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## Neuroexistentialism

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### Abstract

Existentialism is a concern about the foundation of meaning, morals, and purpose. Existentialisms arise when some foundation for these elements of being is under assault. In the past, first-wave existentialism concerned the increasingly apparent inability of religion, and religious tradition, to provide such a foundation, as typified in the writings of Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, and Nietzsche. Second-wave existentialism, personified philosophically by Sartre, Camus and de Beauvoir, and in literature by Mann and Hesse, developed in response to the inability of the polity to serve as such a foundation. There is a third-wave existentialism, a new existentialism, developing in response to advances in the neurosciences that threaten the last vestiges of an immaterial soul or self. With the increasing explanatory and therapeutic power of neuroscience, the mind no longer stands apart from the world to serve as a

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foundation of meaning. This produces foundational anxiety. We suggest how the project of eudaimonics, finding meaning in the material world, might proceed to quell this anxiety. We conclude with this concern for naturalistic eudaimonics: there is some evidence that humans prefer positive, consoling illusions to truth.

**Key Words:** Neuroexistentialism, Eudaimonics,  
Positive illusions