

Week Seven

Outline Lecture Eighteen—The Existentialist Solution

Key Questions:

- 1) Is existentialism the answer for humanity?
- 2) What are the aspirations and pitfalls of existentialism?

I) Age of Spiritual Forlornness

- a) Elie Wiesel's *Night*
 - i) Renunciation of God for his "silence" during the Holocaust
- b) John A.T. Robinson's *Honest to God* (1963)
 - i) "Can a Truly Contemporary Person NOT be an Atheist?"

II) Existentialism—The Philosophy of Individual Accountability

- a) Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980)
 - i) Atheist Existentialism
 - ii) Existence without excuses
- b) Challenge to Freudian Psychoanalysis
 - i) No deferral to some predisposed psychological constitution
 - ii) Existence precedes essence
 - (1) There is no predetermined essence called "human nature"
 - iii) Existence as an organic process
- c) Accountability to Others
 - i) Attack on existentialism as too solipsistic, too passive, too self-indulgent
 - ii) Self-accountability and collective accountability
 - (1) Rationalizing one's transgression
 - (2) Rationalizing one's cowardice
- d) Is this a philosophy of the privileged?
 - i) Does it ignore the realities of race, gender, and class?
 - ii) How does existentialism work for the oppressed?

III) An Existentialist Connection in the World

- a) Humanity's Age-old Need for Connection
 - i) Transitory sense of unity
 - ii) Conformist sense of "pseudo-unity"
 - iii) "Fusion without integrity"
- b) Self as Basis for Connection
 - i) "Standing in love" vs. "Falling in love"

- (1) Masochist “love”
- (2) Sadistic “love”
- ii) Fromm’s ideal of “existentialist love”