

What is Existentialism?

- A. A philosophy centered on individual freedom
- B. A theory of quantum physics
- C. A branch of psychology
- D. A method of mathematical calculation

Show Answer...

Correct Answer: A (A philosophy centered on individual freedom)

Existentialism?

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.

Existentialism: Embracing the Absurdity of Human Existence

Introduction to Existentialism

Existentialism as a philosophy has its roots in the 19th century, blossoming in the 20th century with the works of Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, and others. It focuses on the individual, a radical freedom and responsibility, and the subjective experience as the primary source of meaning and authenticity. The term existentialism (French: L'existentialisme) was coined by the French Catholic philosopher Gabriel Marcel in the mid-1940s.

Existentialism: A Definition

But what is existentialism? At its core, existentialism rejects the notion that life has an inherent meaning, urging instead the individual to create their own

purpose in life. It states that the starting point of philosophical thinking should be the individual and their emotions, actions, responsibilities, and thoughts.

Key Themes of Existentialism

There are certain themes existentialist philosophers tend to grapple with. These include the concept of 'the Absurd', 'existence precedes essence', freedom, and authenticity. 'The Absurd' pertains to the conflict between our desire for order and the apparent disorder of the universe. 'Existence precedes essence' means we are born without a predetermined nature and give our life meaning through our actions and choices.

Existentialism in the 21st Century

Today, existentialism influences numerous disciplines including theology, drama, art, literature, and psychology. It remains relevant as it addresses timeless concerns about human existence. It's a call to confront the discomforting realities of life: freedom, isolation, and mortality, urging us to live passionately and sincerely in an indifferent world.

Conclusion

Existentialism, hence, is more than just a school of thought. It's a lens through which we examine our existence and our role in the world around us. Its significance may lie not in its answers, but rather in the questions it encourages us to ask. Existentialism forces us to confront our freedom, to take responsibility for our actions, and to create a meaningful life amidst an uncertain and chaotic world.

Throughout the ages, existentialism has acted as a mirror, reflecting human nature and the human condition in all its raw, sometimes unforgiving light. It encourages us to find our own unique paths and to be true to ourselves amidst a world that often asks us to conform. In the face of life's absurdity, existentialism urges us to continue creating, to continue existing, to continue being.

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