

PHIL 3024: Existentialism  
T. Parent  
Final Project

On the first day of class, I had you write on the following two questions.

1. What is your dream? More precisely, what do you want to do with the rest of your life? (Avoid vague cop-outs like ‘be happy’, ‘be successful’, ‘be a good person’. Be as *detailed* as you can.)
2. In general, what is the most valuable sort of life? (Again, be detailed.)

For the final project, I would like you to consider what various existentialist writers would say about your answers. I will periodically give you prompts on the course website to help guide this process; here is the first such prompt:

3. Heidegger portrays the individual’s lived experience (“being-in-the-world”) as inescapably that of “being with others.” In itself, he thinks this is neither good nor bad. Even so, he describes a constant *temptation* to live inauthentically by internalizing the norms of “the They.” Heidegger writes “the they maintains itself factually in the averageness of what is proper, what is allowed, and what is not. Of what is granted success and what is not” (p. 125). And if one fully adopts these norms, “the public ‘surrounding world’ is always already at hand and taken care of... This being-with-one-another dissolves one’s own Da-sein completely into the kind of being of ‘the others’ in such a way that the others, as distinguishable and explicit, disappear more and more” (pp. 124-125). But this is a problem: Heidegger thinks one “must become *free* solely in one’s *ownmost* Da-sein. When Da-sein tranquillized [by internalizing the norms of “the They”]...it drifts toward an alienation in which its ownmost potentiality for being-in-the-world is concealed. Entangled being-in-the-world is not only tempting and tranquilizing, it is at the same time *alienating*” (p. 129). Basically, one becomes alienated from one’s own life by giving in to the temptation of surrendering to the They.

In re-reading your answers to 1 and 2, could Heidegger object to those answers on such grounds? If so, is there a way to reasonably reply to that objection? And whether or not such an objection is available, is the Heideggerian concern generally a legitimate one? Or do you disagree with the kind of values that it assumes? Please elaborate.

There is no required minimum or maximum length for this. But naturally, it would be difficult for a response of two sentences to impress me. More broadly, the quality of a response is somewhat proportional to the level of detail and thoughtfulness in the response...and the latter correspond *roughly* to quantity. Even so, there is such a thing as long-windedness, and bogging down your main point with extraneous matters...so it is *certainly* not as if more length is always better.

For further guidance, please see also the handout “writing philosophy” on the course website.