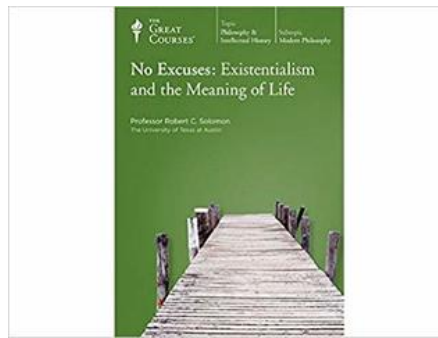




No Excuses: Existentialism And The Meaning Of Life

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From Reader Review No Excuses: Existentialism And The Meaning Of Life for online ebook

Joe Leigh says

I'm so glad I came across this audio lecture series, I can't wait to see what else they have to offer! I saw it mentioned in a comment talking about Nietzsche, so I had to look it up. It's not only an incredible 12 hour crash course on the Existential philosophers (Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Hesse, Husserl, Heidegger, and Sartre) but it also gets into the authors which I have been reading (Camus, Dostoevsky, Kafka)!

Diving into this branch of knowledge unaided and with no foundation has made me feel like I'm missing things, and not getting the most I could out of it. For example, Camus's *The Stranger* did nothing for me, I finished it thinking nothing happened, and was confused by the praise it got. But now I have a whole new appreciation for it, since I really did miss everything the book did.

I'm excited to read more Kafka, continue reading Dostoevsky, and to give Camus another shot! Having only read *Beyond Good and Evil*, I look forward to exploring the rest of his works, and the other philosopher's works.

Amirography says

A great book. One of the most fluent reads. I loved it. Yet I didn't love Existentialism. It raises some great questions and ideas, yet it is a bit bitter and I cannot find any good reason for that. The good thing about it was that I understood that I have to read more of Nietzsche works, and don't waste much time on Sartre any more.

Gary Beauregard Bottomley says

I don't like existentialism philosophy, but I liked this lecture series. It allowed me to understand other philosophers through the lens of Existentialism, and I got to understand Kant, Schopenhauer, and learn more about Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Heidegger. I liked the hour and a half he devoted to Heidegger so much, I ended up buying *"Being and Time"* from Amazon.

I would strongly recommend watching the BBC production of the play *"Huis Clos"* ("In Camera", or also called "No Exit") freely available on YouTube before or after listening to this lecture. I did and am glad for the understanding it brought. The heart of this lecture series is really Jean-Paul Sartre and a lot of what he thinks is within this highly watchable and freely available play.

Even if you think Existentialism is passe (a word the lecturer uses), and you don't particularly like Existentialism this lecture has more than enough to keep you entertained. As with almost all of these Great Course series, I don't know of anything else where I get as much value for my one credit, and because of this series I'm violating one of my rules and plan on reading a difficult book because this series has piqued my interest that much in Heidegger.

Charlie says

Found this lectures very interesting.

SJ Loria says

Existentialism

A fantastic lecture series, where the professor explains existentialism with passion and vigor. One of the best lecture series I've ever listened to. Period.

Basic points of Existentialism

1. Embrace personal responsibility – Sounds so simple when explained, but here's the idea. You make choices. You are responsible for these choices. It's a virtue ethics approach, as opposed to rule systems, motivation theories, or consequential ethics. What matters is the action. You chose it, you are responsible for it.
2. Live life passionately – Existentialists held very little faith in the possibility of an afterlife. Therefore if this is your one shot at life, make the most of it. There is the metaphor Kierkegaard makes of riding a wild horse vs. passively falling asleep in a wagon being pulled by a horse. Existentialists believe you should hop on the horse and ride. It is through passionate commitment that we give our lives meaning. Passionate commitment, say yes to life, commit to it with passion. It's invigorating.
3. No belief in the afterlife – Neitche hated what he called the "otherworldly." Existentialists thought that actions should be weighed and justified according to this world, and without relying on any others. This has to do with debating people who are religious, and in historical context this line of reasoning makes a lot more sense.

Other fun facts, I don't think Camus' The Stranger is enjoyable without understanding Existentialism. Nietzsche also isn't as terrible of an atheist as his reputation would have you believe. I thought the lecture on Hesse's Siddhartha wasn't quite as strong as it could have been. I think the Kierkegaard section is the strongest, excellent lecture series overall.

Quotes

It is through passionate commitment that we give our lives meaning
People clamor for freedom of speech, to make up for the freedom of thought which they lack.

Ivy-Mabel Fling says

Another excellent course but a lot of it is quite philosophical. I found parts of it difficult to get my head round (but when I have listened to ten more professors on the same subjects, I will no doubt understand better!)

Edwin B says

Contents of Part 2 I read earlier include: Husserl, Heidegger and Sartre. Also had a chapter on the existential writers Dostoevsky, Kafka, and Hesse.

[illegible]

A wide-ranging discussion of Existentialism and its history, this set of lectures also contains a very large number of literary reviews, of every novel by Camus I think, plus good discussion of Dostoevsky, Kafka, Sartre and others.

6

Vilnis Auz?ns says

Great introduction to some of the more influential philosophers on existentialism, especially enjoyed lectures on Sartr, Heidegger and Nietche, some of the books are going to reading list. Helped much as well structurize outlines for the lectures to get back to the subject of lectures.

Brett Williams says

For me this lecture series was a thrill, and changed what I assumed I knew about existentialism. According to this University of Texas professor, the late Robert Solomon, existentialism is a movement not a school, made up of Christians, agnostics, and atheists. It addresses those post-antiquities questions that grow out of individualism: Who am I? What am I to do? Will my life matter? The emphasis is on an informed, responsible choice, accepting the consequences, living life to the fullest vs. killing time.

Solomon illuminates existentialist ideas commencing with Camus and his novel *The Stranger*. Through Camus, Solomon provides an answer to a puzzle I've encountered a hundred times: "People without thoughts are people without emotions, and people without emotions are people without thoughts." Loaded with metaphors, Camus' main character has no emotions and no self. In prison, reflecting on other's judgement of him produces a newfound sense of meaning. Supporting my hypothesis that purpose is internal while meaning is external, I was suddenly enthusiastic for the series and read the *The Stranger* in a way I'd not have done without this intro.

On to Camus' next work, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, we find Sisyphus commanded by the gods to push a boulder up hill, let it roll down, only to push it up again without end for eternity. Such absurdity—as all lives will eventually encounter—makes death welcomed. Solomon makes a comparison to Ecclesiastes' (very Sumerian) assessment that life is pointless vanity. But Sisyphus rebels against the gods, not through refusal, but embrace (Buddhist-like). Committed to his task, immersed in his duty, with passion and zeal, Sisyphus invents meaning. Or is that purpose? This makes clear what religious believers already know, and have since a handful of them poisoned Socrates: philosophic thinking is a dangerous business. Rational truth can be not only a threat to societal rules, norms, and belonging, but dehumanizing. Humans invent "meaning," they can just as easily uninvent it. Great preparation for Nietzsche, who shows up later.

Next up, Camus' *The Fall*, where the main character helps a blind man, then doffs his hat to a man who can't see. He wonders why he did this, only to conclude he's a fake, performing for the favorable assessment of onlookers. Reflection for this man becomes, not honest, but a disease. Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living," but can it be overdone, as a different kind of self-deception? I nearly let go the leash on my dogs when this one cracked like a high voltage discharge between my earbuds. Living in splendid isolation, too prone to pondering, the shock was a little too close for comfort, and I was glad for it. As Mark Twain said, "All men live lives of quiet desperation." But maybe we shouldn't. Which is of course the point of existentialism's project: an informed, responsible choice, accepting the consequences, then from there, live to the fullest.

After a good strong drink of Camus, Solomon offers a chaser made from a mix of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Hegel, Dostoevsky, Kafka, Husserl, Heidegger, and Sartre. After a few shots of these names I can't spell or pronounce, I was tipsy with ideas to occupy me for years to come. What a delightful high.

