

Martin Heidegger rejected existentialism completely. When he discovered that Sartre was an avowed existentialist, he no longer cared to be called by that name. As a result, Heidegger completely reversed the most basic motif of existentialism, "existence is prior to essence", and replaced it with the motif, "being is prior to existence." He thus called himself an "ek-sistentialist" (which is similar, in our idiom, to calling oneself an ex convict or an ex prize fighter).

Karl Jaspers came to oppose the term "existentialism", because it suggests a dated, restricted school of thought among other schools, a doctrine among doctrines. He came to prefer the term "philosophy of existence", which he considers to be primordial, eternal philosophy itself.

Gabriel Marcel, since 1950, said that he abhorred the label "Christian Existentialist", and preferred to be called a "neo-Socratic".

Jean-Paul Sartre is the only one who continued to use the term "existentialism", but even in his case he appears to have moved to a new stance. In his autobiography Sartre proclaims himself a Marxist, and declares that "no one can go beyond Marxism."

F. H. Heineman (who first used the term "Existenzphilosophie") in his work, *Existentialism and the Modern Predicament*, asked the question, "Is Existentialism alive?" He answers as follows:

It follows from all I have said that existence cannot become a basis for a systematic philosophy. The axiom, *Existo, ergo sum* ("I exist, therefore I am") is empty, fruitless, and a mere tautology.

However, existence as a subjectively-regulative idea brings unity into the chaos of our personal experience. As such it is of ethical, religious, and metaphysical significance, and can and should be preserved in a philosophy of response. As a general imperative it says: "Your responses shall be existential!" "Within all spheres of your being you shall act in such a manner that you exist in and through your answers!" Morally it implies: "You shall react in such a manner that you are able to accept responsibility for every one of your answers!" As a religious principle it demands: "Reply with absolute responsibility in the face of God!"

In short, existence as a constitutive principle is dead, but it remains alive as a regulative idea. The existentialists were mistaken when they took it as a basis for constructing existentialist systems. They were right in so far as they understood it as a call or appeal. The postulate to become existential in thought and action concerns everybody.

Heineman thus called his own view post-existentialist and meta-analytical, and further developed this view in his book, *Beyond Existentialism*, stating that it is his intention in this book to find a way out of the existentialist crisis and to discover a secure foundation for a new philosophy.

Is existentialism then dead? It lingers on as a philosophy (although it is viewed by many as being in its death-throes), but it lives on as a theology.