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Essay 5

Existentialism is a philosophical worldview which is characterized by its lack of a generalized definition due to multiple variations and philosophical opinions. Existentialism can be broken into two main larger categories, theistic existentialism, and atheistic existentialism. In this essay I will argue that atheistic existentialism is actually a livable worldview. I will begin the essay with contextual background relating to atheistic existentialism, including the basis of what it is and the ideology of some of the atheist existentialist philosophers. This section will be followed by an advancement of the argument stated in my thesis that it is possible to live as an atheistic existentialist. Next, I will provide counter-evidence, which would suggest that atheist existentialism is not a livable world view. I will debunk the counter evidence, and finally, finish the essay in a brief summary conclusion of the evidence covered.

Atheistic existentialism is an approach to existentialism that denies the existence of a spiritual higher power. Atheist existentialist philosophers include Nietzsche, Sartre, Simone De Beauvoir, and Camus. As can be noted from their various works, these philosophers all had slightly varying worldviews. However, they were all quite similar in their emphasis on the finiteness of human existence and the belief that focus should lie on one’s human existence.

Following the previously set boundaries of atheist existentialism that can be agreed on by

atheistic existentialist philosophers, it appears to be an extremely livable worldview with few limitations. As stated previously, the overall point of atheist existentialism is a focus on one’s current life and the intrinsic value they can find in it. Many of the atheist existentialist philosophers wrote about finding happiness in life despite their suffering, and striving to live life in a significant and interesting way. With these constraints, many could interpret atheist existentialism as simply desiring happiness in a life that has accepted that that life is all there is. It can be argued that many atheists currently in the world follow this worldview. For example, a person who has accepted that their life has no extrinsic purpose and drops everything in their life to travel the world because it’s exciting to them (and has no hidden purpose), could very well possess the worldview of atheist existentialism. If this person is truly living for the sake of living and the enjoyment they find in living, while accepting the worldview of atheist existentialism, then they could be living a self-fulfilling life.

Counter evidence can be found in the beliefs of many theistic individuals, who would most likely claim that it is impossible to live a decently happy life with an atheist existentialist worldview. They would further this argument by claiming that one could not truly live a human existence without putting faith into a higher power that could provide them with a sense of meaning. Humans tend to crave a deeper meaning, a hope of sorts that their actions will have a much greater and lasting effect than what is initially perceived. Those who follow a religion, specifically Christianity, believe that this greater meaning manifests itself as the afterlife, where every little action one completes on earth is recognized in their judgement that determines whether or not they’ll go to heaven. By this standard, one can only find happiness in life by looking forward to their death, knowing that their good deeds will finally pay off in the extrinsic value of heaven. This takes away most, if not all value, one could place on their human existence, which is exactly the point of Christianity that atheist existentialism finds fault in. Atheist existentialism could counter this argument with the example of the man with the worldview of atheist existentialism, who drops everything in life to travel the world, seeking fun. Who is to say that this person is not truly happy with what they are doing in their life? They have given their life intrinsic purpose that brings them joy, ultimately leading to what the identify as a happy and fulfilled life. By these standards, atheist existentialism leaves a large amount of room for each individual human to decide whether or not their life has been a happy one, living it in whatever way seems fulfilling and interesting to them personally.

To conclude, atheist existentialism is a worldview that focuses on the human existence of each individual person in their current time. In order to live with the worldview of atheist existentialism, one must accept that their human existence is the only existence they will experience, and choose to find intrinsic value for themselves in that existence. By these standards, it can be concluded that atheist existentialism is a livable worldview, that is actually believed by many people currently living in the world.