

So be it, one might say, but it still must be possible for the failure to be surmounted, and existential ontology does not allow this hope: man's passion is useless; there is no way for him to become this being that he is not. This changes his existence into being. But if he accepts to not be in order to authentically exist, he will abandon the dream of an inhuman objectivity. He will understand that for him it is not a matter of being right in the eyes of a god but of being right in his own eyes. By renouncing to seek the guarantee of his existence outside of himself, he also refuses to believe in the unconditioned values that would rear up across his freedom-like things. "Value is this lacking being [*Ctre manqwi*] whose freedom makes itself lack," and because its freedom makes itself lack, value appears. It is desire that creates the desirable, and the project that posits the end. Human existence makes values spring up in the world, and the undertakings in which it will be engaged can be judged according to these values. But first it is situated beyond all pessimism as well as all optimism since the fact of its original spurting forth is pure contingency. There is no reason to exist before existence; nor is there a reason not to exist. The fact of existence cannot be evaluated because it is the fact from which all principles of evaluating are defined. It can be compared to nothing for there is nothing outside of it to serve as a term of comparison. This refusal of any extrinsic justification also confirms the refusal of an original pessimism that we posited at the beginning: since it is unjustifiable from without, existence is not condemned by being declared unjustified from without. And the truth is that outside of existence, there is no one. Man exists. For him it is not a matter of asking himself whether his presence in the world is useful or whether life is worth living. Those are meaningless questions. It is a matter of knowing whether he wants to live and on what conditions.

“From the moment he is born,
from the instant he is conceived,
a man begins to die.”

—Simone de Beauvoir

“The authentic man will not
consent to recognize any foreign
absolute.”

—Simone de Beauvoir

SHARED RESPONSE

Imagine Sisyphus Happy?

... a multiple-choice question: depression or joy? You pick. ... exactly cheerful that Beauvoir notices that "from the moment he is born, ... instant he is conceived, a man begins to die." That brutal reality, what the ... would call the material conditions, is a fact of life. Add to that a situation like ... amus describes in *The Myth of Sisyphus*—a poor man rolling a rock up a hill ... ve it come down and start the arduous process all over again, forever—and ... think that existentialists have a bleak view of human existence. ... Is it a stretch to imagine a life that consists of getting up in the morning, ... coffee, going to school, perhaps working, having dinner, studying, sleeping, ... ing up in the morning, having your coffee, going to school, perhaps working, ... ner, studying, sleeping ...? You get the idea. And, yes, then you die. That part ... can you imagine Sisyphus happy?

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