

From **The Philosophy Dictionary** by Garth Kemerling: <http://www.philosophypages.com/dy/>

absurd Contrary to reason or beyond the limits of rational thought; paradoxical, nonsensical, or meaningless. According to Camus, **Sartre**, and other existentialists, absurdity is an inescapable consequence of any sensitive effort to live in the face of an indifferent reality. The all-too-human inclination to yearn most passionately for those things which we can never possess, for example, is absurd in this sense.

abandonment In the ethical thought of such [existentialist](#) writers as [Sartre](#) and [Heidegger](#), abandonment is the awareness that there are no external sources of moral authority. No deity, for example, provides us with guidance or direction; we achieve an [authentic](#) life by depending only on ourselves.

alienation Extreme separation from one's own nature, from the products of one's labor, or from social reality, which often results in an indifference or outright aversion toward some aspect of life that might otherwise be attractive and significant.

Entäusserung and **Entfremdung** German terms (literally, "estrangement" and "externalization") used by [Hegel](#) and [Marx](#) to describe the phenomenon of [alienation](#) from one's own nature.

estrangement Withdrawal from things or people; see [alienation](#).

authenticity Self-conscious appropriation of the conditions of one's own existence and identity. According to **Heidegger**, such deliberate reflection about the goals and values of life is the only successful response to the experience of *Angst* without falling into self-deception.

anxiety {Ger. *Angst*} According to many existentialist philosophers, the normal emotional response to the overwhelming responsibility entailed by human freedom.

Existentialism A (mostly) twentieth-century approach that emphasizes the primacy of individual existence over any presumed natural essence for human beings. Although they differ on many details, existentialists generally suppose that the fact of my existence as a human being entails both my unqualified freedom to make of myself whatever I will and the awesome responsibility of employing that freedom appropriately, without being driven by *anxiety* toward escaping into the inauthenticity or self-deception of any conventional set of rules for behavior, even though the entire project may turn out to be absurd.

Determinism: The philosophical doctrine that every state of affairs, including every human event, act, and decision is the inevitable consequence of antecedent states of affairs and/or natural laws. Can also be called, generally, Causation or Causality, and specifically, the Principle of Sufficient Reason

bad faith {Fr. *mauvaise foi*} In the philosophy of [Sartre](#), an effort to avoid [anxiety](#) by denying the full extent of one's own [freedom](#). Bad faith, on this view, is an especially harmful variety of [self-deception](#), since it forestalls [authentic](#) appropriation of responsibility for ourselves.

facticity The contingent conditions of an individual human life. In the [existentialism](#) of [Heidegger](#) and [Sartre](#), facticity includes all of the concrete details—time and place of birth, for example, along with the prospect of death—against the background of which human [freedom](#) is to be exercised.

Transcendence- The ability to exceed one's facticity or background, to go or grow beyond the given.

"In this postmodern world, cultural conflicts are becoming more dangerous than at any time in history. A new model of coexistence is needed, based on man's transcending himself." Vaclav Havel

nihilism - Complete rejection of the existence of human [knowledge](#) and [values](#) or denial of the possibility of making any useful distinctions among things.

Nietzsche, Friedrich (1844-1900) German philologist and philosopher who criticized the over-emphasis on reason characteristic of Western philosophy and the tendency of traditional morality and religion to debilitate the human spirit.

phenomenology - Description of experience. Hence, a philosophical method restricted to careful analysis of the intellectual processes of which we are introspectively aware, without making any assumptions about their supposed causal connections to existent external objects. Philosophers who have made extensive use of diverse phenomenological methods include [Brentano](#), [Husserl](#), [Hartmann](#), [Heidegger](#), and [Merleau-Ponty](#).

optimism -Belief that everything happens for the best {Lat. *optimus*}; the opposite of [pessimism](#). Thus, for example, [Leibniz](#) was an optimist who supposed that this is the [best of all possible worlds](#).

pessimism - Belief that things generally happen for the worst {Lat. *pessimus*}; the opposite of [optimism](#). Thus, for example, [Schopenhauer](#) was a pessimist who supposed that life is endless suffering.

Übermensch -German term for "Overman" or "Superman." Hence, in the philosophy of [Nietzsche](#), an extraordinary individual who [transcends the limits of traditional morality](#) to live purely by the will to power.