I value morality. Unlike scissors, man has no predetermined purpose to fulfill. Our ultimate responsibility is to ourselves to define who we are through worldly projects. Sartre ONE[[1]](#footnote--1):

If one considers a manufactured object, say a book or a paper-knife, one sees that it has been made to serve a definite purpose. It has an essence, the sum of its purpose and qualities, which precedes its existence. The concept of man in the mind of God is comparable to the concept of paper-knife in the mind of the artisan. My atheist existentialism is rather more coherent. It declares that God does not exist, yet there is still a being in whom existence precedes essence, a being which exists before being defined by any concept, and this being is man or, as Heidegger puts it, human reality. That means that man first exists, encounters himself and emerges in the world, to be defined afterwards. Thus, there is no human nature, since there is no God to conceive it. It is man who conceives himself, who propels himself towards existence. Man becomes nothing other than what is actually done [so], not what he will want to be. And when we say that man takes responsibility for himself, we say more than that - he is in his choices responsible for all men. All our acts of creating ourselves create at the same time an image of man such as we believe he must be.

Groups who fully accept us define these projects where we are the major characters. [Extrapolate to judge.] But serialization disrupts this process. Sartre TWO:[[2]](#footnote-0)

Men are not born in isolation: they are born into a family which forms them during their first years. Afterwards they will belong to different socioprofessional communities and will start a family themselves. They are atomized when large social forces — work conditions under the capitalist regime, private property, institutions, and so forth — bring pressure to bear upon the[ir] groups they belong to, breaking them up and reducing them to the units which supposedly compose them. The army, to mention only one example of an institution, does not look upon [see] the recruit as an actual person; the recruit can only recognize himself by the fact that he belongs to existing groups. The army sees in him only the man, that is, the soldier — [but] an abstract entity which is defined by the duties and the few rights which represent his relations with the military power. The soldier, which is just what the recruit is not but which military service is supposed to reduce him to, is in himself other than himself, and all the recruits in the same class are identically other. it is this very identity which separates them, since for each of them it represents only his predetermined general relationship with the army. During the hours of training, therefore, each is other than himself and at the same time identical with all the Others who are other than themselves. He can have real relations with his comrades only if they all cast off their identity as soldiers — say, at mealtimes or during the evening when they are in the barracks. Yet the word “atomization,” so often used, does not convey the true situation of people who have been scattered and alienated by institutions. They cannot be reduced to the absolute solitude of the atom even though institutions try to replace their concrete relations with people by incidental connections. They cannot be excluded from all forms of social life: a soldier takes the bus, buys the newspaper, votes. All this presumes that he will make use of “collectives” along with the Others. But the[y] collectives address him as a member of a series (the series of newspaper buyers, television watchers, etc.). He becomes in essence identical with all the other members, differing from them only by his serial number. We say that he has been serialized. One finds serialization in the practico-inert field, where matter mediates between men to the extent that men mediate between material objects. (For example, as soon as a man takes the steering wheel of his car he becomes no more than one driver among others and, because of this, helps reduce his own speed and everyone else’s too, which is just the opposite of what he wanted, since he wanted to possess his own car.) At that point, serial thinking is born in me, thinking which is not my own thinking but that of the Other which I am and also that of all the Others. It must be called the thinking of powerlessness, because I produce it to the degree that I am Other, an enemy of myself and of the Others, and to the degree that I carry the Other everywhere with me. Let us take the case of a business where there has not been a strike for twenty or thirty years, but where the buying power of the worker is constantly falling because of the “high cost of living.” Each worker begins to think about a protest movement. But twenty years of “social peace” have gradually established serial relations among the workers. Any strike — even if it were only for twenty-four hours — would require a regrouping of those people. At that point serial thinking — which separates them — vigorously resists the first signs of group thinking. Serial thinking will take several forms: it will be racist (”The immigrant[s] workers would not [work] go along with us”), sexist (”The women would not understand us”), hostile to other categories of society (”The small shopkeepers would not help us any more than the country people would”), distrustful (”The man near me is Other, so I don’t know how he would react”), and so forth. All the separatist arguments represent not the thinking of the workers themselves but the thinking of the Others whom they have become and who want to keep their identity and their distance. If the regrouping should come about successfully, there will be no trace left of this pessimistic ideology. Its only function was to justify the maintenance of serial order and of an impotence that was in part tolerated and in part accepted.

The standard is rejecting serialization. I contend voting is serialization, so any act of it should be rejected. Sartre THREE:

When we go to vote tomorrow, we will once again be substituting legal power for legitimate power. The first, which seems precise and perfectly clear-cut, has the effect of separat[es]ing the voters in the name of universal suffrage. The second is still embryonic, diffuse, unclear even to itself. At this point it is indistinguishable from the vast libertarian and anti-hierarchical movement which one encounters everywhere but which is not at all organized yet. All the voters belong to [are] very different groups. But to the ballot box they are not members of different groups but citizens. The polling booth standing in the lobby of a school or town hall is the symbol of all the acts of betrayal that the individual may commit against the group lie belongs to. To each person it says: “No one can see you, you have only yourself to look to; you are going to be completely isolated when you make your decision, and afterwards you can hide that decision or lie about it.” Nothing more is needed to transform all the voters who enter that hall into potential traitors to one another. Distrust increases the distance that separates them. If we want to fight against atomization, we must try to understand it first.

Plus, voting to vote is ontological damnation on the highest level. Sartre FOUR:

When I vote, I abdicate my power — that is, the possibility everyone has of joining others to form a sovereign group, which would have no need of representatives. By voting I confirm the fact that we, the voters, are always other than ourselves and that none of us can[t] ever desert the seriality in favor of the group, except through intermediaries. For the serialized citizen, to vote is undoubtedly to give his support to a party. But it is even more to vote for voting, as Kravetz says; that is, to vote for the political institution that keeps us in a state of powerless serialization. We saw this in 1968 when de Gaulle asked the people of France, who had risen and formed groups, to vote — in other words, to lie down again and retreat into seriality. The non-institutional groups fell apart and the voters, identical and separate, voted for the U.D.R. [1] That party promised to defend them against the action of groups which they themselves had belonged to a few days earlier. We see it again today when S…guy asks for three months of social peace in order not to disturb the voters, but actually so that elections will be possible. For they no longer would be if fifteen million dedicated strikers, taught by the experience of 1968, refused to vote and went on to direct action. The voter must remain lying down, steeped in his own powerlessness. He will thus choose parties so that they can exert their authority and not his. Each man, locked in his right to vote just as the landowner is locked inside his land, will choose his masters for the next four years without seeing that this so-called right to vote is simply the refusal to allow him to unite with others in resolving the true problems by praxis. The ballot method, always chosen by the groups in the Assembly and never by the voters, only aggravates things. Proportional representation did not save the voters from seriality, but at least it used all the votes. The Assembly accurately reflected political France, in other words repeated its serialized image, since the parties were represented proportionally, by the number of votes each received. Our voting for a single ticket, on the other band, works on the opposite principle — that, as one journalist rightly said, 49 percent equals zero. If the U.D.R. candidates in a voting district obtain 50 percent of the votes in the second round, they are all elected. The opposition’s 49 percent is reduced to nothing: it corresponds to roughly half the population, which does not have the right to be represented. Take as an example a man who voted Communist in 1968 and whose candidates were not elected. Suppose he votes for the Communist Party again in 1973. If the results are different from the 1968 results, it will not be because of him, since in both cases be voted for the same candidates. For his vote to be meaningful, a certain number of voters who voted for the present majority in 1968 would have to grow tired of it, break away from it, and vote further to the left. But it is not up to our man to persuade them; besides, they are probably from a different milieu and he does not even know them. Everything will take place elsewhere and in a different way: through the propaganda of the parties, through certain organs of the press. As for the Communist Party voter, be has only to vote; this is all that is required of him. He will vote, but he will not take part in the actions that change the meaning of his vote. Besides, many of those whose opinion can perhaps be changed may be against the U.D.R. but are also deeply anti-Communist. They would rather elect “reformers,” who will thus become the arbiters of the situation. It is not likely that the reformers will at this point join the Socialist Party-Communist Party. They will throw their weight in with the U.D.R. which, like them, wants to maintain the capitalist regime. The U.D.R. and the reformers become allies — and this is the objective meaning of the Communist man’s vote. His vote is in fact necessary so that the Communist Party can keep its votes and even gain more votes. It is this gain which will reduce the number of majority candidates elected and will persuade them to throw themselves into the arms of the reformers. There is nothing to be said if we accept the rules of this fool’s game. But insofar as our voter is himself, in other words insofar as he is one specific man, he will not be at all satisfied with the result he has obtained as an identical Other. His class interests and his individual purposes have coincided to make him choose a leftist majority. He will have helped send to the Assembly a majority of the right and center in which the most important party will still be the U.D.R. When this man, therefore, puts his ballot in the box, the box will receive from the other ballots a different meaning from the one this voter wished to give it. Here again is serial action as it was seen in the practico-inert area. We can go even further. Since by voting I affirm my institutionalized powerlessness, the established majority does not hesitate to cut, trim, and manipulate the electoral body in favor of the countryside and the cities that “vote the right way” — at the expense of the suburbs and outlying districts that “vote the wrong way.” Even the seriality of the electorate is thereby changed. If it were perfect, one vote would be equal to any other. But in reality, 120,000 votes are needed to elect a Communist deputy, while only 30,000 can send a U.D.R. candidate to the Assembly. One majority voter is worth four Communist Party voters. The point is that the majority voter is casting his ballot against what we would have to call a supermajority, meaning a majority which intends to remain in place by other means than the simple seriality of votes. Why am I going to vote? Because I have been persuaded that the only political act in my life consists of depositing my ballot in the box once every four years? But that is the very opposite of an act. I am only revealing my powerlessness and obeying the power of a party. Furthermore, the value of my vote varies according to whether I obey one party or another. For this reason the majority of the future Assembly will be based solely on a coalition, and the decisions it makes will be compromises which will in no way reflect the desires expressed by my vote. In 1959 a majority voted for Guy Mollet because he claimed be could make peace in Algeria sooner than anyone else. The Socialist government which came to power decided to intensify the war, and this induced many voters to leave the series — which never knows for whom or for what it is voting — and join clandestine action groups. This was what they should have done much earlier, but in fact the unlikely result of their votes was what exposed the powerlessness of universal suffrage. Actually, everything is quite clear if one thinks it over and reaches the conclusion that indirect democracy is a hoax. Ostensibly, the elected Assembly is the one which reflects public opinion most faithfully. But there is only one sort of public opinion, and it is serial. The imbecility of the mass media, the government pronouncements, the biased or incomplete reporting in the newspapers — all this comes to seek us out in our serial solitude and load us down with wooden ideas, formed out of what we think others will think. Deep within us there are undoubtedly demands and protests, but because they are not echoed by others, they wither away and leave us with a “bruised spirit” and a feeling of frustration. So when we are called to vote, I, the Other, have my head stuffed with petrified ideas which the press or television has piled up there. They are serial ideas which are expressed through my vote, but they are not my ideas. The institutions of bourgeois democracy have [we are] split me apart: there is me and there are all the Others they tell me I am (a Frenchman, a soldier, a worker, a taxpayer, a citizen, and so on). This splitting-up forces us to live with what psychiatrists call a perpetual identity crisis. Who am I, in the end? An Other identical with all the others, inhabited by these impotent thoughts which come into being everywhere and are not actually thought anywhere? Or am I myself? And who is voting? I do not recognize myself any more.

1. Existentialism a Humanism. Edited by Hughes [↑](#footnote-ref--1)
2. “Elections: A Trap for Fools” by Jean-Paul Sartre 1789 [↑](#footnote-ref-0)