

General / Opening - Comments on Existentialism / Nihilism

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 3, 2020 at 9:06 AM

[Cassius](#) The definition makes sense. The main idea that describes "essence" is that it is prior to existence. Perhaps, the only way for existentialists to reject it is to say that "essence" is posterior, and "existence" prior. It is because redefining it would only mean the posterior is a different concept, not the one they are rejecting and putting behind.

You're right in your observation that Aristotle merely transferred the location. For Plato, there is essence of something before it exists. For Aristotle, you will know that essence when you sense two or more of such things. Voila! It's the same essence. For Plato, it is abstract. For Aristotle, it is objectified.

However, existentialists reject abstraction and objectification. They are highly relativist and subjectivist. Therefore, essence in existentialism is nothing but a metaphorical representation of such rejection.

The statement that "existence precedes essence" was coined by Jean Paul Sartre. If you get used to his style of writing, you will notice he loves turning statement upside down like "I am what I am not," "I am not what I am."

By rejecting the essentialist position that "essence precedes existence," it's no surprise that Sartre's response is to turn the statement upside down, thus he says "existence precedes essence."

He is not like the conventional philosophers who are taking time abstracting and objectifying the meaning of every word since he doesn't believe in abstraction and objectification.

I think it's enough to say that existence precedes essence to reject the primacy of essence. As I understood it, the primacy of existence only means that every essence is just an illusion.