EXISTENTIALISM

EXISTENTIALISM - METAPHYSICS

- The ultimate and final reality resides within the self of the individual human person.
  
  - Morris, V. C. & Pai, Y. Philosophy & the American School, p. 70

EXISTENTIALISM - METAPHYSICS

- Our existence is given; we wake up to it.
- Our essence is what is in question; it becomes our project.
  
  - Morris & Pai, p. 71
EXISTENTIALISM

• Christianity says, “Look to God, who watches over and takes charge of all.”
• Wrong! Look to your own choice.
  • Morris & Pai, p. 70

EXISTENTIALISM

• Plato & Aristotle say, “Look to a rational system of logical necessity.”
• Wrong! Look to your own choice.
  • Morris & Pai, p. 70

EXISTENTIALISM

• Naturalism says “Follow nature; let nature be responsible.”
• Wrong! Look to your own choice.
  • Morris & Pai, p. 70
EXISTENTIALISM

- The Experimentalists say “Look to the scientific method; look to the community.”
- Wrong! Look to your own choice.
  - Morris & Pai, p. 70

EXISTENTIALISM - METAPHYSICS

- No greater tyranny than the tyranny of the majority

EXISTENTIALISM - METAPHYSICS

- In every instance, people have been separated from their basic humanity, i.e., their circumstance of ultimate choice.
  - Morris & Pai, p. 70
EXISTENTIALISM - EPISTEMOLOGY

• Making a choice is not confined to deciding to do something. It also includes deciding to believe something, to accept something as true.
  • Morris & Pai, p. 154

EXISTENTIALISM - EPISTEMOLOGY

• Each person is his or her own supreme court of epistemological judgment and is, therefore, in an ultimate sense, absolutely on his or her own when it comes to deciding between candidates for truth.
  • Morris & Pai, p. 154

EXISTENTIALISM - EPISTEMOLOGY

• In matters religious Protestantism placed all the weight of its emphasis upon the irrational datum of faith.
  • Irrational man, p. 27
EXISTENTIALISM - EPISTEMOLOGY

• as against the imposing rational structures of medieval theology and there is Luther’s famous curse upon “the whore, Reason.”

  • Irrational man, p. 27

Soren Kierkegaard
Christian Existentialist
1813-1855

Kierkegaard:
On Subjective & Objective Truth

If I know that twice two is four, this knowledge is in the highest degree impersonal. Once I know it, I know it, and I need not struggle continuously to make it my own.

  Irrational Man, p. 171
Kierkegaard: On Subjective & Objective Truth

But the truth of religion is not at all like that: it is a truth that must penetrate my own personal existence or it is nothing; and I must struggle to renew it in my life every day.

Irrational Man, p. 171

Kierkegaard: On Subjective & Objective Truth

A learned theologian may be in possession of all the so-called truths of rational theology, able to prove & disprove propositions and generally hold his own dialectically with the best;

Irrational Man, p. 171

Kierkegaard: On Subjective & Objective Truth

And yet in his heart God may have died or never lived.

Irrational Man, p. 171
Kierkegaard: On Subjective & Objective Truth

On the other hand, an illiterate peasant who knows nothing of formal theology, who may not even be able to state accurately the tenets of his creed . . .

Irrational Man, p. 171

Kierkegaard: On Subjective & Objective Truth

Nevertheless may succeed in being religious. He is in the truth, as we say, and people who know him can recognize this fact from his presence, his bearing, his way of life.

Irrational Man, p. 171

Albert Camus
Atheist Existentialist
1913-1960
Albert Camus

There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide.

The Myth of Sisyphus, p. 3

Albert Camus

• Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy... All the rest - comes afterward.

• The Myth of Sisyphus, p. 3

Albert Camus

Whether the earth or the sun revolves around the other is a matter of profound indifference. To tell the truth, it is a futile question.

The Myth of Sisyphus, p. 3
Albert Camus

On the other hand, I see many people die because they judge that life is not worth living. I see others paradoxically getting killed for the ideas or illusions that give them a reason for living . . .

The Myth of Sisyphus, p. 3

Albert Camus

What is called a reason for living is also an excellent reason for dying.

The Myth of Sisyphus, p. 3

EXISTENTIALISM - EDUCATION

• Existentialism . . . has not yet taken up . . .the mundane, non-metaphysical problems of organized social life - politics, social organization, institutional education.

• Morris & Pai, pp. 92-93
EXISTENTIALISM - EDUCATION

• But individual Existentialists have made suggestions.
• Here are some thoughts of Maxine Greene:

Art and imagination: Reclaiming the sense of possibility
• The existential contexts of education . . . have to do with the human condition in these often desolate days.

Art and imagination: Reclaiming the sense of possibility
• and . . . they make the notions of world-class achievement, benchmarks, & the rest seem superficial & limited, if not absurd.
Art and imagination: Reclaiming the sense of possibility

Like their elders, children & young persons inhabit a world of fearful moral uncertainty - a world in which it appears that almost nothing can be done to reduce suffering, contain massacres, & protect human rights.

Maxine Greene, PDK 76(5) p. 378

Art and imagination: Reclaiming the sense of possibility

• The bombardment of images identified with “Technological Communication” frequently has the effect of freezing imaginative thinking.

• Maxine Greene, PDK 76(5) p. 379

Art and imagination: Reclaiming the sense of possibility

• Instead of freeing audiences to look at things as if they could be otherwise, present day media impose predigested frameworks on their audiences.

• Maxine Greene, PDK 76(5) p. 379
Hannah Arendt’s definition of “thoughtlessness”

• The heedless recklessness or hopeless confusion or complacent repetition of ‘truths’ which have become trivial and empty.
  - Maxine Greene, PDK 76(5) p. 380

Art and imagination: Reclaiming the sense of possibility

The passive, apathetic person is all too likely to be unresponsive to ideas of the unreal, the as if, the merely possible.

Maxine Greene, PDK 76(5) p. 379

Art and imagination: Reclaiming the sense of possibility

Participatory involvement with the many forms of art does enable us, at the very least, to see more in our experience,

Maxine Greene, PDK 76(5) p. 379
Art and imagination: Reclaiming the sense of possibility

Participatory involvement with the many forms of art does enable us, at the very least, . . . to hear more on normally unheard frequencies,

Maxine Greene, PDK 76(5) p. 379

Art and imagination: Reclaiming the sense of possibility

Participatory involvement with the many forms of art does enable us, at the very least, . . . to become conscious of what daily routines, habits, and conventions have obscured.

Maxine Greene, PDK 76(5) p. 379

Art and imagination: Reclaiming the sense of possibility

• By such experiences, we are not only lurch out of the familiar and the taken-for-granted, but we may also discover new avenues for action.

• Maxine Greene, PDK 76(5) p. 379
Art and imagination: Reclaiming the sense of possibility

We may experience a sudden sense of new possibilities and thus new beginnings.

Maxine Greene. *PDK* 76(5) p. 379

Art and imagination: Reclaiming the sense of possibility

Classroom encounters with the arts can move the young to imagine, to extend, and to renew.

Maxine Greene. *PDK* 76(5) p. 382

Art and imagination: Reclaiming the sense of possibility

And surely nothing can be more important than finding the source of learning not in extrinsic demands, but in human freedom.

Maxine Greene. *PDK* 76(5) p. 382