

Existentialism at 4.5

Maya's puppy came to school with her and was playing with my dog. My dog was growling and running back and forth, and Maya got worried about her puppy. "Lyla is only pretending to growl," I explained to her. "They are playing." A little while later, the dogs ran past and Maya said, "I think Lyla and Banjo are only pretending to be alive." Her mother said Maya had said that yesterday about her brother, "I think Dylan is only pretending to be alive." What does this mean? What is Maya telling us about what she knows, thinks, feels and questions? What language is she speaking? Her questions make me think about philosophy. When Nietzsche wrote about existentialist philosophy, they became highly influential and certainly respected even if we do not ascribe to existentialist philosophy ourselves. Could it be that existentialist thought originates in these ponderings of a four-year-old? Do we fail to take the statements seriously because they are spoken by someone so young and so inexperienced with oral and written language?