

Sartre's Existentialism and the Concept of 'The Absurd': Implications for Human Existence

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ABSTRACT

The present work aims at presenting and analyzing the fundamental principles of the existentialist current of thought applying to, and specifically on, the idea of the absurd in the existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre. When expounding Sartre's works, it is possible to identify correlative themes in 'Being and Nothingness' (BN) and the play 'No Exit' (NE) when considering human freedom, responsibility, and the absurdity of life. According to the presented ideas, the conception of the absurd identified by Sartre is inclined to disclose the contradictions and oxymoron of existence, indicating that people are free to find a worthy purpose and are responsible for the void in the world.

Aims:

1. In the teaching of Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialism, to deconstruct and explicate the concept of the absurd.
2. To analyze the connection between absurdity, existence, freedom and responsibility according to Sartre's concepts.
3. To assess the extent to which Sartre's concept of the absurd destabilises stable conceptions of meaning and purpose.
4. This paper will aim at exploring the role of absurdity in existentialist thought and as a perspective to the present societies.

Objectives:

1. In this paper I will explain in detail Sartre's definition of the absurd and relate it to the existence of human beings.
2. On this basis it discusses the questions of freedom, responsibility and absurdity in Sartre's creation with the focus on "Being and Nothingness" and "No Exit".
3. To find out all the contradictions and paradoxes of existence, which is in the core of Sartre's definition of absurdity.
4. In these pages, the current author employs the template derived from Sartre's concept of the absurdity inherent in human existence and the= that stems from Sartre's existentialist assertion of the importance of the individual's agency.
5. To assess the contemporary relevance of Sartrean thought from the viewpoint of the present era's ideas and systems.

Introduction:

Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist philosophy has had a profound impact on modern society, influencing various fields including philosophy, literature, and psychology. At the core of Sartre's existentialism lies the concept of absurdity, which he posits as an inherent fact of life. This notion is central to understanding Sartre's ideas on existence, freedom, and responsibility.

In this paper, we will delve into the concept of absurdity as presented by Sartre, exploring its intricacies and connections to other key existentialist principles. We will begin by staging the problem, examining the context in which Sartre developed his ideas on absurdity. This will involve a detailed analysis of Sartre's definition of absurdity, its relationship to human existence, and how it shapes our understanding of freedom and responsibility.

Through this examination, we will uncover how Sartre's concept of absurdity challenges traditional notions of meaning and purpose, instead emphasizing individual agency and choice. We will also explore how absurdity relates to Sartre's concept of "existence precedes essence," where human beings are free to create their own meaning in life, without inherent or predetermined purpose.

By exploring Sartre's concept of absurdity in depth, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of its significance in existentialist thought and its continued relevance in contemporary society. Through this analysis, we will gain insight into the ways in which Sartre's ideas continue to influence modern thought and culture.

Discussion

The Absurd

The essay topic chosen is based on Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist philosophy focusing on the concept of the absurd. The absurd, in oversimplified Sartre's opinion, is the human search for essence and homeland in the world which is without essence and homeland. This is a natural predisposition of people who strive to find a meaning in life and have a goal to achieve in this life. However, to Sartre, this is a merely an attempt, which, in the end, cannot really be completed; the end being fraught with absurdity. Thus, Sartre being consistent in his book called 'Being and Nothingness' also noted that human beings try to give the world a face. They look for meaning and meaninglessness in one's life, be it in interpersonal relations, employment, or religion. However, Sartre focuses on the point that such an attempt is hopeless and will not achieve the expected outcome. The Gehennian conception of the world releases the insignificance of human life and does not reveal one's purpose in it. All that is left to us is to make something out of what is given, which is a practically an ominous and impossible endeavor.

This notion of the absurd is not some from a lofty point of view of metaphysics but is inherent to man's to existence. It portrays the comedy and the tragedy of life and focuses on the issue of the lack of purpose in the meaningless world. In "No Exit," there is the above quotation, Sartre states, "The absurd is the concrete concept of man's existence, and the absurd is the factual base of all human being" (NE, p. 25).

At the same time, Sartre observes that the existence of the absurd is strongly connected to the concept of freedom. He claims that people are fully free and that they can select the way most proper in their eyes. But this freedom is equally a source of concern and some amount of fear because people would have to bear the burden of decision making. It also focuses on the demand of an individual for giving one's life meaning and practicality of the truth in light of the overly prominent semblance of absurdity.

The absurd also exposes the fact that life is filled with contradictions and at the same time paradoxical. Cognitively, human beings want to find the purpose in existence while at the same time are fully aware of the absurdity of the attempts. This gives rise to feelings of anxiety and hostility that people cannot

reconcile with meaninglessness of their existence. Sartre was captured by these sentiments when he defined the absurd in the following manner, “The absurd is the confrontation between subject and world” (BN, p. 123).

Therefore, it can be summarized that Sartre’s concept of the absurd is integrally linked with existentialism as a philosophy. It uncovers human longing to find answers to questions about existence in the world that appears to be meaningless and aimless and it is full of contradictions and’ paradoxes. The absurd is not just an idea from philosophy, but the reality of life, and the major lesson is to be true to one’s self, be honest, and be accepting of the uncertain state to which people are thrown into.

Conclusion:

This paper aims to reflect on the existentialist perspective of life and world, especially Sartre’s idea of the absurd. Thus, accepting the absurdity as a part of life, people are able to assume the task of defining their place in this world and find the purpose of their existence, acknowledging the fact that they are free to go against the idiocy and rely only on their reason (BN, p. 200). This should not be difficult to grasp in the study of human existence, since its notion implies the dynamics of human life based on its contradictions. Meaninglessness undermines the absurdity, stressing authenticity, truth, and recognition of oneself as the source of values amidst the lack of purposeful guidelines in life, forcing people to become responsible for their decision and build the moral compass on their own. Thus, it can be seen that Sartre’s philosophy is not only an ideological system but also a practical code of behaviour for leading a genuine existence. Absurdity of human existence means that the individual understands he is free from the conventional norms, rules, and thus becomes responsible for assigning meaning to life. It is rather a timely philosophy, given the current society where people strive to find purpose in life and are always in search of the next big thing. Therefore, there are numerous consequences of Sartre’s philosophy present in the modern world, affecting such spheres as psychology, literature, and politics. His concept of the absurd has in a way motivated writers, artists, and thinkers for them to go ahead and dwell on the topic of humanity. The ideas of Sartre have also penetrated the sphere of psychological consideration, which calls people to bear the full account of the decisions they make. All in all, it is found that Sartre’s existentialist pneumonoultramicroscopic viewpoint, especially the theory of the absurd, provides significant understanding of existence, freedom, and responsibility of man. Finally, the acceptance of absurdity helps the individuals accept that it is incumbent on them to find purpose in life and this is only possible when they are genuine and honest despite the world’s randomness. Since this paper presents a



part of the phenomenon, it creates a need to continue exploring Sartre's concepts as a framework that explicates human existence.

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