Flaubert in the world, history’s constitution of Flaubert and Flaubert’s reciprocal effect on history. Although Sartre’s Maoist friends around La Cause du Peuple had no patience with what they saw as the indulgent bourgeois individualism of the Flaubert project, it may in fact be read as the synthesis of Sartrean syntheses: Marxism and existentialism, existential phenomenology and psychoanalysis, and fact and fiction.

Since Sartre’s death in 1980 a number of significant works have been published: War Diaries (Les Carnets de la Drôle de Guerre, 1983) composed on the Maginot Line during the ‘phoney war’ period September 1939–May 1940, Notebooks for an Ethics (Cahiers pour une morale, 1983) which provides some of the moral philosophy promised at the end of Being and Nothingness, two volumes of correspondence with Simone de Beauvoir and others: Lettres au Castor et à Quelques Autres, I 1926–39, II 1940–63 (1983), the screenplay for a film about Freud, Le Scénario Freud (1984), the second volume of Critique of Dialectical Reason (Critique de la Raison Dialectique, Tome II: L’intelligibilité de l’Histoire, 1986) and the metaphysically trenchant Truth and Existence (Vérité et Existence, 1989). The thesis that self-definition ceases at the moment of death clearly needs to be treated with some caution.9

Notes


2 The form of this kind of philosophical problem solving, dialectic, is presented by Hegel in his Science of Logic (Wissenschaft der Logic, Nuremberg 1812– 16). It is given content in The Phenomenology of Spirit (Phänomenologie des Geistes, Jena 1807), The Philosophy of Right (Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts, Berlin 1821) the volumes of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (Heidelberg, 1815–30) and posthumously published series of lectures. See Michael Inwood (ed.), Hegel: Selections (London and New York, 1989).

3 Karl Popper (1902–94) attacks the philosophical foundations of right-wing totalitarianism in the first volume of The Open Society and Its Enemies (London, 1945) (subtitled ‘Plato’) and left wing totalitarianism in the second volume (subtitled ‘Marxism’). The Open Society and its Enemies is the most influential political philosophy of the 20th century. The received view that modern totalitarianism is a product of the Enlightenment historically ir 

4 The philosopher and mathematician René Descartes (1596–1650) attempted to reconcile the theocentric world picture of the middle ages with the emerging


8 The American modernist novelist John dos Passos deployed the radical technique of ‘montage’ in his *U.S.A.* trilogy (New York, 1930, 1933, 1936). The literary inventiveness and authentic concern with human reality shown by the Irish novelist James Joyce (1882–1941) in his *Ulysses* (Paris, 1922) possibly makes it the most significant work of fiction of the twentieth century.


University of Human Development
Existentialism is the movement in nineteenth- and twentieth-century philosophy that addresses fundamental problems of human existence. The existentialists are not a self-consciously defined homogeneous school. They include: the Danish protestant theologian and philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813–55), the iconoclastic German atheist Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), the German fundamental ontologist Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), the French Catholic philosopher, critic and playwright Gabriel Marcel (1889–1973), the German psychiatrist and philosopher Karl Jaspers (1883–1969), the French feminist philosopher and novelist Simone de Beauvoir (1908–86), and the French phenomenologist and critic of ‘objective thought’ Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–61). Existentialist themes are salient in the literature of Mikhail Lermontov (1814–41), Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821–81), André Malraux (1901–75), Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (1900–44), Samuel Beckett (1906–89), Albert Camus (1913–60) and Jean Genet (1910–86), and discernible in more.

There is no set of problems addressed by all and only those thinkers labelled ‘existentialist’. However, most of them are interested in some of: What is it to exist? Does existence have a purpose? Is there an objective difference between right and wrong? Are we free? Are we responsible for our actions? What is the right sort of religious, political or sexual commitment? How should we face death?

The term ‘existentialism’ only gained currency after the Second World War, and the word features in the title of the famous October 1945 lecture Existentialism and Humanism.
Existentialism (L’Existentialisme est un Humanisme) which Sartre regarded as an inadequate substitute for reading his denser works. The text nevertheless remains an excellent introduction to Sartrean themes so is reprinted below in full.

What does the term ‘existentialism’ mean in its application to Sartre’s philosophy? To say that something exists is to say that it is. To state something’s essence is to state what it is. Understanding Sartre’s existentialism requires understanding his thoughts on the relation between existence and essence and these are most clearly presented in the 1938 novel Nausea. I shall discuss the existentialism that emerges from Nausea and then make some remarks about Existentialism and Humanism.

In Nausea, Antoine Roquentin, the existentialist anti-hero and voicepiece for Sartre’s own philosophy, makes a series of profound and traumatic philosophical discoveries. Each discovery is a thesis canvassed intermittently in Western philosophy.

Roquentin notices a change. He is not sure whether the change is in the things around him or in his consciousness of them but it amounts to this: he discovers that the things he perceives exist. More specifically, he realises that the bare existence of things can not be captured by our ways of describing them. When for example he acts on an urge to join some children throwing pebbles into the sea he suddenly has to drop his pebble in disgust: it exists. Staring closely at his beer glass in a bar he notes its shape, the name of the brewery written on it and further properties. Even so, something about the glass eludes all these perceptible qualities: the existence of the glass.

Roquentin has discovered that existence cannot be reduced to essence. From no description of a putative object, no matter how complete, can we logically derive the claim that that object exists. As Roquentin puts it: ‘To exist is simply to be there; what exists appears, lets itself be encountered, but you can never deduce it.’ (Nausea, trans. Robert Baldick, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1966, p. 188)

Sartre presents Roquentin’s discovery as an empirical one. Roquentin sees existence and sees that existence is distinct from essence. The physical existence of things cannot be reduced to essence.
La cause du peuple, the GP’s newspaper, ran a photograph of a demonstration in nearby BeUTHune, which shows Ewald marching arm in arm with Bruay’s citizens as they hold an imposing likeness of the miner’s daughter above their heads. The GP’s politicization of the Bruay affair is typically characterized as a case of post-68 radicalism run amok. Among the Maoists’ offenses, a special place is usually reserved for the notorious May 1, 1972, edition of La cause du peuple. Committed to letting workers speak in their own voices, the paper ran an article entitled ‘And Now They Massacre Our Chi He might have been one of the quieter buccaneers sailing into harbour. Then, nodding amiably, he stepped forward, looked up and down the wharf again, and returned to the saloon, where he took a cigar from the box the captain had bought at the entrance to the Kiel Canal, and helped himself to a drink from one of the many bottles that overflowed from the sideboard to the table. And still softly shining in the darkening air, a ball and a cross. It was the very top of St. Paul’s, seen above the roof of Cannon Street Station. Mr. Golspie recognised it with pleasure, and even half sung, half hummed, the line of a song that came back to him, something about ‘St. Paul’s with its grand old Dome. Good luck to St. Paul’s! After she had said this many times, she began to wonder how she was to get her treasure home. It was too heavy for her to carry, and she could see no better way than to tie the end of her shawl to it and drag it behind her like a go-cart. "It will soon be dark," she said to herself as she trotted along. "So much the better! The neighbours will not see what I'm bringing home, and I shall have all the night to myself, and be able to think what I'll do! Mayhap I'll buy a grand house and just sit by the fire with a cup o’ tea and do no work at all like a queen. So, all in a hurry to see how the stone would keep the gate open, she trotted off down the hill till she came to her own cottage. She unlatched the gate and then turned to unfasten her shawl from the stone which lay on the path behind her. Aye!