means never abandoning the present for the future or living off the past. It means trusting one's empirical experience as a guide for what is good and right. Camus's humanism is a freedom fighter's personal declaration of war against an absurd world. In both epistemology ethics, it's a call always to the individual to revolt and transcend (Reynolds, 2006).

V. HEIDEGGER

Heidegger's conception of the Being concerns its radical temporality. For Heidegger, Plato's distinction between Being and Becoming has the effect of radically devaluing the world of existence here and now (Becoming) because it placed all value in an eternal world of unchanging essences (Being). The rest of the tradition aggravated the situation by identifying Plato's Being (the eternal and unchanging ideas and essences) with the biblical God and Plato's world of Becoming with the fallen world of man, history and wretchedness. Therefore, everything of value was concentrated in the transcendent world, while the world of human existence was divested of all worth. Heidegger had a profound awareness of the mere fact of existence. To be so intensely aware of the sheer fact of being there is also to be conscious of the inevitability of one's death or of not being there. This consciousness of death is a classic theme of existential literature which abounds with the immanence of death understood as a return to inorganic matter. Existential literature invokes the image of one's own corpse just to bring home the inevitability of one's non existence. This is the sensibility which Existential Dread or anxiety is all about. Heidegger made dread the central mood of Dasein or the human way of being (Stewart, 2010).

He defines man not by his rationality but by his moods; joy, boredom, excitement and above all dread. The latter is not fear of this or that but a more general and more disconcerting condition. Its source is man's predicament taken as a whole. But far from thinking that such gloomy reflections are a sign of weaknesses and infirmity, Heidegger believed that Dread was necessary precondition for freedom. Only when driven by dread to face the prospects of one's own dissolution can one awaken to the freedom of one's existence. The reason is that freedom

from us by bad conscience, which is encouraged by the social environment. Society invents countless distractions to conceal from man the truth of his existence and inevitable death. But to be so distracted by the social environment and its oblivion is to live an inauthentic life, to live as others wish and to be what 'they' expect, and to do as 'they' do. Heidegger describes this inauthentic existence in vivid terms in the first part of his work *Being and Time* as the life of *Das Mann* or the one who forfeits his freedom to a formless 'they'. This inauthentic existence mired in 'average everydayness' is what Sartre called 'bad faith'. Awareness of the imminent possibility of one's death is the bridge from inauthentic oblivion to authenticity and freedom. The prospect of man's return to inorganic matter forces him to be conscious of his current freedom and prevents him from thinking of himself as given, predestined and preordained. Only in the light of impending death does man become aware of his life as his own free project. Only in the face of finitude does he become 'resolved' to take possession of his life and shape his destiny. Heidegger was not oblivious to the importance of fate, heredity, environment and the circumstances in which man finds himself "thrown." Even though man is not responsible for his being, he is unique in being responsible to his being: his life, his death and his destiny are his project and his responsibility. Man is altogether unlike a rock or a tree, given, static and identical with itself. Man is sheer possibility. He is very nothingness, and his nothingness, is what makes him so extraordinary. Heidegger gives nothingness a creative significance. It becomes a symbol of man's freedom, his singular, exceptional, remarkable existence.

According to Heidegger, Man stands in an odd position regarding his being. It is he who brings about the problem because of his special relation to Being. The awareness of the problem is in itself a mode of being. *Dasein* is said to mean 'existence'. But human existence is complex and cannot be defined because of its potentiality. Man is continually evolving himself, advancing and reaching out to the future, a transcending being. The nature of man suggests that man is a 'being-in-the-world'. Given that man lives in the world, he now stands in relation with other things and persons. Heidegger does not mean that man stands still in relation with other things and persons. Rather, man exists as a being which is necessarily preoccupied or concerned with 'the other'. The individual comes to see himself now as an individual that is a being within the world (a being in relation with other persons). Social interdependence, being-with others, therefore is constitutive of the mode of human existence. The human being is in the world as a member of 'the one' and this fundamental social interdependence shows itself in his participation in established way of thinking ('one thinks') and feeling ('one feels'). Being-in-the-world is being with others and private perspectives arise only on the basis of common world constituted by the concern or preoccupation which is a fundamental characteristic of man

considered as a member of 'the one'. Man is a being who is set towards the realization of his possibilities, not as an isolated ego, but a being that is necessarily interrelated with the world of things and the world of persons. It follows that man can never wholly escape from the impersonal anonymous form of existence which is rooted in membership of 'the one'. At the same time man, as potential being, is not condemned to one way of realizing himself, of existing. Two main paths lie open to him. He can acquiesce in his membership of 'the one' to the extent of becoming absorbed or immersed in the crowd consciousness, thus gaining assurance at the expense of personal responsibility for his destiny, freely choosing his own possibilities, above all his destiny to death. This is 'authentic existence' (Copleston 2003 and Husserliana, 2009).

VI. THE SHARED COMMONALITY AMONG THE KEY FIGURES

Subjectivity is the inner state of the self constituted by thinking, experience, emotion, belief, intentionality, self awareness, and the awareness of others. Existentialism described the individual that lives in an undefined world. He needs his subjectivity to grasp the uncertainties around him and the manner how a person relates to these experiences impacts the kind of life that he will lead. The subject of faith and death has been a perpetual challenge to man's desire for the extensive emotion that comes with it. He has searched for answers to countless questions on one's belief and the fear and pain that death brings. Man's life is indeed full of complexities and how he'll go through it is a question only he can answer.

Existential thinkers believe that human beings have the capacity to reveal the essential features of the world and of the beings in it. The individual lives in the real world, and in his journey through life, he encounters existential characteristics that he must deal with in order to have the wisdom on how he will shape his life. Thus, the essence of man can then be measured by the way he projects his life in relation to these existential characteristics. In this paper, the researcher compares and contrasts the key elements of Existentialism from the works of five key theorists who define the Existentialism school, namely Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger and Soren Kierkegaard. Overall, the paper tries to deepen our understanding of to what extent the key figures in existentialism share and contrast with each other in the general constructs of Existentialism school.

VII. THE DIFFERENCES AMONG THE FIVE THEORISTS

However, these theorists differ significantly in the manner in which they present and inter-relate these characteristics with other existing ideas or concepts.

Freedom

- For Kierkegaard, human freedom is the source of human's dread. He believes that it is the only appropriate response to man's quest to be free individuals. Dread is a key concept in his philosophy and it is a deep level of anxiety that signals whether the self is moving forwards in freedom or withdrawing unto freedom.

- Sartre focuses more on the nature of being in explaining what freedom is. For him "either man is wholly determined or else man is wholly free. Sartre asserts being a creature whose existence is not pre-determined; man is free to do what he wants.

- Albert Camus sees that one's freedom lies in his recognition that the universe is fundamentally devoid of absolutes. Acknowledging that the world is itself is undefined; gives man the freedom to establish its meaning in relation to his existence.

- Atheist existentialist, Friedrich Nietzsche, declares that "God is Dead"; therefore man is left in this world alone and free.

- Heidegger sees freedom in the Dasein; true existence is letting oneself be. Freedom is a kind of imposition of determination on a self of the self with no reference to beings.

Responsibility

- Theistic existentialist Kierkegaard believes that only the individual, through faith and self-renunciation, could begin to perceive the Absolute, God and for him, personal responsibility is vital in discerning appropriate courses of action to achieve this.

- Sartre, after telling that man is wholly free, stresses that man is also responsible for his actions. The inescapable condition of human life requires choosing something and accepting responsibility for the consequences. Free choice is never exercised capriciously, making a moral decision is an act of creation and nothing is pre-determined, so its value lies wholly within itself

- For Camus, life is worth living, but only as a heroic struggle against suffering and deprivation. A genuine human being should take responsibility for his own life and that of others.

- Nietzsche questions whether the conscience involved in responsibility is driven or determined by moral norms and laws or by the original capacity of freedom to oppose or affirm self-responsibility. Nietzsche believes that man's original capacity of freedom and not laws should drive man to his sense of responsibility.

- Heidegger identifies responsibility in relation to his concept of Existence or Dasein.

He describes Dasein as open to intraworldly entities, to the other Dasein. The very concept of Dasein thus includes responsibility to the other. It involves care, meaning 'care for others.

Dread

- Camus asserts that dread exists because of the absurdity that lays in man's relationship to the universe.

- For Nietzsche, dread is inevitable in a Godless world, and therefore man has to live with it.

Authenticity

- For Kierkegaard, to achieve an authentic life, one needs to have authentic faith. For him, authenticity means returning to man's genuine origin, feelings and belief and In order for man to seek his authentic being he must have a leap of faith or the leap into the arms of God.

- Sartre's central feature of human existence is the capacity to choose in full awareness of one's own being, and man may chose whether or not he will be true to himself or be authentic. Self-deception or bad faith results in living the inauthentic life. Living an authentic life for Sartre is fidelity in oneself.

- Camus perception of existential authenticity is it demands that man admits to himself that his plans and projects are for the most part hopeless and vain and struggle or regardless. This for Camus is existential revolt, to affirm the absurdity of life and continue. Man's authenticity lies in his capacity to revolt which is defined by him as a constant confrontation between man and his own obscurity, it is certainty of crushing fate, without the resignation which out to accompany it. Embracing one's absurd condition gives man the opportunity to give life meaning, an authentic existence.

Absurdity

- For Camus, Human beings are caught in a constant attempt to derive meaning from a meaningless world. The human condition is absurd in the sense that there is a confrontation between man's desire for significance, meaning and clarity on one hand and the silent, cold universe on the other.

- Nietzsche with his proclamation that God is dead tells that the absurd seeps towards us like stench of a dead God. Man is adrift in meaninglessness and has to set for himself the meaning of humanity.

- Heidegger asserts that conflicts and contradictions are the deepest truths and realities; and reason or logic is subjective and is impotent to reach truths about reality. Given these

arguments, man now lies deep in absurdity and since logic cannot help him, he turns to feelings as a more reliable guide in determining his destiny.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Kierkegaard (1835) asserts that the tonality of existential choice is “dread” though sometimes the term “anxiety” is preferred as a translation. Its nature may be seen most clearly in the case of a man faced with the choice for or against God. God is transcendent, invisible. To choose oneself before God, to commit oneself to faith, appears to be equivalent to losing oneself, to throwing oneself into the abyss; and man recoils from it. On the other hand, if a man risks all and leaps, he finds himself; he chooses his true self, which is both finite and infinite, a finite being that is to say, related to the infinite. He who has no God is alienated from himself: he is “in despair”. He who makes the leap of faith “recovers” himself, his true self, after the dispersion of the aesthetic level. Faced with the leap, therefore, man is simultaneously attracted and repelled. He is like a man standing on the edge of the precipice and simultaneously attracted and repelled by the yawning chasm below him. He experience a “sympathetic antipathy and an apathetic sympathy.

Existence for Kierkegaard does not mean simply being there, in the world, or even simply living. There are many who exist but whom at the same time do not “exist.” That is to say, they drift along, following custom and convention and without ever becoming individuals in anything but an ontological sense. To “exist” means choosing one’s true self; “existence” is something to be won by choice. Kierkegaard can therefore speak of it as a “process of becoming” and as a “striving”. And because man’s true self is the finite self as related to the infinite Subject, “existence” can also be described as “the child that is born of the infinites and the finite, the eternal and the temporal” (Flynn, 2006 and Cowan, 2003).

Human life is lived in the presence of others. Life is not a solitary enterprise with occasional interruptions by other people. One is born into a set of relations with the world. Authentic life requires dialogical relationship with Nature, with other people, with spiritual beings, and with God. It is likewise described relations with others as a constitutive of authentic life. Authentic life transcends manipulative or possessive relations, which are dominated by desires and fears, to relations of simply being with another person, of being fully present to the Other, and appreciating the mystery of the Other’s life. For Sartre, the presence of the Other reveals a dimension of one’s life over which one has no control of. Life is a struggle between the meanings that one gives and those that the Other gives to it. Man is a being thrown into the world that is finite and abandoned, that he reaches out towards the realization of his possibilities

and in doing so, interprets the world and forms his particular projects. And his final possibility which itself annihilates all other possibilities is death. Man is a being who transcends himself in his movements towards the future as a being who is 'thrown' into the world and who is destined to death. And the effective tonality of the obscure consciousness of contingency and finiteness and dereliction and destiny to death, the obscure consciousness, that is to say, of his fundamental situation or condition is 'dread'. But he can attempt to flee from dread which accompanies the obscure consciousness of what it means to be in the world by immersing himself in 'the one' and absorbing himself in his preoccupations. Death then becomes for him something which happens to 'one'. Or he can resist the temptation to distract himself from the consciousness of his radically contingency and freely assume his situation as a being in the world. To do this is to choose authentic existence, provided that he at the same time commits himself to the fulfillment of the possibilities which are here and now open to him and only which he can fulfill. For authentic existence does not mean withdrawal from all self-commitment within the world. A pure authentic existence is not possible, since man always retain his membership of the 'one'. But authentic existence is possible within limits (Leening, 2009).

Consciousness and anticipation of death are an important part of life. Indeed, the affirmation of life in the face of death gives life its special meaning. Nietzsche held that death could be a victorious experience when one ceases to fear or flee it as enemy secretly sneaking up on oneself and affirms death as natural consummation of one's life. Heidegger believed that authenticity requires moving from the notion that one must die to the personal realization that one must die. Such awareness of death enables one to live authentically. Awareness of death awakens one to a life of an individual distinct from the mass and responsible for one's own project. By accepting anxiety, by being prepared for death, one is free to live openly and creatively. For Sartre death is not something that one experiences. Death is the final absurdity, since it stops one's project in midcourse and turns the meaning of life over to the Other. Death makes life into a thing that prevents one from ever looking at life as a whole. Man cannot contemplate on his own death, since that would require taking the viewpoint of the Other who survives him. In one's death, life has become an object for the Other, reduced to one's past. The project that was one's life becomes solidified into a story that has ended and is told by another.

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