

Papuan Existentialism

A Manifesto of Awakening, Choice, and Decision



The Name

1 *Papuan existentialism is not a philosophy to be studied, a religion to be believed, a political ideology to be joined, or a cultural belief to be performed at festivals. It begins before all of these, in a single act: waking up.*

2 *It is the consciousness, awareness, recognition, and understanding of the nature, reality, situation, and condition of everything that has been gathered under one name: Papua, Papuan. Whoever carries that name carries everything that has been done to it, said about it, and planned for it.*

3 *To be Papuan in this century is to be born into a sentence that others have already written. Papuan existentialism is the moment a Papuan read that sentence for the first time and realises that it was never written in his hand.*

4 *It is the awakening to what Psycho-Cosmocide calls the second cage: the constructed cage of names, labels, borders, laws, doctrines, maps, and promises that civilisation has built around the Papuan world and then called the world itself.*

Two Worlds to Wake From

5 *Every human being lives in two worlds at once. The first is the world that is simply there: land, water, air, fire, the body, kin, birth, hunger, and death. The second is the world that human beings make up: money, nations, flags, scriptures, ranks, development plans, and the stories that tell people who they are and what they are worth.*

6 *The first world is the given cage. No one escapes it. Every people must face mortality, scarcity, and the silence of the cosmos. The second world is the constructed cage. Human hands built it, and what human hands have built, human consciousness can see through.*

7 *Papuan existentialism asks the Papuan to wake up in both worlds. In the real world, he must see plainly what is happening to his land, his numbers, his rivers, and his children. In the made-up world, he must see that the story he has been told about that reality was invented to keep him asleep while it happens.*

8 *A Papuan who wakes up only to the real world falls into despair. A Papuan who wakes up only to the made-up world falls into cynicism. A Papuan who wakes up to both begins, for the first time, to stand in his own time and his own place.*

Where Europe Stopped

9 *European existentialism asked serious questions. Kierkegaard asked how a single individual can choose himself before God. Heidegger asked what it means to be thrown into a world and to live towards one's own death. Sartre declared that existence precedes essence and that human beings are condemned to be free. Camus asked whether life is worth living in a universe that does not answer.*

10 *These were honest questions. But they were asked by people whose essence had never been written for them by a conquering civilisation. When Sartre's European stood before the abyss, he stood there as a man. His humanity was the starting point of the inquiry, never its object.*

11 *The European existentialist wrestled with the given cage. He confronted being, nothingness, time, anxiety, freedom, and death, and he did so from inside a civilisation that had already granted him a name, a history, a language, a future, and a seat at the centre of the world.*

12 *Frantz Fanon came closer to the Papuan condition. He wrote that the Black man is "overdetermined from without", and he spoke of a "zone of nonbeing" into which Black existence had been thrown. The Papuan knows this zone. He was born into it.*

13 *Papuan existentialism departs from Europe at the decisive point. Its first question is neither “What is being?” nor “Why is there something rather than nothing?” Its first question is harder and more urgent: what must I choose, and what must we decide, while there is still a “we” to decide anything?*

14 *For the Papuan, existence does not precede essence. An essence was manufactured for him in advance by explorers, missionaries, anthropologists, administrators, soldiers, and journalists, and then laid over his existence like a uniform. His freedom does not begin from nothing. It begins from underneath that uniform.*

15 *That is why Papuan existentialism concerns choice and decision before it concerns being. European existentialism could afford to contemplate the abyss. The Papuan is already standing at its edge, and the ground beneath his feet is being sold.*

The Layers

16 *The European faced one existential crisis: the crisis of being human in an indifferent universe. The Papuan faces that crisis and several more piled on top of it, each heavier than the last.*

17 *He faces the crisis of black existence: a body whose colour was made the symbol of sin, danger, dirt, and backwardness long before he could speak a word in his own defence.*

18 *He faces the crisis of primitive existence: a life classified in advance as Stone Age, undeveloped, and left behind, a remnant that civilisation has kindly arrived to carry forward in time.*

19 *He faces the crisis of the savage, the cannibal, the pagan, the headhunter, and the naked native: images printed in travel books, repeated from pulpits, and photographed for magazines, until the world could no longer see a Papuan face without seeing these images first.*

20 *He faces the crisis of being a problem: a security problem, a separatist problem, a poverty problem, a development problem, a health problem, a governance problem. Every institution that approaches him arrives with a file already open.*

21 *Each label is a layer of paint. Layer upon layer, century upon century, the paint thickens until the person beneath it disappears and only the painting remains. The world then looks at the painting and believes it has seen a Papuan.*

The Dismembered Being

22 *Seen through all these layers, the creature named Papuan is first dismembered. His being is cut into pieces, and the pieces are distributed. His sacred objects and the bones of his dead go to museums in Europe. His stories go into the notebooks of anthropologists. His soul goes to the mission. His labour goes to the plantation and the mine. His land goes to the concession map. His image goes to the postcard.*

23 *Then he is dislocated. Torn from his own centre, he is moved to the edge of someone else's world: the outer island, the remote interior, the last frontier, the eastern margin of a nation whose capital lies thousands of kilometres away.*

24 *Then he is disconnected, and this wound cuts furthest. He is cut off even from the given cage, the first world of land, kin, ancestors, and cosmos that every people before him could at least call their own. The mountain is still there, but it now belongs to a company. The river is still there, but it now runs grey with tailings. The ancestors are still there, but he has been taught to call them demons.*

25 *European existentialism assumed that a human being, however anxious, still stood on his own ground. The Papuan has been lifted off his ground and then asked to contemplate existence in mid-air.*

The Occupied Workshop

26 *After the dismemberment, the task seems plain. The Papuan must gather his pieces and make himself whole again: not as the old being, which cannot simply be restored, and not as the new being prepared for him by others, but as a being of his own making.*

27 *Yet every tool he needs for this work has been taken. His power is occupied. His will is supervised. His language is replaced in the classroom. His grammar is corrected by the grammar of the state. His mind is trained in another's curriculum. His dreams are furnished with another's images. His desires are manufactured in another's markets.*

28 *His vision is censored. His imagination is shaped before it can form. His history is rewritten as the history of his integration. His future is planned in ministries where he holds no seat. His memory is filed under myth. Even the framework he would use to relocate himself in his own time and space has been occupied, deleted, prohibited, or corrupted.*

29 *Imagine a man ordered to rebuild his house, whose timber has been confiscated, whose tools have been locked away, whose plans have been burned, and whose builders have been told that building is a crime. Then imagine him blamed for living without a roof.*

30 *Such is the Papuan task of self-remaking. The Papuan lacks neither intelligence nor courage. What he lacks is a workshop of his own.*

A Civilisational Project

31 *And so the Papuan being becomes a project. He did not design this project; he is its raw material: something to be studied, converted, developed, integrated, pacified, empowered, educated, and managed.*

32 *He appears in budgets, five-year plans, special autonomy laws, investment forums, and conference papers. He is the target population, the beneficiary, the stakeholder, the vulnerable group. Each of these words makes him the object of someone else's verbs.*

33 *A project has architects, contractors, supervisors, and a completion date. The Papuan must ask what the completion date of his project is, and what the finished building is supposed to look like.*

34 *When the architects describe the finished project, they speak of a Papua with roads, airports, plantations, cities, and markets. They rarely speak of a Papua with Papuans in it.*

The Podium

35 *Picture a field. In the middle of the field stands a podium. Around the field, at a respectful distance, stand soldiers with guns.*

36 *A Papuan man is led to the podium. He has been dressed for the occasion: a bird-of-paradise crown on his head, a batik shirt on his body, a ribbon across his chest, perhaps a medal. He is decorated as the model citizen, the optimistic civilised primitive, the success story, the living proof that the project works.*

37 *Before him lie the prepared words: development, peace, progress, unity, prosperity, investment, welfare, the future. Behind him hang the banners of utopia: money, wealth, roads, scholarships, positions, a seat in the new order.*

38 *Cameras record the event. Officials applaud. The soldiers do not move. Nobody needs to point a gun at him. The guns are there so that everyone understands the speech is free.*

39 *Papua has stood on this podium before. In 1969, barely more than a thousand hand-picked representatives were assembled under military supervision and asked to speak for an entire people. The world called it the Act of Free Choice. The podium has been rebuilt many times since, and each time a new Papuan is invited to stand on it.*

40 *The man on the podium believes he is speaking about the future. He believes he has been honoured, chosen, and raised up. He believes he is making a choice.*

The Funeral Speech

41 *What he does not realise is that he has been dressed for a funeral and permitted to deliver the eulogy.*

42 *The funeral is not his own. He will be well fed, well paid, and well protected. The funeral is for his people, his nation, his history, his languages, his forests, his future, and his children.*

43 *Through his mouth, the land is signed away. From his hand, the forest is licensed. By his vote, the law is passed. With his smile, the occupation is photographed as partnership. Papuan existence is deleted, executed, and buried through him, from him, by him, and with him, and the burial carries his signature.*

44 *Psycho-Cosmocide is cruel in a particular way. It has no need to silence the Papuan. It needs him to speak, provided he speaks the words it has written for him.*

45 *He cannot see it, because the decorations dazzle. He cannot hear it, because the applause is loud. He cannot feel it, because the funeral has been arranged to feel like a celebration.*

46 *Papuan existentialism begins at the moment the man on the podium looks down at his notes and reads them for what they are.*

The Arithmetic of Disappearance

47 Papuan existentialism then asks the question that the podium was built to prevent: if the Papuan people remain inside Indonesia, what will become of the people called Papuan in fifty years, in a hundred years, in two hundred years?

48 Begin with what has already happened. When Indonesian rule began, Papuans were the overwhelming majority in their own land. By the early twenty-first century, according to some scholarly estimates, they had fallen to roughly half of the population, and to a minority in many of the towns where power, money, and administration gather.

49 Extend the line. In fifty years, will Papuans still be the majority anywhere except the most remote highlands? In a hundred years, will Papuan languages still be heard in the market, the classroom, and the parliament, or only in archived recordings? In two hundred years, will there be Papuans, or only Papuan names on provinces, regencies, football clubs, and tourist brochures, carried by people who are not Papuan?

50 Ask the same of the land. In fifty years, how much forest will still stand? How many mountains will still be mountains? How many clans will still hold the ground in which their ancestors are buried? In two hundred years, will Papuan soil still remember Papuan feet?

51 These questions belong to arithmetic rather than prophecy, and arithmetic is deaf to slogans. A people who are shrinking in proportion, losing their land, abandoning their languages, and learning to despise their own faces do not need to be massacred to disappear. Time is enough.

52 History is full of peoples whose names outlived them. Their names became rivers, provinces, and museum labels. Papuan existentialism refuses to let the word Papua become that kind of name.

Choice Under Guard

53 Sartre said that human beings are condemned to be free. The Papuan is condemned to choose inside a cage designed so that every available choice leads towards his own erasure.

54 He may choose development and lose his land to it. He may choose silence and lose his voice to it. He may choose exile and lose his home to it. He may choose resistance and be named a criminal, a separatist, a terrorist. The menu has been written by the kitchen that is cooking him.

55 Here existence takes its harshest form: the Papuan is required to choose, while someone else has already fixed the meaning of every choice.

56 Yet even here, one freedom has not been confiscated: the freedom to see. Before the Papuan can choose differently, he must see that someone else wrote the menu. Seeing is the first free act, and every other freedom grows from it.

57 Sartre called it bad faith when a person lies to himself about his own freedom. Papuan bad faith is a double lie: telling oneself that the podium is an honour, and telling oneself that there is no choice but to stand on it.

What Must Be Decided Now

58 Papuan existentialism therefore ends in a demand, and the demand falls on every Papuan, not only on leaders. The questions of fifty, one hundred, and two hundred years cannot be answered in fifty, one hundred, or two hundred years. They can be answered only now.

59 Every Papuan must decide whether to read the speech written for him or to write his own. Whoever writes his own will be called ungrateful. Whoever reads the prepared one will be called a leader. Let him choose knowing this.

60 Every Papuan must decide what to do with the land. Land sold is not land lent. A clan that sells the ground of its ancestors for a car, a house in town, or a season of money has sold its grandchildren's address on this planet.

61 Every Papuan must decide in what language his children will dream. A people who lose their language lose more than words. They lose the map by which their world was known.

62 Every Papuan must decide what to remember. Memory is the first territory to be occupied and the last to be surrendered. Write down the names of the dead. Record the elders. Keep the genealogies, the songs, the place names, and the stories of how each clan came to stand where it stands.

63 Every Papuan must decide whom to trust: not those who arrive with gifts and leave with signatures, not those who speak of unity and act to fill their own pockets, and not those, Papuan or otherwise, who occupy the podium and call it a stage.

64 Every Papuan must decide whether the divisions between clans, regions, churches, and factions matter more than the survival of the whole. A divided people is easily guarded. A united people is far harder to hold.

65 Every Papuan must decide what to demand of those who claim to lead. Ask every Tokoh, every official, and every leader of the movement the same question: where does this decision leave Papuans in two hundred years? A leader who cannot answer has not earned the right to speak for the people.

66 Every Papuan must decide that the question of the Papuan future belongs to Papuans: to be asked openly, debated freely, and answered by the people themselves, not by a thousand chosen voices under guard.

67 And every Papuan must decide how he will live today, in his house, his village, his classroom, his church, and his office, so that his daily life stops rehearsing the funeral and begins rehearsing survival.

The Question

68 For decades, questions put to Papuans have been: Are you loyal? Are you grateful? Are you ready to be developed?

69 Papuan existentialism turns the questioning around and puts it to the Papuan himself:

When my grandchildren's grandchildren stand on this land, will they still be Papuan, and will the land still be theirs?

70 Every choice must be measured against that question. Every decision must answer to it: every speech, every signature, every sale, and every silence.

The Awakening

71 The man on the podium can still step down. The notes can still be torn up. The microphone can still carry a different speech.

72 To wake up is to see the field, the soldiers, the decorations, and the script, and to recognise that the funeral has not yet ended. The coffin is still open. The people inside it are still breathing.

73 This awakening is the beginning of Wonesis: the return from the constructed cage to the given world, to the land, the water, the kin, the ancestors, and the cosmos that made the Papuan before any civilisation named him.

74 The Papuan does not need to be redeemed by civilisation, developed by the state, or saved by the mission. He needs to wake up, gather his pieces, and decide.

75 Papuan existentialism asks only this of every Papuan, and it asks it now: see clearly, choose consciously, decide together, and act while the name Papua still belongs to a living people.

The views, words, and ideas expressed in this manifesto are personal, reflective, and diagnostic rather than declarations of settled truth. They offer a reading of the human condition through the Psycho-Cosmocide lens, intended to open questions rather than to close them.

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