

Reading Questions for September 18

These questions cover a lecture by Jean-Paul Sartre called “Existentialism is a Humanism.” The answers do not have to be turned in. You will probably have to read more than once to get the answers.

*Background:*

Sartre, in this lecture, offers a defense of a view called existentialism. In the course of doing so, he offers some statements about the purpose of life. In many ways, his claims are in tension with the article we read for Wednesday.

*Questions:*

1. On pages 2-3, Sartre explains what he means by “existentialism” in general and “atheistic existentialism” in particular. What does he mean by these expressions? What do you think about the plausibility of his views? Why?
2. Starting on the bottom of page 3, with “If, however, it is true” and continuing on to “... in fashioning myself I fashion man” Sartre makes a point about responsibility. What is his point? What do you think about it?
3. On pages 5-7, starting with “As an example by which ...” Sartre tells a story. What is the story and what is the point he is making with it? What do you think about what he says?