

I. Freedom and Responsibility The Desire to be God

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Condemned to be Free

- Man is responsible for the whole world
- Only through the for-itself is there a world
- The for-itself makes itself be, against the forces of the “coefficient of adversity”
- The advantages or disadvantages of anything are only relative to the individual project
- Complaining is therefore senseless

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My World is My Choice

- As I am free, whatever happens to me happens through me
- The choice to flee to the non-human (e.g., through magical transformation) is a human choice
- Even a war is mine, since I could opt out through suicide or desertion
- It is as if I bore responsibility for the whole

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Situation

- Each person is bound to the time in which he lives
- He is responsible for that epoch and what happens in it: “We have the war we deserve”
- He is responsible for everything but the fact that he is responsible
- He even chooses his being born: in appealing to its “facticity,” he makes it his own

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Anguish

- Anguish is the result of recognizing that one is not the foundation of one’s own being, another person’s being, or the in-itself, yet one is responsible for everything
- One could recognize this “abandonment” without remorse or regret
- But most often, we flee anguish in bad faith

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The Impulse Toward God

- There is a human impulse toward something greater than the immediate object
- Love of a woman stands in for love of God
- This orientation toward what is greater is fundamental to human reality
- Our fundamental project is to be God
- Our impulse toward God is toward the fundamental limit of human reality

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Freedom and the Desire to Be God

- If our fundamental impulse is to be God, how can we be free?
- Freedom creates its own possibilities
- Being God is like an essence or nature, which cuts off possibilities
- We must distinguish the fundamental desire from empirical desires
- But the possibilities embodied in empirical desires do not explain our freedom

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Being-in-itself-for-itself

- The fundamental project is to be God
- God would be the being that is both in-itself and for-itself
- God thus would be pure being which is the cause of itself: *causa sui*
- The *causa sui* is impossible
- But there may be a way to overcome the dualism of the in-itself and the for-itself
- Freedom might take itself for an end

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Futility?

“Every human reality is a passion in that it projects losing itself so as to found being and by the same stroke to constitute the In-itself which escapes contingency by being its own foundation, the *Ens causa sui*, which religions call God. . . . But the idea of God is contradictory and we lose ourselves in vain. Man is a useless passion” (*Being and Nothingness*, Part Four, Chapter One, I)

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