

# The Ultimate Battle of Philosophical Giants: Thomas Aquinas vs Jean-Paul Sartre



When it comes to the realm of philosophy, two names stand out as titans of their respective eras - Thomas Aquinas and Jean-Paul Sartre. These intellectual powerhouses, separated by centuries, have shaped the way we see, think, and analyze the world around us. In this thought-provoking article, we will delve into the lives and philosophies of both Aquinas and Sartre, and embark on a comparative journey of their views on existence, morality, and the nature of being.

## **Thomas Aquinas: The Angelic Doctor**



## The Saint and the Atheist: Thomas Aquinas and Jean-Paul Sartre

by Joseph S. Catalano (First Edition, Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.2 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 338 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported

Enhanced typesetting: Enabled

Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 176 pages  
Lending : Enabled



Thomas Aquinas, known as the Angelic Doctor, lived during the medieval period from 1225 to 1274. His influential works, particularly the monumental "Summa Theologica," have deeply impacted both theological and philosophical circles. Aquinas sought to reconcile faith with reason, merging the teachings of Christianity with the philosophical traditions of Aristotle.

Aquinas' philosophy revolved around the concept of natural law, asserting that there are objective moral laws that can be discovered through reason. He believed in the existence of God as the ultimate cause of everything, using philosophical arguments to support the existence of a divine being.

Furthermore, Aquinas emphasized the role of virtue ethics, which focuses on cultivating good habits to foster moral development. For Aquinas, the pursuit of moral goodness through virtue leads one towards perfection and union with God.

## **Jean-Paul Sartre: The Existential Maverick**



Jean-Paul Sartre, a renowned figure in existentialism, lived from 1905 to 1980. Sartre's works, such as "Being and Nothingness" and his literary masterpiece "Nausea," propelled existentialism into the mainstream consciousness. His philosophy focused on the individual's freedom, responsibility, and the anguish that accompanies their choices.

Sartre rejected the idea of a higher power or objective moral values, arguing that existence precedes essence. According to him, individuals have no pre-defined purpose or predetermined nature. Instead, they are thrust into existence and must create their own essence through their choices and actions.

Here lies the core of Sartre's philosophy - radical freedom. He believed that individuals have absolute freedom to shape their lives, but this freedom also comes with the burden of responsibility. Sartre's philosophy encourages individuals to embrace their autonomy and make conscious choices, acknowledging that every decision has consequences.

## **A Comparative Analysis**

While Aquinas and Sartre may appear to have starkly contrasting philosophies, a comparative analysis reveals intriguing connections between their ideas. Both philosophers explored questions regarding the nature of existence and the search for meaning in life, albeit through different lenses.

Where Aquinas sought to harmonize faith and reason, Sartre rejected the supernatural entirely, advocating for an atheistic existentialism. Despite the divergence in their beliefs, both philosophers acknowledge the significance of the human experience and the necessity for individuals to engage with their existence.

Additionally, both Aquinas and Sartre recognized the moral dimension of human actions. Aquinas contended that objective moral values exist and can be discerned through reason and natural law, whereas Sartre argued for subjective moral responsibility, emphasizing personal choices as the foundation for moral judgment.

In terms of the nature of being, Aquinas believed in the existence of a soul and posited that human beings are composed of both a material body and an immaterial soul. Sartre, on the other hand, rejected any metaphysical notions and asserted that individuals are purely material beings, devoid of any innate essence beyond their existence.

However, despite these convergences, Aquinas and Sartre's philosophies remain fundamentally distinct. Aquinas grounded his arguments in theology, relying on the existence of God as the foundation for his moral framework. In contrast, Sartre fervently rejected theological explanations and sought to establish a purely secular approach to existentialism.

The intellectual duel between Thomas Aquinas and Jean-Paul Sartre offers a captivating exploration into the complexities of human existence, morality, and the search for meaning. These two philosophical giants, separated by centuries and divergent backgrounds, have left an indelible mark on the world of thought.

Aquinas's synthesis of faith and reason and Sartre's radical exploration of existential freedom showcase the immense diversity within the realm of philosophy. While their views may differ, the profound impact of their ideas highlights the necessity for deep reflection and contemplation in our own lives.

As we navigate the complexities of our existence, let us draw inspiration from Aquinas and Sartre, embracing reason and personal responsibility to foster our own growth and understanding of the world.

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It is hard to think of two philosophers less alike than St. Thomas Aquinas and Jean-Paul Sartre. Aquinas, a thirteenth-century Dominican friar, and Sartre, a twentieth-century philosopher and atheist, are separated by both time and religious beliefs. Yet, for philosopher Joseph S. Catalano, the two are worth bringing together for their shared concern with a fundamental issue: the uniqueness of each individual person and how this uniqueness relates to our mutual dependence on each other. When viewed in the context of one another, Sartre broadens and deepens Aquinas's outlook, updating it for our present planetary and social needs. Both thinkers, as Catalano shows, bring us closer to the reality that surrounds us, and both are centrally concerned with the place of the human within a temporal realm and what stance we should take on our own freedom to act and live within that realm. Catalano shows how freedom, for Sartre, is embodied, and that this freedom further illuminates Aquinas's notion of consciousness.

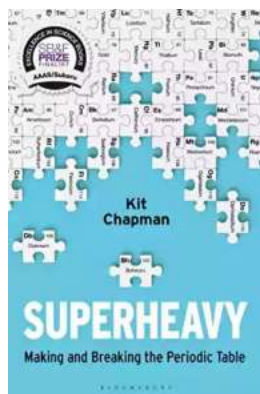
Compact and open to readers of varying backgrounds, this book represents Catalano's efforts to bring a lifetime of work on Sartre into an accessible consideration of philosophical questions by placing him in conversation with

Aquinas, and it serves as a primer on key ideas of both philosophers. By bringing together these two figures, Catalano offers a fruitful space for thinking through some of the central questions about faith, conscience, freedom, and the meaning of life.



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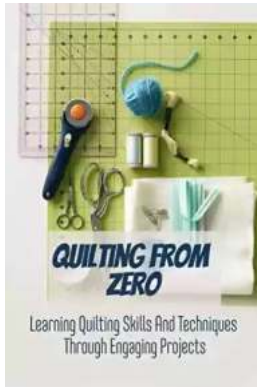
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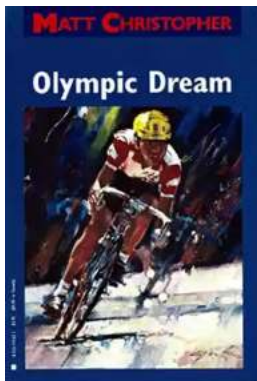
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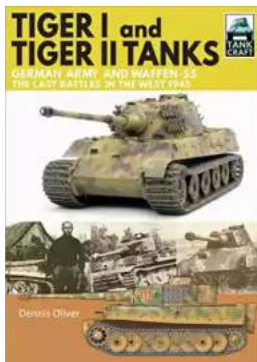
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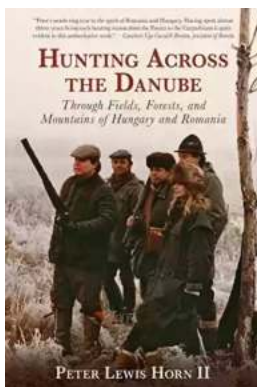
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