

THE AGE OF NON-REASON

I. Optimism Of Older Humanist Philosophers:

The unity and true knowledge of reality defined as starting from Man alone.

II. Shift in Modern Philosophy

- A. Eighteenth century as the vital watershed.
- B. Rousseau: ideas and influence.
 - 1. Rousseau and autonomous freedom.
 - 2. Personal freedom and social necessity clash in Rousseau.
 - 3. Rousseau's influence.
 - a) Robespierre and the ideology of the Terror.
 - b) Gauduin, natural freedom, and disillusionment.
- C. DeSade: If nature is the absolute, cruelty equals non-cruelty.
- D. Impossible tension between autonomous freedom and autonomous reasons conclusion that the universe and people are a part of the total cosmic machine.
- E. Kant, Hegel, and Kierkegaard and their followers sought for a unity but they did not solve the problem.
 - 1. After these men and their followers, there came an absolute break between the area of meaning and values, and the area of reason.
 - 2. Now humanistic philosophy sees reason as always leading to pessimism; any hope of optimism lies in non-reason.

III. Existentialism and Non-Reason

- A. French existentialism.
 - 1. Total separation of reason and will: Sartre.
 - 2. Not possible to live consistently with this position.
- B. German existentialism.
 - 1. Jaspers and the "final experience."
 - 2. Heidegger and *angst*.
- C. Influence of existentialism.

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1. As a formal philosophy it is declining.
 2. As a generalized attitude it dominates modern thought.

IV. Forms of Popularization of Nonrational Experience

- A. Drug experience.
 1. Aldous Huxley and “truth inside one’s head.”
 2. Influence of rock groups in spreading the drug culture; psychedelic rock.
- B. Eastern religious experience: from the drug trip to the Eastern religious trip.
- C. The occult as a basis for “hope” in the area of non-reason.

V. Theological Liberalism and Existentialism

- A. Preparation for theological existentialism.
 1. Renaissance’s attempt to “synthesize” Greek philosophers and Christianity; religious liberals’ attempt to “synthesize” Enlightenment and Christianity.
 2. Religious liberals denied supernatural but accepted reason.
 3. Schweitzer’s demolition of liberal aim to separate the natural from the supernatural in the New Testament.
- B. Theological existentialism.
 1. Intellectual failure of rationalist theology opened door to theological existentialism.
 2. Barth brought the existential methodology into theology.
 - a) Barth’s teaching led to theologians who said that the Bible is not true in the areas of science and history, but they nevertheless look for a religious experience from it.
 - b) For many adherents of this theology, the Bible does not give absolutes in regard to what is right or wrong in human behavior.
 3. Theological existentialism as a cul-de-sac.
 - a) If Bible is divorced from its teaching concerning the cosmos and history, its values can’t be applied to a historic situation in either morals or law; theological pronouncements about morals or law are arbitrary.
 - b) No way to explain evil or distinguish good from evil. Therefore, these theologians are in same position as Hindu philosophers (as illustrated by Kali).
 - c) Tillich, prayer as reflection, and the deadness of “god.”
 - d) Religious words used for manipulation of society.

VI. Conclusion

With what Christ and the Bible teach, Man can have life instead of death—in having knowledge that is more than finite Man can have from himself.

Questions

1. What is the difference between theologians and philosophers of the rationalist tradition and those of the existentialist tradition?
2. “If the early church had embraced an existentialist theology, it would have been absorbed into the Roman pantheon.” It didn’t. Why not?
3. “It is true that existentialist theology is foreign to biblical religion. But biblical religion was the product of a particular culture and, though useful for societies in the same cultural stream, it is no longer suitable for an age in which an entire range of world cultures requires a common religious denominator. Religious existentialism provides that, without losing the universal instinct for the holy.” Study this statement carefully. What assumptions are betrayed by it?
4. Can you isolate attitudes and tendencies in yourself, your church, and your community which reflect the “existentialist methodology” described by Dr. Schaeffer?

Key Events and Persons

Rousseau: 1712-1778

Kant: 1724-1804

Marquis de Sade: 1740-1814

The Social Contract: 1762

Hegel: 1770-1831

Kierkegaard: 1813-1855

Paul Gauguin: 1848-1903

Whence, What Whither?: 1897-1898

Albert Schweitzer: 1875-1965

Quest for the Historical Jesus: 1906

Karl Jaspers: 1883-1969

Paul Tillich: 1886-1965

Karl Barth: 1886-1968

Martin Heidegger: 1889-1976

Aldous Huxley: 1894-1963

J.P. Sartre: 1905-1980

Beatles’ Sergeant Pepper: 1967

Further Study

Unless already familiar with them, take time to listen to the Beatles' records, as well as to discs put out by other groups at the time.

Albert Camus, *The Stranger* (1942).

Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception* (1954).

Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (1762).

J.P. Sartre, *Nausea* (1938).

Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (1952).

Following Rousseau, the exaggeration of the delights and the pathos of nature and experience which marks Romanticism may be sampled in, for example, Wordsworth's poems, Casper David Friedrich's paintings, and Schubert's songs.

J.G. Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation* (1968).

J.W. von Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1962).

Erich Heller, *The Disinherited Mind* (1952).