

EXISTENTIALISM!

"A PHILOSOPHICAL THEORY OR APPROACH THAT EMPHASIZES THE EXISTENCE OF THE INDIVIDUAL PERSON AS A FREE AND RESPONSIBLE AGENT DETERMINING HER OWN DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ACTS OF THE WILL."

DASEIN:

"BEING THAT WE OURSELVES ARE," HUMAN BE-ING IN THE WORLD. INTRODUCED BY HEIDEGGER IN *BEING IN TIME*; SIMILAR TO KIERKEGAARD'S "THE SINGLE INDIVIDUAL."

FREEDOM:

BECAUSE HUMANS HAVE NO PREDETERMINED, OBJECTIVE ESSENCE, YOU ARE RADICALLY FREE TO DETERMINE YOUR OWN PURPOSE.

RESPONSIBILITY:

BECAUSE YOU ARE RADICALLY FREE TO DETERMINE YOUR OWN PURPOSE, YOU ARE RADICALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR ACTIONS AND EXISTENCE.

ANXIETY:

IF ALL THE ABOVE HAVEN'T MADE YOU ANXIOUS BY NOW, YOU ARE PROBABLY EITHER TOO CHRISTIAN OR TOO CLASSICAL PHILOSOPHICAL FOR EXISTENTIALISM.

THE ABSURD:

YOU KNOW WHEN YOU REPEAT A WORD SO MANY TIMES IT DOESN'T SOUND LIKE A WORD ANYMORE? DO THAT WITH EVERYTHING IN EXISTENCE.

THE CROWD:

THE FIELD IN WHICH DASEIN OPERATES, INCLUDES PUBLIC OPINION, SOCIAL NORMS, RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, MORAL CODES, AND PARADIGMS.

FACTICITY:

FACTS ABOUT YOUR EXISTENCE THAT A THIRD-PARTY OBSERVER COULD ACCESS; THESE FACTS DON'T BELONG TO YOU, THEY JUST DESCRIBE YOU.

TRANSCENDENCE:

YOUR ATTITUDE, RELATIVE TO YOUR FACTIC PROPERTIES; YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF YOURSELF POSITIONED WITHIN THE THIRD-PARTY GAZE.

ALIENATION:

THE SELF IS NECESSARILY UNKNOWABLE, TO ANYONE, INCLUDING YOURSELF.

AUTHENTICITY:

THERE IS NO ESSENTIAL GOOD FOR HUMANS-NOTHING YOU ARE *SUPPOSED* TO BE. ACCORDINGLY, YOU MUST LIVE YOUR LIFE WITH THAT UNDERSTANDING.

NOTHINGNESS:

NOTHINGNESS IS A NECESSARY FACT OF EXISTENCE.

TIMELINE!

YEAR	EVENT
1813	KIERKEGAARD IS BORN
1818	MARX IS BORN
1843	KIERKEGAARD PUBLISHES EITHER/OR AND FEAR AND TREMBLING
1844	NIETZSCHE IS BORN
1848	MARX PUBLISHES THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO
1855	KIERKEGAARD DIES
1856	FREUD IS BORN
1833-1885	NIETZSCHE WRITES AND DISTRIBUTES THUS SPOKE ZARATHUSTRA
1883	MARX DIES
1889	HEDEGGER IS BORN
1900	NIETZSCHE DIES
1905	SARTRE IS BORN
1908	DE BEAUVOIR IS BORN
1923	FREUD PUBLISHES THE EGO AND THE ID
1925	FANON IS BORN
1927	HEDEGGER PUBLISHES BEING AND TIME
1939	FREUD DIES
1943	SARTRE PUBLISHES BEING AND TIME
1947	DE BEAUVOIR PUBLISHES THE ETHICS OF AMBIGUITY
1952	FANON PUBLISHES BLACK SKIN, WHITE MASKS
1961	FANON DIES
1976	HEDEGGER DIES
1980	SARTRE DIES
1986	DE BEAUVOIR DIES

KIERKEGAARD!

BRIEF BIO: BORN 1813 IN COPENHAGEN AND ONLY LEFT ONCE. TOOK LOTS OF WALKS. WAS INFATUATED WITH/ENGAGED TO REGINE OLSEN BUT BROKE THE ENGAGEMENT, RAN TO BERLIN, WROTE STUFF, AND CAME BACK.

THEMES

FAITH: EXEMPLIFIED IN OUR JUDEO-CHRISTIAN WORLD BY ABRAHAM ON MOUNT MORIAH; A PARADOXICAL AND DEEPLY PERSONAL STATE OF BEING THAT RECONCILES UNIVERSAL AND PARTICULAR, INFINITE AND TEMPORAL, ETHICS AND FANATICISM.

UNKNOWABILITY: WE CAN UNDERSTAND FAITH THROUGH EXAMPLE BUT WE CAN'T KNOW IT WITHOUT ACHIEVING IT.

INEFFABILITY: SIMILAR TO UNKNOWABILITY-WE CAN TALK AROUND FAITH BUT CAN'T EXPRESS IT WITH PRECISION.

THE IMPOSSIBLE: WHAT WE WANT TO HAVE FAITH IN. FOR ABRAHAM, THIS WAS THE NOTION THAT MURDERING HIS SON WOULD PLEASE GOD.

INFINITE RESIGNATION: NOT THE SAME AS FAITH, BUT A NECESSARY STEP ON THE ROAD TO FAITH. IN ORDER TO HAVE FAITH IN THE IMPOSSIBLE, YOU FIRST HAVE TO RESIGN YOURSELF COMPLETELY TO ITS IMPOSSIBILITY.

THE ABSURD: ABSURDITY IS WHAT BRINGS YOU BACK FROM INFINITE RESIGNATION. JUST GO WITH IT.

ANXIETY/COURAGE: TO SURRENDER WHOLLY TO THE IMPOSSIBLE WILL PRODUCE ANXIETY. TO TRUST IN THE ABSURD REQUIRES COURAGE. BOTH ARE NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE FAITH.

ISOLATION: THE EXPERIENCE OF INFINITE RESIGNATION AND SUBSEQUENT REDEMPTION BY VIRTUE OF THE ABSURD IS SOMETHING ONLY YOU CAN ACHIEVE FOR YOURSELF, AND IT IS A LONELY PROCESS.

IMPORTANT QUOTES

"TO BE ABLE TO LOSE ONE'S UNDERSTANDING AND WITH IT THE WHOLE OF THE FINITE WORLD WHOSE STOCKBROKER IT IS, AND THEN ON THE STRENGTH OF THE ABSURD GET EXACTLY THE SAME FINITUDE BACK AGAIN, THAT LEAVES ME AGHAST." (65-66)

"INFINITE RESIGNATION IS THE LAST STAGE BEFORE FAITH, SO THAT ANYONE WHO HAS NOT MADE THIS MOVEMENT DOES NOT HAVE FAITH; FOR ONLY IN INFINITE RESIGNATION DOES MY ETERNAL VALIDITY BECOME TRANSPARENT TO ME." (75)

"THE ABSURD IS NOT ONE DISTINCTION AMONG OTHERS EMBRACED BY UNDERSTANDING. IT IS NOT THE SAME AS THE IMPROBABLE, THE UNEXPECTED, THE UNFORESEEN." (75)

"CONVICTION IS MERE FRIVOLITY COMPARED WITH A FAITH THAT IS UNSHAKEABLE EVEN WHEN IT SEES THE IMPOSSIBILITY." (76)

"IT TAKES A PURELY HUMAN COURAGE TO RENOUNCE THE WHOLE OF TEMPORALITY IN ORDER TO WIN ETERNITY... AND THAT COURAGE IS THE COURAGE OF FAITH." (77)

"HOW MONSTROUS A PARADOX FAITH IS, A PARADOX CAPABLE OF MAKING A MURDER INTO A HOLY ACT WELL PLEASING TO GOD... WHICH NO THOUGHT CAN GRASP BECAUSE FAITH BEGINS PRECISELY WHERE THINKING LEAVES OFF." (82)

LESS-IMPORTANT QUOTES

"THEOLOGY SITS ALL PAINTED AT THE WINDOW COURTING PHILOSOPHY'S FAVOR, OFFERING PHILOSOPHY ITS DELIGHTS." (62)

"EVEN IN LOVING ANOTHER, ONE SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT UNTO ONESELF." (73)

"A LOT IS SAID IN OUR TIME ABOUT IRONY AND HUMOUR, PARTICULARLY BY PEOPLE WHO HAVE NEVER SUCCEEDED IN PRACTICING THEM BUT WHO NEVERTHELESS KNOW HOW TO EXPLAIN EVERYTHING." (80)

NIETZSCHE!

BRIEF BIO: BORN IN 1844 IN WHAT WAS THEN PRUSSIA, TO A FAMILY OF PROTESTANT MINISTERS. ATTENDED FANCY SCHOOLS, HAD INTENSE RELATIONSHIPS AND FALLINGS OUT WITH WAGNER AND LOU SALOME. WANDERED NOMADICALLY AND WROTE A LOT. EXPERIENCED AN ACUTE MENTAL BREAKDOWN IN 1899, PURPORTEDLY AFTER THROWING HIMSELF IN FRONT OF A WHIP THAT WAS BEING USED TO CRUELLY BEAT A HORSE. (WHIPS FEATURED PROMINENTLY IN NIETZSCHE'S LIFE.) REMAINED MAD, DIED IN 1900, PROBABLY NOT FROM SYPHILIS.

MAJOR WORKS

THE GAY SCIENCE: PUBLISHED IN 1882, INTRODUCES THE NOTION THAT "GOD IS DEAD," AND THE CONCEPT OF ETERNAL RECURRENCE.

THUS SPOKE ZARATHUSTRA: PUBLISHED IN FOUR PARTS BETWEEN 1883 AND 1885. EACH OF THE FIRST THREE PARTS WAS WRITTEN IN ABOUT TEN DAYS; NO ONE IS REALLY SURE WHERE THE FOURTH PART BELONGS. CONTROVERSIAL DUE TO ITS LITERARY STYLE, WHICH INCLUDES FICTIONAL CHARACTERS, PARABLES, ALLEGORY, AND (ALLEGEDLY) NARRATIVE. TOUCHES ON MOST OF NIETZSCHE'S KEY IDEAS; HE CONSIDERED IT HIS MOST IMPORTANT WORK.

BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL: PUBLISHED IN 1886, RE-INTRODUCES THE WILL TO POWER; REFINES THE ARGUMENT THAT THERE IS NO UNIVERSAL MORAL TRUTH AND THAT "EQUALITY" IS A PERNICIOUS CONSTRUCT; CHALLENGES THE IDEA THAT DOMINATION OF THE WEAK IS A UNIVERSAL MORAL WRONG; PROPOSES A SERIES OF MORALITIES THAT ARE APPROPRIATE TO THEIR CORRESPONDING SOCIAL ROLES.

TWILIGHT OF THE IDOLS: PUBLISHED IN 1888, LARGELY AN EXAMINATION AND DRESSING-DOWN OF SOCRATES, PLATO, KANT, AND CHRISTIANITY, WITH SOME ENTERTAINING DETOURS INTO MAXIMS THAT READ LIKE LATE 19TH-CENTURY BUMPER-STICKERS. SUBTITLE "HOW TO PHILOSOPHIZE WITH A HAMMER" REFERS TO THE HAMMER OF A TUNING FORK.

THE ANTICHRIST: PUBLISHED IN 1888, DEVOTED TO EXPRESSING CONTEMPT FOR CHRISTIANITY. ARGUES THAT CHRISTIANITY IS AN OPIATE FOR THE WEAK, UNHEALTHY MASSES.

THEMES AND QUOTES

GOD IS DEAD: THIS IS THE CATASTROPHIC REALIZATION THAT NIETZSCHE'S WRITING ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE. AT BEST, THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT GOD IS DEAD LEADS TO PERSPECTIVISM (SO-NAMED AFTER NIETZSCHE'S DEATH), OR THE LOSS OF UNIVERSAL TRUTH. AT WORST, IT LEADS TO...

NIHILISM: NOTHING HAS INHERENT VALUE. LIFE LACKS PURPOSE.

ETERNAL RECURRENCE: IF YOU KNEW THAT YOU WERE GOING TO BE REBORN, OVER AND OVER AGAIN, TO RELIVE YOUR LIFE EXACTLY AS YOU'VE ALREADY LIVED IT, HOW WOULD YOU FEEL? (CORRECT ANSWER: JOYOUS. LIKELY ANSWER: NAUSEATED.) UNCLEAR IF NIETZSCHE ACTUALLY BELIEVED IN ETERNAL RECURRENCE, OR IF HE WAS JUST USING IT AS A THOUGHT EXPERIMENT.

THE OVERMAN: THE STAGE OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT THAT COMES AFTER THE REALIZATION THAT GOD IS DEAD AND THE ACCEPTANCE OF ALL THAT ENTAILS-MAN IS A BRIDGE BETWEEN ANIMAL AND THE OVERMAN, AND "MAN" IS A HUMAN AFFLICTION THAT MUST BE OVERCOME. "I TEACH YOU THE OVERMAN. MAN IS SOMETHING THAT SHALL BE OVERCOME... WHAT IS THE APE TO MAN? A LAUGHINGSTOCK OR PAINFUL EMBARRASSMENT. AND MAN SHALL BE JUST THAT FOR THE OVERMAN" (124)

THE LAST MAN: THE STAGE OF HUMANITY IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO THE RISE OF THE OVERMAN, CHARACTERIZED BY A DESIRE FOR COMFORT, HAPPINESS, ENTERTAINMENT, AND MORAL CONSTRAINTS. "WE HAVE INVENTED HAPPINESS; SAY THE LAST MEN, AND THEY BLINK" (130).

REVALUATION OF VALUES: IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE THE OVERMAN BY CLINGING TO INHERITED VALUE SYSTEMS, BOTH FROM JUDEO-CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS AND CLASSICAL MORAL PHILOSOPHY. "FALSE COASTS AND FALSE ASSURANCES THE GOOD HAVE TAUGHT YOU; IN THE LIES OF THE GOOD YOU WERE HATCHED AND HUDDLED. EVERYTHING HAS BEEN MADE FRAUDULENT AND HAS BEEN TWISTED THROUGH AND THROUGH BY THE GOOD" (325) IN ORDER TO TRULY HERALD THE DEATH OF GOD AND THE RISE OF THE OVERMAN, ONE MUST, IN ZARATHUSTRA'S WORDS, "BREAK THE OLD TABLETS." "NEW LYRES ARE NEEDED FOR YOUR SONGS" (332).

SARTRE!

BRIEF BIO: BORN 1905 IN PARIS AND BROUGHT UP, STRICTLY, BY PROTESTANT THEOLOGIANS. ENROLLED AT THE ECOLE NORMALE SUPERIEURE IN 1924, MET HIS LIFE PARTNER, SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR. LIVED OUT OF HOTELS, WROTE OUT OF CAFES (HE HAD A VERY RIGID DAILY SCHEDULE), POPPED AMPHETAMINES, SPENT WWII AT THE MAGNOT LINE IN THE FRENCH METEOROLOGICAL CORPS. REFUSED THE NOBEL PRIZE FOR LITERATURE IN 1964, FELL UNCONSCIOUS AND DIED IN 1980.

THEMES AND QUOTES

EXISTENCE PRECEDES ESSENCE: THERE IS NO "HUMAN NATURE" OR ESSENTIAL HUMAN-NESS. COMPARE TO AN ARTIFACT: FOR US TO CREATE, SAY, A SHAKE WEIGHT, WE MUST FIRST HAVE AN IDEA OF WHAT THE SHAKE WEIGHT IS TO DO-WHAT IT'S ESSENTIAL QUALITIES ARE. MAN HAS NO SUCH PRIOR PURPOSE.

"MAN FIRST OF ALL EXISTS, ENCOUNTERS HIMSELF, SURGES UP IN THE WORLD-AND DEFINES HIMSELF 'AFTERWARDS'" (28).

BEING-IN-ITSELF: EN-SOI. OBJECTIVE REGION OF BEING. SELF-CO-INCIDENT AND CAN BE NOTHING OTHER THAN WHAT IT IS. UNCREATED, NOT ACTIVE, BEYOND NEGATION AND AFFIRMATION. IS SOLID. SOMETIMES IT HELPS TO THINK ABOUT THE UNIVERSE BEFORE THE BIG BANG.

"BEING IS OPAQUE TO ITSELF PRECISELY BECAUSE IT IS FILLED WITH ITSELF. . . BEING IS WHAT IT IS" (111).

BEING-FOR-ITSELF: POUR-SOI. SUBJECTIVE REGION OF BEING, LINKED TO CONSCIOUSNESS. ONCE YOU ARE CONSCIOUS OF YOUR BEING, YOU ARE NECESSARILY SEPARATED FROM IT, BECAUSE BEING IN-ITSELF ADMITS NOTHING OUTSIDE ITSELF. AS SOON AS YOU ARE AWARE, YOU ARE SEPARATE FROM THE THING YOU ARE AWARE OF. FOR-ITSELF IS WHAT GIVES YOU POSSIBILITIES AND THE FREEDOM TO CONSTRUCT AND DEFINE YOUR SELF.

"THE FOR-ITSELF IS THE BEING WHICH DETERMINES ITSELF TO EXIST INASMUCH AS IT CAN NOT COINCIDE WITH ITSELF" (118).

"THE SEPARATION WHICH SEPARATES BELIEF FROM ITSELF CAN NOT BE GRASPED OR EVEN CONCEIVED IN ISOLATION" (117).

SITUATION: BEING-FOR-ITSELF MUST BE SITUATED IN SOMETHING OUTSIDE ITSELF: ONCE BEING IS SITUATED, THE FOR-ITSELF IS NECESSARY. SITUATION AND BEING-FOR-ITSELF ARE BOTH SUFFICIENT AND NECESSARY FOR EACH OTHER.

NOTHINGNESS: BY SAYING THAT ANYTHING EXISTS, YOU HAVE TO ADMIT TO NOTHINGNESS. THIS IS THE SPACE BETWEEN BEING IN-ITSELF AND FOR-ITSELF-IT ALLOWS FOR AWARENESS AND SEPARATION.

"THE PERMANENT POSSIBILITY OF NON-BEING, OUTSIDE US AND WITHIN, CONDITIONS OUR QUESTIONS ABOUT BEING" (140).

FREEDOM: ANOTHER NECESSARY CONSEQUENCE OF CONSCIOUSNESS. BECAUSE EXISTENCE PRECEDES ESSENCE AND YOU MUST DEFINE YOUR SELF, YOU ARE RADICALLY FREE.

"I AM CONDEMNED TO BE FREE" (184).

"FREEDOM IS PRECISELY THE NOTHINGNESS WHICH IS MADE-TO-BE AT THE HEART OF MAN AND WHICH FORCES HUMAN REALITY TO MAKE ITSELF INSTEAD OF TO BE. . . FOR HUMAN REALITY, TO BE IS TO CHOOSE ONESELF" (185).

RESPONSIBILITY: TO PARAPHRASE SPIDERMAN'S UNCLE, "WITH GREAT FREEDOM COMES GREAT RESPONSIBILITY."

THE SELF: YOU DON'T FIND THE SELF IN BEING-IN-ITSELF, BECAUSE BEING-IN-ITSELF CANNOT BE SELF-AWARE (OR AWARE, FULL STOP). THERE IS NO OBJECTIVE SELF-SEEING YOUR SELF IS LIKE BEING IN A HALL OF MIRRORS: YOU UNDERSTAND YOURSELF BY REFLECTING ON YOURSELF.

"THE SELF CANNOT BE APPREHENDED AS A REAL EXISTENT: THE SUBJECT CAN NOT BE SELF, FOR COINCIDENCE WITH SELF, AS WE HAVE SEEN, CAUSES THE SELF TO DISAPPEAR" (116).

"THERE IS AN INDISSOLUBLE UNITY OF THE REFLECTING CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE REFLECTED CONSCIOUSNESS (TO THE POINT THAT THE REFLECTING CONSCIOUSNESS COULD NOT EXIST WITHOUT THE REFLECTED CONSCIOUSNESS). BUT THE FACT REMAINS THAT WE ARE IN THE PRESENCE OF A SYNTHESIS OF TWO CONSCIOUSNESSES, ONE OF WHICH IS CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE OTHER" (162).

FANON!

BRIEF BIO: BORN IN 1925 IN MARTINIQUE, TO A BLACK BOURGEOIS FAMILY. LEFT THE COLONY IN 1943, AFTER HAVING LEARNED POLITICS FROM AIME CESAIRE, AN IMPORTANT CRITIC OF COLONIALISM. BRIEFLY WORKED FOR THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT AS A PSYCHIATRIST IN ALGERIA, BUT REALIZED HE COULD NOT SUPPORT THEIR BRUTAL REPRESSION OF THE ANTICOLONIAL MOVEMENT, QUIT HIS JOB, AND DEVOTED HIMSELF TO THE ALGERIAN STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE. DIED OF LEUKEMIA IN 1961.

THEMES AND QUOTES:

THE OTHER: BEING-IN-ITSELF IS ONE-DIMENSIONAL-IT IS WHOLLY ITSELF, LIKE A POINT. BEING-FOR-ITSELF IS TWO-DIMENSIONAL-ONCE YOU ARE AWARE OF YOUR EXISTENCE, YOU CAN MOVE YOURSELF FORWARD AND DEFINE YOURSELF AND YOUR FUTURE, LIKE A LINE. BEING-THROUGH-OTHERS IS THREE-DIMENSIONAL-YOU CAN MOVE TOWARD AND AWAY FROM THE OTHER, AND THE OTHER CAN MOVE TOWARD AND AWAY FROM YOU. YOU HAVE THREE POINTS OF REFERENCE-LIKE A PLANE. IMPORTANTLY, "BLACKNESS" IS NOT A PRODUCT OF BEING-IN-ITSELF OR BEING-FOR-ITSELF: IT COMES FROM BEING-THROUGH-OTHERS.

"IN THE TRAIN IT WAS NO LONGER A QUESTION OF BEING AWARE OF MY BODY IN THE THIRD PERSON BUT IN A TRIPLE PERSON. IN THE TRAIN I WAS GIVEN NOT ONE BUT TWO, THREE PLACES. . . IT WAS NOT THAT I WAS FINDING FEBRILE COORDINATES IN THE WORLD. I EXISTED TRIPLY: I OCCUPIED SPACE. I MOVED TOWARD THE OTHER" (112).

"ONTOLOGY . . . DOES NOT PERMIT US TO UNDERSTAND THE BEING OF THE BLACK MAN. FOR NOT ONLY MUST THE BLACK MAN BE BLACK; HE MUST BE BLACK IN RELATION TO THE WHITE MAN"

FACTICITY: SARTRE'S "SITUATION" WAS NEUTRAL; FANON PRESENTS A FACTICITY/SITUATION THAT HAS THE POWER TO LIMIT, BECAUSE IT IS DETERMINED BY THE OTHER.

"THE WHITE WORLD, THE ONLY HONORABLE ONE, BARRED ME FROM ALL PARTICIPATION. A MAN WAS EXPECTED TO BEHAVE LIKE A MAN. I WAS EXPECTED TO BEHAVE LIKE A BLACK MAN" (114).

"I AM OVERDETERMINED FROM WITHOUT" (116).

SHAME/NAUSEA: FANON'S SHAME/NAUSEA IS A PRODUCT OF THE IDEA OF BLACKNESS IMPOSED ON HIM BY THE OTHER.

"HERE SAY HELLO TO MY FRIEND FROM MARTINIQUE (BE CAREFUL, HE'S EXTREMELY SENSITIVE: SHAME, SHAME AND SELF-CONTEMPT, NAUSEA" (116).

TYPES OF BEING-THROUGH-OTHERS:

OBJECT: ESSENCE IS PRIOR TO HIS EXISTENCE-YOUR PURPOSE IS DETERMINED FROM OUTSIDE YOURSELF BECAUSE OF YOUR SKIN COLOR.

"I SUBJECTED MYSELF TO AN OBJECTIVE EXAMINATION, I DISCOVERED MY BLACKNESS, MY ETHNIC CHARACTERISTICS; AND I WAS BATTERED DOWN BY TOM-TOMS, CANNIBALISM, INTELLECTUAL DEFICIENCY, FETISHISM, RACIAL DEFECTS, SLAVE-SHIPS, AND ABOVE ALL ELSE, ABOVE ALL: 'SHO' GOOD EATIN'" (112)

"I AM OVERDETERMINED FROM WITHOUT. I AM THE SLAVE NOT OF THE 'IDEA' THAT OTHERS HAVE OF ME BUT OF MY OWN APPEARANCE. . . I AM *FIXED* HAVING ADJUSTED THEIR MICROTOMES, THEY OBJECTIVELY CUT AWAY SLICES OF MY REALITY" (116).

OTHER: YOUR EXISTENCE IS QUALIFIED IN ALL CONCEIVABLE INSTANCES.

"WHEN PEOPLE LIKE ME, THEY TELL ME IT IS IN SPITE OF MY COLOR. WHEN THEY DISLIKE ME, THEY POINT OUT THAT IT IS NOT BECAUSE OF MY COLOR. EITHER WAY, I AM LOCKED INTO THE INFERNAL CIRCLE" (116).

FOIL: YOUR EXISTENCE IS ONLY RELEVANT IN OPPOSITION TO ANOTHER'S.

". . . FOR US THE BODY IS NOT SOMETHING OPPOSED TO WHAT YOU CALL THE MIND. WE ARE IN THE WORLD. AND 'LONG LIVE THE COUPLE, MAN AND EARTH! BESIDES, OUR MEN OF LETTERS HELPED ME TO CONVINCE YOU: YOUR WHITE CIVILIZATION OVERLOOKS SUBTLE RICHES AND SENSITIVITY. LISTEN: 'EMOTIVE SENSITIVITY. *EMOTION IS COMPLETELY NEGRO AS REASON IS GREEK*.'" (127).

STAGE: YOUR EXISTENCE REPRESENTS A STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT, BUT NOT THE ONE THE OTHER HAS ACHIEVED.

"YOUR PROPERTIES HAVE BEEN EXHAUSTED BY US. WE HAVE EARTH MYSTICS SUCH AS YOU WILL NEVER APPROACH. STUDY OUR HISTORY AND YOU WILL SEE HOW FAR THIS FUSION HAS GONE" (129).

NAGARJUNA!

BRIEF BIO: LIVED IN SOUTH INDIA AROUND 2ND CENTURY AD AS A BUDDHIST MONK. FOUNDED THE MIDDLE PATH SCHOOLS OF MAHAYANA BUDDHISM (MADHYAMIKA), WROTE A *LOT*. PROBABLY THE MOST IMPORTANT BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHER BESIDES THE HISTORICAL BUDDHA.

MULAMADHYAMAKAKARIKA: OR *FUNDAMENTAL VERSES ON THE MIDDLE WAY*; NAGARJUNA'S BEST KNOWN, MOST IMPORTANT WRITING. STRUCTURED COLLECTION OF TERSE, SOMETIMES CRYPTIC VERSES. CANONICAL TRANSLATION IS TIBETAN (THE DBU-MA RTSA-BA SHES-RAB).

THEMES AND QUOTES

REDUCTIO AD ABSURDUM: ARGUMENT FROM CONTRADICTION. EX: 'IF THAT'S TRUE, THEN I'M A MONKEY'S UNCLE.' X CAN'T BE TRUE, BECAUSE IF X IS TRUE, THEN SO IS Y, AND Y IS ABSURD.

INHERENT EXISTENCE: SVABHAVA. ESSENTIAL OR PRIMARY EXISTENCE, THAT WHICH IS REAL, OBJECTIVE, AND IRREDUCIBLE. THE KIND OF EXISTENCE THAT SEEMS LIKE IT SHOULD BE STRUCTURING OR HOLDING UP THE REAL WORLD, BUT DOESN'T, BECAUSE THE CONCEPT OF INHERENT EXISTENCE IS ABSURD, AS PROVED THROUGH THE REDUCTIO AD ABSURDUM ARGUMENTS.

CONVENTIONAL EXISTENCE: DEPENDENT EXISTENCE, RELATED TO THE WAY WE NAME THINGS OR ASCRIBE USES/PURPOSES TO THEM. A SHAKE WEIGHT IS ONLY DEPENDENTLY EXISTENT AS A SHAKE WEIGHT-IT COULD JUST AS EASILY BE A DOORSTOP, DEPENDING ON THE CONVENTION WE'RE USING TO TALK ABOUT IT.

DEPENDENT CO-ORIGINATION: PRATITYASAMUTPADA, EVERYTHING IS MUTUALLY INTERDEPENDENT. NOTHING IS SELF-CAUSED, CAUSED BY SOMETHING EXTERNAL, OR NON-CAUSED. EVERYTHING THAT ARISES DOES SO MUTUALLY WITH EVERYTHING ELSE. 'NEITHER FROM ITSELF NOR FROM ANOTHER, / NOR FROM BOTH, / NOR WITHOUT A CAUSE, / DOES ANYTHING WHATEVER, ANYWHERE ARISE' (3)

REIFICATION: BELIEVING THAT EVERYTHING EXISTS INHERENTLY.

NIHILISM: BELIEVING THAT NONEXISTENCE IS INHERENTLY EXISTENT.

EMPTINESS: FUNDAMENTAL ESSENCE OF ALL THINGS. THERE IS NOTHING THAT INHERENTLY EXISTS, BECAUSE THAT IS ABSURD, BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN THAT EVERYTHING IS NONEXISTENT (NIHILISM). RATHER, IT MEANS EXISTENCE IS EMPTY. INTERESTINGLY (MADDENINGLY?) EMPTINESS ITSELF IS EMPTY.

EMPTINESS 'IS IS NOT A SELF-EXISTENT VOID STANDING BEHIND A VEIL OF ILLUSION COMPRISING CONVENTIONAL REALITY, BUT MERELY A CHARACTERISTIC OF CONVENTIONAL REALITY' (91).

THE MIDDLE WAY: BECAUSE OF DEPENDENT CO-ORIGINATION, THE ONLY NON-ABSURD WAY TO UNDERSTAND THE WORLD IS TO BELIEVE IN THE EMPTINESS OF INHERENT EXISTENCE AND THE SIMULTANEOUS EMPTINESS AND MEANINGFULNESS OF CONVENTIONAL EXISTENCE.

'NAGARJUNA AND HIS FOLLOWERS DO ARGUE THAT THE ENTIRE EVERYDAY WORLD IS, FROM THE ULTIMATE STANDPOINT, NONEXISTENT' (94).

'THE ACTUALITY OF THAT ENTIRE PHENOMENAL WORLD, PERSONS AND ALL, IS RECOVERED WITHIN THAT EMPTINESS' (95).

'ONLY IN THE CONTEXT OF EMPTINESS-WHAT MIGHT APPEAR TO BE THE GREATEST THREAT TO MEANINGFULNESS-CAN A MEANINGFUL LIFE BE UNDERSTOOD' (180).

VERSES

'WHATEVER IS DEPENDENTLY CO-ARISEN / THAT IS EXPLAINED TO BE EMPTINESS, / THAT, BEING A DEPENDENT DESIGNATION, / IS ITSELF THE MIDDLE WAY, / SOMETHING THAT IS NOT DEPENDENTLY ARISEN, / SUCH A THING DOES NOT EXIST, / THEREFORE A NONEMPTY THING / DOES NOT EXIST' (69).

'TO SAY 'IT IS' IS TO GRASP FOR PERMANENCE, / TO SAY 'IT IS NOT' IS TO ADOPT THE VIEW OF NIHILISM, / THEREFORE A WISE PERSON / DOES NOT SAY 'EXISTS' OR 'DOES NOT EXIST', / 'WHATEVER EXISTS THROUGH ITS ESSENCE / CANNOT BE NONEXISTENT' IS ETERNALISM, / 'IT EXISTED BEFORE BUT DOESN'T NOW' / ENTAILS THE ERROR OF NIHILISM.

