

My Life As A Dog, directed by Lasse Hallstrom, 1987, Swedish w/ English subtitles, 101 minutes.

Ingemar's life is presented as increasingly under the shadow of his mother's illness. In literature and film, we all know the outlines of this type of story and the typical moral of how individual's react in a (what is to us a) positive or negative way. In this film, a Nietzschean existentialist message can be appreciated in the last few scenes. An emotional turn is made by Ingemar in the glassworks, which occurs right after the dramatic climax of him locking himself in his the summer house, in the dead of winter, and in the morning crying with guilt over whether he is responsible for his mother's illness. This turn is a simple smile that comes over him as he looks on with his friend Saga as they survey the scene of townspeople warming up Fransson after his impromptu morning swim. It is not a coincidence that this emotional turn is a result of the actions of Fransson, whose constant roofing is a symbol of Nietzsche's eternal recurrence, see aphorism 341. **What is the message of this symbol for Ingemar in this film?** Make sure that you explain how this message is not the typical positive moral message that we all have seen portrayed in films. (Hint: once you understand this, this same message is portrayed in the final scene of the film where Ingemar and a couple of his friends, taking a ride in a homemade 'rocket ship' crash in a mud/animal waste pond, but emerge triumphant.)

Extra Credit Question: After Sartre states the view of existential psychoanalysis on the "real goal" of peoples' pursuits, he writes, "... to the extent that this attempt still shares in the spirit of seriousness ... they are condemned to despair: for they discover at the same time that all human activities are equivalent (for they tend to sacrifice man in order that the self-cause may arise) and they are all doomed to failure. Thus it amounts to the same thing whether one gets drunk alone or is the leader of nations." (p. 361) In light of this, please characterize Meursault in Camus' The Stranger in this "negative" light. In what immediately follows the above quote, Sartre spells out a "positive" approach involving anguish, instead of despair. What does Meursault lack from the point of view of the "positive" approach? I think it would also be instructive to compare Meursault with the character of Michel Poiccard in Breathless. What are their similarities and differences?