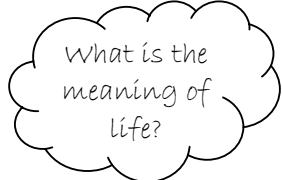


THEORY OF EXISTENTIALISM

Theory on the meaning of life



Plato said that the whole of philosophy could be summed up in one Question: "How should we live?"

Socrates felt the "unexamined life" is not worth living.

Western societies have tended to ignore existentialism, believing that technological progress could satisfy all human needs. A heavy price of social breakdown, violence, alienation and cynicism is being paid.

Main Objective / Aim / Importance of

- Seeks an understanding of our existential purpose
- Questions the role of social institutions
- Opposed to "nihilism" which negates everything

Key Concepts

- Self-examination
- Self-discovery
- Decision-making
- Choice-making
- The meaning of life*

Main Proponents

- Jean-Paul Sartre
- Franz Fanon
- Jean Baudrillard
- Jacques Derrida
- Frederick Nietzsche
- WEB du Bois

Other Proponents

- Kgalushi Koka
- Michael Foucault
- Lucy Irigaray
- Simone de Beauvoir



Foucault

Nihilism:

Opposite of Existentialism.

- ✓ No such thing as a soul
- ✓ Motto is "So What?!"
- ✓ Can lead to violence & chaos
- ✓ Can free people (esp if from very repressive religious background / upbringing / environment)

Can help us to...	Failings are...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Question other peoples ideas & values ✓ Be more open about ourselves ✓ Trust our instincts ✓ Spot fakes ✓ Enjoy life more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ It may make us too trusting ✓ It can be confusing ✓ It may lead to despair ✓ It may leave us feeling helpless & angry ✓ It may be seriously disrupting

Existentialists believe that people should not be told what their lives mean – everyone should discover their own meaning and this meaning will be subject to their culture. Existentialists believe we should repeatedly ask ourselves, "Is this how I want to spend my life?"

Black Existentialism contemplates the situation of black people in the world generally. – Scholar: Lewis R Gordon's book *Existence in Black: An Anthology of Black Existential Philosophy*.

Michael Foucault extremely concerned with the *influence of modern institutions* have on human existence. Foucault believed they distorted life & destroyed the innocence of the human soul. Foucault said human beings are essential free & unformed – institutions force people to conform to sets of rules.