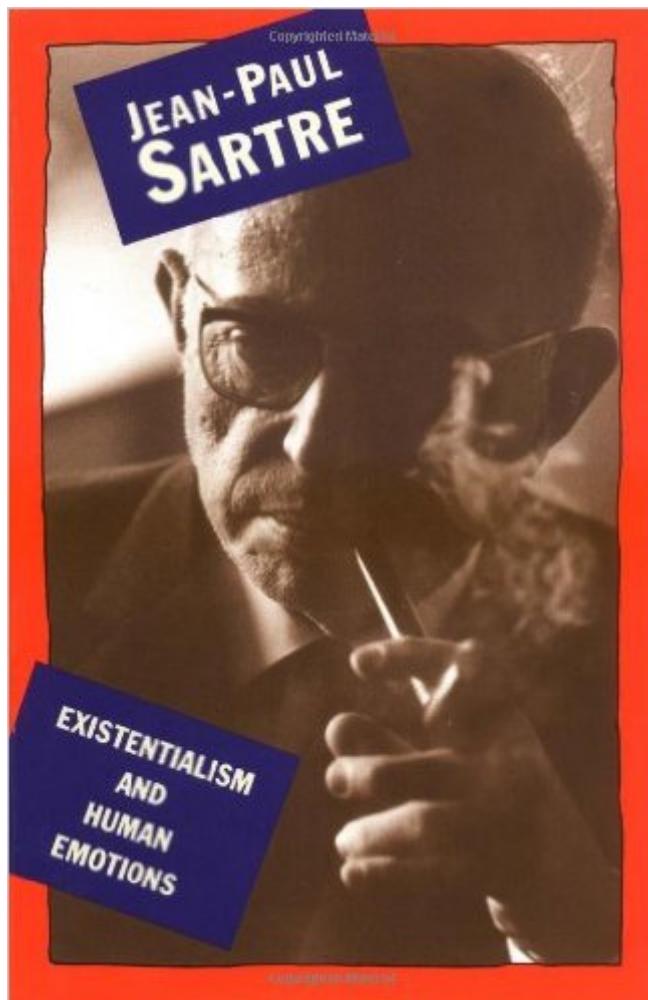


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Existentialism And Human Emotion (A Philosophical Library Book)



Synopsis

In this provocative philosophical analysis, Jean-Paul Sartre refutes the idea that existentialism drains meaning from human life, by claiming that the philosophy instead gives man total freedom to achieve his own significance. Sartre's Existentialism and Human Emotions is a stirring defense of existentialist thought, which argues that "existence precedes essence." While attacks on existentialism claim that the philosophy leads to a kind of nihilistic gloom, Sartre contends that instead existentialism is the only path toward giving man meaning. Sartre ultimately argues that by the very absence of "a priori meaning," an individual can discover and shape his or her own significance and place in the world. Sartre turns the typical nihilistic definition of existentialism on its head in this optimistic take on his best-known theory.

--This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Those not wishing to slog through some of Sartre's weightier work will find "Existentialism and Human Emotions" a very useful statement and summation of the principles of Sartre's beliefs. More than half a century after existentialism came to the fore, I, for one, find the ideas as compelling as ever. Sartre shows on the one hand that existentialism was a movement born out of the rejection of ideology. Ideas that come packaged and defined and handed to the individual for unquestioning acceptance hold no interest for the existentialist. While Sartre makes few, if any, explicit references

to the disastrous totalitarian mass movements that gave rise to World War II, it's clear that these -- along with organized religion -- are his targets. The core of Sartre's analysis lies in his assertion that "existence precedes essence." Every other piece of existentialism flows from this idea that Man, at birth, is a being for whom nothing is determined. Man, Sartre argues, creates the story that becomes his life through living, pure and simple. From this it follows that all of our lives are shaped by choice. Another of Sartre's famous contentions emerges from the book, that even if one does nothing, that in itself is a choice. Man cannot escape that responsibility for his actions. There is, as Sartre was to famously and dramatically delineate later, "no exit." For me, the most important idea in the book is that it convincingly refutes the shallow attack often leveled at existentialism: that it is dressed-up nihilism. Sartre shows that the existentialists do not reject meaning; they simply insist that there is no a priori meaning.

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