

Self-Driven by Vice — A Philosophical Exploration

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Abstracts

This paper tries to find the connection between vice and self-driven motivation through the perspectives of existentialism and absurdism. It deepens how influential philosophers view the role of vice in human life and shows how it can inspire individuals to challenge societal norms by motivating them. To bring these philosophical ideas to life, this paper includes study cases from various fields, illustrating the importance of understanding vice in relation to human behavior and the quest for meaning in a seemingly absurd world.

1 Introduction

Exploring human nature often discloses the paradoxes and contradictions. The concept of “vices” stands out as a particularly fascinating topic, which are negative traits or behaviors that differs from moral norms, yet they can also act as strong self-driven motivations, pushing individuals to go against their own moral beliefs or societal expectations. This paper investigates the importance of vices as a source of motivation within the frameworks of existentialism and absurdism—two philosophical movements that offer unique insights into human existence and behavior.

Existentialism emphasizes individualism and the subjective nature of experience, suggesting that life is both absurd and meaningful. Thinkers like Jean-Paul Sartre and Friedrich Nietzsche argue that people are free to create their own meanings and values, despite life's inherent absurdity. On the contrary, absurdism, as Albert Camus, highlights the irrationality of the universe and the meaninglessness of human existence in space and time, viewing vices as natural reactions to an illogical world. By examining vices through these philosophical lenses, this report aims to enrich our understanding of how self-driven motivations arise from our human condition by vices. This exploration contributes to discussions in philosophy and psychology while illuminating the complex relationship between human nature and our environments. The paper is structured to define various forms of vice, such as greed, jealousy, and ambition, and explore how they can motivate individuals in chapter 2. While in

chapter 3 will provide an overview of existentialism and absurdism, tracing their development and key thinkers, setting the stage for a deeper discussion of vice in these contexts. And in chapter 4, one will focus on how existentialist philosophers interpret the role of vice in human existence and its contribution to meaning. Similarly, in chapter 5 I will examine the connection between vice, self-driven motivation, and absurdism, discussing how absurdity shapes our understanding of vice and human behavior. Additionally, in chapter 6, I will present case studies illustrating the role of vice in self-driven motivation through examples from literature, history, and contemporary society. Finally, the Discussion and Conclusion chapters will summarize findings, connect them to existing theories, and suggest areas for future research.

Overall, this report seeks to shed light on the darker aspects of human nature, where vices can become powerful motivators to drive oneself, and explore how these behaviors are influenced by existentialism and absurdism, which not only deepens the understanding of human behavior but also highlights the complexities and contradictions inherent in our existence.

2 Understanding Vice and Self-Driven Motivation

2.1 Definition and Forms of Vice

Vices—traits or behaviors that society often treats morally or socially undesirable—usually play a significant role in shaping human behaviors. These complex characteristics have been the subject of many discussions in both philosophy and psychology. Vices can be as many forms, including **greed**, **jealousy**, and **ambition**, etc. with each with its own implications and effects on behavior.

Take **greed** as an example, it's driven by an overwhelming desire for wealth, power, or resources, pushing individuals to act in the ways that are irrational or even self-destructive. While **jealousy** typically stems from feelings of insecurity or inadequacy, manifesting as hostile behavior towards others—such as envying their achievements or trying to undermine their happiness. And there's also **ambition**, which is usually seen as a positive force, but when it has gone too far, it becomes a vice, leading individuals to chase their goals at the expense of others' well-being or ethical standards.

The roots of vice are intricate and shaped by the complexity of factors. Researchers indicate that societal norms, personal experiences, even genetic predispositions can influence these behaviors. For instance, environments that prioritize materialism and competition often nurture greed and ambition, while social settings that encourage comparisons and hierarchies can breed jealousy. Moreover, individual personality traits, such as neuroticism or a tendency toward dominance, can make some people more vulnerable to developing these negative traits.

2.2 Vice as a Self-Driven Motivation

From a psychological standpoint, vices often stem from unconscious desires and emotions that can override rational thoughts. Researchers indicate the fact that strong emotions, like anger or fear, can push individuals toward aggressive or harmful behaviors. On the other hand, the pursuit of pleasure or the desire to avoid pain can lead to risky behaviors, such as addiction or recklessness.

Philosophically, existentialist and absurdist thinkers highlight how vice reflects human experiences. Existentialists like Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus argue that vices emerge from the struggle between people's desires and societal expectations. Like Sartre's famous claim, "man is a useless passion," suggesting that our conflicting desires often lead us to act against our own best interests and moral values.

Absurdism views the universe as irrational, leading to a sense of absurdity in the human condition. In this framework, vices can be seen as a natural response to a chaotic world where traditional meanings are questioned. Camus believed that feelings of alienation and meaninglessness could drive people to seek fulfillment through excess, rebellion, or self-destructive behaviors. Moreover, acting on vices can be seen as a form of personal choice. When individuals prioritize their desires over societal norms, they may be rebelling against the status quo or searching for their identity in an absurd world. The connection between vice and self-driven motivation is essential for tackling various social and psychological issues. Therefore by examining the types and psychological roots of vices, along with their philosophical implications in existentialism and absurdism, we can gain insights into the complex dynamics that influence human behavior and how vice shapes our individual and collective experiences.

3 Existentialism and Absurdism

Existentialism and absurdism are two philosophical movements that deeply shape our understanding of human nature, especially regarding personal motivation and the absurdity of life. They highlight the importance of individual experiences and choices while confronting the idea that life may lack inherent meaning. Ultimately, these philosophies encourage us to explore our own paths in an unpredictable world.

3.1 Existentialism

Existentialism is a philosophical movement that highlights the significance of individual existence and personal experiences. It delves into the questions about the meaning of life, what it means to be human, and the freedom and responsibility each person holds. Coined by Jean-Paul Sartre in his 1946 lecture "Existentialism is a Humanism," the term reflects the ideas that had been evolving throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries.

A core principle of existentialism is individualism, which asserts that people are autonomous and accountable for their own lives. As Sartre's famously state, "Man is nothing else but the sum of his actions," stressing how our choices and actions shape

the character of who we are. Existentialists argue that while we have the freedom to choose our paths, this freedom comes with a profound responsibility.

The movement also grapples with the human condition, particularly the notion that life can seem meaningless or absurd without a clear purpose. The theme is vividly illustrated in Albert Camus's "The Myth of Sisyphus," where Sisyphus is condemned to eternally push a boulder up a hill, only to see it roll back down. Camus uses this image to convey the struggle to find meaning in a world that can feel inherently devoid of it.

3.2 Absurdism

Absurdism is another philosophical movement that offers a more radical perspective on the human experience than existentialism. It takes the universe as irrational and life itself as inherently absurd. The term "absurdism" was popularized by playwright Samuel Beckett in his 1938 play "Waiting for Godot."

Its core, absurdism's highlights the conflicts between our human desires and the universe's lack of inherent meaning. It suggests that trying to find a purpose in life can often feel futile because there's no underlying rational structure to reality. This idea is captured well in the sentiment, "The more I love the world, the more I know it's made up of people," reflecting the tension between our hopes and the chaotic nature of existence.

Absurdism also explores the concept of the "absurd," which is the feeling of absurdity or meaninglessness that arises when individuals recognize the lack of inherent meaning of their existence. This concept is central to the philosophy of Albert Camus, who believed that the absurdity of life can be countered through a process of rebellion or refusal. He famously stated, "I rebel; therefore we exist."

Camus's concept of the absurd is closely related to his critique of suicide. He argued that suicide is a cowardly way to escape the absurdity of life, instead of facing it head-on and finding meaning through personal rebellion and action. This perspective is reflected in the character of Meursault in his novel "The Stranger," who, despite being faced with the absurdity of life, chooses to live and find meanings through his own actions and choices.

Both existentialism and absurdism emphasize the importance of individual experiences and the role of choice, as well as the idea that life can be inherently meaningless or absurd. Existentialism focuses on personal freedom and responsibility, while absurdism highlights the conflict between our desires and the lack of meaning in the universe. These concepts are essential for exploring self-driven motivation, especially in relation to vice and ethical behavior.

4 Vice, Motivation, and Existentialism

Existentialism is a philosophical movement that highlights the absurdity and importance of human existence, offering a fresh view on the concept of vice and its

impact on behavior. This chapter explores how existentialist thinkers like Heidegger, Sartre, and Camus have interpreted vice, examining how it can act as a source of self-driven motivation and contribute to the search for meaning in life.

4.1 Vice and the Meaning of Existence

Existentialism offers a profound framework for understanding the role of vice in shaping human behavior and existence, particularly through the insights of key philosophers like Heidegger, Sartre, and Camus. Each presents a distinct perspective on how vice intersects with the complexities of the human condition.

Heidegger, in "Being and Time," emphasizes authenticity, suggesting that feelings of alienation and a sense of being "homeless" can drive individuals to adopt vices such as consumerism and narcissism. He views these behaviors as a retreat from authenticity, a response to the "angst" or fear of confronting one's responsibilities and choices. For Heidegger, engaging in vice represents a departure from true selfhood and highlights the struggle to live authentically in a seemingly indifferent world[1].

Sartre, conversely, adopts a more proactive stance, positing that vice can be an expression of individual freedom. In "Existentialism and Human Emotions," he argues that in a universe devoid of inherent meaning, individuals create their own significance through their choices, including the choice to engage in vice. For Sartre, these actions are not flaws but conscious responses to life's absurdity, asserting control over a chaotic existence[2].

Camus offers a nuanced perspective, particularly in "The Myth of Sisyphus." He acknowledges that the absurdity of life can lead individuals toward vices like addiction or even suicide as a means of escape. However, Camus also champions the power of choice, suggesting that individuals can resist these temptations and instead find meaning through self-acceptance and confronting life's inherent absurdity[3].

In conclusion, the existentialist exploration of vice reveals its complex role in the human experience[4]. Heidegger, Sartre, and Camus each contribute unique insights, underscoring that while vice may reflect a reaction to existential challenges, it also presents opportunities for personal growth and the creation of meaning in an otherwise chaotic world[5].

5 Vice, Motivation, and Absurdism

5.1 Absurdism and Vice

Absurdism is a philosophical movement that suggests both the universe and human existence are fundamentally absurd. It challenges our traditional ideas about meaning and purpose. This perspective is closely tied to the works of Albert Camus, who argued that one of the core human experiences is the realization that there is no inherent reason for anything. This can lead to feelings of alienation and a struggle to find meaning in an irrational world.

In this framework, vice isn't simply seen as a moral failing; rather, it emerges as a natural response to the absurdity of existence. It can reflect the human drive to seek meaning, even when faced with meaninglessness. Camus illustrates this in his essay "The Myth of Sisyphus," where he portrays Sisyphus as a figure who, despite his endless and futile struggle against the gods, finds a sense of purpose in his defiance.

This idea of vice as a reaction to the absurd can also be found in other absurdist works. Characters in the plays of Eugene Ionesco, for example, often behave in bizarre and irrational ways, driven by emotions like jealousy, ambition, or a need for attention. This highlights the notion that, in a world devoid of inherent meaning, individuals may resort to vice as a way to forge their own sense of purpose and significance.

5.2 Vice and the Absurd

The connection between vice and absurdity is further examined through absurdism, which highlights the irrational nature of the universe and the absurdity of human existence. Existentialist thinkers like Sartre and Heidegger also engage with the concept of the absurd, but they approach it from different angles. In "Being and Time," Heidegger addresses the "absurdity" of everyday life, pointing out the gap between our expectations for meaning and the inherent meaninglessness of our lives. And Sartre echoes this in "No Exit," where he depicts individuals trapped in a world devoid of meaning, prompting them to seek significance through various vices.

In absurdism, vice becomes a way for characters to cope with this sense of absurdity. Driven by a desire to find meaning, they often turn to vice as a means of asserting control and creating purpose in their lives. For example, in Camus's "The Stranger," Meursault's seemingly indifferent or nihilistic behavior can be interpreted as a form of vice that arises from his struggle to find meaning in an absurd world. This view challenges conventional moral standards, suggesting that vice isn't merely a deviation from morality but a reaction to the absurdity of existence.

From the absurdist perspective, vice and self-driven motivation are closely linked. It may become a motivating force, pushing individuals to act against societal norms in their quest for purpose. A clear example is Cléante in Molière's "The Imaginary Invalid," whose ambition and envy lead him to manipulate those around him for personal gain. This illustrates the idea that, in a world lacking inherent meaning, people often create their own meanings through vice.

The absurdity of existence can create a void that individuals try to fill with various forms of vice, which allow them to express their desires, ambitions, and fears in an irrational world. This perspective redefines traditional views of morality, suggesting that vice isn't just a sign of a flawed character but a response to life's inherent absurdity. In conclusion, exploring the relationship between vice, self-driven motivation, and absurdism offers a unique lens on human behavior. In a universe perceived as absurd, individuals are often propelled to seek meaning through vice, which serves as both motivation and a way to assert control. This perspective challenges traditional moral frameworks and highlights the complex interplay between individual desire, societal expectations, and the absurdity of existence.

6 Case Studies

This chapter presents several samples that illustrate the role of vice in self-driven motivation in different fields, giving examples from literature, history, and contemporary society. The primary objective is to demonstrate how vice can serve as a powerful motivator, often pushing individuals to act against their moral beliefs or societal norms. These case studies will be analyzed through the lens of existentialism and absurdism, exploring how these philosophical movements interpret the significance of vice in human existence.

6.1 Greed in Historical Context

Greed, a fundamental vice, has been a significant factor in human history. One notable example is the fact that the rise and fall of the Roman Empire, often attributed to the excessive consumption and greed of its leaders. The Roman Senate, once a symbol of moderation, became corrupted by power, leading to the collapse of the empire. This historical narrative aligns with the existentialist perspective, which posits that individuals are responsible for their actions and choices, even in the face of societal or historical forces .

6.2 Jealousy in Literature

Jealousy, another vice, has been a driving force in literary works. As one known, In Shakespeare's "Othello," the protagonist's jealousy leads to tragic consequences, exemplifying how personal vice can undermine one's sense of reality and rationality. This reflects the absurdism view that human behavior is often irrational and driven by unconscious desires, making jealousy a powerful catalyst for self-destruction .

6.3 Ambition in Contemporary Society

Ambitiousness, while often seen as a positive trait, can also be a vice driving individuals to pursue success at any cost. Consider the case of corporate executives who engage in unethical behavior to climb the corporate ladder. This behavior, driven by ambition, undermines the moral and ethical foundations of society. Existentialists might argue that such actions are a consequence of individuals' refusal to accept the absurdity of their existence and their subsequent quest for meaning and significance through material success .

6.4 Technology and Vice

In the digital age, technology has become a double-edged sword. While it enhances our lives, it also provides new avenues for vice. Social media, for instance, can fuel envy and comparison, leading to feelings of inadequacy and anxiety. These platforms, which were designed to connect people, often become vessels for vanity and self-promotion, reflecting the darker aspects of human nature. This phenomenon aligns

with both existentialism and absurdism, as it highlights the inherent conflict between our desire for meaning and the often arbitrary and absurd nature of social media .

6.5 Vices and Disaster

The interplay between vice and self-driven motivation can also lead to catastrophic outcomes. For example, consider the case of leaders who are driven by hubris and ignore scientific warnings, leading to environmental disasters. This behavior exemplifies how vice, in this case hubris, can triumph over reason and result in significant harm to society. The existentialist perspective on such events would emphasize individual responsibility and the need to confront the absurdity of our actions .

Through these cases, one can see the powerful force of vice as a self-driven motivation, that is playing an important role in history, literature, modern society, and in technology and disasters. These examples highlight how vices drive individual behavior, making existential and anarchist explanations of human nature and its internal conflicts relevant. They emphasize the importance of understanding and addressing these inner forces that drive our behavior, so that we can gain a deeper control over actions and face the absurdity of life.

7 Discussion & Conclusion

Exploring vice as a form of self-driven motivation through the perspective of existentialism and absurdism reveals profound insights into the complexities of human nature. Existentialism emphasizes individualism and the inherent freedom and responsibility of human existence, positing that vice often emerges from our quest for meaning in an absurd universe. Thinkers like Heidegger, Sartre, and Camus illustrate how individuals may engage in vices to cope with feelings of alienation, often acting against societal norms in their search for significance. Sartre's concept of "bad faith" exemplifies this, showing how people evade their true freedom, resulting in actions that obscure their authentic selves.

Conversely, absurdism frames vice as a natural response to an irrational universe, where traditional values seem irrelevant. In this view, individuals may resort to vice to navigate life's inherent absurdity, seeking to create their own values amid chaos. Camus encapsulates this in his depiction of the "absurdist hero," who, despite recognizing life's futility, asserts their existence through vice as a means of resistance. Case studies of literary and historical figures further illustrate how vice can drive individuals to pursue goals, often at the expense of moral integrity, highlighting the interplay between existentialism and absurdism.

In conclusion, the exploration reveals a nuanced understanding of vice's role in shaping human behavior and the search for meaning. By deepening the psychological and philosophical dimensions of vice, we uncover its significance in the quest for identity within a seemingly indifferent world. Future research should continue to unravel the complex relationship between human nature, existential thought, and vice, enriching our understanding of how to navigate existence amidst life's contradictions.

8 References

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