

THE RISE AND FALL OF EXISTENTIALISM: A STUDY  
OF A SOCIAL MOVEMENT

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.  
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LeROY W. ROSS

1969

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## ABSTRACT

### THE RISE AND FALL OF EXISTENTIALISM: A STUDY OF A SOCIAL MOVEMENT

by LeRoy W. Ross

The approach in this research has been guided by the perspective of the sociology of knowledge and emphasizes historical and structural analysis. The study examines the social and intellectual settings which together found pronounced expression in France during the 1940's. Social aspects are traced from the period of the French Revolution through to the Fifth Republic. Intellectual aspects are considered from the philosophical roots of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, the phenomenology and philosophies of Husserl, Sartre, Camus, and others. The aim of this study is to show that Existentialism was a result of conducive social conditions which produced diverse and intense strains and that this social movement constituted an indictment, commentary, and resolution of these social strains, and resolved the problem of otherwise meaningless experiences for members of that social movement.



THE RISE AND FALL OF  
EXISTENTIALISM: A STUDY  
OF A SOCIAL MOVEMENT

By

LeRoy W. Ross

A THESIS

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merit this study may have is largely due to their seminal thinking; any errors in misrepresentation, misinterpretation, faulty logic, weak expression, and the like is due, of course, to my own failing. Finally, I should like to thank Carol Ross, maritally associated with this writer, for services performed well beyond what reason would permit. She has not only typed this work several times, but has done so while a student herself. She has been a source of steady encouragement, a springboard for clarity of expression and meaning, and enormously helpful in many, many ways throughout this study.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE SOCIAL SETTING

#### Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to examine the French "Social Setting" by tracing its historical and structural factors, in contrast to an analysis of the intellectual setting, which is to be the concern for the following chapter; this will enable us to structurally account for the rise of existentialism as a social movement in France during the "Forties" and especially in the post-liberation-war period. We will want to consider the socio-historical factors in so far as they are significant and conducive to the emergence of existentialism. It is in this connection that existential thought will be viewed as a reflection of these strained social conditions, which, in turn, provided a remedy that served to overcome the social structural strains and personal discontinuities.

If then, it is posited that existentialism reflects the social conditions that affected man and his means of social interaction and relations, we need to specify the reference point that is germane to our study. Thus, relevant questions to be asked are: one, which men are we talking about; and two, what temporal, physical, and spacial factors are we considering. In response to the first



question, it is important to especially stress that we will be considering French existentialism and its impact on the French people (though existentialism certainly was not limited to them only, for it was also a dynamic phenomenon in both Germany and Italy). In answer to the second question raised, our particular concern focuses upon various historical forces, conditions, and events which served as a back-drop to the all-too-real structural manifestations of the French defeat by the Germans in 1940, of the French submission and subjugation during the German Occupation, and of the internal instability, failure, and/or loss of France's institutionalized mechanisms that were essential for its very survival and functional continuation.

In as much as the fragmented social setting is considered to be of vital importance in understanding why existentialism emerged as a social movement, let us very briefly indicate some of the themes expressed within existentialism. By so doing, we will be better able to see why existentialism became significant in its message and in its attempt to provide meaning for the lives of those who had lost so much: financially, socially, politically, psychologically, aesthetically, and morally. Indeed, existentialism, as a philosophical orientation, provided a basis for an evaluation and explanation of the past history of events and actions, gave meaning

and assessment in the immediate "normless" present, and served as a means of experiencing the future with purpose, utility, and relevance. (Our entire study is to be focused on substantiating and providing evidence to validate this conjecture.)

What, then, are the themes of existentialism?

Basically, they are negative and nihilistic. We get, for instance, a fairly accurate notion of its themes expressed in this note of despair (which in itself is a theme): to exist is to suffer, to be in agony, and to die; to survive is to find meaning in suffering, in agony, and in death. The conditions of life are viewed as being more than a mere predicament; they are absurd in so far as man has continually machinated life situations and forfeited his real being and purpose. Instead of seeking his self-realization, man has rejected and deceived himself; he has not challenged his "world-situation" created by others; and he has usurped his relations with others, and the result is often one of strain, tension, anxiety, and alienation. By noting these existential themes at this point, then, we will be able to view them as "threads" in our examination of the social setting.

Another aim of this chapter is to identify the relevant stages in the development of the French social setting. To be sure, these stages are not clear-cut or contained in precise, delineated periods; rather, they pulsate, extend, and overlap one another. Our first concern will be to

identify and discuss some of the remnant strains from the French Revolution of 1789. It will become apparent that these strains had a very definite impact on the forthcoming French social structure that extended right up to (and beyond) France's conflict with Germany in 1940. Although we will not examine this aspect in great detail, it will be profitable to survey these social conditions and events that provided the structural basis for later French undertakings.

Following the above, we will extensively examine the social conditions that resulted from France's defeat and the consequent period of Occupation in relation to their impact on the French social structure. Here, we will analyze the objective atomization of relations on various levels of her society. Finally, we will examine the results of these impairments or discontinuities endemic to the social structure: alienation.

We must continually bear in mind that it is Europe in general and France in particular (in our concern) that has been victimized and subjected to devastating crises, stresses, and strains. Also, it is important to note that the French writers (more specifically, writers such as Sartre and Camus) did not create these strains, tensions, and crises in their social milieu (it has often been noted that those who explore and assess a phenomenon are frequently held accountable for its

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manifestation); rather, they gave expression to them by focusing on and decrying the inadequacy, unresponsiveness, and ineffectiveness of the social forces that produced these discontinuities. Moreover, their expression was to include the way out of this perceived senseless maze.

### The incomplete social and political revolutions

Our concern now is to embark on a discussion of the remnant strains from the French Revolution which became identified and intensified within social and political cleavages. The impact of these cleavages certainly are of importance in France's attempt to maintain herself as a sovereign nation. The point is, of course, that though all nations (or societies, or groups) must, by necessity, cope with the problems of goal attainment, certain task performances, adaptation, leadership, integration and cohesion, and pattern maintenance, France was to bear the scars of these cleavages marked and embedded, in part, from the incompleteness of the political and social revolution of 1789.

A glimpse at the impact that these cleavages had on the French people can be noticed in Shirers typically perceptive account. He notes that:

. . . the story of France's fall from greatness could not be told merely in terms of documented events and statistics or by recounting the failings of the miserable individuals who for brief intervals seemed to hold the destiny of the nation in their hands. These facts were of

extreme importance, it is true . . . . But there were in this French tragedy, I saw, many imponderables . . . . For in the last analysis, it seems, to me, the sickness of our present Western Civilization infected the French more deeply than most of the other democratic people of the Occident, weakening their spirit and their morale and their morals so that in the end the virtues which had made them great were no longer strong enough to enable them to withstand the evil pressures which confronted them in the turbulent and corrupt time between the world wars.

That summer of 1940, with France under the heel of the barbarian Nazi, when conservative middle-class Frenchmen sighed and said to me: "Well, better Hitler than Blum!" (Blum, a socialist, a patriot, and a Jew, had been premier of the Popular Front government), and when the Communists, who had captured the fanatical allegiance of the majority of the organized workers, justified to me their opposition to defending France against the Nazi invasion (because that was what Moscow had ordered in line with Stalin's pact of August 1939 with Hitler), I began to comprehend the depths of confusion and treachery to which the French, as a people, had fallen.<sup>1</sup>

How, then, did France go from her favorable and prestigious position in the world in-between the two great world wars to the degrading state depicted above? In her sublime state, France seemed to be supreme for she had the most powerful army; her navy was second only to Great Britain; she possessed the finest balanced economy of any nation in Europe; her French diplomacy was energetic and farsighted; and she possessed, in

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<sup>1</sup>William L. Shirer, Midcentury Journey: The Western World through its Years of Conflict (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1952), pp. 62-63.

Paris, the intellectual and art center of Europe.<sup>1</sup> In what way and to what extent does the French Revolution of 1789 bear upon the denigrating and degrading state that France was in during her fall and defeat by Germany on that decisive day in June, 1940? Let us examine the nature of the social and political cleavages that partially stemmed from 1789. (Let us emphasize, however, that our concern is not in analyzing the causes, per se, of the French Revolution; rather, we are concerned with some of its consequences which later were to be mulled over and re-interpreted by "existential" thinkers.) As such, the Revolution was only one factor among many in which the message of existentialism reflected on the futility of man's endeavor, for man himself did not know precisely what he was or where he was going. (Indeed, this matter of the nature of man goes back at least to the time of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.) Consequently, his specific pursuit was embedded in ambiguity and vacillation, and in general, the drama of life was meaningless, uncertain, and guided by fate, not by rational thought or planned purpose.

The major political cleavage stemming from 1789 centers, in simple terms, on the ideological difference between those in favor of the monarchy and those in favor

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 64-65.

of the Republic. It is to be noted that the origin of this ideological cleavage was dynamically, not temporally, evidenced in their mutual distrust of each other; further, both were to challenge the validity and legitimacy of the other henceforward. Parenthetically, the monarchists, prior to the Revolution, appear to have gotten enmeshed and victimized in their own political inflexibility, unresponsiveness, and ineffectiveness. Tocqueville provides insight to this in his depiction of the changing state of public opinion within France prior to 1789. Further, he contended that the economists and physiocrats, acting as agitators:

conceived [of] all the social and administrative reforms effected by the Revolution before the idea of free institutions had once flashed upon their minds . . . . Their idea . . . was not to destroy but to convert the absolute monarchy. . . . About 1750 the nation at large cared no more for political liberty than the economists themselves. . . . People sought reforms, not rights.<sup>1</sup>

But the consequences of the monarchical political weakness and ineptitude are reflected in the following appraisal:

Only after these demands for reform were thwarted by governmental indifference, monarchical ineffec-

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<sup>1</sup>Alexis de Tocqueville, The Old Regime and the French Revolution, trans. John Bonner (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1856), pp. 194, 196-97, 200, as cited in Neil J. Smelser, Theory of Collective Behavior (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), p. 331.



tiveness, and the destruction of the Parliaments, did grievances begin to be defined in terms of the values--liberty, the natural state of man, etc.--which later became the basis for the French Revolution.<sup>1</sup>

The basis of the political and social cleavage, then, was not that the French Revolution became a reality; rather, the difficult and far-reaching consequences focus on an unfinished and incomplete revolution. Consequently the old order of monarchicism was never really derailed or recruited into the Republican ideology, and thereby survived to continually oppose and counterattack the republican's position, basis of legitimacy, and aims. Again, Shirer relates in descriptive fashion:

[The monarchists] survived to combat the republican idea right up to Hitler's entry into Paris, which it welcomed and which brought the Third Republic to an end.

For a hundred and fifty years two Frances which lost no love on each other . . . lived side by side. They never fused. Under the leadership, in the last century, of kings, the church, Napoleon III, and even of a general or two on horseback, the powerful minority which had not been destroyed in the blood bath of the 1789 Revolution constantly opposed the conception of the Republic, taking a strong stand against parliamentary democracy, the separation of church and state, and social and economic reforms.<sup>2</sup>

The issue that is important here is that, in addition to the perennial conflicting ideologies of the monarchy and of the Republic, the political parties

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<sup>1</sup>Smelser, op. cit., pp. 331-32.

<sup>2</sup>Shirer, op. cit., pp. 66-67.

were organized within an underpinning ideological belief in which the political "in-group" attempted to inaugurate into manifest social action the "perceived" logical implications of the ideology. Consequently, political instability ensued primarily because of: (1) the necessity of forming coalitions among the smaller "sub-parties" within the respective major political ideology, and (2) the temporal change of office holding between the major ideologies being represented in office. The impact of the French political instability is further attested to by G.D.H. Cole's insightful comparison between the French and Russian revolutions:

The instability . . . rests on the fact that, even now [1956], France has not completely absorbed the lessons of its great Revolution of 1789. Whereas in Russia, within a year of the Revolution of 1917, the old ruling classes, including the old bourgeoisie, had completely vanished as a social and political force, in France these have been ever since 1789 active reactionary elements within the society, not at most times very numerous, but always influential enough to make a great noise and often able to cause dangerous disturbances as in the Dreyfus Case and again in the crises of 1934. . . . [which foretold] the beginning of Vichyism and the moral collapse of 1940.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, following the Revolution of 1789 and its aftermath of mass disillusionment and weakened state

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<sup>1</sup>Alexander Werth, France: 1940-1955 (London: Robert Hale LTD, 1956), p. xiv.

at the close of Napoleon's reign, the aristocracy, royalists, and monarchical adherents rejoiced in the triumph over the "revolutionaries" and in the ascendancy of Louis XVIII to the throne. Once again, social order and prosperity at home and peace in foreign relations were expected to prevail. However, Charles X, Louis XVIII's successor, was evicted by the 1830 revolution, and this time it was Louis-Philippe, the "Citizen King," who was expected to bring these goals to fruition. Nevertheless, his reign was to last only until the formation of the Second Republic in the revolution of 1848 with Louis Napoleon Bonaparte being inaugurated as President. The latter, in turn, destroyed the weak constitution within three years and established himself as dictator (and later as emperor).<sup>1</sup>

Finally, it was the Third Republic to succeed the "Second Republic" after the former had been crushed by the war with Germany in 1870-71. It was to take Léon Gambetta almost nine years to secure the actual control of the Republic. Even then, the Republic was not safe, secure, or stable. Harrison depicts the internal strife and struggle within France in the following account:

Powerful groups were opposed to it. The chief of these were the various factions of monarchists (Bourbons, Orléanists, and Bonapartists), the professional military, the Roman Catholic hierarchy, and large numbers of peasants who

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<sup>1</sup>John B. Harrison and Richard E. Sullivan, A Short History of Western Civilization (New York: Knopf, 1964), pp. 521-23.

were strongly influenced by the clergy.<sup>1</sup>

If one examines the peculiar birth of the Third Republic, some clue is given for their insecure political state, of which no small part was played by the freshly experienced frustration and exhaustion caused by their loss to the Germans. Shirer, for instance, proposes that the Third Republic was "ill-fated" from its inception by noting that:

It had a freak birth. Its constitution was actually devised for a monarchy. Two-thirds of the members of the National Assembly, all freely elected, were monarchists. And it was the Assembly which was to choose the new form of government. After a bitter four-year struggle in which the agreed candidate for the throne, the Count de Chambord, unexpectedly weakened the monarchist cause by insisting on the restoration of the fleurs-de-lis flag on the old regime, the Assembly, in 1875, decided on a republic by a majority of one vote, 353 to 352. . . .

But that was not the only drawback. The birth of the Third Republic left France with its old divisions. On the one side was the democratic, republican Left, drawing its spiritual support from the mystique of the 1789 Revolution, and its popular support from the little tradesman, the peasants, and the workers. On the other side was the Authoritarian Right which looked backward with nostalgia to the ancient regime, still yearned for a monarchy, and drew its strength from the upper classes, the Church, the Army, big business, and high finance. Both sides were evenly matched at the polls and both were uncompromising.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 585.

<sup>2</sup>Shirer, op. cit., pp. 67-68.

And further on, he notes the painful results that followed the precarious and unstable political order:

It was in this situation which led to the instability of the Third Republic, the constant shifting from Left to Right and back to Left . . . and brought about the numerous coalitions and blocs, the frequent fall of cabinets, and a political atmosphere charged with uncertainty that foreign observers came to refer to the Republican regime as the "fickle" Third Republic. From its birth in 1789 until 1920, the Republic had fifty-nine different ministries, and after the First World War the changes came even more rapidly --from 1920 to 1939 there were forty-one French cabinets. At more than one moment of international crises, such as in March 1938, when Hitler annexed Austria, France was temporarily without any government at all.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the revolution, that resulted in the emergence of the Third Republic, did not succeed in its attempts to solve the political problem in that it failed to establish a stable and effective type of leadership, to attain a functional degree of integration and cohesion, or to maintain its social order. In addition, we have already noted that the Revolution of 1789 failed to solve the social problem.<sup>2</sup> While there are other relevant failures that weakened France and eventually contributed to her fall to the Germans in 1940, one can state with some degree of confidence (or justification) that the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 68; italics added.

<sup>2</sup>R. Nisbet offers additional insight into these sociocultural changes by relating and interpenetrating the effects of the Revolution of 1789 and the Industrial Revolution that undermined, shook, or toppled "institutions [of the social order] which had endured for centuries--even millenia--and with them, systems of

failures endemic to the above incomplete revolutions might be interpreted to be the failure of man himself in his inconsistency and vulnerability in seeking his own vested interests--e.g., the cleavage between the monarchists and the republicans.

It is no wonder, then, that there was no consistent definition of what constituted a social problem or the best method of governing. In short, there were (and remain as well) potent diverse conceptions of what is social justice and social progress and of the best means of implementing them or their referents into actual social situations. (In this connection, one could ask also the perennially simple, though antinomically complex, questions: What is man? Where is he going? How will he get there, if at all? Will he prevail?)

These are some of the crucial issues that are to be raised by existentialists in their attempt to bridge the bifurcation of mind from life and the worthwhile from the inconsequential. While we are reserving an extended treatment of these and other relevant factors for the next chapter, we can already note at this point the sense of futility and absurdity of life-situations manifested in the numerous

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authority, status, belief, and community . . . measured in terms not only of human effort, authority, and community, but also in terms of human values and aspirations." *Italics mine*; also, I have made the same into a declarative phrase from Nisbet's original interrogative form. Source is from Nisbet's insightful and synthesizing treatise, Emile Durkheim with Selected Essays (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1965), p. 19.

forms of government that had been tried, without lasting success, in France from the Revolution of 1789 to 1939.

### The incomplete industrial revolution

Another failure that seems to be relevant to France's weakness and eventual demise in the tragic year of 1940 is the incompleteness of the industrial revolution. While it may be argued that the incompleteness of the socio-political (Revolution of 1789), political (Revolution of 1870), and industrial revolutions is most generally, if not always, a matter of degree in so far that any nation can be characterized as being viable, progressive, and enterprising in overcoming their problems germane in time and space, yet, the disheartening realization is that the French industrial revolution, by remaining uncompleted, failed to solve France's economic problems or meet the technological demands required for self-preservation. By saying this we are not positing any cause and effect relationship between the incompleteness of the industrial revolution (or any of the above or forthcoming factors as well) and France's defeat by Germany in 1940. At the same time, certain precedents, as predispositioning factors, and prolegomenous self-interests can be related. But, in so doing let us not become too bogged-down with any particular precedent or predecessor; our focus must remain on those failures experienced by France which provided the

basis for re-evaluation by the existential writers that articulated the re-evaluation. For now, then, we focus on France's inability to solve the economic problem because of her incomplete industrial revolution, which, in turn, contributed to her weakened position as a major European power.

One of the factors that seemed to play a part in this failure is in the incipient role of the bourgeoisie and the peasantry, who, one will recall, constituted a vital element of the Revolution of 1789. From the beginning they inveighed against and hindered the coming of the machine age that made men the slaves of machines and profits. As we shall see, their suspicion and hostility toward the "grip of the machine" was "perceived" as minacious and crippling to their interests.

Their outlook and seeming resultant contribution to France's failure to industrialize to the extent of the Germans, British, and Americans is evidenced by Shirer's comment:

They (businessmen, tradesmen, and peasantry) contrived not only to deprive industry of the capital it needed to keep pace with that of other Western countries but to keep labor in such a state of wretched poverty that it constantly rebelled against its lot. Instead of investing their savings in new business enterprises or at least putting them in the banks, where they could be siphoned off for investment, the tradesmen and the farmers preferred to keep their surplus cash in stockings under the mattress. Even in our own times, between the wars, the French put into industry only about a quarter of the capital the British put into theirs.



Today in all of France there are only 55,000 machine tools compared to 2,000,000 in Great Britain. Horsepower of machinery per head in France is a third of Britain's, a fifth of ours.

Smallness and even pettiness of outlook prevailed in France. It was the paradise of the small merchant, the small manufacturer, the small farmer. They dominated French economics as they did politics. They instinctively recoiled from the technique of mass production which was being so successfully developed in the United States, in Great Britain, in Germany, and often used their power to hamper the growth of big business.<sup>1</sup>

In this respect, without itemizing all of the significant influences, C. J. H. Hayes concurs, in general, with the above citation by stating that:

Generally speaking, nevertheless [i.e., in spite of cognizant gains], mechanized industry in France was "infant industry," and seemingly unable to compete on equal terms with the lusty machine industry of Britain (of Belgium), many French industrialists and French bankers . . . arrayed themselves against any change in the existing protectionist system [i.e., non-intervention by the state or by the trade unions].<sup>2</sup>

The reasons for this state of "infant industry" in France indicated above are varied, complex, and their full significance and implications are well beyond the scope of our inquiry. However, no small import lies within the Weltanschauung of the French people themselves. For them, the individual skill of the craftsman, the quality rather than quantity of the product, and the stress on the

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<sup>1</sup>Shirer, op. cit., pp. 74-75.

<sup>2</sup>C. J. H. Hayes, Modern Europe to 1870 (New York: Macmillan Company, 1953), p. 655.

individualistic, imaginative, and artistic roots were greatly to be favored over the patterns of industrial conformity and regimentation. In short, the French epitomize what may be said to be a moral reaction against all of the faults and failures of modern bureaucracy in industrial life. Shirer relates some of the consequences that followed from this orientation to life:

The modern corporation which enabled industry to expand at a breathless pace in Britain and America, was too cold and impersonal to suit a Frenchman. At the end of 1939 there were only 43,000 corporations in all of France compared to a half million in America.

The closely knit family was the proper unit to conduct a business enterprise . . . [even] if it was woefully inefficient and made but a modest profit. It gave honor and reputation to the family and enabled its members to live decently well, free from the fears, the frenzies, the worries, the instabilities of the go-getters in the teeming business world of more "advanced" lands . . . . Thus, it was that even as late as 1931, 64 per cent of the registered industrial establishments in France had no paid employees at all. Service and labor were supplied exclusively by the owner and the members of the family. A further 34 per cent of French "industries" had less than ten paid employees each. Exactly 98 per cent of the manufacturing concerns, then, were distinctly small businesses. The fearful wear and tear of modern industrial life on the human being was thus spared most Frenchmen. But the cost to the nation of its failure to industrialize sufficiently was great. Wealth increased less in France than in other countries struggling to maintain or achieve a major place in the sun. And until it was too late, the French did not fully realize that in our time military power was coming to be based largely on industrial strength. In the fall of 1938 just a year before Hitler launched his war, French

production was 25 per cent below that of 1930;  
German production was 30 per cent above.<sup>1</sup>

We could, of course, point out similar problems, inadequacies, discontinuities, and misalignments encountered--positively and negatively it may be argued--in the development of the industrial giants, referred to above as the "advanced" lands. Even though France's incomplete industrial revolution was evidenced negatively to a great degree--in her inability to solve her economic problem--it is essential to keep in perspective that this failure contributed, in part, to her weakened position as a major power and to her near-annihilation in the Second World War. Though we will give limited attention later on to the ineffective French military, we can, at this point, recognize how significant France's failure to industrialize adequately in order to meet the demands and needs of a war was.

The French social structure  
and conditions prior to and  
during the Second World War

In our discussion to this point we have attempted to indicate that the incompleteness of the social and political revolution of 1789, the political revolution that resulted in the formation and establishment of the Third Republic, and the lack of an extended industrial revolution

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<sup>1</sup>Shirer, op. cit., pp. 75-76; italics added.

all contributed to France's weakened state as a major power. These failures, in turn, had far-reaching consequences when she was to encounter Germany for the second time within a twenty-five-year period. We have also stressed the ideological bi-polarization that separated the two Frances. Indeed, this cleavage or fissure will be interjected repeatedly for consideration in our study. From our above discussion of this fissure considered from the Revolution of 1789, for instance, we can extrapolate its import into the Stravinsky episode,<sup>1</sup> the ouster of Blum and the Popular Front,<sup>2</sup> the "traitorous" armistice of 1940 led by Laval and Pétain,<sup>3</sup> and (some would forcefully argue) in the beckoning call for De Gaulle's authoritarian type of leadership.<sup>4</sup> In short, the reactionary forces are neither defunct nor without influence even today.

These failures, encapsulated in France's historical forces and evidenced in certain events and situations at particular times, provide for only a partial understanding of the resultant strains, anxieties, and uncertainties

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 84-90.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 91-94.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 94-99.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 100-109, especially pp. 108-109; see also: E.M. Earle (ed.), Modern France (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1951), p. 253; L. Lania, The Nine Lives of Europe (New York, 1950), p. 12.



that became so "unmeaningfully real" with France's collapse in 1940. However one may attempt to categorize or taxonomize the "real" or "alleged" causes for France's collapse, the heart of the matter is--at least from our perspective and for our purposes--that France did collapse and did become an occupied country in which the French people daily experienced various ambiguities, deprivations, normative disorganization or misalignment, and value dissonance or conflict as a result of this truncation from traditional and operative social institutions. Thus, the additional positing of other French failures stemming from her population decrease, the proclivity of her bourgeoisie and peasantry to avoid paying taxes, the deterioration of her military thought since World War I as well as the First World War itself, the "sell-out" of her mass media, her "treachery in high places," the myth of the Maginot line, and other factors<sup>1</sup> all add to the understanding of the eventual weakened state of France. Many of these factors will receive further attention, in so far as they are

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<sup>1</sup>Shirer, op. cit., pp. 69-111. For an inclusive and meaningful treatment, see, George Duby and Robert Mandrou, A History of French Civilization, trans. J.M. Atkinson (New York: Random House, 1964), chaps. xiii-xviii. For the more immediate noted causes prior to France's fall in 1940, see, H. M. Armstrong, Chronology of Failure: The Last Days of the French Republic (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1940), chap. x; Sisley Huddleston, The Tragic Years: 1937-1947 (New York: Devin-Adair Co., 1955), pp. 9-17. Additional discussion is provided by Gordon Waterfield, What Happened to France (London: John Murray, 1940), pp. 1-26.

relevant and assist in greater clarity and understanding, as we turn to an examination of the French social structure and its conduciveness to the emergence of existentialism as a social movement. That is, our effort now will be directed toward an examination of the general social conditions which resulted from France's military defeat and political collapse during May and June of 1940 and her subsequent Occupation by Germany (and Italy) and her early post-liberation period.

Thus, these general social conditions will provide the social setting in which the assessment of these events and situations become defined as manifest strains in concrete, recurrent social activities. It is hoped that through the achievement of the above delineated aims that we can better and more fully understand the social structure of France that evidenced these various kinds of social strains by which anxiety, uncertainty, and the like resulted in an alienated collectivity.

With the advantage of hindsight, we can contend that it is as if a whole French nation had hoped against hope that either Hitler and his mighty forces would not go to war against them or that their belief in the impregnability of the Maginot Line--i.e., the line from Basel, Switzerland to Montp dy and Longwy on the Belgium border--and of the Siegfried Line would result in a stalemate on the Western front. Both of these views had some merit, but unfortunately,

both were to be disastrous for France. In regard to the merit of the first hope and expression of "More bluff! There will be no war," Huddleston relates the Frenchmen's skeptic feeling vis-a-vis war in the following:

When Hitler slammed the door of the League of Nations and declared that, with the breakdown of the disarmament conference, Germany no longer considered herself bound by the terms of the Treaty of Versailles (of 1919), there had been no war. When, by a plebiscite in the Saar. . . that territory had returned to the Reich, there had been no war. When Hitler had occupied the Rhineland, and Premier Sarrant had trumpeted the brave word that Strasbourg would not be allowed to remain under the menace of the German cannon, there had been no war. When the Anschluss (annexation) with Austria, in defiance of treaty engagements, had been proclaimed, there had been no war. When the German population of Czechoslovakia had been ceded, with the territory that population occupied, to Germany, there had been no war. And when, a few months later, Prague itself was occupied and the conglomerate little state had ceased to exist, there had been no war. Why should there be was now [i.e., in early September, 1939]?<sup>1</sup>

The issue of Germany's perpetual, unmitigated, and bloodless encroachment and encasement of the European continent, then, did not appear as a legitimate probability to the French people. The basis of this wishful thinking was that "there will be another Munich," so why should they "die for Danzig" and invoke the wrath of Germany upon them. Huddleston expresses this in the following:

Since Munich, where peace had been promised in perpetuity, the tone had been pacific in France. The moral preparation had been

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<sup>1</sup>Huddleston, op. cit., pp. 1-2.



strangely neglected. War was unpopular in France.<sup>1</sup>

This desire for peace and its referents--i.e., they wanted neither to pay taxes for the preparation of war and its costly armaments nor time in the military service--was to demand a high price.

The justification of the Frenchmen's belief in the impenetrability of the Maginot Line and its inevitable resultant impasse between the French and the Germans focused primarily on the misconception of a German frontal attack. Pertinax relates in the following the three articles of faith endemic in the "Credo of the Maginot Line":

1. Men defending field works can hold out against an offensive, even if they are outnumbered three to one, or if the attack is carried out with bombers and tanks in massive quantities. . . .

2. The ground gained by an enemy attack will always be limited. . . . and,

3. . . . The Maginot Line has replaced the fieldworks of twenty-five years ago. These works were continuous; the Maginot Line is not only continuous, it has the strength far above anything we have ever seen. . . . The Maginot Line presents the Germans with this dilemma: either they attack at once and pay a fearful toll in lives--presenting us also with the opportunity for effective counterattack --or they temporize, and thus permit us to sap the fighting strength of the Wehrmacht by undermining the nation's economic structure through the blockade.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Pertinax, [André Géraud] The Gravediggers of France (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1944), pp. 11-14.

Further, France's one fear of attack on the Maginot Line turned out to be needless. This fear of an attack by parachutists whereby "a single courageous man could put the guns out of action by throwing incendiary grenades at the gun turrets" was counteracted by "putting up barbed wire on the hill above the fort."<sup>1</sup> It is well known today that the Germans attacked the weakest link in the chain (or Line which, in fact, did not exist beyond the French-Belgium border) with an unexpected flanking movement through the Low Countries by employing the tactics of: "a skillful use of air power, lightening movements of armored columns spearheaded by tanks, some 'fifth column' work, the use of parachute troops, and relentless pressure against a disorganized foe."<sup>2</sup> Thus, not only did Poland and Norway become engulfed in the German march toward European hegemony, but Luxemburg, Holland, and finally Belgium also fell victim to Germany's thrust of military aggrandisement. Once again Germany had added to her possessions those neutral countries she had promised friendly security, and in so doing, the road to Paris destined the latter's fall and collapse on June 14, 1940. The hope against hope that Germany was "bluffing" about going to war now resounded in an objective, unequivocal, and sealed fate.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 18-19.

<sup>2</sup>Hayes, op. cit., p. 642.

On the very same day that Paris fell, the hope against hope that was based on the impregnability of the Maginot Line on the German border gave way also to the reality of its partial penetration and eventual collapse. This German puncture and destruction of the Maginot Line understandably had grave consequences. Werth comments on some of these effects:

. . . the collapse was not only a military collapse, but as Marc Bloch wrote at the time, above all a moral collapse. All the myths broke down all at once: the Maginot Line myth, and the myth of the invincible French Army ("Finest army in the world," Weygand had said only a year or two before, and "Thank God for the French Army," Churchill had said, time and time again), and also the myth that this war would not cost many lives.<sup>1</sup>

The French government had already departed from its capitol three days before the actual fall of Paris (and of the Maginot Line) on the fourteenth of June. On that date, the French government would again move to Bordeaux.<sup>2</sup> Armstrong graphically depicts the heavy toll and blight that the shattering and demoralizing events of war had on the Parisians. He indicates that:

The Parisians stand firmly on the curb as Germans march through their boulevards for the first time since 1871. It is the ninth recorded invasion of Paris. Only a third of the citizens remain. Shops are closed and shuttered. The police and civil guards remain on duty but surrender their arms.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Werth, op. cit., p. xix.

<sup>2</sup>Armstrong, op. cit., pp. 83-98.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

Three days later on the seventeenth, Shirer notes that:

. . . as the German tanks rumbled past below my hotel window on their way south to crush the retreating remains of the French army . . . (I wrote in my diary): "What we're seeing here is the complete breakdown of French society--a collapse of the army, of government, of the morale of the people."<sup>1</sup>

The sixteenth was a decisive date in French history, for the French Cabinet voted in favor of an armistice and Reynaud resigned and was replaced by Pétain.<sup>2</sup> Although the final fighting would not formally cease until the twenty-fifth of June, many questions were raised in consequence to the government's request for an armistice. Waterfield poses the issue of the adequacy of France's leadership and their duplicitous acts in what follows:

The Government kept on repeating that they [France] would hold out to the last. "Paris," they said, "is in a state of defense," and a few days later they declared it an open town. "We will fight from North Africa if necessary," they proclaimed, and a short time afterwards they asked for the German terms. "We will not," they said, "accept a dishonorable Armistice." and they gave Hitler a blank check. They were not only unfit to lead, but they deceived the people. . . .<sup>3</sup>

And further on, he relates the "Final Deception" of the government by quoting Boudouin's (France's Foreign Minister) anti-English radio broadcast that reached

<sup>1</sup>Shirer, op. cit., p. 60.

<sup>2</sup>Armstrong, op. cit., pp. 102-106.

<sup>3</sup>Waterfield, op. cit., p. 106.

the feelings of "many" French people as a consequence of the conducive condition of the French people's intense state of despair and disillusionment:

The forty million Frenchmen found themselves before the Battle of France almost alone against the eighty million Germans to whom the menace of the Italian Army was added. . . . Insufficiently prepared for the totalitarian warfare, our friends and allies have not been able in time to give the help necessary to the advanced guard constituted by the French Army. That is why our Government, presided over by Marshall Pétain, had to ask the enemy what his conditions would be." But the conclusion of the speech came as a shock. "France is not ready," he said, "and it will never be ready, to accept dishonourable terms, nor to abandon the spiritual liberties of our people and betray the soul of France. The French people can save the spiritual values to which they are attached more to life itself, but if they are obliged to choose between existence and honour, their choice is made--and by their total sacrifice, it is the soul of France and all that it represents to the world that they will have saved.<sup>1</sup>

Waterfield then goes on to say that this deception:

was an attempt to dope the public by grandiloquent words, so that they would accept their betrayal. Pétain was more honest when he suggested in his broadcast that the sufferings of millions of refugees had influenced the Government to make its decision.<sup>2</sup>

Armstrong contends that the reason France failed was directly attributable to the French and English statesmen who lacked imagination and a strong will.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 142-43.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>3</sup>Armstrong, op. cit., pp. 188-95 and chap. x.

Other reasons that are usually given for France's defeat are: (1) the confusion caused by the refugees; (2) the "fear of a Communism uprising" ("Better the German occupation than a popular revolt"); (3) the pressure of those with large vested interests; (4) rigidity of French censorship;<sup>1</sup> and many others (some have been heretofore indicated either through discussion or by reference).

It is in The Gravediggers of France<sup>2</sup> that the most thorough indictment against Gamelin, Daladier, Reynaud, and Pétain is presented, but it is Shirer in the following commentary, who pithily indicts with intense exacerbation the treasonous Laval as the "chief architect of the surrender" and Pétain as its chief executor:

The perfidy of the traitors in Bordeaux, led by Laval and Pétain, lay in surrendering the nation's independence not because it had been forced upon them but because they saw in it a golden opportunity to destroy the democratic Republic, to reorganize the country on a Fascist foundation, and in so doing to enhance their own personal power and protection of their pocketbooks, and those of their reactionary and misguided friends. To achieve this they showed no qualms at betraying a nation's honor which through the centuries had stood so high. Nor did they shrink from the final degradation: of seeking the friendship of the enemy who had just attacked their native land and laid it waste--and even worse, of seeking the counsel and aid of that enemy in destroying the nation's honored institutions so that they could replace them with cheap imitations of the evil ones their barbarian conqueror had clamped for a brief moment on the pitiful "Master Race" beyond the Rhine.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Waterfield, op. cit., pp. 56, 104-107.

<sup>2</sup>Pertinax, loc. cit..

<sup>3</sup>Shirer, op. cit., p. 96.

This vitriolic condemnation of the leaders' conduct-- of their leadership and of their position of trust, and as caretakers of France's welfare and survival--prior to and during the war appears not to be unjustified; in fact, evidence of the above assessment is supported in general (though the treatment is less journalistically expressed) by numerous historians.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the account to this point is that Paris is no longer a city of defense, but on the contrary, it is occupied by the German forces; the English offer to France of an "Act of Union" is not accepted but rejected; the declaration that "We will fight from North Africa, if necessary," no longer instills hope and confidence in France's determination to "eternally thwart" the barbarian forces, but rather, the fate of France has been sealed by Pétain in his request for an armistice and in his subsequent broadcast-declaration that France no longer has

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<sup>1</sup>See, Harrison, op. cit., p. 674; Hayes, op. cit., pp. 644-45; Werth, op. cit., Parts I and II; Pertinax, loc. cit.; Waterfield, op. cit., especially, chaps. xii and xv-xvi. For a penetrating anthology of the original documents--i.e., speeches, communiques, aims, problems, and so forth--of the events and institutions during 1940-1944, see, France During the German Occupation, 1940-1944: A Collection of 292 Statements on the Government of Marichal Pétain and Pierre Laval, trans. Phillip Whitcomb (3 vols.; Stanford: The Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, n.d.). (The table of contents is given in Vol. I; the index is given in Vol. III.) However, for a favorable and sympathetic examination of Pétain and the justification of his leadership, see, Huddleston, op. cit., chaps. iii, iv, x, xv, xvi, and especially xxv. (Note, however, that Huddleston himself was a "Vichyite.")

the military power to continue the fight "against an enemy superior in arms and in numbers."<sup>1</sup>

If the military fate of France was sealed as a result of her defeat by Germany, her specific (and limited) role as a defeated and occupied nation was yet to be determined or assigned by Germany (and Italy). In the interim of four days (17-21 June) the issues posed centered on the uncertainty of whether France would be forced to accept the German Weltanschauung as their own. Specifically, the question asked was whether France would accept and abide by the German philosophy of ideas, morals, economy, culture, religion, and conception of the nature and duty of man while in a state of occupation.<sup>2</sup>

The preamble to the armistice at the time, seemed to be not overly suppressive. (The actual "hard but honorable" terms of the armistice, however, were not simultaneously made public.) Armstrong provides part of the preamble and the general objects of the German demands in the following:

"France, after heroic resistance, has been defeated and has collapsed after a unique series of battles. Germany does not, therefore, propose to give to the terms or negotiations for an armistice the character of insult to so brave an opponent." The preamble concludes by outlining the objects of the German demands: "(1) To prevent a resumption of hostilities. (2) To provide all necessary safeguards to Germany for the continuation of the war forced upon her by Great Britain. (3) To create the necessary conditions for a new peace, the basic elements of which shall be reparation of the injustice committed by force against the Reich"<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Armstrong, op. cit., p. 108.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 195.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 136.



Though the German-French armistice was eventually to become effective, concomitant with the Italian-French armistice, on June 25, last resortive appeals (on June 18 and 23, respectively) by de Gaulle from London that urged the French people never to cease in their resistance and to unite as one nation under the Provisional French National Committee were received with sympathy but to no avail.<sup>1</sup> Churchill also appealed to the French people to aid Great Britain in her task to defeat the enemy.<sup>2</sup> The French government reacted by intensifying the effort to arrest and court martial de Gaulle and (Pétain) responded to Churchill's address "with grief and amazement."

"Peace" succeeded war in France, then, by her acceptance of and submission to the armistice conditions imposed by both Germany and Italy. We learn, however, the cost of this "peace" from Hayes' account which provides the general terms of the double armistice in the summary that follows:

. . . France north of the Loire River [i.e., the Northern half of France] and its entire Atlantic coast would be occupied and administered by the Germans, and a strip along its southern border, by the Italians; the remainder would have a measure of autonomy but were compelled to disarm and cooperate with Germany; the country would have to pay heavy "costs of occupation;" French prisoners of war, numbering about two million, would be held in Germany as hostages; the French navy, though retained by Pétain's "autonomous" government [to be located in Vichy, thus marking the fifth relocation of the French government in

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 117-18, 154-55.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 150-51.

less than one month] would be disarmed . . .<sup>1</sup>

The French people had been deceptively victimized and were now humiliated and demoralized; their once great nation was now defeated, ravaged, scorned, and oppressed by the barbarian, "second-classed" unsophisticated "goose-steppers;" and the hope of France in its deliverance from the "vice of oppression" resounded in the fate of her friends: Great Britain, the United States, and her own men of the Resistance (against Germany, not of the épuration<sup>2</sup>--i.e., the purge) who were destined to redeem some of the folies of the past and to reclaim much of the lost honor and glory of France.

#### The German Occupation

With the emergence of Pétain's dictatorial powers as "chief of the French State" on July 10, 1940, the de jure Third French Republic disappeared, "political parties and trade unions were suppressed, and for the revolutionary watchwords of liberty, equality, and fraternity, were substituted labor, family, and fatherland."<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the period of the German Occupation had begun and the numerous anxieties, uncertainties, disparities, and discontinuities were to be greatly intensified.

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<sup>1</sup>Hayes, op. cit., pp. 644-45.

<sup>2</sup>Huddleston, op. cit., chaps. xxiii-xxiv.

<sup>3</sup>Hayes, op. cit., p. 645.

In the remarkable but disquieting book entitled They Speak for a Nation: Letters from France, "an untouched picture of the people of France" is related in sobering detail. The consistent themes that run throughout the hundreds of letters--dated from July 1940 to April 1941--that comprise the book are: (1) the nature and degree of their widespread misery and dissatisfaction; (2) the far greater loss of freedom in all of their social activities; (3) their intense dislike of the Nazis; (4) their desire to be free (though the best means of attaining their freedom is generally bi-polarized into the pro-Pétainists--or reactionaries--and the deGaullists--or resistants.) From this frame of reference, then, the editors present a clear and descriptive picture of the people's reactions, problems, and situations that were connected to and in consequence of France's defeat. Regarding these concerns, then, the following account, though exceptionally long, is especially revealing:

The French people, who have known national independence for more than fifteen hundred years, are now enslaved by their enemies. Two million of them are prisoners of war. Several other millions live in the occupied zone, watched by German soldiers. Others still, in the unoccupied zone, are, if we may say so, on parole. Every one of these forty million people--man, woman, or child--has been, since the spring of 1940, a witness and a victim of an appalling series of disasters.

The storm of Nazi invasion has swept our country, from the north to the south, rolling back the defeated French soldiers and the

bewildered civilians. The land of France, so rich, and which had attained, throughout centuries, to such a perfect stage of beauty, has been devastated. Hitler has mutilated France by this terrible wound: the line of demarcation between the two zones which cut across rivers, roads, and railroad lines, which separate families. The Nazis have plundered the crops and looted the houses. They have brought to France, as to every country which they have conquered, famine and disease.

The French have seen their country destroyed. They have seen her surrendered. The Government of Bordeaux has capitulated and given to Hitler the signature of France. Under the pressure of a victorious conqueror, France has replaced her liberal institutions by an authoritarian regime, which, in turn, cannot ignore the authority of the Germans. While Great Britain was stubbornly pursuing, day by day, her lonely fight against the common enemy, the French have been summoned to give to this very enemy their "collaboration." Thus, the name of France, so magnificently clear for centuries, has become, to the whole world, a subject of anxiety and of doubt.

Since the 22nd of June 1940, the powerless French people have been surrounded by a circle of growing suspicion. And they have no direct means of moral defense, for they can no longer speak freely to any free nation. Never in history, not even in the Middle Ages, have the French been so completely separated, as today, from their fellow men. War, blockade, oppression, the machinery of censorship and of propaganda, have rendered absolutely useless, for our compatriots, every invention of industry and science. France is as helpless to tell the world what she thinks, and also to hear from the world, as if she were deaf and mute.

There are a few American correspondents in unoccupied France, but the only news they would like to give us is the news they cannot send. There are radio transmitters in France, but they have such cautions and distant relations with the truth that the French have practically stopped listening to their broadcasts. There are telephone conversations--with a third party, German or French, eaves-

dropping. There are newspapers without news, and books without free thought. Indeed, France is isolated, as isolated, as an island in the Arctic seas. True, she has official statesmen. We listen as hard as we can to their voices. But the harder we listen, the less we recognize the familiar voice of the French nation. The Americans have stated, in their Declaration of Independence, that: "Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." There is no such government in France. From the French citizens, from the people of France comes nothing but silence--and this silence has now lasted more than a year.

. . . We have reached a moment where every single country in the world is urged to decide if she puts independence and freedom above everything else, or if, eventually, she will accept to deal with the oppressors.

Well, here is a devastated country--France--which has been more free than any other in the past, and whose government has tried, for a year, to find peace through negotiations with the Nazis. It is of some value to everybody to know the result of this experiment. The French are aware of this. They make desperate efforts to keep in touch with the citizens of the free countries.

In their dreadful loneliness they have rediscovered the means of communication used centuries ago, when there were no telephones, no radios, no newspapers, and no American correspondents. The news from France today is brought by travelers, by men who escape in sailboats across the Channel or by foot across a border. Above all, it is brought by letters smuggled from one zone to the other and posted in the unoccupied zone. There is censorship, of course. But the censor has not always forgotten that he is French.

To whom do the French write? To any human being they can think of: to the French speakers whom they hear on the programs of the English radio, or to General de Gaulle who carries on the fight at the side of the Allies. They write to England as a person to a friend.

Across the Atlantic they write to the American short-wave radio stations, and to whatever friends they may have abroad. It is on these thousands of sheets of paper that we find today the truth about the French. . . . They are profoundly conscious of the fact that France, today, is truly represented by nobody except themselves.<sup>1</sup>

The Frenchman's experiences in these undeniable stresses and strains pointed directly and solely to the despicable Hitler and his looting Boches. The letters, sequentially categorized, about "The Hardships of Material Life" and in "Life in Paris," for instance, relate that each day of the Occupation was filled with anxiety for their personal safety and for their possessions; each day was filled with a concern and struggle for the bare necessities of life; and each day was filled with uncertainty for the destiny of their country.<sup>2</sup> The overwhelming caricature of these times, portrayed in They Speak for a Nation is one in which the people become increasingly suppressed by the Vichy Government and by the Boches. The logical corollary of this is the increasing inability of the French people to control and predict the outcomes of their behavior.

If this descriptive account of the Occupation to this point appears sordid, bleak, and turbulent, it is, unfortunately, but a prelude to its latter part, wherein the social

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<sup>1</sup>Eve Curie, Philippe Barres, and Raoul de Roussy de Sales (eds.), They Speak for a Nation: Letters from France (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1941), pp. xiii-xvii.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., chaps. ii and vi, respectively.

conditions become even more burdensome and insalubrious in their effect on the lives of the French people.<sup>1</sup> As the days and months passed, difficulties of every kind increased. Of utmost concern was the food problem--a plaguing problem from the beginning.<sup>2</sup> Many Frenchmen, who could afford the high prices, dealt in the practice of "junketing"--i.e., the organized black market. (One negative latent function of this, however, led to a disrespect for authority when authority was essential in the immediate post-war period.<sup>3</sup>)

Unfortunately, there are no similar detailed accounts, such as They Speak for a Nation during the 1940-1941 period, of the Frenchmen's trials and struggles in getting food, for instance, that became, by necessity, prominent during the latter period of the Occupation. (Many details of the agricultural and by-product technicalities, though, are available in detail in France During the German Occupation, 1940-1944.<sup>4</sup>) However, F. Chasseigne, the Secretary of State for Food, summarizes the general problems related to food production, distribution, and consumption in the following:

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<sup>1</sup>A. Camus' The Plague (New York: The Modern Library, 1948) is an account that also illustrates clearly how the social system falls apart in relation to individual people as well as their reactions to despair, suffering, and death.

<sup>2</sup>Huddleston, op. cit., pp. 123-27.

<sup>3</sup>Shirer, op. cit., p. 71.

<sup>4</sup>France During the German Occupation, 1940-1944, Vol. I, chap. v.

France had now [i.e., in the early spring months, 1944] reached a point of the most extreme shortages. On the one hand, agricultural production had made itself more cruelly felt as the years passed; on the other hand, German levies had become heavier and heavier. Still worse, throughout the entire winter of 1943-1944, the Germans had given absolute priority to their military requirements, which by the spring of 1944 had reduced the stocks of the important urban regions below the vital level. Finally, the black market had become more and more widespread. In fact, we were caught between the German levies and the black market . . . .

[Further,] the discipline of those services which were concerned directly with food problems had steadily slackened. . . . In many fields, the Germans forced us to maintain ridiculous prices which merely kept products off the market. . . . The levies made by the French food services, which should have obtained enough potatoes to feed the cities (as well as meeting the German levy), became nothing more than a form of taxation and, in the end it was only enough to meet the German levy.<sup>1</sup>

The official price for potatoes was only a little over one-cent per pound while the ruling rate was about four cents. The German levy on meat, to take another example, had been increased from 24 per cent in 1941 to 59 per cent in 1943. The remaining output of 771,500 tons or 39 per cent was offered for sale at official prices but does not include the figures of the black market that stripped the official market.<sup>2</sup> This problem of providing

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 287.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 288.



the people with even a minimum amount of meat and other staple foodstuffs--bread, milk, vegetables, fats, cheese, etc.--was hampered, in addition to the German levies and the black market operation, by the disorganized transportation system, the blockade (English), bombardments, and sabotage,<sup>1</sup> as well as the many problems encountered in the actual food production operation (e.g., such simple needed supplies as nails and horseshoes were largely unavailable for the horses and oxen which provided the chief mode of power in the planting operation).<sup>2</sup>

Many other obstacles hindered the Frenchman from adequately providing for his daily existence: privation of coal and clothes to be used in keeping warm; electrical and plumbing failures; inability to maintain his place of residence and family because of bombardments, unemployment, travel restrictions, and so on in numerous areas and in varying degrees.

Pertinax contends that Germany's basic policy in the Occupation was one in which France would not only be subdued, but reduced to a degenerate physical condition "incapable of ever rising again to her moral stature." He outlines the details of this policy in what follows:

Not for military reasons alone did the Germans draw lines of demarcation, set up rigid interior forces, encourage Breton, Flemish, and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 288-92.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 254.

Basque separatism. They wanted to split wide open government services, business, families, intellectual groupings, moral and material interests, great and small. This vivisection of French life added to requisitions, legal robbery, rationing, and the National Revolution, spawned antagonisms: cityfolk against peasants, occupied against free zone, . . . workers against employers, poor against rich, popular irritation toward the Army and even, up to a point, against the Church, which was under suspicion of favoring a return to the policy of the throne and the altar.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, these restrictions were felt socially, materially, and psychologically; these strains and stresses, as one might palpably imagine, resulted in the intensification of the already highly tensed, anxious, and uncertain state that harbored the powerless and inanimate abode of the Frenchmen.

The horrors, hardships, anxieties, and the detailed listing of all the most despicable and noxious elements that become evident as a result of war may have the possible effect of conditioning our thinking to the extent that we may become immune to the significance and implications of these events and effects on the people who endured them. In short, how is it possible for others--i.e., disinterested observers--who have existed under less arduous conditions to empathize with them: that is, to think, feel, and act in "borrowed shoes"? Is it really possible today, for instance, for one to understand the

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<sup>1</sup>Pertinax, op. cit., p. 485-86.

conditions and problems of a typical war-plagued housewife (typical, not as an objective, bald, and abstract category but as one of many who daily encountered a hostile world) who alone remained responsible for the protection of her offspring but who lacked the necessary monies or other means to adequately provide for their bare physical needs? The concern was for a particular day, not for its morrow. Tomorrow may present another like problem, but it was on a certain extant day that the mother and offspring were hungry, and/or cold, and/or without shelter. These were the vital concerns; the problems of the morrow were perceived as somewhat unreal, in their remoteness, for in that "eternal" eventuality all of them may have been already killed from some night bombing mission or the like. So, it was, indeed, that the immediate concern of the day was to live; to live by getting food, shelter, etc. The question remained, however, how this was to be achieved: would she beg, borrow, or steal from those who were in like circumstance as she; would she buy what was available according to her meager means (which is another problem altogether) even though their bodies were already suffering and bearing the scars of malnutrition and other afflictions; would she morally abuse her body by submitting herself, as an instrument, in order to satisfy the carnal desires of the Boches (or anyone) in return for something--be it food, per se, or that which could be converted into same? Even if an ade-

quate amount of food was available and secured, what about diseases such as ricketts, tuberculosis, scurvy, and so on? What about the terror and fear that her husband may be imprisoned, tortured, killed or maimed? Ingenuity helps but her power over the situation was less than adequate. These situations, then, were some of the problems that confronted thousands of Frenchwomen. On a more nomothetic level, the kind, the manner, and the extent of the cases that affected Frenchmen (and Frenchwomen) in general varied relative to a life under dictatorship, in a concentration camp experience, or in other situations of terror.<sup>1</sup>

So what has happened to France concerning our examination to this point? With the collapse of her army, her capital, her position as a great European power, and her cherished values, beliefs, and institutions, she has become an occupied country that has been bombed, starved, ravaged, suppressed, oppressed, and divided into two zones--physically, socially, and psychologically. In short, France emerged from the Occupation period (and from World War II) in a ravaged, defeated, and demoralized state.

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<sup>1</sup>For a penetrating study of the experiences encountered in concentration camps, see, E. Kogon, The Theory and Practice of Hell (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1950, and New York: Berkley Medallion Books, 1960); Lord Russell, The Scourge of the Swastika (New York: Ballantine Books, n.d.); and V.E. Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy (New York: Washington Square Press, 1963), Part I. For a similar type experience that takes place in a Siberian labor camp, see, A. Solzhenitsyn, One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch, trans. Ralph Parker (New York: Time Reading Program, 1963).

We have stressed throughout our examination that France had experienced numerous kinds of strains, failures, and discontinuities. We have attempted to relate in detail the intensification of these strains that resulted from France's defeat in war by Germany and then as an occupied country with the concomitant collapse of her sociocultural way of life. We have seen that the Occupation had far-reaching consequences:

(1) France's valued and prestigious position as the "cultural-center" of the world collapsed and became enslaved by the "barbarian" and "inferior" German forces. France descended from a position of magnificence to that of lowly deference, and in so doing, anxiety, doubt, and uncertainty ensued. Finally, the commitment to the belief of "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity" no longer provided legitimacy for recurrent social activities; rather, Frenchmen were to commit themselves to the accommodation and maintenance of German values. Thus, conflicting claims were made on the Frenchmen's ideological commitment.

(2) Frenchmen necessarily were forced to conform to the German authority and dictate, while recognizing that her past traditions, standards, and normative principles lacked relevance for most situations. The absurdity and paradox in everyday affairs became prominent by the virtual fact

that the French people had to obey the decisions and regulations of the Germans while maintaining their feeling of superiority. Thus, the long tradition of various French prescriptions and proscriptions that had functioned to provide for an adequate level of integration in the social order became "obsolete" or preempted during the Occupation by those rules and regulations established by the foreign and "barbarian" Germans; competing demands of different roles for various social activities ensued.

(3) The French people were mobilized during the Occupation into roles and organizations in which they became instrumental--i.e., in their role performance--to the German aims and demands and deprived of accustomed rewards. Strain also resulted from the collapse or separation of various institutions--e.g., the family, school, church, etc.--in which millions of Frenchmen were disenfranchised and lacked sufficient rewards. We have also noted that for those who became collaborators--e.g., large industrialists, the press corps, etc.--with the Germans during the Occupation became co-opted and were beneficiaries of a disproportionate share of the available rewards. In this context, then, we have noted the numerous

deprivations experienced in the daily lives of most Frenchmen.

(4) Finally, we have discussed various strains endemic to the adequacy of available means for some kind of pursuit-e.g., food, clothing, shelter, specific role performance, and so on. We also found that in consequence of the inadequacy of certain skills and knowledge relative to a certain situation that uncertainty, anxiety, etc., was manifested on the psychological level.

#### The French post-liberation-war period

The remaining task in our tracing the development of the historical conditions and social setting in France is to examine its post-liberation period that was characterized by a disorganized social structure. We will continue to focus our attention on the French social structure in relation to its condition of conduciveness to the rise of existentialism as a social movement. Following this discussion of the various societal discontinuities that, by implication, possessed numerous strains, the final aim of this chapter will be to discuss the psychological product or result of these degenerate and ineffective social forces: alienation. The immediate task, then, is to indicate "some" of the crises that intensified the already precarious social structure and that in consequence resulted in the alienation of the population, or part of it.

In order to understand what is meant by the effect of the various strains that are to be discussed within the social structure, it is necessary to view these impairments of the relations among the units (e.g., institutions, organizations, roles) that comprise the social system in relation to their adequate or inadequate functioning in the social system.<sup>1</sup> It is essential to note that the above suggests not only the operation of social processes but also a degree in relation to a continuum of some specified variable (e.g., structural differentiation, structural integration, and structuring).

Structural differentiation simply refers to the number of units within a social system. For example, France during the Occupation reflected a low degree of structural differentiation within its political sector inasmuch as the German-Vichy government was autonomous, and it claimed and possessed the sole legitimacy of the state--"assisted" by means of terror and coercion--and prohibited the formation and claim of legitimacy of other possible competing political parties; the economic sector, however, reflected a high degree of structural differentiation evidenced by a wide range of occupational statuses and roles, a specialized

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<sup>1</sup>The theoretical presentation in this section draws heavily on the material presented in a course called "Advanced General Sociology and Social Psychology" given at Michigan State University during April-June, 1964 by Dr. William A. Faunce. I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to him.



division of labor, organizational complexity, and so forth, but at the same time, we must keep in mind that the economy was but an extension of the German political policy. Following the war, we will note that many competing political parties became active within the political sector, and by definition, France was characterized by a higher degree of structural differentiation, politically and economically, than during the Occupation period.

The second variable is the degree of structural integration. This social structural variable refers to the extent to which the relationship among social system units is characterized by logical coherence and absence of institutionalized conflict. That is, if social institutions provide means of normative integration for the functioning of the social system--its needs, values, and expectations--the extent to which a social system adequately functions to adapt, attain certain goals, and maintain itself is largely influenced by how the interdependence and reciprocal influences of its components hang, fit, or harmonize together: the degree of structural integration. It is suggested that France's social structure during the Occupation period reflected a higher degree of structural integration than in her post-liberation period. For instance, during the Occupation the German-Vichy government had greater control relative to virtually all social activities that involved the movement of men, messages, and/or materials than in the post-liberation period, which was characterized by weakened and

ineffective forces (e.g., political and economic instability and/or paralysis).

The third variable or dimension of the social structure involves the degree of structuring--i.e., the extent to which the functioning of a social system is normatively regulated. In this connection, it would appear likely that the social structure during the Occupation period reflected a higher degree of structuring than in the post-liberation period. In the former period, we have heretofore discussed some of the strains (e.g., value dissonance, role conflict) as a result of the Frenchmen's forced adherence to the "foreign" and "barbarian" decrees and regulations while maintaining their feeling of superiority over the "inferior" Germans, but the significant key is that a greater degree of adherence or conformity was both demanded and obeyed in particular recurrent social activities. During and after the liberation, however, the French social structure was characterized by a lower degree of structuring or by a lack of specified expectations that defined what was appropriate behavior relative to a certain situation. It is in this context, then, that an ambiguous situation, for instance, would be likely to permit and result in a condition of alienation when perceived in connection with and reinforcement of similar past experiences of anxiety, uncertainty, insecurity, and so forth. Finally, we can note that the social structure during the Occupation can be characterized,

in general, by a low degree of structural differentiation and that it was inversely related to the degree of structural integration and to the degree of structuring; during the months of the liberation period and its aftermath the social structure was characterized, in general, by a high degree of structural differentiation and that it was inversely related to the degree of structural integration and to the degree of structuring. In short, all three of these social structure variables become significant in their interrelatedness for our study in which established procedures and organizations had been severed during the Occupation; they are no less significant for the post-liberation period when France encountered further difficulty in her attempt to reestablish familiar procedures, organizations, statuses, roles, and so on. If France was not entirely severed from her past traditions and Weltanschauung in general at the end of the Occupation, she, at least, reflected an extremely fragile and disconcerted condition; she, lamentably, would falter again in diverse manners and in varying rates.

### Political instability

One of the manifest ruins in the post-liberation period centered on the French political sub-system. We have already indicated on numerous occasions that the war had destroyed the French constitutional structure (i.e., the Third Republic). The issue in 1944 was whether to restore

that structure or to create another constitutional framework<sup>1</sup> for France was in a political vacuum after the removal of Pétain to Germany.<sup>2</sup> The old issue of the Republic versus the "ancient régime" again emerged, which hampered efforts to unify France.

Beginning with de Gaulle as head of the Provisional Government of the French Republic that followed the liberation of Paris, the problems of recovering from the sufferings of the Occupation period, the destructiveness of the war, and the shock to its economy were basic and primary. Although the personage of de Gaulle inchoately symbolized the liberation of Paris,<sup>3</sup> his bases of legitimacy for authority were supported primarily by the Algerian and "home" elements of the Resistance and centered within four political parties: Radicals, Christian-Democrats, Socialists, and Communists.<sup>4</sup> From this political structure that evidenced numerous blocs and coalitions, various cleavages ensued between: (1) de Gaulle and the Resistance parties;<sup>5</sup> (2) the centralized

<sup>1</sup>Compare the legitimacy of the creation of a new constitution in Huddleston, op. cit., pp. 331-32, ff.

<sup>2</sup>Werth, op. cit., p. 208.

<sup>3</sup>For an extensive account of this period, see, Larry Collins and Dominique LaPierre, Is Paris Burning?: Adolf Hitler, August 25, 1944 (New York: Pocket Books, Inc., 1965).

<sup>4</sup>Werth, op. cit., p. 227.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 228.

government, located in Paris, and the local seats of government which resulted in a lack of consistent goals and in cooperative activities;<sup>1</sup> (3) the regular and the Home Army (FFI);<sup>2</sup> (4) de Gaulle and his administrators.<sup>3</sup> It is in this context that conditions would become worse rather than improve.

De Gaulle's main concerns were centered on foreign and military policy--i.e., the role of France in the last stages of the war and her diplomatic position--rather than on implementing and directing emergency measures for "normalizing" everyday life in France. At the same time, de Gaulle's ministers were struggling with everyday problems. Werth, citing passages from Combat--a resistance newspaper edited by Albert Camus--relates in the following that:

Truly exhausting, this period of political transition, which is dragging on interminably. Internally France doesn't seem to know where she stands or what she wants. There were terrible massacres in Algeria in May [1945, before the referendum], but nobody seemed to care; at the Consultative Assembly hardly anyone turned up to listen to the speakers. . . . A terrible confusion of values and ideas. . . . Everywhere there seems to be a lack of seriousness and a lack of enthusiasm. . . .

We are living in a kind of nihilist atmosphere, with no doctrine, but merely muddling along from day

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 221.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 233.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 337.

to day. . . . The hopes of the Resistance have been dashed to the ground. For nothing has really changed. The same forces that fought each other before the war are doing so now, even though the struggle is less spectacular, because of the facade of National Unity.<sup>1</sup>

After the war ended, the Fourth French Republic emerged, but the narrow margin of the plebiscite that provided for its passage reflected a great deal of ambiguity and uncertainty. Differences over the new constitution epitomized the future unstable political scene; one that was to be characterized in the endless squabbles and negotiations between de Gaulle (or other presidents) and the parties and among the parties themselves. The purpose of these attempts was to form coalitions that would secure certain ideological ends rather than having mere differences over certain issues that could be discussed within specified institutionalized procedures. Within this context, Benms indicates in the following that the old problems and conflicts of the pre-war period reappeared:

. . . As in prewar days the electorate was split into many parties or groups and political leaders were chiefly preoccupied with party struggles. Conflicts between the extreme Right and the extreme Left once more developed, fears of communism or fascism were again expressed, and ministerial instability in the Fourth French Republic resembled that in the Third. Between January 22, 1947, and May 21, 1953, for instance, France had thirteen ministries. [There were periods also when France had no government at all.] The basic problem of each successive premier was to manage

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 269; italics added.

his multiparty cabinet in a way to offend none of the parties composing his government. . . . But since frequently, almost usually, the parties in his ministry were in conflict over some major policy, financial aid to Catholic schools [initiated in the Vichy reign], for example, or direct versus indirect taxes, attempts to hold them together often brought political inaction, if not national paralysis. No French leader seemed able to resolve the fundamental political and economic differences of the French parties. Consequently, in the words of one foreign observer, parliamentary government in France appeared as "an interregnum of dissent between spells of chaos."<sup>1</sup>

In short, political leadership was characterized by impotent, inflexible, unresponsive, ineffective, and degenerate social forces that precluded, to a large extent, individual French loyalty to these capricious and oft-times selfish leaders and their programs, and in consequence, confidence in and compliance with the leader's decisions was often deficient or lacking altogether.

Ramifications of the above echoed loudly throughout the economic and financial sector (of which we will have more to say later) and in everyday social activities. In connection with the political effects on current social activities, the second major problem--the other major problem, of course, dealt with the immediate post-liberation emergency measures--that faced de Gaulle after the Liberation was in punishing the traitors who collaborated with the Germans and the Vichy Government. To examine this

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<sup>1</sup>F. L. Bennis, *European History since 1870* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1955), p. 885; italics added.

dimension, some background and detail must necessarily focus on the Resistance Movement. While it would be a futile attempt to write a history of the Resistance Movement within the narrow confines of this research project,<sup>1</sup> it is deemed profitable to point out at least one of its major stages.

The one element of the Resistance Movement to be considered at this point, then, occurred primarily, and centered, in the épurateurs (i.e., the purgers) of the épuration (i.e., the purge) who robbed, tortured, and murdered their fellow Frenchmen. One reason, among many, for this reaction was primarily based on the suspicion rumor, and/or evidence --ranging from a high to a low degree--of some kind that pointed to the collaboration of the accused with the Germans or with the Vichyites or with both.

Another major condition--as we have indicated above--that allowed this "revolution of 1944" to add to the terror and hardship of French life focuses on the powerless and incompetent state of the French Government under de Gaulle; France in this transitional period was without an effective government for "the writ of Paris did not run far."<sup>2</sup> In short, this hostile outburst (a type of social movement in itself) was a reaction and attack on those who were held

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<sup>1</sup>For a discussion on the different stages of recruitment, participation, and operation, etc., see Werth, op. cit., pp. 133-198; Collins and Lapierre, op. cit., pp. 43-45, 99-280; and Blake Ehrlich, Resistance: France 1940-1945 (Boston: Little, Brown and Co.).

<sup>2</sup>Huddleston, op. cit., p. 315.



as responsible for the denigration of France's honor and totally unwholesome state of affairs and for the "sub-human" social conditions that the épurateurs (and others, of course) were forced to live under while subordinate to the dictate of the Germans and the Vichy Government.

A relevant question, then, is who fell victim to these atrocious deeds and for what reasons? Huddleston informs us that all types of people joined the bandwagon of the "resistentialists"--not to be confused with existentialists --for reasons not always related to the loyalty of France. He states:

There were hundreds of private vendettas, husbands who had grudges against their wives, and wives who would seize the opportunity of injuring their husbands. Friends had fallen out and were waiting the chance to betray one another, storing up distorted reminiscences of conversations in which indiscreet words had been spoken. There were racial enmities. There were commercial jealousies. There were rivalries in the administrative services. There had been fraternization with the occupying troops [some women accused of this had their heads shaved and marched naked through the streets], human and comprehensible, which would give a glorious (or inglorious) excuse to those who had not fraternized to wreak vengeance. Worse still, many of those who had fraternized with the enemy, and had made money out of their relations with the enemy, having much to be pardoned for, would place themselves among the most zealous witch-hunters and patriotic épurateurs. There were the black marketeers, spies, common criminals, who would be let loose and would add to the lawlessness. . . . And now the émigrés from London and Africa were preparing. . . to come over with all of the animosity of men who had long been in exile, to punish the wrongdoers and with the wrongdoers the innocent who were often denounced by the real wrongdoers.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 288-289.

This "pro-Vichy" account may have exaggerated the actual situation in which anyone allegedly, by professing to be a Resistant, could condemn and inflict harm or even death on those accused of some "dealing" with the Germans or with the Vichyites. But it was often true that no judge, no jury, and no deliberation was necessary. If one were accused of being a collaborationist, the accuser adopted the dual-role of judge and executioner which was justified on the grounds of purifying the French state. Thus, after the retreat of the Germans, the Americans had delegated to the French authorities the responsibility to maintain law, order, and stability. The difficulty endemic to the American's assumptions that the French authorities would be responsive, flexible, and effective in the containment of these abuses is that the latter were powerless, in the main, to act in the southern part (of Vichy) of her "bifurcated" state. (De Gaulle had assumed political leadership in Paris, but the greater part of France was without a legitimate political system after the demise of the Vichy government.)

These threats resulted in "adding more fuel to the fire" in which many Frenchmen's destinies were to appear largely determined by luck, providence, or the dictate of the fickle finger of fate. One might justifiably contend (as did Camus) that there are certain beliefs worth dying for, but that there are no beliefs worth killing for. This

seems to have been (and remains) a vexing issue. We have indicated that various scholars place the 1940 defeat of France on its failure to adequately prepare for war relative to materials, creativeness, and willingness, etc. On the other hand, the one-sided civil war that resonated throughout France--especially in the South after D-Day in June of 1944, though, as any war, it was perceived as necessary and justified--now threatened the very existence that the "Resistentialists" had hoped and even fought for; now they --individuals, criminal bands, tribunals, self-appointed bodies, etc.--arbitrarily purged the workers, industrialists, newspapermen, entertainers, painters, civilians, policemen, and others who had in some way been affiliated with the enemy.<sup>1</sup> One might logically ask: would not all Frenchmen at one time or another be vulnerable and guilty by virtue of the structural interaction with the Germans of the Vichy Government? The answer would seem to be definitely in the affirmative, but the arbitrary selection of the victims is to be stressed for if one could finance--wholly or partially --a group of resitants, if one joined with the other resitants (regardless of past behavior), or if one remained silent and inconspicuous, one might eschew loss of life or incarceration.

At any rate, the number of arrests and incarcerations

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., chaps. xxi-xxiv, and especially pp. 304-306.

in this period of "Terror" after the Liberation is estimated by Huddleston at about one million Frenchmen; the number of deaths was estimated from eighty to one-hundred and five thousand.<sup>1</sup> Although Werth vociferously contends that Huddleston's account is a gross misrepresentation of what actually happened,<sup>2</sup> the point seems to be, at the very least, that this "purge" period did contribute considerably to the already highly tensed and uncertain state of many Frenchmen. Certainly these years from 1944-1946 could not be considered as conducive to a unified and cohesive French attack for a return to "normalcy."

In addition to the French politics being absorbed with her domestic affairs and her diplomatic role in the world, France had been evicted from Syria in 1945 and would experience further grief and economic losses in her involvement in her overseas possessions; notably, Indo-China (Viet Nam) and later in Morocco and Algeria.<sup>3</sup> As indicated above, many Vichyites had returned to business and even to political office (e.g., Thorez) which depicted a scene of gross absurdity for many; other consequences were evidenced by these Vichyites being in office: their influence and role in the French-Indo-China affairs and in the Cold War.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 309, 299-300.

<sup>2</sup>Werth, op. cit., pp. 284-90.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 326-43.

Nevertheless, these and many other political problems, from a national position of marginal existence and evidenced by wide-spread misery and confusion, hindered the development and syntality of the French social order in the post-liberation-war period. These political ruins, characterized by unstable, ineffective, and degenerate forces, reflected an inability to cope with the vital problems of the time. It is in this context that this disintegrative period reflected a continuation of past attempts that also failed in providing viability and strength in the French social order. It is primarily from this vantage point that the "existentialists" would articulate the way out of this miserable and confused state of affairs.

#### Economic instability

It is impossible to completely separate the political realm from the economic realm. In the post-liberation period, indeed, ministerial and financial instability are interosculated and intertwined, for the many problems that led to conflict with and among the political parties had a bearing on the national budget and on the desired means of balancing it (e.g., increase taxes vs. cutting back civil service employees). We have already indicated many of the reasons for the increased expenditures: (1) the cost of the war itself; (2) the reconstruction of the bombed-destroyed areas and other evidences of devastation; (3) the cost in pursuing "intervention" in her colonial possessions (and

later, (4) the costs involved in meeting her obligations to the European Defense Community).<sup>1</sup> Consequently, "the fundamental weakness of France after the Liberation was the absence of a constructive financial and economic polity. . . Monetary reform was the cornerstone of the whole structure."<sup>2</sup>

Without a firm, controlled, and drastically reformed policy, France destined itself to a continual unstable position that had far-reaching political, economical, and social importance. Mendes-France--the Minister of National Economy and a maverick in his Keynesian oriented economic approach against the "experts"--stressed the need for stable wages that could be made possible only by a stable currency. He firmly contended also that the post-liberation period necessarily had to be austere and that a more equitable distribution of the national income was essential. In short, many people would have to be poor in order that France could be rich.<sup>3</sup> Again, however, opposition to these proposals by the Ministry of Finance, the Bank of France, and political parties resulted in their non-adoption.

The rejection of Mendes-France's proposals resulted in the inevitable inflation of the currency, the black market

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<sup>1</sup>Benns, op. cit., p. 886.

<sup>2</sup>Werth, op. cit., pp. 246-47.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 247.

survival and triumph over the official market, the disorganized food supply, the starvation of the working-class, and the ruination of the middle-class who had fixed incomes.<sup>1</sup> It is particularly important to stress the two crucial major problems that were to plague France: (1) the mounting tide of inflation; and (2) the black market. In reference to the latter, Werth comments that:

As long as there was a shortage of food in the country and a plethora of bank notes, . . . [no one] could do anything other than fight a losing battle against the black market. There were rackets all over the place: the racket of the motor car licences that were sold "below the counter" at the Prefecture de Police; the sugar racket, as a result of which at least one-third of the sugar produced in France found its way to the black market and had to be replaced, for the benefit of the ration-card holders, by imported sugar; there were rackets in meat and petrol, in newsprint and various raw materials; . . . the poor consumer, with no hoard of bank-notes under his bed, was told one day to trust the Government's "draconic measures" and the next day to "fend for himself," to "buy direct from the peasants" or to get whatever he could from friends in the countryside; if he hadn't any, it was just too bad.<sup>2</sup>

The other issue centered on the rising tide of inflation affecting the rising cost of living which surpassed incoming wages and salaries. For instance, "the price level at the end of the war was 3.7 times the pre-war level; at the end of 1946 the figure was 8.5 times; in January, 1948, it was 13.5 times."<sup>3</sup> From this point, then, another rami-

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 249.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 299.

<sup>3</sup>Benns, op. cit., p. 880.





fication focussed on the social unrest among the workers which resulted in conflicts between them and their employers. If strikes ensued, the impact on industrial productivity is clearly apparent: If there was no output, then, there would be no products for distribution and consumption, which, in turn, would preclude any income derived from the consumers for the producer; in short, stagnation and inertia would set in. Werth provides meaningful data in this connection and outlines the implication of it in the following:

Inflation continued throughout 1946, the note circulation rising during the year from 570 milliard [billion] francs to 722 milliards (it had been 142 milliards at the Liberation), but, much worse, the price index of controlled retail prices in Paris rose from 481 (1938=100) in January 1946 to 865 in December 1946, thus nearly doubling in a year; black market prices were higher still, and wages were lagging far behind.

In short, immense difficulties were piling up, and the maldistribution of wealth, bad enough at the time of the Liberation, had become not less, but more serious two years later. . . . Both public and private economic difficulties, and a widespread hankering for "back to normal" had dampened the enthusiasm of August 1944 [i.e., for the benefits derived from the proposed and promised economic and social reforms]. The Communists in the Government, who had "pushed" the reforms as hard as they could, and the the Communists in industry who had made many sacrifices in not clamoring unduly for higher pay, were beginning to wonder, more and more, what kind of France they were helping to build, with the working-class underfed, and with the Cold War increasing the tension between the Communist Party which was looking East and most of the other French parties, which were wither looking West or sitting on the fence.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Werth, op. cit., pp. 300-301. The figures indicated are from the Statistique Generale, the returns of the Bank of France, and the Inventaire Financier, as quoted in Année Politique, 1944-45 and 1946.

The government's inability to cope with these problems reflected a condition of political and economic sterility, and, in turn, had undeniable consequences for the French population in their struggle against food shortages, food prices, and other unavailable and/or inaccessible commodities. We can clarify and specify the meaning of this by considering the social ruins that are connected to and in partial consequence of the previously discussed aspects of political and economic ruins that were evinced during the Liberation period and its aftermath. We now attend to this examination.

### Social instability

The connotation of social ruin (social disorganization) refers to some kind of a decline, collapse, breakdown, or discontinuity among the units which had once functioned on a scale deemed adequate or appropriate for the performance of various tasks in concrete, recurrent social activities. In this section we will be concerned with the post-liberation period and its aftermath of disillusionment, deprivation, dislocation, and chaos. It is essential to keep in perspective that this period was an extension and intensification of many conditions examined heretofore (particularly, those of the Occupation). We should bear in mind, as well, that France had been, and remained, victimized by turbulent economic and political forces that

had grave implications in everyday social life.<sup>1</sup>

It is axiomatic that these times were abnormal and filled with intense terror, anxiety, and uncertainty. One need only recall that the war operation was still going on at the time of the Liberation, and that it would officially continue for almost ten months (for the most part, though, Paris was free from being the target of its operation except for a couple of "revenge" air raids).

At the time of the Liberation, Werth reports in the following that economic activity was nearly nonexistent:

Railroad transport had been virtually paralysed all over France, and food conditions in the larger cities, and especially in Paris, were extremely bad. All the bridges on the Seine between Paris and the sea had been blown up. Over a thousand road and railway bridges had been destroyed. Practically all the ports. . . were either out of action, or still in German hands. Of 17,000 railway engines, before the war, less than 3,000 were left, and railway trucks and carriages were down to about 40 per cent, and many of these in poor condition.<sup>2</sup>

The decimation and disruption of the transportation system played a significant part in the already hard-pressed food supply in Paris. In particular, we find that:

Adult rations were down to 1,050 calories per day [e.g., one banana split today], and though vegetables and other unrationed food could be bought

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<sup>1</sup>For the effects of war, see: J.O. Hertzler, Social Institutions (Lincoln, Nebr.: University of Nebraska Press, 1946), pp. 263-64; W. Waller, "War and Social Institutions" in W. Waller (ed.), War in the Twentieth Century (New York: Dryden Press, 1940), pp. 478-532; and E. Burgess, et. al., The Family (New York: American Book Club, 1963), pp. 473-95.

<sup>2</sup>Werth, op. cit., pp. 224-25.

in the "open" market, wages had scarcely doubled since pre-war, while the currency inflation had reduced the franc to about one-fifth its pre-war value.<sup>1</sup>

Food conditions remained poor during the winter of 1944-1945, and by spring the food situation was even worse: policemen were searching small and large parcels for unauthorized food purchases; on March 19, even the ration cards were not honored; "anti-hunger" demonstrations broke out; food (as well as coal and sugar) riots occurred.<sup>2</sup> Werth further reports that the Minister of Health estimated that "75 per cent of the urban population was showing signs of more or less severe undernourishment."<sup>3</sup> In short, there was little food, coal, or travel, and the Parisians apothegmatically complained "Worse than under the Germans."

It would be futile--within the limits of this project--to attempt any thorough explanation for the various discontinuities or breakdowns that are indicated above on a simple cause and effect basis. Nevertheless, some understanding is attainable when one views the disparities or discontinuities among the stages of production, distribution, and consumption in relation to the availability and accessibility of some final product, event, or situation. As we have tried to point out, political and financial policies also influenced the rate, mode, and extent of these processes, which

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 225.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 237.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid..

in the main were greatly inadequate and ineffective. At the same time, it is essential to note that even the "best" of policies aimed at recovery after the Liberation required valuable time for their effective implementation. This does not, however, gainsay or overlook the very real loss of raw resources, damaged buildings and industry in general, the disruption of the transportation and communication systems, various social institutions, and so on. However, one could--as did many existentialists--question the political sense of judgment in their allocation, use, and manipulation of various resources that were earmarked for foreign military enterprises rather than for immediate emergency measures.

In connection with the above and the related problem of the returning prisoners, Werth comments:

A strange, rather nerve-racking summer altogether, that first post-war summer in France. People were shaken by the sight of the prisoners and especially the deportees [i.e., the French workers, numbering between one-half to one million, who were deported to furnish the industrial labor in Germany under the Compulsory Labor Service], and by so many of their horror stories, and by their weariness and disillusionment. De Gaulle had spoken in March of the structural reforms that would be carried out when the war was over; but for a long time he had other things to absorb his attention--foreign affairs, the Army, and Syria.<sup>1</sup>

Other manifestations of social ruins reflected frayed ends. We mentioned the return of the prisoners and deportees, but to their dismay many of their families were broken, displaced, or in the process of being dissolved. Werth again

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 254; italics added.

provides a commentary on this aspect by citing an issue from Les Vivants:

There is also the myth--and perhaps the most devastating of all to our newly recovered freedom--of faithful and love-sick Isolde. . . . Yet, I am told that in Paris alone, the Courts are dealing with 30,000 divorce cases concerning ex-war prisoners, that 60 per cent of married men who return find that the bonds between them and their wives have, in one way or another, been broken; that most of the fiancées back home will not keep their promise; we also know that a new race of bachelors had been formed in the prisoners' camps. . . . It's no use sniggering; behind all these things there are countless personal conflicts and tragedies.<sup>1</sup>

And further on, he again cites from Les Vivants vis-a-vis the disillusionment of the returning prisoners who returned to France but "not the France of their Stalag and Oflag daydreams":

The ex-prisoner has found an amorphous country, used to its hardships, and incapable of saying no. . . . The passers-by in the street seemed, before the war, to be going somewhere. Now they look like people walking, but not going anywhere. . . . The question of money is most revealing. There's a black market on every level. And the worst of it is that it's an insult to Labour. Only fools work; the others do their black marketing and eat. . . . They pity those who don't eat, but don't give a damn. Only pity is the spice to their egoism. . . . Everything is taken for granted, even the victims. "One has the right to be lucky. If it isn't me, it would be somebody else. . . ."2

In addition to the breakdown of values, norms, disjunctures between motivated behavior and reward, thousands returned

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 251.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

home to find their homes destroyed or damaged, to find themselves unable to provide adequately for their families because of some war-affliction that incapacitated them, and/or to find themselves unable to adjust to the "unanticipated" new social conditions.

The family was not the only social institution to manifest stress from within, strain from without, and to reflect a high degree of disintegration. The agencies embodied in the school, church, entertainment, and so on felt the painful effects of war. Both during the war and the Occupation, these institutions were being modified in response to certain definite events and situations and concomitantly affected changes in their status, role, functions, and basis of authority. We have discussed above how the "traditional" governmental institution had been virtually deracinated and then reorganized for the purpose of advancing the German military position. The same holds true generally for the economic system. In short, France's social institutions had been greatly modified, forced to function primarily for the purpose of advancing Germany's military power, and had incurred numerous strains that were brought on by these structural changes but which, in the main, were not accompanied by attitudinal changes. These modifications dynamically affected the Frenchmen's customs, habits, traditional work patterns, values, and beliefs.

After the Occupation, we described the numerous strains that resulted from the atomized and disorganized social structure. Further, we stressed that the restoration of the

social order was particularly hindered by the absence of a firm, unified, and effective political and economic policy. In connection with our previous discussion of structural variables, this period (in contrast to the Occupation) reflected a low degree of structural integration as well as a low degree of structuring; that is, there was institutionalized conflict among the units comprising the social system, and there was a low degree of adherence or conformity to certain specified norms, standards, and the like--if not lacking altogether. Specifically, we noted that various crises along with numerous degenerate and ineffective social forces detracted from an adequate adjustment or balance among the social units, and that this state of French social disorganization reflected an inadequate normative regulation of the Frenchmen's social activities and aspirations.

Finally, a most devastating effect of the war and its following period of disruption and disorganization was the severing of relations, not only within families, but from voluntary associations--e.g., work, play, peers, community, etc.--that function as a buffer for the individual between the family unit and the state.<sup>1</sup> In consequence of the isolation or lack of adequate relations within the family unit and/or with intermediary associations, traditional ties to authority were severed concomitant with social obligations and demands that norm-

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<sup>1</sup>William Kornhauser, *Politics of Mass Society* (Glen-coe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1959), p. 74. See also, Karl Mannheim, *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World-Harvest Book, HB 119, 1940), pp. 117-29.



ally reinforce meaningful social relations and interaction. In this connection, isolation and rootlessness are felt by those who lack meaningful and operative social ties. Again Kornhauser informs us that "in their absence, people lack the resources to restrain their own behavior as well as that of others."<sup>1</sup> The atomization of these social relations, then, "engenders strong feelings of alienation and anxiety, and therefore the disposition to engage in extreme behavior to escape these tensions."<sup>2</sup> Traditional values and post regulatory principles no longer provided for the general aims and means in this shattered and woefully weakened social order. Yet, some guidance and direction was needed to combat the problems presented in daily life and in coming to grips with their condition of alienation that is reflected in the themes of disillusionment, absurdity, anxiety, uncertainty, resentment, distrust, disenchantment, hopelessness, despair, separation, etc. Within this condition existentialism emerged, for it attempted to explain the result of these various social strains--i.e., alienation--and constituted an articulate resolution to reconstruct this disturbed social order. The elaboration of this articulated resolution necessarily entails a discussion of its intellectual roots and development that played a significant part in the rise of existentialism as a social movement within the condition of structural conduciveness. This is the concern for the next chapter, "The Intellectual Setting."

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<sup>1</sup>Kornhauser, op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., italics added

## CHAPTER II

### THE INTELLECTUAL SETTING

#### Introduction

Under the discussion of the "the social setting" we have reviewed a number of possible causes that directly or indirectly contributed to the downfall and defeat of France. Each of them undoubtedly contains some truth, but in no sense could they be considered as independently complete or causally related in a monistic sense. Regardless of the taxonomical structure that one selects in positing the causes--e.g., social political, economic, religious, metaphysical, moral, psychological, etc.--for the war, concomitant with a detailed examination of it, one recognizes, even in our limited treatment, that all sectors or phases of society were affected by their interrelatedness which necessarily defied even "scientific" atomization. While we became only superficially aware of this complexity, one of our primary concerns focussed on the effects and implications of the French defeat in 1940 and her subordinate position to Germany during the Occupation. The other major concern centered on the chaotic social conditions that made possible and set the stage for "extreme" forms of collective mobilization. (This condition plus the examination of other

general determinants in relation to the rise of existentialism constitutes the aim of the next chapter.) In short, the disturbed French social order reflected widespread chaos and instability, and, in turn, these anomic social conditions resulted in a condition of alienation. In this context, then, the rise of existentialism as a social movement is to be considered as an articulated resolution to remedy this condition of alienation.

Our primary concern with the twentieth-century movement of French existentialism--expressed and extolled in its mode of thought, writings, and basis for orientation to life situations--draws heavily from Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. That is to say, we will not be interested in the philosophy of existence and its many real or alledged antecedents or forerunners,<sup>1</sup> per se; rather, we again stress that we are focussing our attention on French existentialism and its exponents.

Our interest in Kierkegaard and Nietzsche becomes

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<sup>1</sup>Many philosophical expressions of existentialism may be traced as far back as the pre-Socratic Heraclitus, the "weeping philosopher," or even to the Biblical Job; in fact, one may trace this concern with the individual, his salvation, his personal relations to society, to God, to man, to nature, and the meaning of his life and actions to anyone concerned with "religious" ideas and their implications. For discussion within this context, see, Maurice Friedman, (ed.), The Worlds of Existentialism: A Critical Reader (New York: Random House, 1964), pp. 4-12; see also, Edward Tiryakian, Sociologism and Existentialism: Two Perspectives on the Individual and Society (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1962), pp. 80-81.

significant insofar as they provide the "modern" intellectual roots of a belief that becomes extended, reappraised, and articulated later by Sartre in particular, as well as by other French existentialists. That is, both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche dealt with the vital problems of their own historic times and place, and in so doing they revealed the vital themes--e.g., total commitment, objective uncertainty and self-orientation--that were to become a special concern for the "French existentialists." The recurring issue is that even though existence is both indefinable and inexhaustible,<sup>1</sup> man must encounter life situations in all their forceful contingencies and contradictions by accepting the challenge of subjectivity, activity, and responsibility if any regeneration of self and society is to be achieved. As such, the term "existentialism" refers to "a certain state of mind, to a specific approach or attitude, to a spiritual movement which is of significance in present circumstances and to a specific mode of thought. . . ."2

The central substance summarized in the usual noted themes of despair, dread, anguish, forlornness, anxiety, estrangement, the discrepancy between the superficial and the genuine self, the faceless man of the mass horde, death, and the revolt against science, rationalism, and rigidity

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<sup>1</sup>Tiryakian, op. cit., p. 72.

<sup>2</sup>F. H. Heinemann, Existentialism and the Modern Predicament (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953), p. 165.



become encapsulated in the inevitable suffering, agony, and alienation of man, which ironically is in itself (apparently) fixed and eternal. Barrett notes that both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche were dramatic witnesses to, as well as great amplifiers of, these themes:

. . . while they proliferated in ideas that were far in advance of their time and could be spelled out only by the following century, these ideas were not the stock themes of academic philosophy. Ideas are not even the real subject matter of these philosophers--and this in itself is something of a revolution in Western philosophy: their central subject is the unique experience of the single one, the individual, who chooses to place himself on trial before the gravest question of his civilization. For both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche this gravest question is christianity, though they were driven to opposite positions in regard to it. . . . [Kierkegaard to revitalize Christianity; Nietzsche to destroy it.] More than thinkers. . . [they] were witnesses--witnesses who suffered for their time what the time itself would not acknowledge as its own secret wound. No concept or system of concepts lies at the center of either of their philosophies, but rather the individual human personality itself struggling for self-realization. . . .<sup>1</sup>

One aim in this chapter, then, is to relate how Kierkegaard and Nietzsche bear evidence to the ultimate aim of the French existentialists' concern for the awakening to a special way of life that is generally depicted as "authentic existence."

Though we have indicated that existence is indefinable and inexhaustible, existentialism is generally brought

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<sup>1</sup>William Barrett, Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1962), p. 13.

into "meaningful" focus for many people by the catch-phrase that "existence precedes essence." Again, Barrett provides insight into this Sartrian vein:

The essence of a thing is what the thing is; existence refers rather to the sheer fact that the thing is. Thus when I say "I am a man," the "I am" denotes the fact that I exist, while the predicate "man" denotes what kind of existent I am, namely a man.

In the case of man, its meaning is not difficult to grasp. Man exists and makes himself to be what he is; his individual essence or nature comes out of his existence; and in this sense it is proper to say that existence precedes essence. Man does not have a fixed essence that is handed to him ready-made [if the presupposition of an existent God is abrogated in the case of the atheistic, but not theistic, existentialists], rather, he makes his own nature out of his freedom and the historical conditions in which he is placed.<sup>1</sup>

We will have much more, of course, to say about this ontological apothegm when we discuss Sartre, but it is essential to note here that the central focus and stress is on the concrete and the particular rather than on the abstract and general, though the latter is not necessarily delegated completely to an obsequious and insignificant realm--i.e., one must consider certain abstractions, such as social structure and social conditions, and certain general categories such as man, freedom, choice, decision, situation, commitment, action, responsibility, etc.

Although there are definite differences between

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 102.

Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Sartre, for instance, all three became involved in and responded to the problems that affected the human condition within varying situations. This concern with human reality and the human condition of the individual is first, last, and always the major point to remember when attempting to understand what existentialism, in general, is all about and the acute revolt and expostulation by Sartre in particular (in our study). It will be profitable to bear in mind also that the world was not perceived to be the "best of all possible worlds" for these "existentialists" nor was its future likely to witness consummated social progress and social justice; on the contrary, the world was in a miserable state of affairs, of crises, and of paradox, and the promise of a better and better future seemed not only unwarranted but absurd. Thus, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, as revolutionary proponents of the philosophy of existence, protested and committed themselves against the "unassailable" and highly esteemed Hegelian philosophy, against a lethargic Christendom, and against society.

From these historico-intellectual origins, then, Sartre's protest and revolt against the plight of the human condition became extended and more "violent" than those of Kierkegaard or Nietzsche, for his concrete time-space situation--i.e., social conditions--evinced greater violence, instability, and confusion. In a nutshell, Sartre's extreme response stemmed from an acute alienated human condition.



At the same time, it is absolutely crucial to emphasize two vital points concerning the writings of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. The first of these is that their writings were enormously influential in the intellectual, philosophical, and literary developments of both Sartre and Camus, as should become clear later in the discussion. The second point may be even more important insofar as any justification for their inclusion in this study is concerned. This means, reaffirming Barrett's above comment, that both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche became, to a large extent, "rediscovered," accepted, and important as times or social conditions changed from their own; in other words, their appeal and acceptance were based, in part, upon a widespread and inadequate French normative structure.

We will now be able to consider Edmund Husserl's role in the development of French existentialism. By limiting Husserl's contribution to this segment in relation to the more general whole or area of the philosophy of existence, his influence on others (e.g., Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty) is neither denied nor meant to disparage his significant contribution to the general field of phenomenology; our interest in Husserl lies in his phenomenological method that was largely imbibed by Sartre, who, in turn, replaced Husserl's pure "consciousness by existence [and re-installed his] natural standpoint."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Heinemann, op. cit., p. 58.

The above becomes clearer when we consider Sartre's basic conceptions--e.g., situation, freedom, transcendence--in relation to the problems of human personality:

. . . not on reality as such but on man's reality. It is, after all, from its stress on human existence, not just existence, that the movement takes its name; and it is that stress, in its new concreteness, that gives it its importance. . . .<sup>1</sup>

From this point, then, additional understanding between Kierkegaard (and Nietzsche) and Husserl in relation to Sartre's revival of the philosophy of crises becomes increasingly clear by noting Ruggiero's appraisal of the "existentialist theme" and its "phenomenological orchestration":

. . . in existentialism the personal experience of Kierkegaard (we could add, in a more limited way, of Nietzsche too) and the generalisation and typification of that experience merge together. As far as the first element is concerned, we are not dealing with a merely philosophical resumé, unconnected with the reality of the contemporary spirit [i.e., in the post-war period between 1945-1948]. The experience of Kierkegaard is an assiduous vindication of the irrational and the immediate, as existence, as life, as faith, as personality, against the universal values of reason, which, in their claim to universal validity, absorb and annul what is singular in each individual. That which the individual is in his effectual reality, his anxieties and hopes, his feelings for life and death, his personal salvation or perdition--all is neutralised in the passivity of a universal spirit which devours its sons, heedless of their particular destiny. . . . Now this irrationalistic theme, which. . . Kierkegaard unfolds in passionate antithesis

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<sup>1</sup>Marjorie Greene, Introduction to Existentialism (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), pp. 48-49; italics added.

[i.e., his existential dialecticalism] to Hegelian rationalism, is also the most insistent and persistent theme of contemporary philosophy. The terms of the antithesis are often changed, so is the emphasis, but always it is the immediate, lifelived, intuition, 'animal faith,' contingency, belief, etc., which are opposed to scientific laws or impersonal nature or the universal spirit or the rationality of history. As it is to be expected, the insistence on the theme becomes more exasperated in moments of crises, when the individual loses confidence in the collective [social] order which supports him and feels a more acute anxiety to escape and save himself. This explains why today existentialism goes back to Kierkegaard, for whom the need of escape is morbid, rather than to other, less violent exponents of the same tendency. . . .

While the first element gives us the existentialist theme, the second gives us the orchestration. If the drama of existence had remained shut up within the limits of a single personality, Kierkegaard or Nietzsche, it could have aroused other isolated, sporadic and disconnected dramas, but not a collective movement of ideas, far less a universal interpretation of existence. The connective tissue has been provided by Husserl's Phenomenology with its analysis of the contents of consciousness and its account of spiritual 'regions,' constituted by interconnected psychological elements and thus abstracted from the arbitrary fluctuations of the individual life. Thus we can pass from the singular existent to existence, from its particular anxieties and preoccupations to Anxiety and Preoccupation, predicted of a new subject and extending the generalization. . . . Time, space, birth, death, the finite, the infinite, liberty, destiny, immanence, transcendence, etc., have formed an ever richer procession as they follow upon existence. . . .<sup>1</sup>

In our treatment of Sartre and Camus, we will attempt to relate their subject matter--the "nature" and problem

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<sup>1</sup>Guido de Ruggiero, Existentialism: Disintegration of Man's Soul (New York: Social Sciences Publishers, 1948), pp. 43-45; italics added.

of man's existence--and use of the technique or method of phenomenology--i.e., the description of concrete data of immediate experience. More specifically, their novels, plays, (newspaper) essays, etc., which are to be considered in this study, consistently relate the plight of man's existence, present an image of man through a combined use of philosophy and literature, and provide a remedy for overcoming an alienated human condition. Their pronounced leadership was a vital element in the articulation and communication of this existential message that stressed the return to concrete facts, immediate personal experience and to the reality of daily life--viz., our discussion of the social conditions in the previous chapter. Summing up then, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche provide the existential themes, whereas Husserl's modified phenomenology becomes significant in directing attention to a description of that which is "given to us in experience without obscuring preconceptions or hypothetical speculations."<sup>1</sup> We now turn to a more thorough examination of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and the French existentialists.

### Kierkegaard

Throughout the various treatises that deal with the philosophy of existential thought (or existentialism) Kierkegaard is not depicted generally as a philosopher in

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<sup>1</sup>Barrett, op. cit., p. 213.

the traditional sense of the word. Yet, his life and writings point to and focus on the vital "existential" issues that man encounters in his personal experience and daily life. Tiryakian relates that within existentialism there are two main dimensions that intersect at one point: "philosophical thought in general and the world situation," whereby the point of intersection is the human condition or situation of man.<sup>1</sup> It is precisely at this point of intersection that Kierkegaard presents a hortatory exposition for the reaffirmation of the importance of the individual who is born, sins, suffers, and dies. This reaffirmation of the individual not only implies that some sort of a proper and legitimate focus requires a readjustment toward life and the human condition, but it also entails for its fulfillment, in the case of Kierkegaard, a forceful expostulation against Hegelian idealism, Christendom, and the bourgeoisie society.<sup>2</sup> In short, Kierkegaard "struck the Jugular" and set forth the basic issues that were to be of utmost concern for those existential thinkers that followed him. Such, then, leads to Tiryakian's general statement that:

Existential thought can be viewed as a reaction or protest against the negation of integral man in dominant philosophical circles. It may also be viewed as a protest against the negation of integral man in the modern urban-industrial world.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Tiryakian, op. cit., p. 73.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

In our treatment of Kierkegaard, we will want to pursue the implications of the above, namely, the recognition of the "single" person as the bearer of all authentic value along with the denigrating and suffocating effects of the church and the "press" that leads to the "leveling" of the populace or to an "inauthentic" individual existence.

Kierkegaard's attack on Hegelian idealism is precisely a focus on the "fundamental discrepancy between the existence and theory" concerning the nature of man.<sup>1</sup> His attack was a challenge to the traditional philosophical thought that stemmed back to Plato; in "modern" times the Platonian legacy was reflected in the thinking and writings from Descartes down to Hegel. Kierkegaard's philosophical protest and break with Hegel (and classical philosophy in general), then, was analogous to the scientific revolution that occurred with the publication of Concerning the Movement of the Heavenly Bodies in 1543. That is, Copernicus' heliocentric theory destroyed the validity of the traditionally accepted geocentric theory and Kierkegaard destroyed the smugness and complacency of the traditional philosophy that had championed the pursuit of objectivity, essence, the absolute, and the speculative through logical reasoning over and at the expense of the pursuit of subjectivity, existence, the particular, and the need for commitment largely through

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<sup>1</sup>Barrett, op. cit., p. 158.

intuition, moods, feelings or emotions, and the like.

Even though Hegel insisted upon the notion of Becoming, and thereby differed from his predecessors' desire to transcend the realm of Becoming in the pursuit of a universal and eternal truth solely through reason, he nevertheless maintained his belief in a universal reason. Wahl provides a clear and concise statement of Hegel's thinking and the reaction to it by Kierkegaard in what follows:

He tells us that our thoughts and feelings have meaning solely because each thought, each feeling, is bound to our personality, which itself has meaning only because it takes place in a history and a state, at a specific epoch in the evolution of the Universal idea. To understand anything that happens in our inner life, we must go to the totality which is the human species, and finally to the totality which is the absolute idea. This is the conception which Kierkegaard, whom we may call the founder of the philosophy of existence, came forward to contradict.<sup>1</sup>

Kierkegaard not only reacts against this Hegelian conception but, at the same time, he rejects Descartes' "cogito, ergo sum" by insisting that it is more appropriate to view it as "sum, ergo cogito." More specifically, it might be more accurate to depict Kierkegaard's reaction to Hegel by indicating the notion of "eligo, ergo sum" ( I choose, therefore I am). We learn from Barrett that Hegel was "caught in the act" of trying to restore existence into his system through logic whereby reason produces existence or "reason

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<sup>1</sup>Jean Wahl, A Short History of Existentialism, trans. F. Williams and S. Maron (New York: The Wisdom Library, 1949), p. 3.

would generate out of itself."<sup>1</sup> Another way of viewing this is that thought cannot logically include Being; on the contrary, it is Being that includes thought. Man's existence involves the total person and cannot be contained in any closed and abstract philosophical system that is based on logic alone. Therefore, any attempt to explain reality solely in objective terms becomes a nonsequitur. Hegel's logic and reason could never explain away or provide a guide for social action when personal paradoxes or contradictions are presented in such a way that a decision/choice must be made. The two usually noted examples, provided by Kierkegaard himself are: (1) should I, or should I not, marry?, and (2) should Abraham, or should he not, sacrifice his son Issac? For instance, in the last example given the dilemma is clear: ~~if~~ Abraham sacrifices his son, he is transgressing an established normative regulatory principle and ethical law (no father should kill his son, rather he is to protect, support, and assist his son as much as possible); but, if Abraham ~~does~~ not kill his son, he is transgressing God's law (which ~~for~~ Kierkegaard is a higher law). Again, logic could not ~~assist~~ in this ambiguous, uncertain, and "absurd" situation. In any case, a situation was presented to a single existent ~~per~~son who was forced to choose between two competing demands -- Kierkegaard's "either-or"--and by choosing one of them,

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<sup>1</sup>Barrett, op. cit., pp. 158-60.



the commitment (Sartre's idea of engagement) entailed vital consequences. The individual does face certain risks by virtue of his choice, but he does so, according to Kierkegaard, with a passionate personal concern, whereby "true existence is achieved by this intensity of feeling."<sup>1</sup> At the same time, he does so with "fear and trembling" for he does not and cannot know if the choice made was the correct one, but in any case, it is clear that Kierkegaard is contending "that the individual is higher than the universal" as well as of "higher value than the collective."<sup>2</sup> Kierkegaard, then, was saying, in effect, that these problems are not merely fabricated in the mind (cogito, ergo sum), but that they are met in a world of reality (sum/eligo, ergo cogito). As Barrett relates, "He [the individual existent] encounters the Self that he is, not in the detachment of thought, but in the involvement and pathos of choice."<sup>3</sup>

Kierkegaard's reaction against Hegel's speculative idealism has been noted in his stress upon subjectivity, wherein truth lies, and in his assertion that "true existence is achieved by intensity of feeling." Wahl provides a capstone to the above discussion by noting Kierkegaard's conception of the existential individual:

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<sup>1</sup>Wahl, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Barrett, op. cit., p. 167.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 163.

[He is, first of all] in an infinite relationship with himself and has an infinite interest in himself and his destiny. Secondly, the existential individual always feels himself to be in Becoming, with a task before; and, applying this idea to Christianity, Kierkegaard says: One is not a Christian--one becomes a Christian. It is a matter of sustained effort. Thirdly, the existent individual is impassioned, impassioned with a passionate thought; he is inspired; he is a kind of incarnation of the infinite in the finite. This passion which animates the existent (and this brings us to the fourth characteristic) is what Kierkegaard calls "the passion of freedom" [that affirms one's destiny through repetition].<sup>1</sup>

Another reaction against Hegel centered on Kierkegaard's assertion that there are real possibilities for the subjective, existent individual rather than, as Hegel contended, that "the world is the necessary unfolding of the eternal idea, and freedom is necessity understood."<sup>2</sup> Tiryakian suggests that Kierkegaard's existential criticism against Hegelianism is:

. . . ultimately a religious attack, since Kierkegaard's fundamental arguments rest upon religious considerations. Not only does the logical system fail to take into account the subjective, existing thinker, but also its logical categories within which everything is objectively located cannot deal with religious-existential matters such as sin and faith. These are extremely important to Kierkegaard for. . . it is in the notion of sin and the correlative notion of faith that he found his real refutation of Hegel.

Sin is not a logical concept. It is not subsumed under a more general category, and less general terms are not subsumed under it. It

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<sup>1</sup>Wahl, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

is not an object of scientific inquiry; it is intimately personal and individual; it defies rational explanation. . . . The notions of sin and faith are by their very nature scandals to reason, for they are grounded in their enemies: the absurd, the paradoxical, the uncertain. . . . But Kierkegaard affirms that what is impossible for reason is possible for faith. Existence is always a possibility, since to exist is to be before God--and for God, everything is possible.

Kierkegaard does not assume man's personal relations to God, nor does he posit faith as a "given" which opposes reason or goes beyond reason. On the contrary, faith is always something uncertain, involving the subjective thinker, the subjective individual, in the most intense internal tension. Instead of quietude and certainty about his relation to God, the believer is always in a state of acute anxiety or awe, for he is staking his very existence on the unconditional acceptance of an absolute objective uncertainty.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, our discussion leads us back to where we indicated that (in Abraham's case, for example) one inevitably confronts a situation that necessitates a decision to be made between two competing demands (in general, a choice between good versus good rather than good versus evil) without the assistance of logic, for it is useless in an absurd and paradoxical situation; one makes choice but with fear and trembling as to the correctness of that choice. In this context, existence is regarded as a "transition from a possibility in the mind to an actuality in the wholeness of the person."<sup>2</sup> It is only a short way, then, to Kierkegaard's

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<sup>1</sup>Tiryakian, op. cit., pp. 83-84.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

two notions of the moment--i.e., the particularity of every situation--in relation to that of the "discontinuity of existence" or its three stages--Aesthetic, Ethical, and Religious.<sup>1</sup> Though we have indicated briefly the difference between the ethical and religious stages (in the example of Abraham's dilemma), they will reappear in Kierkegaard's attack on Christendom.

Kierkegaard's attack on Christendom was equally vitriolic--perhaps, more so--as his reaction against the speculative idealism of Hegel and the intellectual climate of his time. The message of his attack is compressed (though not condensed) into a single sentence but explodes in ramificative dimensions by implication. Barrett gives us the following capstone account of Kierkegaard's thinking:

In the modern world it makes no sense and is in fact a gigantic swindle to speak of Christian nations, Christian states, or even Christian peoples; this is the sum and substance of Kierkegaard's attack.<sup>2</sup>

The evaluation and implication of this summarized indictment is vividly provided by Tiryakian in what follows:

The gist of his [Kierkegaard's] attack is that Christendom seeks to make christianity something reasonable, something palatable to the masses, something agreeable to bourgeois mentality. One can live comfortably within the church. By following the teachings of the church, by attending its services and listening to its sermons, one

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Barrett, op. cit., p. 173.

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can be born a Christian, live a Christian life, and die a Christian. To be a Christian in Christendom requires little effort, one can live at peace with one's self, and masquerade as a respectable "witness for the truth."

For Kierkegaard, this was nothing short of a renunciation of true Christianity, a prostitution of the Christian life. One is not born a Christian, one becomes a Christian in a complete, subjective involvement with God. I am not before God in the presence of others; the existent individual before God is unique, singular. God cannot appear to me as an object of reason, "because God is a subject, and therefore exists only for subjectivity in inwardness."

Whether one is or is not a Christian can never be an object of certitude. One can try to be a Christian; indeed, one must try, but there are never any objective signs that one has succeeded --and certainly, for Kierkegaard, church membership is no gauge of certainty. . . . [One] cannot arrive at a relation with God in a collective enterprise. The life of the religious thinker is full of tension, despair, and suffering. The existing individual cannot accept the world as he finds it, for Christ told us to forsake the Kingdom of Caesar for the Kingdom of God. I am anxious about appearing before God as a sinner. Anxiety and sin are part and parcel of the Christian life. As for being a "witness for the truth," a person cannot possibly be one if he lives at rest with society, without having gone through agonizing despair, without having made a "leap" of faith.<sup>1</sup>

The church, in particular, was viewed with alarm for no "social gospel" or any of its "institutionalized" offerings could act as a substitute or give account for man in his relation to God. Indeed, the church was perceived to be too institutionalized whereby man was not given the opportunity to assert himself or even to "find" himself.

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<sup>1</sup>Tiryakian, op. cit., pp. 85-86.

In addition to the above reactions, we can note that the press, (mass media, public opinion, etc.) also contributed to the leveling process whereby social life becomes increasingly collective and external to the detriment of the unique single person. This, then, constitutes Kierkegaard's third major reaction against the leveling forces encountered by man. In such a condition, the individual becomes depersonalized, dehumanized, self-estranged, and subject (as partaker) to the influence and sway of the social forces.<sup>1</sup> In order for the individual to counteract these forces, he must discover what it means to be a Christian and to reassert his true existence.

Throughout our discussion of Kierkegaard, we have tried to point out his primary concerns: the singularity of the unique individual and the human condition. We have found that he challenged the conventional institutionalized moral codes and regulations; that he presented a sense of urgency in matters of conscience; that he placed great emphasis upon the subjectivity of the individual; and that in all of the situations presented to him in a world of reality it is he, as the single-one, who must choose either to be religious in the life adventure and to commit himself in this engagement by affirming his authentic existence or else he was destined to fall into hopeless despair (and without hope

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 126-27.

for salvation). Authentic existence, for Kierkegaard, demanded a life (repetitive moments) of decision that was filled with an intense feeling and resolutely embedded in faith rather than in reason and distant abstractions. As such, man must withstand the tyranny and leveling process of the age. It is precisely this point--i.e., the plea for the individual both to recognize and to revolt against the powerful and evil shaping or molding social forces that precluded man's authentic existence--on which the French existentialists will focus by asserting the primacy of the particular personal experience over the abstracted universals which become "divorced from life." First, though, we turn to Nietzsche's philosophy of existential thought and interpretation of what it is that justifies man's existence.

### Nietzsche

Nietzsche continues in the Kierkegaardian tradition by posing the basic issues of the nature of man, his destiny, and his meaning in life. We have seen that Kierkegaard's reply to these issues had pierced through a quiet and smug world of academic philosophy, through a suffocating and complacent Christendom, and that he had condemned the externalization of life that overwhelmed and hindered the individual's quest to realize his possibilities as well as to fulfill his duty of authenticating his being. In the period that followed Kierkegaard's time and work, "a deep silence" was witnessed with respect to his criticisms. In short,



the post-Kierkegaardian period was an era that championed the dogma of progress in which hope and confidence reigned even though "the paternalistic monarchies and the traditional churches were confronted by serious challenges."<sup>1</sup>

Breisach goes on to say that:

. . . despite such a penetrating upheaval, the radical questioning concerning the meaning of man's life and the call for an authentic existence which had been the supreme themes for Kierkegaard and still remains so for existentialism, had hardly any impact on the thought of this period. Characteristically and fatefully, those who had become free choose all too often to use this freedom to dedicate their lives to a new authority. The new authorities were mainly the "isms" [e.g., scientism, humanism, liberalism, nationalism, Marxism, socialism, etc.] or systems of ideas which again seemed to afford a universal explanation of the world and thus to offer to man comfort and security. He could again rest assured in "the" knowledge of the structure and aim of the world. Furthermore, since the majority of these systems promised a necessarily better future, one could also look forward to it with great hopes and expectations. Moreover, under the "isms" all this could be achieved by merely changing the institutional organization of society. Kierkegaard had viewed the authentic life as one of continuous personal involvement. In most of the "isms" such a strenuous task could be avoided, since a single revolutionary or an evolutionary change of social institutions would solve human problems forever.<sup>2</sup>

It is in this context that Nietzsche came forward, as a critic of his age, to reappraise and to revolt against this "positivistic" era of hope, progress, and spirit of unwarranted enthusiasm. In doing this, Nietzsche would

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<sup>1</sup>Ernst Breisach, Introduction to Modern Existentialism (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1962), p. 32.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 32-33.

seek "truth" in the world of appearance<sup>1</sup> rather than cherish any comforting illusions or debilitating crutches that were endemic in any ideology, whether the latter be philosophical, political, economic, social, or religious; he would destroy the illusions of his age, admit and point out the disharmonious and turbulent social forces that he observed, and he would place great importance on irrational will that can be both negative and positive in a world of reality. The crucial point is that Nietzsche attempted to follow Kierkegaard's earlier admonition of "don't pretend" but expose that which is or exists in a world of reality. In short, Nietzsche did not pretend that all was well in an optimistic age that envisioned continual social progress and increasing social justice. On the contrary, "his global preoccupation was to relate metaphysics and ethics to the moral crises of Western civilization."<sup>2</sup>

From the above moral crises, we are alerted to Nietzsche's concern with nihilism; it is this concern that constitutes the core of his writings and work. Quoting Nietzsche, Breisach relates, in what follows, the famous Nietzschean prophesy that stemmed from the proposition that "God is dead" whereby the traditional value systems no longer provided meaning for man's existence:

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<sup>1</sup>Tiryakian, op. cit., p. 90.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 89-90.

What I relate is the history of the next two centuries. I describe what is coming, what no longer can come differently: the advent of nihilism. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Nietzsche's basic proposition that "God is dead" was based on his observation (and interpretation) of what actually existed in the world of reality whereby:

. . . to say that "God is dead" means no more and no less than that he is dead for the majority of the Europeans of the time of Nietzsche. The Nietzschean analysis was aimed at showing that this crucial condition existed despite the most widespread conviction to the contrary.<sup>2</sup>

For Nietzsche, then, faith in God<sup>3</sup> was dead as a matter of cultural fact, and any meaning of life which was devoid of God abnegated any transcendent purpose in the traditional Judaic-Christian sense.

The ultimate problem for him centered on whether it was still possible for man to conform and give allegiance to the "isms" that were, in fact, based on an unsupported and unsound structure because they were "devoid of God and transcendence."<sup>4</sup> What man did not recognize (and did not want

<sup>1</sup>Breisach, op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Barrett relates that "God" here means the historical God of the Christian faith. But in a wider philosophical sense it means also the whole realm of supersensible reality--Platonic ideas, the Absolute, or what not--that philosophy has traditionally posited beyond the sensible realm, and in which it has located man's highest values." This interpretation is discussed in Barrett, op. cit., pp. 203-205.

<sup>4</sup>Tiryakian, loc. cit.

to recognize) is that the "isms" (liberalism, socialism, etc.) enslaved man, denegated his existence, and provided the advent of nihilism. Speaking for Nietzsche, Breisach suggests that "the crucial point is that in order to overcome the onslaught of nihilism, man must go beyond his previous answers,"<sup>1</sup> if not, the stage was set for the advent of nihilism. In short, it was the task for man--the "overman" --to reconstruct a disturbed social order that departmentalized, depersonalized, and fragmented his being; man must reaffirm his self-importance, recognize that he alone is responsible for his actions, and strive for an authentic existence whereby he (as "overmen") "can say yes to life in its entirety, even in its ugliest and basest details."<sup>2</sup>

In order for man to realize his own existential possibilities, Nietzsche's notion of the "will to power" appears. The notion of power replaces the "eternal verities" (of Hegelianism, for example) or traditionally accepted values which have actually lost their relevance and meaning for modern man. Tiryakian, interpreting Nietzsche, relates that:

The will to power is not the morality of the masses, it is that of the overman. Power, in the last analysis, is not the control over others so much as self-mastery, overcoming one's nature through creative sublimation; in brief, it is "the courageous living out of the individual's potentialities in his own particular existence."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Breisach, op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>2</sup>Tiryakian, op. cit., p. 93.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 95.

This conception of morality--the will to power--of the authentic individual differs radically from Christian morality which became a primary target for Nietzsche's most acerbic attack, because it is based on a false division of good and evil as well as in the illusion of an ideal world.<sup>1</sup> In particular, Christian morality bore the brunt of Nietzsche's attack because "in its ascetic ideal and in its set of values it has led man to renounce life and nature, to say No to the world of the senses and the joys of the body, to seek the illusion of another world."<sup>2</sup> Christianity did not challenge men, it tranquilized them; it stultified rather than stimulated individual creativity; it decayed rather than strengthened him; it enslaved rather than freed him; it passified rather than activated him. The same indictment follows for the leveling forces--e.g., customs, morality, opinions, etc.--of society or for man's eternal quest to find security, comfort, and identity in dogma, doctrine, or self-enclosed systems. The authentic individual "demands activity, creativity, and personal involvement in what he does."<sup>3</sup> Breisach provides a concluding commentary to these concerns:

. . . Nietzsche, apart from all of his specific ideas, challenged his contemporaries to see and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>3</sup>Breisach, op. cit., p. 55.

admit that, despite national glory and material progress, it is still the individual existence which is at the core of all that is human: to fail there is to fail as a human being.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, the protests of Nietzsche (and Kierkegaard) went unheeded: protests against the optimistic era of hope, progress, and enthusiasm whereby social progress and the conquest of societal evils were envisioned through the "miracle" of the increasingly rational organization of human life; against the annihilating tendencies of the "isms" that enslaved man and precluded his creative possibilities; and against the illusory security that enveloped the passive, dull, and unreflective "mass horde."

It is clear that certain advances had been achieved in the social and cultural life in the cities--e.g., in better working conditions, in the provision for more and better public services (education, health, etc.), in the greater availability and accessibility of productive goods, etc.,<sup>2</sup> but the year of 1914 ushered in an unfamiliar and unexpected age of despair and disenchantment though Kierkegaard and Nietzsche had foretold this nihilistic doom. Barrett graphically relates below the consequences of this pivotal date in "modern Western history" which simultaneously ushered in the present-day world:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 71.

August 1914 shattered the foundations of that human world. It revealed that the apparent stability, security, and material progress of society had rested, like everything human, upon the void. European man came face to face with himself as a stranger. When he ceased to be contained and sheltered within a stable social and political environment, he saw that his rational and enlightened philosophy could no longer console him with the assurance that it satisfactorily answered the question of What is man? . . . The individual is thrust out of the sheltered nest that society has provided. He can no longer hide his nakedness by the old disguises. He learns how much of what he has taken for granted was by its own nature neither eternal nor necessary but thoroughly temporal and contingent. He learns that the solitude of the self is an irreducible dimension of human life no matter how completely that self had seemed to be contained in its social milieu. In the end, he sees each man as solitary and unsheltered before his own death. . . . It appears that man is willing to learn about himself only after some disaster; after war, economic crises, and political upheaval have taught him how flimsy is that human world in which he thought so securely grounded. What he learns has always been there, lying concealed beneath the surface of even the best-functioning societies; it is no less true for having come out of a period of chaos and disaster. But so long as man does not have to face up to such a truth, he will not do so.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, while neglected and "in a time that knew them not." now gained increased stature and significance upon the emergence of an era that experienced despair, estrangement, and disenchantment. In particular, Kierkegaard's writings became of interest within Protestant theological circles (e.g., Jaspers, Barth, etc.).

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<sup>1</sup>Barrett, op. cit., pp. 34-35.

whereas Nietzsche became rediscovered "in a new although not altogether correct meaning."<sup>1</sup> However, it is neither our aim to pursue the abortive interpretation of Nietzsche's "Will to Power" within the emergent German racist ideology nor to consider its complement to the Marxian socialist ideology.<sup>2</sup> Further, we are not concerned with Nietzsche's "Will to Power" within Jung's "psychoanalytic school"<sup>3</sup> or with Heidegger's challenge to unravel Nietzsche's nihilistic ruins.<sup>4</sup>

Kierkegaard and Nietzsche's contribution to French existentialism lies in their concern with and stress upon the concrete world of reality, the human condition, and the meaning of human life. Sartre's message and remedy of man's estrangement from his own being becomes an extension of the themes exposed by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, though differences will appear in what justifies meaning in life. As we have seen, Kierkegaard asserted that the unique individual authenticated his life in the Christian existence, whereas Nietzsche contended that man's authentic existence was in the "Will to Power." Sartre will certainly differ greatly from Kierkegaard for he, like Nietzsche, asserts that "God is dead"; he will differ from Nietzsche not so much in

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<sup>1</sup>Breisach, op. cit., p. 72.

<sup>2</sup>Barrett, op. cit., p. 202.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 205.





Nietzsche's idea that the "Will to Power" is made into the essence of Being (for both stress the will to Being through action) as in Sartre's extension of Nietzsche's nihilistic prophecy to that which serves "as a basis for humanitarian and democratic social action."<sup>1</sup> For Nietzsche, the alienation of man was seen to be overcome through a responsible individual effort whereby man creates his own values, since, and because, "God is dead"; this is no less true for Sartre. We now turn to a discussion of the message or way of viewing life of the French existentialists that is of crucial significance in our study: the rise of existentialism as a social movement.

### Sartre

Before beginning a description of French existential thought, we again wish to draw the reader's attention to the conditions, circumstances, and events that were discussed in the previous chapter. In brief, we noted that France had experienced defeat in war, subjugation and oppression during a long, four year period of occupation by the Germans, a post-war period of political instability and economic turbulence, and a strained and precarious social structure. With the passing of traditional values and collapsing norms, coupled with unresponsive and ineffective social forces, the French people were no longer supplied with general ends

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 244.

and rules to legitimize their behavior or with adequate means to sustain their needs. Thus, as we have seen, the French social structure displayed numerous strains and lacerations whereby anxiety, uncertainty, and the like produced a condition of alienation. In response to this chaotic, unstable, and uncertain situation, French existentialism constituted a reevaluation or reappraisal of the being of man and his social relations with others as well as an articulated resolution to remedy this condition of alienation.

Barrett's above account of the consequences of the outbreak of World War I which "shattered the foundations of that human world" can be equally relevant to the situation that France endured with the leading up to and outbreak of World War II and, in particular, its aftermath.

One of the basic assertions of French existentialism, as well as the philosophy of existence in general, is that man exists in a particular situation even though he cannot apodictically find any ultimate reason for his being. For Sartre, ultimate reality is without meaning for human existence except for what man chooses and thereby makes out of himself. It is in this context that Sartre's message was in response to the concrete, historical conditions of the then immediate situation experienced by him and his fellow Frenchmen. The point to keep in mind is that Sartre, more than anyone else, presented a message that attempted to awaken his fellow countrymen from a state of cultural dis-

affection, social apathy, and personal resignation, to reaffirm the importance of the individual, and to reassert the true existence of the authentic self whereby meaning in life could be realized. As will be discussed, the writings of Sartre and Camus provided philosophical insight and guidance for various moral decisions and types of action that were to be encountered in a shattered and chaotic social order.

In addition to Sartre's ontological concern, which examines the idea of existence of being and reality,<sup>1</sup> Heinemann relates Sartre's other concerns in what follows:

No doubt Sartre expresses a genuine experience of concrete ultimate situation. It is political, as the experience of a political group, moral, as implying a moral choice, and metaphysical, as the experience of the individual who, in face of an ultimate situation, in his

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<sup>1</sup>Sartre's more formal distinction between ontology and metaphysics is provided by H. Barnes: "Ontology studies 'the structures of being of the existent taken as a totality;' it describes the conditions under which there may be a world, human reality, etc. It answers the questions How? or What? and is a description rather than an explanation. For this reason it can state positively. Metaphysics, on the other hand, is concerned with the origins and seeks to explain why there is a particular world. But since such explanations seek to go behind the Being which they must presuppose, they can be only hypotheses. . . . While this does not offer hypotheses to explain the origin of the world or consciousness, it does nevertheless offer hypotheses for interpreting concrete examples of human behavior and principles by which to understand individual personalities." This citation is taken from Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology, trans. and intro. Hazel Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), pp. xxxv-xxxvi.

utter loneliness remains nevertheless indissolubly connected with, and responsible to, all members of the group and, in the last resort, to all men. As an experience of liberty [i.e., freedom], it rightly stresses its two sides-- i.e., negatively, the power of resisting oppression, and positively, the genuineness of choice and the responsibility of this choice. . . .<sup>1</sup>

In short, Sartre attempts to reinterpret human nature in terms of human subjectivity, a condition in which human values and problems are created out of a human situation. While it is true that certain factors (e.g., social, historical, geographical, political, economic, etc.) are held to be of vital significance in determining the scope and limits of the choices that an individual can make, the essential point is that it is a choice within a totally human situation, not just the situation itself, that makes the man. In providing meaning to man as a significant being, the clarification of the condition of man is essentially that of description, interpretation, and explanation. Thus, we now turn to how this became articulated by examining what has come to be known as Sartre's atheistic existentialism. (Thereupon, we will supplement this examination by the literary works of Sartre and Camus.)

In October, 1945, Sartre presented a lecture to the Club Maintenant in Paris entitled, "L'Existentialisme est un Humanisme" (Existentialism is a Humanism") which was well attended and favorably received. We learn from Thody

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<sup>1</sup>Heinemann, op. cit., p. 115.

that "it was delivered under rather exceptional circumstances at the height of the vogue for existentialism [and that] the room where it was delivered was so crowded that fifteen people fainted and thirty chairs were broken."<sup>1</sup> In the following year, the essay was published in book form and met with immediate success, as indicated by the sale of 120,000 copies.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of this talk was to defend existentialism against its attackers--notably, the Catholics and Communists --by refuting their charges that existentialism was "unduly pessimistic" and prone to "quietism." As we shall see, existentialism can be characterized as "rugged individualistic" adventure and encounter in daily concrete situations, whereby the formulation of Sartre's "doctrine" of "existence precedes essence" takes on new meaning and demands. As such, Sartre attempts to posit a doctrine that permits human life as well as to declare "that every truth and every action implies a human setting and a human subjectivity."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Phillip Thody, Jean-Paul Sartre: A Literary and Political Study (New York: Macmillan Co., 1960), p. 253. In addition, Simone de Beauvoir relates that 5,000 people attended what I take to be Sartre's talk at the Club Maintenant in her book entitled The Mandarins (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1956), p. 222.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.; this essay was translated into English by B. Frechtman under the title of Existentialism (New York: Philosophical Library, 1947). The same work also appears in Jean-Paul Sartre, Existentialism and Human Emotions (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957), pp. 9-51.

<sup>3</sup>Sartre, Existentialism and Human Emotions, p. 10.

This element of human subjectivity sets man apart from objects that are manufactured--e.g., a book, house, etc.--for man is a subject who becomes aware of himself, reflects on himself, intends or plans for the future, and creates his own being through the free choice of his projects. With man, "existence precedes essence" and this can be true only of man. Sartre gives the example of a paper-cutter, a material object, in contrast to man, a conscious subject. Thus, a paper-cutter is first conceived of in the form of a design, an idea in the mind, and only then is produced and manipulated as an object in the performance of some specified function for which it was designed. Hence, "essence precedes existence" for those objects as things that are manufactured from an idea or design. In contrast to a fabricated object, man exists first and only then does he possess an essence in the sense of what he is going to be, in becoming his authentic self, but his being (essence) is not predetermined by any superior artisan (God) or universal concept (Kant) or by any other absolute, determining preconception or promulgation that demands an unchangeable structure of essences. Sartre depicts the condition, not essence, and meaning of man as follows:

. . . First of all, man exists, turns up, appears on the scene, and, only afterwards, defines himself. If man, as the existentialists conceive him, is indefinable, it is because at first he is nothing. Only afterward will he be something, and he himself will have made what he will be. Thus, there is no human nature, since there is no

God to conceive it. Not only is man what he conceives himself to be, but he is also only what he wills himself to be after this thrust toward existence. Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself. Such is the first principle of existentialism.<sup>1</sup>

At this point, we might as well face squarely the implications of Sartre's idea that (1) God does not exist, and (2) his refusal to accept the functional and spiritual power of a mythical concept of God. Let us first note that he, following Nietzsche's lead, reasserts in Being and Nothingness that "God is dead" insofar as "everything happens as if the world, man, and man-in-the-world succeeded in realizing only a missing God."<sup>2</sup> Hence, the death of God, for Sartre, meant that there is no longer any absolute (e.g., God, theology, psychoanalysis, government) to which man can appeal for certitude, reality, meaning, and value. Man, since "God is dead," regains his true existence by creating his own raison d'être through the actions or projects that he alone chooses. Thus, Barnes contends that the answers to the above two questions may be clearly given, though Sartre himself has not posed and answered them. She relates that Sartre "rejects the notion that God actually exists because the idea appears to him false on logical grounds."<sup>3</sup> The "logical grounds" that she talks about

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 15. Cf. Barrett's analysis of the "existence precedes essence" issue of priority, op. cit., pp. 101-110; here, the relevance of this issue and its affinity to the "Sociology of Knowledge" is apparent but not articulated

<sup>2</sup>Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 623.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. xxxiv.



dictate that the existence of God cannot be demonstrated because a concept of a being which is by itself and is its own cause is structurally inconceivable and logically contradictory. In short, logic cannot lead to the affirmation that God exists.

Sartre, we have said, denies the possibility of transcending the generic, existential human experience. Anything beyond this is supernatural, meta-human; therefore, we again find no assistance either from logic or empirical demonstration. Progressing, we become aware from Barnes' account that:

He [Sartre] refuses the myth [of a concept of God regardless of its inspirational or functional power] partly because of his stern conviction that we must face reality and not hide behind myths which tend to blur the sharp edge of the human dilemma. He refuses it also because it is, at least he believes, inevitably accompanied by a belief in absolutes and a theory of a human nature which would determine our destiny, because it conceals the fact that each man must discover and affirm his own values, that there is nothing to guarantee the permanent validity of any one set of ideals as compared with another.<sup>1</sup>

We have included this brief discussion at this point because (1) Sartre's "interpretation of existence postulates the pursuit of God"<sup>2</sup> (i.e., the desire of man to be God), and (2) with no God to support, aid, and justify man's existence, man has absolute freedom in creating his own essence

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

in the projects that he chooses even though this involves man's total responsibility for them.<sup>1</sup>

As indicated above, man is not subordinate to any idea of essence; he exists insofar as he creates his own essence in the projects of his free choice. For Sartre, this constitutes one of the meanings of subjectivism; the second meaning, then, is that "it is impossible to transcend human subjectivity."<sup>2</sup> In what follows, Sartre summarizes the meaning and implication of this notion of human subjectivity which differentiates man from inert and self-contained objects:

For we mean that man first exists, that is, that man first of all is the being who hurls himself toward a future and who is conscious of imagining himself as being in the future. Man is at the start a plan which is aware of itself, rather than a patch of moss, a piece of garbage, or a cauliflower; nothing exists prior to this plan; there is nothing in heaven [or in a heaven of ideas as well]; man will be what he will have planned to be [the first meaning of human subjectivity]. Not what he will want to be. Because by the word "will" we generally mean a conscious decision, which is subsequent to what we have already made of ourselves. I may want to belong to a political party, write a book, get married;

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<sup>1</sup>The problem of freedom and evil is also given by Camus: ". . . either we are not free and God the all-powerful is responsible for evil. Or we are free and responsible but God is not all-powerful." For discussion, see Albert Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Plays, trans. Justin O'Brien (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), p. 42 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Sartre, Existentialism and Human Emotions, pp. 16-17.

but all that is only a manifestation of an earlier, more spontaneous choice that is called "will". But if existence really does precede essence, man is responsible for what he is. Thus, existentialism's first move is to make every man aware of what he is and to make the full responsibility of his existence rest on him. And when we say that a man is responsible for himself, we do not only mean that he is responsible for his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men. . . [which] is the essential [and second subjective] meaning of existentialism. . . . [This is so because] if we grant that we exist and fashion our image at one and the same time, the image is valid for everybody and for our whole age. Thus, our responsibility is much greater than we might have supposed, because it involves all mankind.<sup>1</sup>

Because man validates his being solely through meaning which he creates in his human situation, he finds himself a stranger, an outsider, in nature because of his unique and individual consciousness. Breisach notes that Sartre posits:

. . . the emergence of consciousness out of the world of beings as an established fact or primary position. . . [whereby] man is no longer safely imbedded in any whole; his being stands irrevocably separated from everything which surrounds him.<sup>2</sup>

In a world without preconceived meaning, preordained order, or ultimate justification as well as lacking any external support, aid, and security, man--in his total isolation from all other beings--is now capable of becoming the master, rather than a voiceless and manipulated object,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., italics added.

<sup>2</sup>Breisach, op. cit., p. 98.

of himself and of his human situation. In short, we can say that, for Sartre, man is the being who is what he is not and who is not what he is<sup>1</sup> in the Heideggerian sense whereby the condition and situation of man can be characterized as "no longer" what he was but is "not yet" to the point of complete fulfillment of his authentic existence; man is constantly making himself. Hence, he transcends his present situation in the creation of cognizant possibilities, and his present being has meaning only in reference to the future toward which he intends, creates, and projects himself. As the trajectory of a bullet, an arrow, or any projectile is not determined precisely at a specified, immobile point at a particular time in its kinematic path, so it is with man; he is or exists in the present, but he is always beyond himself by striving for this or that object to be possessed, allocated, manipulated, or used.

Our above discussion constitutes a brief insight into one aspect of Sartre's idea of Being: consciousness which is transcendental of human existence by its very nature. As such, consciousness is coextensive with Being-for-itself which Sartre calls pour-soi, the authentic being of man, whereby he creates meaning out of an absurd and orderless world in an attempt to realize those possibilities available to him. Sartre's literary and philosophical works relate

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p. 95. <sup>1</sup>Cf. Sartre, Existentialism and Human Emotions,

that man is nothing more than what he has done and what he is doing to eventuate his created meaning, value, and possibility. In this sense, his philosophy is harsh, demanding, and activistic; it is "rugged individualism" par excellence.

If man is the being "who is what he is not and who is not what he is," there is also the possibility, however, that man will eschew the demand of creating his own meaning whereby he is no longer the master of himself and his world. In this case, we find that man is not an authentic being, but rather, he is that of a mere self-contained, de trop object, an inauthentic being (Being-in-itself or Sartre's en soi),<sup>1</sup> for he denies his potentiality or refuses to accept his responsibility of the creation of meaning wherein man makes himself; insofar as man evades his freedom, he is guilty of "bad faith," of "self-deception."<sup>2</sup>

We have seen that man is what he makes of himself and that he alone is responsible for what he is and for what he does. How then, it might be asked, can man really exist inauthentically? As briefly noted above, the answer, for Sartre, is simple: man does nothing, he exists in the manner of any other self-contained, nonconscious being, such as a tree, a posie, a katydid. In this case, man finds refuge in the security, comfort, and identity provided by

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Sartre, Being and Nothingness, pp. 88-89, 59-60, and 83.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 44-45, 47-70.

the various "isms," dogmas, and systems of ideas that specify and point to a way of life in unambiguous terms. Man gets carried away into the "mainstream"--i.e., a stagnant condition--of compulsive conformity and routine, into that which is considered to be the "normal-way," the adjusted life within the "sane society." No longer is there a mystery as to what is acceptable, legitimate, and desirable. Nevertheless, "to live and to pretend to be an en-soi is to live in estrangement from what one can be;"<sup>1</sup> existence, as such, is both jejune and pusillanimous.

In addition to the prescribed and acceptable patterns of behavior that are provided by agents or agencies external to the individual, which comfort and secure the feeling that one has a definite niche in the world--in contradistinction to the continual individual struggle to create his meaning and world--there are certain "basic dispositions that grip him and remind him of the futility of his endeavor to escape the freedom he is."<sup>2</sup>

These dispositions, among many, are contingency, anxiety, forlornness, and despair.<sup>3</sup> We have heretofore referred to them without specifying the implications that stem from them. These dispositions or fundamental exper-

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<sup>1</sup>Breisch, op. cit., p. 98.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>3</sup>Sartre, Existentialism and Human Emotions, pp. 18-

iences are not mere capricious moods, feelings, emotions, or expressions of the irrational. Rather, we find that "they are dispositions in which the full dimensions of human life become visible."<sup>1</sup> The point is that even though some rationality is evinced in these basic, personal experiences, reason alone is unable to comprehend their completeness and full importance.

Existentialism does not discard these dispositions simply because they are unpleasant to recognize. Instead of avoiding or repressing them, one must become aware and deal with them, for man does encounter them in the drama of life regardless of his choice to abnegate or abrogate them. More importantly, however, these dispositions, when taken in the existentialist perspective, permit man to recognize himself for what he is--a contingent, temporal, but noble being. "Existentialism is a personalistic philosophy in the sense of always being concerned with the whole, the living person."<sup>2</sup> The emphasis on these experiences occurs because they constitute significant dimensions in each person's existence.

Contingency is one such basic experience. Man becomes aware of his own fragility in a world that is foreign to him and wherein man encounters his finitude, temporality, and

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<sup>1</sup>Breisach, op. cit., p. 192.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 192-93.

death. Man initially exists, appears on the scene, but without his approbation or disapprobation (in this sense, Sartre claims that man is condemned to absolute freedom and responsibility<sup>1</sup>). As we have noted on numerous occasions, the French "world-situation" that many encountered prior to, during, and especially after World War II was one of turbulence, ambiguity, anxiety, uncertainty, despair, and disillusionment. Life in those times confronted man daily with the possible annihilation of his being, and if he did survive, he encountered a number of inescapable, hostile forces that prevented or hindered his endeavor to find meaning in life; all too often, the unending maze that he dealt with was that of hardship, terror, and acute disappointment.

Death, we know, is an event which faces all men though it is uncertain as to its precise moment;<sup>2</sup> it is both a terminal and personal event for, as yet, no one can die by

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59. <sup>1</sup>Sartre, Existentialism and Human Emotions, pp. 52-

<sup>2</sup>For a discussion of the problems and attempts to define both the "certainty" and "time" of death in a bureaucratic institution, see Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, "Dying on Time," Trans-action, XII, No. 4 (May-June, 1965), 27-31. For an engaging science fiction account of deferring all temporal satisfactions based on self-imposed poverty--having diverse sociological consequences, such as the demise of war, religion, competitive sports, social entertainment, as well as changes in political and economic power concentrations--for assurance of "inter-life" mobility and thus immortality via human "deep-freezing," see C. D. Simak, Why Call Them Back from Heaven? (New York: Ace Books, 1967). The existential perspective, however, remains firmly attached to the immediate situation rather than focusing on future "bliss" achieved through suspended animation, metempsychosis, or heavenly entry.



proxy.<sup>1</sup> Breisach relates in what follows that instead of romanticizing the event of death, it is transformed into:

. . . The great force which can lead to an ennobling of man's life. Indeed it is one of the paradoxes of existentialism that by giving finitude a central place, it transforms death into an enchantment of life. . . . Whether death is viewed as a purely natural event, the harvest of what has grown from seed to full-fledged plant, or as an incidental termination of a meandering life, it is deprived of its full impact. It is denied its role of making for a human life which at every moment is filled with an intensity of experience derived from the awareness that every moment is precious because in it a decision is made as to each individual's authenticity. The finitude of man's existence is actually that quality without which he would senseless vegetate--if in this case he could be called a man at all. . . . [Contingency and finitude] alone initiates man's wondering about the meaning of life, projects him out of superficial comfort, and is the major challenge to an authentic life. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Whereas Kierkegaard asserted that the fact and experience of contingency pointed to the bifurcation between man--the finite being--and God,--the absolute being--Sartre "takes it as a challenge to man to become man in his short sojourn

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<sup>1</sup>Breisach, op. cit., p. 193.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 193-94. For a different view, of course, we can learn from the Stoics that death is nothing; that is, when I am, death is not, and when death is, I am not. Certainly, the existentialists deny the legitimacy of this passive attitude and approach to one of the most basic concerns of human existence, for man reacts in relation to this certainty of life-termination even though the precise time is uncertain. See, for example, Sartre's depiction of the confrontation of death experienced by three prisoners in his short story, "The Wall" in W. Kaufman (ed. and trans.), Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre (New York: World Publishing Co., 1956), pp. 223-40.

in this absurd world."<sup>1</sup>

Another disposition or basic experience is anxiety (often called anguish), which is closely allied to contingency. It is imperative to note the distinction between the social scientists' idea of anxiety from that of the existentialists. The former view anxiety as the result of maladjustment, whereby man does not adequately learn or act according to certain specified and expected patterns of appropriate behavior. As such, anxiety may result when institutional means are inaccessible or unavailable for the express purpose of achieving certain goals.<sup>2</sup> Or again, anxiety may be considered as a deviation from the "normal," the adjusted life, whereby anxiety may result from an inability to know of or conform to the legitimate, proper, and desirable patterns of behavior.

For the existentialist's notion of anxiety, we learn from Breisach that anxiety is not:

. . . explainable as a vague fear of physical nonsurvival or as a product of experiences resulting from incomplete adjustment. . . . Anxiety is linked to the emerging awareness of nothingness. . . . Always nothingness is experienced in the contingency of man's life and with it as the awesome certainty of the "not to be," an experience not to be forgotten because of its supposed unpleasantness

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<sup>1</sup>Breisach, op. cit., p. 193; cf. Sartre, Existentialism and Human Emotions, pp. 60-67.

<sup>2</sup>For discussion, see Robert K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (2d ed. rev.; New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1957), pp. 121-94.

but on the contrary to put at the core of man's life. Nothingness in this sense becomes the great positive force in man's life through its challenge to live authentically. With it anxiety is no longer the feeling of being threatened in one's physiological survival but is transformed into one of the most important guides man has to what he is beyond his organic life. Consequently, anxiety is the call to become oneself rather than the signal for an increased or improved conformity.<sup>1</sup>

One must, in Sartre's view, never fail to bear in mind that the human condition is one of freedom, choice, engagement, and responsibility. Herein, the problematic condition of man is man himself--in his paradox, in his contradiction, in his dialectic.<sup>2</sup> That is to say, in each aspect of life there is happiness but also sorrow and the absurd,<sup>3</sup> there is the positive but also (indeed because of) the negative, and there is the perpetual opposition to and reconciliation of freedom that is both painful and glorious.<sup>4</sup>

Man is free, we have noted, because he is conscious, makes decisions, and can act on that basis. However, it is evident also that this freedom can produce a deep, unsettling experience of anxiety. Anxiety or anguish means,

<sup>1</sup>Breisach, op. cit., pp. 195-96.

<sup>2</sup>Négatités is the term that Sartre uses for kinds of human experiences (or realities) and objects of judgment which blend the negative and positive (in which negation is the condition of positivity) such as absence, change, otherness, repulsion, regret, distraction; see Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup>Camus, op. cit., p. 90.

<sup>4</sup>Barrett, op. cit., p. 246.

then, that man can never know the goodness or correctness of his choice nor escape the consequent burden or responsibility of that choice; man cannot be sure when his responsibility is complete since there is no handbook or study-guide available to tell one what his responsibility is or when it is complete. Since no proofs, signs, or assurances are to be found a priori, man still is forced to make up his mind--to make decisions--and this entails risks and consequences. This is so even if one may be blamed (or praised) regardless of what he does. In this context Sartre provides the example of the military officer who experiences anguish when forced to make a battlefield decision:

. . . when a military officer takes the responsibility for an attack and sends a certain number of men to death, he chooses to do so, and in the main he alone makes the choice. Doubtless orders come from above, but they are too broad; he interprets them, and on this interpretation depend the lives of ten or fourteen or twenty men. In making a decision he can not help having a certain anguish. All leaders know this anguish. That doesn't keep them from acting; on the contrary, it is the very condition of their action. . . .<sup>1</sup>

From the above, it is apparent that one's existence, if free, is one of continuous choice and responsibility; man is what he makes of himself; his life is nothing else but the sum total of his acts.<sup>2</sup>

Another point, however, is that this highly demanding,

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21. <sup>1</sup>Sartre, Existentialism and Human Emotions, pp. 20-

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 15, 32-33, 36, 49, 59.

rugged individualistic venture into an "unconditional acceptance of an absolute, objective uncertainty" is just too difficult and painful for many people to bear; the price of freedom is too high. The result, says Sartre, is that they try to flee or escape from freedom.<sup>1</sup> Instead of the quest for freedom, many men search for identity, meaning, security, or community in which pre-established issues and answers are already provided. Thus, in order to "escape from the freedom of the lonely crowd," a man may become a "true believer"<sup>2</sup> of some externally created value, belief, or project, or he may avoid making painful choices by fetishily following the pattern of compulsive conformity and adherence to societal dictates.

While we will have more to say about the "escape from freedom" at the conclusion of this chapter, we point out here that while many men attempt to escape from freedom, many others find their lives devoid of meaning as a result of the oppressiveness of rationalism and the abstractness of life evidenced in modern bureaucratic and technocratic society. Man becomes viewed as an object as well as manipulated and used as an instrument to some end not of his choosing. Again, the reestablishment of the free individual becomes possible insofar as he recognizes the situation

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 18, 46-47.

<sup>2</sup>Eric Hoffer, The True Believer (New York: New American Library, 1958).

for what it is, namely, nothingness; it is not eternal and necessary but temporal and contingent.

It is precisely thus [says Sartre] that the for-itself apprehends itself in anguish; that is, as a being which is neither the foundation of its own being nor of the Other's being nor of the in-itselfs which form the world, but a being which is compelled to decide the meaning of being--within it and everywhere outside of it. The one who realizes in anguish his condition as being thrown into a responsibility which extends to his very abandonment has no longer either remorse or regret or excuse; he is no longer anything but a freedom which perfectly reveals itself and whose being resides in this very revelation.<sup>1</sup>

The last two dispositions to be noted are forlornness and despair. We have already given extensive treatment to Sartre's idea of forlornness: since "God is dead," man is totally free and responsible for his acts that he chooses. Man is alone, without any comfort, aid, or security and is thereby obligated to create his meaning continuously; man is abandoned and is forced to decide the meaning of his existence.

The meaning of despair is that man must act on less than certainty. Since he has to act on inadequate evidence, he cannot tell or figure out all of the consequences; hence, man must rely on the "ensemble of probabilities which make our action possible."<sup>2</sup> Furthermore: "man should act with-

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<sup>1</sup>Sartre, Existentialism and Human Emotions, p. 59; for Sartre's more formal treatment of anguish, see his Being and Nothingness, pp. 29-45.

<sup>2</sup>Sartre, Existentialism and Human Emotions, p. 29.

out hope for any meaning and regularity in the world other than what he introduces."<sup>1</sup> Hence, man no longer can rest at ease or feel "at home" under the security and comfort of any "ism," philosophical system, social institution, or daily routine for all of them may eventually turn out to be not only illusory and oppressive but the annihilation of man himself. In the matter of man's attempt to validate his being, it is he alone who is responsible for this endeavor of being aware, of choosing, of active engagement; no surrogate can ever take this yoke of responsibility that befalls man.

For Sartre, it is always the concern for the unique individual and the immediacy of his experience in a thoroughly human situation. Man's true and ultimate choice is between nihilism or the regeneration of himself for if "God is dead," as asserted by Sartre (and Nietzsche), it is up to man to provide meaning, reason, and purpose in his world. Thus, Sartre, one may contend, goes beyond what Green maintains, namely, that "existentialism does not go beyond the position of the early Nietzsche, where we are faced, ethically with a choice of honest despair or self-deceiving hope."<sup>2</sup> The point is that Sartre's message was to challenge men out of the abyss of despair and disenchantment, and

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<sup>1</sup>Breisch, op. cit., p. 101.

<sup>2</sup>Green, op. cit., p. 149.

rather than to articulate to man a "self-deceiving hope," Sartre asserts that there is no ultimate hope or justification for man in the traditional eschatological sense. Nevertheless, man's challenge and hope is in the creation of meaning in a world without pre-set meaning or purpose. On the level on which the "spirit of seriousness" chooses to live--i.e., the quest to conform and adjust to the external dictates which provide a false sense of security--"life is absurd, but the absurdity consists precisely in maintaining life at this level."<sup>1</sup>

Finally, we can now specify the demands that are endemic to the challenge of existentialism whereby man can authenticate his being:

There is first the challenge to overcome one's inertia, present in the temptation not to decide, not to act or at least to follow slavishly suggestions by various agencies of certainty in order to avoid the struggle true decisions require. Second, the challenge to accept one's uniqueness rather than to betray it at every moment for the sake of comfort. Related to this, third, is the demand that one fulfill one's potentialities [Sartre's idea of transcendence]. . . . In every case man is never finished, he is never that which he is at a given moment. Lastly, . . . he must decide and act with a strong sense of personal involvement.<sup>2</sup>

Hence, man revolts against the oppressive and debilitating social forces as well as against the pressurizing social

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<sup>1</sup>Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. xlii; italics added.

<sup>2</sup>Breisach, op. cit., p. 223.



agencies that prevent or hinder his attainment of authenticity. Man must first recognize his truly human condition whereupon he ventures out in self-chosen projects. The ultimate demand of Sartre's challenge to man is the call to action, a total commitment to and engagement in action. From a point of nothingness, which faces all men at one time or another, appears the basis for the will to action in which man's destiny is within himself since "the only hope is in his acting and that action is the only thing that enables man to live."<sup>1</sup> Rather than to resolve oneself to a meaningless world and to "quietism," man involves himself by acting on the aphorism, "Nothing ventures, nothing gained." Sartre relates in summary fashion:

Quietism is the attitude of people who say, "Let others do what I can't do." The doctrine I am presenting is the very opposite of quietism, since it declares, "There is no reality except in action." Moreover, it goes further, since it adds, "Man is nothing else than his plan; he exists only to the extent that he fulfills himself; he is therefore nothing else than the ensemble of his acts, nothing else than his life."<sup>2</sup>

The key for overcoming oppression, estrangement, despair, and the life is solely in the free choice and commitment to whatever type of action that is made personally meaningful. In short, Sartre's existentialism explains

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<sup>1</sup>Sartre, Existentialism and Human Emotions, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 31-32.

man's place in the universe, whereby he is given a definite meaning in it as the basic unit of measure and the creator of values; hence, self-worth and predictability may be attained in times of crises and uncertainty.

The call to action through  
existential literature

Sartre.--Through literature, as it is in his philosophical treatises, Sartre's aim is to stress the human condition, man's freedom, and to explicate the implications of that freedom. His message never wavers from one of protest and challenge; most important of all, it was to reestablish the value of the individual and to articulate the basis of authentic being: conscious choice, freedom, commitment, and engagement. The distinction between en-soi (in-itself) and pour-soi (for-itself) again is pertinent: en-soi is the non-conscious being which rests in itself or is what it is, such as a tree, a rock or a poseur; pour-soi is that being which is conscious of itself or "coextensive with the realm of consciousness" and of such a nature as to enable man to transcend himself.<sup>1</sup>

We have seen that, for Sartre, man disallows and bastardizes his being whenever he looks beyond his inward subjectivity for his freedom--i.e., the act of "bad faith;" whenever man surrenders and becomes enslaved to his past--

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<sup>1</sup>See Sartre, Being and Nothingness, pp. 79-102; Tiryakian, op. cit., pp. 131-33.

e.g., to his "bundle of drives," instincts, philosophical systems, or any other pre-set essential structure; and whenever man becomes the victim of his own self-deception rather than the victor over his mode of activity or pursuit-object.

Rather than allow man to be an en-soi in which he is unaware of himself as a unique, conscious person, a highly valued "single-one," the literature of existentialism demands that man provide meaning and purpose in his human situation. Thus, in Sartre's book, Nausea, man (Roquentin) becomes so forcefully aware of his existence as nothingness and of his vacuous role in society, that he feels overwhelmingly insignificant in a de trop (absurd) world that even slimy, lifeless objects crush or overpower him. Sartre's hero, Roquentin, realizes that:

Being in general and he himself in particular are de trop; that is, existence itself is contingent, gratuitous, unjustifiable. It is absurd in the sense that there is no reason for it, no outside purpose to give it meaning, no direction. Being is there, and outside it --Nothing.<sup>1</sup>

In Being and Nothingness Sartre relates that man all too often fails to inwardly reflect on his raison d'etre, and consequently, he exists solely as an object for "others." Here again, the concept of nausea refers to the "revelation of my body to me and of the fact of my inescapable connec-

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<sup>1</sup>Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. xvii.

tion with Being-in-itself;"<sup>1</sup> en-soi is only that which is --nothing, inert, self-contained, absurd. Nevertheless, man is, he exists, and thereby must choose the way of his being. In the Cartesian fashion of doubting everything that is not absolutely clear and distinct, Sartre's notion of nausea is a reaction against:

The selfish quietude of a life and forces the mind to start abruptly again ex nihilo and to revise all its values. . . . The veneer of falsehood, which concealed authenticity in things and persons, is scraped off. From mere existence, the victim, who is also the victor, of the nausea passes on to being and reaches toward his own essence.<sup>2</sup>

And further on, Peyre cites Sartre's acerbic, symbolical revolt against the oppressive external social forces and sanctities--e.g., the bourgeoisie:

Farewell, beautiful lilies, elegantly enshrined in your painted sanctuaries, goodbye, lovely lilies, our pride and our reason for living! Good-by, you bastards (salauds)!<sup>3</sup>

Here, then, the implication is clear: there are no values external to man, and he is free from any obligation to fulfill any pre-set idea of what it is to be man. He exists insofar as he makes himself in the creation of meaning and purpose, in which he is no more, but no less, than what he is and what he does freely and responsibly for his

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. xvii and lxi-lxvii.

<sup>2</sup>Henry Peyre, The Contemporary French Novel (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), pp. 224-25.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 225.

own mode of existence. The essential point is that out of nothingness in which one experiences the absurd, the boredom of his existence, etc., man revolts by asserting his freedom. Indeed, man qua man can always revolt by saying No. Always, the existentialist's concern is in relation to the individual's existence, so it comes as no surprise that the existential literature, as a mode of action, consistently stresses the need to preserve the immediacy of those experiences--nausea, absurdity, anxiety, risk, boredom, despair, nothingness, death, etc.--that man feels in his daily sojourn through life, for an awareness of them forces man to "take conscious stock" of himself to where he may then begin to strive for authentic existence. Only then is man able to overcome his alienated condition.

Camus.--Closely allied to the ideas of the absurd and the contingent, which are the themes of Nausea (and of relevance in Being and Nothingness), is Albert Camus' literary work: Caligula, The Myth of Sisyphus, and The Stranger, among others. Contrary to Camus' assertion that he is no existentialist,<sup>1</sup> we can feel justified in including him as at least sympathetic to existential ideas and to the style of life it suggests. We indicated above (under the "Social Setting") that one of the basic themes of existentialism might be depicted as follows: to exist is to suffer, to be

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<sup>1</sup>Albert Camus, "Non, je ne suis pas existentialiste," Les Nouvelles Litteraires, November 15, 1945.

in agony, to die; to survive is to find meaning in suffering, agony, and death. We can now see that Camus has a much closer link to existentialism even though he asserted, "Non, je ne suis pas existentielle" for he repeatedly articulated his concern (before his untimely and absurd death in 1960) with the existing individual and his struggle to assert himself against intolerant and coercive systems of any kind--e.g., nationalism, fascism, racism, colonialism, bureaucraticism, positivism, and so on.

Another link that identifies Camus with existentialism is his contention that man is an alien, a stranger, in a world without aim, meaning, benevolence; man is alone, without external verities to guide him, so that he alone is responsible for creating his values. Thus, Camus shares the general assumptions of existentialism: "the death of God, unconcern for essence and stress on existence, the absurd, humanism in the sense that the man freed from belief in God must love and serve men all the better, and so forth."<sup>1</sup> Consequently, we shall consider his existential thought expressed in the above mentioned literary works. Categorizing Camus as an existentialist is primarily for our convenience, although the category is not deemed absolute or even necessary; we are interested in what he had to say to those who yearned for the guidance he provided directly or indirectly.

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<sup>1</sup>Peyre, op. cit., p. 243 fn.

(We might add that he certainly does not agree with Sartre's thinking at all times--e.g., their differences over the forced labor camps in Russia; however, both may be said to be in agreement concerning the positive value of man and, at the same time, pessimistic concerning the destiny of man.)

Central to Camus' thinking is the concept of the absurd, whereby life is without hope and without clarity of purpose; myths and illusions may be functionally beneficial, one could say, when routines are harmoniously ordered and all is copesetic, but the plunge to the profound depths of despair after their collapse warrants their fraudulent exposure in their incipient stage so that man may then realistically recognize the "world-situation" for what it is--irrational, absurd, contingent. (In this context one will recall the despair of the Frenchmen when the myth of "another Munich will save us from war" collapsed; when the myth of the "impenetrable Maginot Line" collapsed.)

We have noted that the political instability that plagued France from 1789 onward led to the appearance of every conceivable form of government, none of them of lasting duration.<sup>1</sup> Again, man and his human situation are not eternal

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<sup>1</sup>For additional discussion, see Pertinax, *op. cit.*, p. 565 ff.; on page 568, he enumerates them: ". . . an absolute and (for a few days) a liberalized form of imperial power, constitutional monarchy, an almost socialist republic, a reactionary republic degenerating into dictatorship, an authoritarian empire, a government of national defense imposed by the Parisian mob under the fast growing shadow of German invasion, a National Assembly with the Commune at its heels, a conservative republic, a radical republic, a popular-front republic, and, under the fire of the enemy, a counter-revolution. . . ."

and necessary but only temporal and contingent. As Sartre noted that "man knows himself as a Nothingness" until he recognizes himself as a subjective, free person, Camus asserts the need for an awakening to the fact that his "secure" world gives no ultimate answer to the question of why some event or situation occurs in such and such a way. What is the meaning of man's "know-how"--i.e., skill--in a world that is becoming increasingly conquerable by science, technology, etc. when man does not "know that"--the reason, purpose, value, and so on--of his being and where he is going.<sup>1</sup> Peyre provides the meaning and implications of these basic questions in reference to the concept of absurdity:

Man wants rationality, and he is faced everywhere by the irrational. He is impelled by the will to control and steer his fate, but he is chained by blind and evil forces. He is athirst for freedom, fraternity, solidarity, and everywhere he encounters a selfish social order, a dried-up bureaucracy, a mechanized world readied for the impersonal slaughter of modern war. Man waits for a voice from Heaven but receives only the answer of eternal silence. He feels dissonant in this cruel world (dissonance is the original meaning of absurdity), de trop, unwanted and insignificant, and the temptation of suicide follows fast upon the realization of such all-pervading absurdity.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Cf., among others, Barrett, op. cit., pp. 1-10, 23-41, 268-80; J. Nehru, "The Tragic Paradox of our Age," in A.P. Grimes and R.H. Horwitz, Modern Political Ideologies (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 194-203; E. Fromm, The Sane Society (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1955).

<sup>2</sup>Peyre, op. cit., pp. 241-42.



Camus would say, however, that man is never justified in succumbing to the temptation of a permanent flee from life or in subscribing to this sincere form of self-criticism, for he would thereby consent to the absurd; rather than renounce life, man must defy, protest, revolt against the absurd (of injustice, suppression, senselessness, etc.) by transcending it in his daily struggle to assert and affirm his true self. Nevertheless, the absurd is always near at hand to confront man in "the discrepancy between man's aspirations and his possibilities, and to the lack of any ultimate, external justification of man and his projects."<sup>1</sup> Camus' literature as a mode of action points to man's available possibilities to modify and to improve the absurd situation that stifles him. The underpinning point is that Camus attempts to reappraise the concept of what it is to be man.

In Caligula, a play written in 1938 but produced in 1945, Camus' central theme focuses on the problem of suffering in a world without reason, without meaning, without justification. "Men die and they are not happy" is the lamenting cry of Caligula.<sup>2</sup> Through this acknowledgement one discovers the truth of his human existence, which is always tainted by the feelings of absurdity and misery of human life;

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<sup>1</sup>Hazel Barnes, The Literature of Possibility; A Study in Humanistic Existentialism (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1959), p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>Albert Camus, Caligula and Three other Plays, trans. S. Gilbert (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), p. 8.

the stage is then set for his spiraling plunge into despair.

Caligula is a historical figure, a Roman Emperor from A.D. 37-41, who discovers the basic absurdity of life upon the death of his sister (and mistress), Drusilla; the world is no longer satisfactory. Whereas he had been gentle and modest prior to Drusilla's death, he thereafter tyrannizes his subjects; he attempts to transform, by destroying, the nature of the traditional and acceptable values (e.g., he inverts the values of the good for evil and evil for good), and all certainties; and he tries to persuade and force all people to think of the world's absurd state of balance. In short, man can find nothing that is absolute and certain: "the basic quality of the absurd world is that it reinforces man's solitude and renders all actions equally unimportant and insignificant."<sup>1</sup>

Caligula confronts his world of nonmeaning and absurdity even though he does not conquer it. In fact, he is killed because he has not done so; he is adjudged by conventional forces and declared guilty for instilling despair among the young and for denying life of its meaning. While others failed to face an absurd world without meaning (Cherea) or were unwilling to deviate from a belief that viewed a harmonious world (Scipio), Caligula embodies two attitudes that are, for Camus, legitimate and partially positive:

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<sup>1</sup>Phillip Thody, Albert Camus: A Study of His Work (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1957), p. 17; Camus, op. cit., p. 11.

(1) the idea that man frees himself only when he recognizes that the world is meaningless in and by itself, and (2) the idea of revolt against, rather than submission to, the absurd which is essential to the self-realization of one-self.<sup>1</sup> Barnes provides a summary of and additional meaning to these two attitudes in relation to Caligula's attempt to "capture the moon" as a symbol of the impossible:

He pursues the impossible for the very reason that it is impossible. He has a need for the impossible because "things as they are do not seem to me satisfactory." . . . He realizes at the end that he will not have the moon and that all his efforts have merely resulted in referring him back to himself and the knowledge of his failure. Yet it is Camus' fundamental principle that man's grandeur and possible happiness lie in his refusal to give up his desire for the impossible. If man is to save himself, he must never cease to revolt against the limits of his condition at the same time that he refuses to pretend that they are not there.<sup>2</sup>

Here again, then, we find the recurring idea that man must not pretend that there are absolute values and fixed certitudes in a meaningless world; man is isolated from others and all of his hope for a rational universe and pursuit for certainties inescapably fade when one encounters the experiences of suffering, despair, and death.

Camus quickly emerged as a prominent literary figure with the publication of The Myth of Sisyphus (1940) and The Stranger (1942). He became an articulate spokesman

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<sup>1</sup>Barnes, op. cit., pp. 163-64.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 164; Camus, Caligula and Three other Plays, pp. 7-8.

for those who had encountered the events and conditions we described under "The Social Setting." Thody provides an indirect confirmation to our discussion by noting the reasons for Camus' rise to fame and leadership in those troubled and chaotic times:

[His] success is easily accounted for. His automatic assumption that life had no meaning, his denunciation of hope, his determined refusal of any comforting transcendence exactly fitted the mood of the time. Cataclysmic defeat had drifted into the monotony of occupation, the prospect of liberation seemed almost infinitely distant, and a philosophical view of the universe in which all paths to the future were rigorously closed and optimism suppressed, corresponded exactly to the historical situation of the French people. L'Etranger (The Outsider) conveyed the atmosphere of the time before the philosophical essay Le Mythe de Sisyphe (The Myth of Sisyphus) offered an analysis of it and suggested a provisional attitude to be adopted.<sup>1</sup>

In The Stranger,<sup>2</sup> for instance, Camus again<sup>3</sup> deals with the theme of absurdity by representing Meursault, the protagonist, as the victim of degenerate and hostile social forces. Meursault, who leads an uneventful life as an

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<sup>1</sup>Thody, Albert Camus. . ., p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Albert Camus, The Stranger, trans. S. Gilbert (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946).

<sup>3</sup>The existentialists prefer the word again to that of continues for they view each new experience as an affirmation or denial of their authentic existence rather than having any "carry-over" from previous decisions, commitments, or state of being. Man can neither "hold-on" to past glories nor entertain any idea of "doomed-failure;" the essence of the matter is that he exists insofar as he makes himself in the free choice of each of his projects.

uneventful life as an office clerk in Algiers, is portrayed as being, and remaining to his death, completely honest and indifferent to everything which should be important to him--i.e., his immediate physical and social environment--while others seem to be engrossed in a world of conformity, mediocrity, and myth.

The Stranger consists of two main parts: (1)

Meursault's prosaic and unemotional account of the events that took place after the death of his mother in a home for the aged, and (2) his detached and indifferent account while in prison awaiting trial and the consequences of the verdict.

In the first part, then, Meursault is granted time off from work to attend the funeral. At the funeral home, he is without sadness, remorse, affection but he is aware of the inconvenience and embarrassment, rather than grief, that comes over him. When it is suggested that he go out for dinner, he indifferently notes his lack of appetite, but he does accept a cup of coffee with cream. While yet sitting at his mother's casket, he wonders if it would be disrespectful to smoke and decides that there is no reason why he should not. The next day he meets Maria and together they, in turn, see a movie, go swimming, and go to bed. Again, he displays no "real" sign of affection or feeling. Meursault then reluctantly promises to help his new acquaintance, Raymond, who is having mistress-problems and is

threatened by her Arab brother. It is at the beach on the following day that Meursault accidentally kills the Arab.

The second half of the book relates Meursault's imprisonment, trial, conviction of premeditated murder, and pre-death attitude that in-the-end it is only life that is important--life and pleasure and natural beauty.

The tenor of the story relays Camus' idea that the world lacks a basic, coherent meaning and order. This is reflected throughout the story by Meursault's apathy and indifferent attitude towards life. He finds that the conventional values--e.g., family ties and affection, ambition, friendships, etc.--that others hold and cherish to be passing and insignificant. He is interested in life--in nature, in beauty, in sensuous pleasure--and this confirmation seals his date with death. This is his tragic fate in an aimless, pointless, and absurd world. One gets a fairly clear idea that Meursault is not convicted and executed because he had killed the Arab, for if this had been the case, a plea of self-defense could have been invoked. He is executed because he had not wept and played the conventional, expected, "bereaved" role at his mother's funeral.<sup>1</sup> After all, one could ask, what respectful son would desecrate the memory of his mother by having an illicit and indifferent "love affair" with a prostitute on the same weekend of his

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<sup>1</sup>Camus, The Stranger, p. 152.

mother's death? What about his response to his question of the appropriateness of smoking while sitting at his mother's casket and receiving condolences from those people "viewing the last remains"? What about his indifference concerning the "obituary" details? (He did not even know how old his mother was, but when pressed for an answer, he "guessed" that she must have been about sixty.) All of these issues led to his fateful destiny with death. Once again, Meursault is interested in the pursuit of happiness that consists of his immediate physical sensations. The absurdity of it all is that he condemned himself even though he was the one to face up to reality, to what he was, and to what he wanted out of life.

Thus, Meursault represents the hopelessness and aimlessness of man's situation in the world; he is a stranger, an outsider in an alien and hostile world. Even if he did not weep over the loss of his mother, Camus seems to ask if Meursault's insensitivity warrants his condemnation and execution when "others" mythologize their world of justice and concern for man. Here we see the vast gulf between the "lip-service" that many speak of in reference to traditional values and the difficult task of applying or incorporating these same values into concrete social action, in everyday life situations. Barnes provides an extended meaning of what we have indicated--Meursault as the absurd hero--by suggesting the following implications of The Stranger and

by citing Camus' statement from an unidentified source:

Evidently Camus intended to portray in Meursault not a poor individual who irritated society but a man who seriously threatened it. He is condemned because he will not play the game. And this is the explanation of the novel's title. "In this sense, he is a stranger to the society on whose outskirts he wanders, living his own private, lonely, sensual life." But in what way does he refuse to play the game?

[Barnes now goes on to cite Camus' statement.] "The answer is simple: he refuses to lie. Now, lying is not only saying what is not. It's also saying more than is, and in matters of human heart, more than we feel. We all do this everyday, in order to simplify life. Meursault, contrary to appearances, does not want to simplify life. He tells the truth, he refuses to exaggerate his feelings, and immediately society feels itself threatened. For instance, he is asked to say that he is sorry for his crime, according to the conventional formula. He answers that he experiences more annoyance on its account than genuine sorrow. And this nuance condemns him.

"So, for me, Meursault is not a mere drifter but a poor, naked human being, in love with that sun which casts no shadows. He is far from being completely without sensibility; a profound passion, though a tacit one, moves him--a passion for the absolute and for the truth. The truth at stake is as yet only negative, the truth of being and feeling. But without this truth, no conquest over oneself and over the world will ever be possible."<sup>1</sup>

Camus' main preoccupation is to herald the importance of man himself and to refuse the legitimacy of an inhuman and

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<sup>1</sup>Barnes, op. cit., pp. 177-78. The unidentified source referred to by Barnes apparently is Albert Camus, L'Étranger, eds. Germaine Brée and Carlos Lynes, Jr. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1955), for which Camus himself, at the request of the editors, wrote the Foreword, which was published for the first time in this edition (p.vi).



absurd world that strikes out against the autonomy of the individual in his self-choosen mode of existence. Nevertheless, there is no "eschatological" transcendence that man can look toward, for his life ends in the certainty of death, but, at the same time, man, through the awareness and experience of the absurd, can consciously experience the fullness of the present, the here and now life situation in all of its intensity and exhaustability.

In The Myth of Sisyphus<sup>1</sup> Camus expresses the same experience of absurdity that we discussed in The Stranger, but he also formulates a tentative attitude to be taken toward life. The entire essay, in fact, is an attempt to relate an attitude of constant refusal to the absurd and of contumacious perserverance to that destiny which man consciously chooses for himself. Let us note something about the reception of The Myth of Sisyphus by Camus' fellow Frenchmen. Thody remarks that:

The considerable success of the essay at the time of publication [1940]--and in the immediate post-war period--was due very much to the fact that in insisting upon the absurdity of the world, Camus was expressing the historical experience of his generation. . . [and of an] intellectual and emotional atmosphere. . . [of] despair and defeat.<sup>2</sup>

While it is apparent that Camus takes great pains in examining the philosophy of the absurd,<sup>3</sup> we are limiting

<sup>1</sup>Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus, pp. 88-91.

<sup>2</sup>Thody, Albert Camus . . ., p. 99.

<sup>3</sup>For a discussion of the philosophical premises, as well as Camus' "Logic of the Absurd," see Barnes, op. cit., pp. 164-70. For a critical examination, rather than in the

our discussion to the provisional attitude that Camus presents in relation to man's confrontation with the absurd. Indeed, it is this encounter with the absurd that forces man to decide either to commit suicide or to reaffirm the importance of his existence in three ways: (1) by revolting against the absurd, (2) by asserting his freedom to make himself in the projects of his choice, and (3) by becoming aware and engaging in the full intensity of experience, regardless of its quality: ". . . What counts is not the best living but the most living."<sup>1</sup> Hence, the individual chooses the mode of existence that has meaning for him. If life and the world is absurd in its aimlessness, pointlessness, and meaninglessness, then, it is the duty of man to assess the situation and to prescribe sense into it; thus, the revolt against the inanities that comprise the absurd life and human situation.

The above discussion leads us to consider Camus' depiction of Sisyphus as the symbol of absurdity.<sup>2</sup> Instead of picturing man in a fight against one meaningless disaster after another, Camus describes Sisyphus condemned to push a huge stone to the top of a mountain. It is a fight

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expressive merit, of Camus' philosophy of the absurd, see Thody, Albert Camus . . ., pp. 94-120. For Camus' own exposition, see The Myth of Sisyphus, pp. 3-48.

<sup>1</sup>Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus, pp. 38-48, especially p. 45.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 88-91.

without any hope for success because Sisyphus, when nearing the top of the hill, finds that the stone inevitably rolls back to the bottom. Though condemned to this task because of his defiance of the gods, Sisyphus represents not only the absurd hero, but also the grandeur of man. As Sisyphus decides in each new situation to roll the rock up the mountain, he consciously creates whatever meaning there is in what he is doing. In short, Camus is reaffirming the necessity of exhausting the availability of what is in the immediate here-and-now in its fullness rather than to hinge one's hope on any pollyanna-producing future; therein, man affirms his own individual importance, asserts the existence of his being, and overcomes his condition of alienation by finding meaning for life.

Sartre revisited.--What we have thus far encountered in the "call to action" can be appraised by noting Peyre's comment on Sartre's fiction (but it is equally appropriate for Camus' literary work as well):

The main postulates of Sartre's philosophy are to a certain extent present in his fiction. But they are no longer assertions dialectically presented; they are lived situations. There are no essences, and therefore no types, no general categories, no universal human nature, no harmonious consistency in man. There is no determinism, and man is not to be "explained" ponderously by all the shackles that bind him to his environment and to his past. Freedom alone, slowly and painfully conquered, can constitute an exit from a world that would otherwise be a purposeless, loveless, derelict abode of viscousness and cowardice.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Peyre, op. cit., p. 234.

We can now examine briefly Sartre's two plays that were first produced under the German Occupation--The Flies and No Exit. The Flies<sup>1</sup> is a play based on the Greek legend of Orestes who returns to the city of Argos and avenges the death of his father (Agamemnon) by killing his oppressive uncle (Aegisthus) and his crafty mother (Clytemnestra). In this play, then, Sartre deals with the myth of Orestes and the Furies (or the Flies).. Orestes eventually realizes that he is created free and thereby becomes the spokesman for the Sartrian view of freedom by revolting against the hostile forces, the Flies. which hinder and limit his freedom.

Barnes suggests that in The Flies Sartre is concerned with "the situation and the characters choice of themselves within the limits of the situation"<sup>2</sup> rather than in a literature of characters. Further on, she informs us that this play, as well as Sartre's other literary works, employs the use of myth and case history in addition to his comment on the social situation:

. . . Like any myth it takes up the question of man's place in the universe. In opposition to Aeschylus, who claimed that there is a divine Justice concerned about the affairs of men, Sartre's Orestes declares, "What do I care about Zeus? Justice is man's business, and I need no god to instruct me in it." . . . Sartre's hero leads a humanistic revolt against the whole concept of deity and says that man must make himself responsible for his destiny.

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<sup>1</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, No Exit and Three Other Plays, trans. S. Gilbert (New York: Albert A. Knopf, 1948) pp. 49-57.

<sup>2</sup>Barnes, op. cit., p. 21.

At the same time, although Orestes is in one sense any human being courageous enough to accept the full responsibility of being human, and while he cares enough about his fellow man to suffer for them voluntarily, still Sartre is concerned to show us the inner feelings of a man thus discovering himself [thus, Sartre's use of social or case history]. . . . Three positions of Sartre's [theory] are particularly delineated: the inevitable sense of futility in the man who tries to avoid in any way engaging or committing his freedom (Orestes in Act One); the anguish with which a man first realizes that his freedom is absolute and inescapable but paid for by estrangement from the world of nature (Orestes in Act Two); the concept of "bad faith" by which man tries to escape being responsible for himself (the townspeople throughout and Electra [who is Orestes' sister] in Act Three).

Finally, this humanistic doctrine of man's freedom is developed in such a way that the political reference is inescapable . . . [for] it is a plea to the French people to have the courage to work for national freedom against their oppressors. In a broader sense, it is also a manifesto for freedom against social or economic oppression. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Here we see that Zeus (or God) cannot determine human reality, that the world is, by implication, contingent, temporal, and meaningless, and that man can find freedom by becoming aware of the fact that the gods can give only illusory comfort--i.e., "Aegisthus, the German invader, and Clytemnestra, the French collaborator [e.g., the Church, the Vichy government] who accepted the invader and welcomed him in."<sup>2</sup> In short, The Flies is a literary work that contains the basic formulations of Sartre's existentialism which

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 22-23.

<sup>2</sup>Thody, Jean-Paul Sartre. . . , p. 73.

we discussed under his "Existentialism is a Humanism": that is, man is responsible for what he is and for what he does, since there are no absolute values outside of what man chooses in the creation of his projects; man is nothing else but the sum total of his acts.

In addition to a study of what constitutes "bad faith," Sartre's No Exit<sup>1</sup> graphically "illustrates his statement that the basis of any human relationship is a conflict of subjectivities, each trying ceaselessly to assert his own subjective supremacy by making of the other an object."<sup>2</sup> The three main characters--Garcin, Inez, and Estelle--in this one-act play are dead and find themselves in hell. Hell is not the Jonathan Edwardian hell of "fire and brimstone" but here on earth, in a hotel room. Though they are condemned to spend eternity in this locked room, the only punishment that is to be meted out is that which they inflict on each other in their triadic struggle that inevitably leads to tension, conflict, and suffering. Thody, in picturesque fashion, extends this thought and provides additional meaning to this pursuit of one, as subject, to possess the "other" as an object:

. . . [But] if by any miracle two people manage to reach some kind of co-operative coexistence, the arrival of a third person immediately destroys this harmony. This third person

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<sup>1</sup>Sartre, No Exit and Three Other Plays, pp. 1-48.

<sup>2</sup>Barnes, op. cit., pp. 27-28; cf. Tiryakian, loc. cit.

judges the couple, and they can no longer be content with the mutual reassurance that they had been giving to each other. Instead, each tries to captivate the third person's consciousness as well. Normally, when we are alive and constantly changing our projects, perpetually hoping to imprison new people in our world, we can avoid recognizing the really unbearable nature of all our relationships. Once we are dead, however, all hope disappears and we are forever given up to the critical and hostile judgement of other people. . . .

[Thus,] each of the characters in In Camera [i.e., No Exit] comes to be judged by the others not for what he or she tried to do or hoped to become, but for what he in fact did or was. As they gradually reveal the truth about themselves, all pretence is cut away, and the natural hell of human relations becomes a moral hell where they are punished for past cruelties, lies, and self-deception. Hell is like a self-service restaurant where no waiters are needed because the customers look after themselves. There is no need for tortures because hell, as Garcin realizes, is simply other people.<sup>1</sup>

At this point in our discussion of No Exit, we are able to clarify some of the threads presented earlier in the chapter: the situation of man, his dispositions, and the nature and remedy provided by Sartre.

Sartre's indictment against those who engage in "bad faith" rather than in what they do is clear: they forsake their inalienable right to be free for they are no longer aware of themselves as persons; they exist, as objects, in relation to how "others" think of them. Excuses that are made after death for failures in life's sojourn count for naught. Man's life is not judged by what he dreams, hopes,

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<sup>1</sup>Thody, Jean-Paul Sartre . . ., p. 80.

and expects but in what he has done or is doing in the immediate project of his choice. Hence, we come face to face with Sartre's vitriolic condemnation of those who seek excuses for their de trop existence behind the lifeless masks of the environment, the molding and shaping forces of society, the providence of the supernatural, or the fate of an inexorable past dominating and ruling the present.

Clearly, however, Sartre is not at issue, for instance, with G. H. Mead's account of the origin of the self arising in social experience.<sup>1</sup> The polemic centers not on the determinants of personality formation<sup>2</sup> in the early stages of one's life (or in the origin of one's socialized self), but on man's persistent denial to assume his contemporary function of asserting his freedom to establish the range of possible alternatives that are open to

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<sup>1</sup>Sartre, Existentialism and Human Emotions, pp. 15-17. While Sartre does not formally analyze the relation of the individual and society in Being and Nothingness, Tiryakian comments that Sartre does discuss this issue from the point of view of the "subjective self in relation to the social object, alter;" Tiryakian op. cit., p. 131; specifically, Sartre's discussion of the "we-subject" and "us-subject" is in Being and Nothingness, pp. 413-30.

<sup>2</sup>Two classic treatments of a conception of personality and its formation are "A Conception of Personality" and "The Formation of Personality" in C. Kluckholm, H. Murray, and D. Schneider, Personality in Nature, Society, and Culture (2d ed. rev. and enl.; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), pp. 3-67. In an attempt to place greater stress on the importance of the role of social structure in personality formation than that of the Kluckholm and Murray account, as well as to present an interdisciplinary approach to this general area of interest, see the recent presentation by J. Milton Yinger, Toward a Field Theory of Behavior (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), Part II.



him and to choose and engage in some meaningful act as well as to bear sole responsibility for his action.<sup>1</sup>

Sartre really seems to be saying that while man is determined, yet, he is determining; though he is acted upon, he is still a self-actuating being; he is shaped, molded, and formed by biological, environmental, and sociocultural variables, but, nevertheless, he can be no less than a shaper, molder, and formulator of his own destiny as well as responsible for his destiny.<sup>2</sup> In simple and unequivocal terms, we learn from Kaufmann just what this burden of responsibility entails:

All man's alibis are unacceptable: no gods are responsible for his condition; no original sin; no heredity and no environment; no race, no caste, no father, and no mother; no wrong-headed education, no governess, no teacher; not even an impulse or a disposition, a complex or a childhood trauma. Man is free; but his freedom does not look like the glorious liberty of the Enlightenment; it is no longer the gift of God. Once again, man stands alone in the universe, [and is solely] responsible for his condition. . . .<sup>3</sup>

From this perspective, then, we find the real meaning of his denunciatory reaction against the supreme value that is placed upon expediency and efficiency in which rationality reigns while reason plays an increasingly insignificant role in the matter of human affairs--i.e., in both public issues and private concerns. That is to say,

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 83.

<sup>2</sup>Sartre, Existentialism and Human Emotions, pp. 34-35.

<sup>3</sup>Kaufmann, op. cit., pp. 46-47.



for example, that industrial, commercial, and governmental pursuits are firmly grounded on the values of rationalism, abstractionism, and impersonalism. Hence, there is an increasingly precise calculation of the means in order to attain some specific end while the "average citizen" becomes lost in the larger organizational setting: he works, expropriates, votes, etc. but without any apparent idea of his contribution to, or control of, or power over the overall operation or outcome. In such instances workers are not considered as people but personnel; personnel that are to be allocated, manipulated, and used as necessary resources; they are not viewed as possessing unique qualities, needs, interests, and aspirations but become abstracted into dull, bald, and lifeless categories and statistics--e.g., the "labor force," our "manpower resources," unemployment rates, military forces, civilians. In short, they are viewed as instrumental, segmentalized "situational facilities" analogous to the usefulness of machines and capital for they permit or, at least, facilitate the realization of some desirable goal or objective.

Regnant evidence of this argument,<sup>1</sup> in one fashion or another, is contained in, though not limited to, the socio-

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<sup>1</sup>Peter Blau, Bureaucracy in Modern Society (New York: Random House, 1956). Also see J. Davis, "Existentialism: A Reaction to an Age of Organization," Western Political Quarterly, XVI (1963), 541-47.

logical literature. On a general level, we become aware of the categories dealing with social control, conformity, and socialization topics and more specifically in encountering G. H. Mead's "Me," Cooley's "Looking-Glass Self," Whyte's "Social Ethic," Fromm's "Automaton," Riesman's "Other-Directedness," C. W. Mills' "The Cheerful Robot," and so on.

Perhaps of equal importance or at least a very healthy complement to the above, the interpretation and assessment of the ascendancy and consequences of the previously noted "alter-orientation" to the "life-lab" have been soberly depicted in many fictional (and hence, grossly exaggerated and horrifying) novels; the two best known being, perhaps, Huxley's Brave New World and the very ultimate in Orwell's 1984. In all of these accounts one major theme is that the individuality, individual assertiveness, and personal worth of the individual become defeasible without recourse. At the same time, of course, this does not gainsay that pronounced differences of description, interpretation, and assessment appear in varying intensity and scope. For instance, Fromm, Orwell, and more important for our purposes, Sartre would hardly disaffirm Cooley's<sup>1</sup> notion that the categorized human infant becomes human, a social being, only in an on-going social order, namely, within the primary group of the family (or functional-surrogate group), play

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<sup>1</sup>Charles H. Cooley, Social Organization (New York: Scribner, 1902), p. 139.

group, and neighborhood.

Here the individual, in Mead's<sup>1</sup> thinking, forms his self out of a social experience as he acquires language, interacts with others, and learns to take the role of others. Again, Sartre readily grants and stresses the fact that man is born into a definite social and historical condition even though he had nothing to say about it; he comes upon the scene but not of his own choosing. However, Sartre would and does question the function performed by dedicated adherence and compulsive compliance to an "alter-orientation" in which collectivized man becomes "only an abstract fragment of man."<sup>2</sup> The value of man, the human man, can never be judged on the basis of his usefulness or contribution to the effectiveness and functioning of any social system; hence, it is necessary to reestablish man as his own measure.

This concern for man and his rightful role in society

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<sup>1</sup>Mead's idea of the distinction between the origin or emergence of the self and the functionally "autonomous" self is given in Anselm Strauss, (ed.), The Social Psychology of George Herbert Mead (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 217. It is interesting to note, too, that Durkheim had repeatedly insisted on this necessary differentiation between the origin and persistence or validity of phenomena. In rejecting the primacy of individualism and biologism, for instance, he had asserted in articulate and forceful fashion the importance and necessity of the group (society) for the emergence of the individual as a social being (in Meadian language, the society is essential for the development of the mind and self): Robert Nisbet, Emile Durkheim with Selected Essays (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1965), pp. 10-16, 49-59.

<sup>2</sup>Barrett, op. cit., p. 30.

is not new, for Socrates had indicated millennia ago that to fail to examine one's life is to have a life not worth living, and a failure to actively engage oneself in life is to have a life hardly worth living. Parenthetically, it is not the ultimate acquisition or finding of truth that is of utmost importance; rather, the critical importance lies in the contingent, ever-temporal, and persistent search for truth (or authentic truth). In this sense, then, truth is not to be thought of as a thing but as an expression of a dynamic, non-terminating process; there is no truth but only truths, one of which is man's existence. For Sartre, in this fundamental sphere of the problematic, man's existence is contralized in the immediate and contingent phenomenological present situation which, nevertheless, is the "simultaneous" attestation of his essence or being in, with, and of the world in which he is the measure; the measure, however, is certainly not one in which the need-dispositions become isomorphic in relation to the role-expectations in the Parsonian sense. In other words, the essence of man is his existence, for it is never completely forged or realized ("Man is the future of man"<sup>1</sup>). Here, in his consciousness, his choice, freedom, and responsibility man asserts, affirms, and realizes his authentic self, his dignity, his justification in the life-drama. Sartre,

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<sup>1</sup>Sartre, Existentialism and Human Emotions, p. 23.

in short, denies and rejects the legitimacy of an easy, static-free, gelatin-coated life of noncommitment and non-engagement. On the other hand, and in a positive vein, Sartre demands the absolute right to affirm life for what it is in his contingent, temporal, but chosen sojourn. Life, then, is absurd only to the extent that man, wholly or partially, relinquishes this inalienable human right.<sup>1</sup>

Regardless of the situation in which man finds himself, despicable and hopeless as it may seem, he can always react (choose, say no, revolt, rebel); indeed, Sartre says man must come to terms with this issue of being-for-itself by denying the legitimacy of external values, standards, and certitudes as well as to forsake excuse-ridden wishes, dreams, and good intentions. What is important is for man to venture out into some self-chosen endeavor, for if not, he is condemned as Garcin (in No Exit) who can never undo or justify his cowardly acts or evade the illusion that:

. . . For thirty years [says Inez] you dreamt you were a hero, and condoned a thousand petty lapses--because a hero, of course, can do no wrong. An easy method, obviously. Then a day came when you were up against it, the red light of real danger--and you took the train to Mexico.

Garcin: I "dreamt," you say. It was no dream. When I chose the hardest path, I made my choice deliberately. A man is what he wills himself to be.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. xlii.





Inez: Prove it. Prove it was no dream. It's what one does, and nothing else, that shows the stuff one's made of.

Garcin: I died too soon. I wasn't allowed time to--to do my deeds.

Inez: One always dies too soon--or too late. And yet one's whole life is complete at that moment, with a line drawn neatly under it, ready for the summing up. You are--your life, and nothing else.<sup>1</sup>

We now conclude our examination of "The Intellectual Setting." The attempt has been to show that French existentialism presented a message of hope and meaning for man in overcoming his alienated condition from God, nature, society, and himself by becoming aware of his inalienable, subjective being; by recognizing that man is the being who is what he is not and who is not what he is in his continual pursuit to make himself; by being the victor over, rather than the victim of, the absurd and degenerate social forces that thwart and limit man and his choice to be whatever he decides. It is man alone that chooses and is thereby responsible for the mode of his existence, whether he commits and engages himself in politics, in resisting the oppressor, in acting to alleviate the sorrow and stress that confront mankind, or in enhancing his own individual interests. In short, Sartre spoke of a rugged individualistic orientation to life that many Frenchmen were eager to and did accept, for he restored their sense of human dignity, he provided

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<sup>1</sup>Sartre, No Exit and Three Other Plays, pp. 44-45.

meaning and purpose in their otherwise chaotic life situation, and he instilled in them a hope, a confidence, that enabled them to become their own master, their own measure, as they sought to "pursue the unknown" in their thoroughly human situation. The immediate task at hand now is to consolidate the discussion thus far in relation to the rise of existentialism as a social movement.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE RISE AND FALL OF EXISTENTIALISM:

#### A STUDY OF A SOCIAL MOVEMENT

##### Introduction

A little over a century ago in the introduction to his Critique of Political Economy, Karl Marx articulated that it is not the consciousness of man that determines his social existence, but rather, it is his social existence that determines his consciousness.<sup>1</sup> There are a number of ways in which one might consider this dialectical polemic. In effect, Marx was saying that man thinks as he lives, not lives as he thinks. Or in yet another fashion, man's "life-chances" (and "life-style"), vested interests, etc. are a consequence of his occupational (class) position in society instead of metaphysical abstractions or rational formulations possessing a priori primacy in delineating his being and purpose in the life-drama and struggle. The main point that Marx was trying to convey is that man's condition--i.e., his social, political, and intellectual life--is almost exclusively determined by his economic relationship in the social order.

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<sup>1</sup>Karl Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (Chicago: C. H. Kerr, 1904), p. 12.

While Marx's academic position has been modified by time, events, situations, and responsive dialogue,<sup>1</sup> his stress on studying the changing nature of institutions is clearly recognized as essential for many sociological inquiries.<sup>2</sup> It is in this context that it was deemed essential to identify and trace the major factors of France's historical past which contributed to her weakened state as a nation in the late 1930's and early 1940's--viz., "The Social Setting." Numerous factors--e.g., France's truncated political and social revolutions, her ideological bi-polarization, her lack of an extended industrial revolution, her weakened and shaken traditions, her manifest social ruins concomitant with collapsing institutions, etc.--were all deemed significant in her devastating fall and collapse in 1940. These facets, while not mutually exclusive, account in large part for the social condition that Frenchmen encountered in their personal experiences and daily life. From this vantage point, it seems merely academic to ask if man thinks as he lives.

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<sup>1</sup>For discussion and critical appraisal of Marx's theory, see M. M. Bober, Karl Marx's Interpretation of History (2d ed. rev.; New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1965), Part IV; Leonard Reissman, Class in American Society (New York: The Free Press, 1959), chap. 2, esp. pp. 35-69. The role played by Marx in the "Sociology of Knowledge" is discussed by Robert Merton in his Social Theory and Social Structure (2d ed., rev.; New York: The Free Press, 1957), chap. 12.

<sup>2</sup>See, for instance, C.W. Mills' analysis of "The Uses of History," in his book, The Sociological Imagination (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Spectrum, 1959), chap. 8.

There is, however, the significant reciprocal of the above: "All that we are is the result of what we have thought."<sup>1</sup> That is to say, men also live as they think.<sup>2</sup> Men have beliefs, values; they do think; they hope, aspire, plan, and intend which serve as guides to social interaction and engagement in concrete activities. In short, Weber (and many others) have recognized and related how idealism and ideology become influential and powerful social forces in society: W. I. Thomas taught us the value of the "definition of the situation;" Merton reintroduced this significant concept in "the self-fulfilling prophecy;" words such as hope, opportunity, and rising expectations have become key frames of reference in contemporary social-psychological analyses. Ideas, indeed, are weapons.

The chief concern of the preceding chapters, then, has been to emphasize and demonstrate that an orientation or philosophy of life has been given by men of thought

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<sup>1</sup>Kaufmann, Existentialism: From Dostoevsky to Sartre, p. 46; Kaufmann is citing a radical Buddhist dictum, but this idealist position also has a long history in philosophy from the time of Plato to Descartes to Hegel.

<sup>2</sup>Weber's classic work constitutes another major reaction against Marx's monistic "economic determinism." See Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Scribner, 1930). Weber's approach was to ask exactly what requirements must be met in order for capitalism to emerge. His findings, though controversial, indicated, in the most general sense, that Protestant religious ideas played an important role in the emergence of capitalism; that is, religious ideas constituted a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the rise of capitalism.

in the philosophical and literary spheres and that their articulate expression has been guided, even dictated, by the situation in which they lived. At the same time, we have been keenly alert to the problem inherent in separating the origins from the persistence (and validity) of existentialism as a social phenomenon. Thus, efforts to identify and describe the particular historical stages and comparison of development were deemed necessary, as was the explanation of its persistence and present function. Specifically, we had to identify the men behind this phenomenon and analyze the social conditions which permitted this century-old philosophy to reappear in its dynamic fashion during the forties in France.

From this frame of reference we are able to understand more easily the role of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche in this movement. This is especially true when we encounter the French existentialists' intellectual debt to their existential predecessors and their contemporary secularized and ontologized effort to transcend, for instance, Kierkegaard's stress on the religious and personal factors by dealing with these elements as general terms (themes) which depict the human situation as a whole. It should be apparent, then, that the approach in this research has been guided, in sociological parlance, by the perspective of the sociology of knowledge and emphasizes, therefore, historical, intellectual, and structural

analysis. Thus, our concern focused on the social and intellectual settings which together found pronounced expression in France during the 1940's in order to show that Existentialism was a result of conducive social conditions which produced diverse and intense strains and that this social movement constituted an indictment, commentary, and resolution of these social strains, and resolved the problem of otherwise meaningless experiences for members of that social movement.

In consequence, then, we have profited indirectly from the many responses and reactions to the ideas set forth by Marx. Summarily, the fact that man thinks as he lives and lives as he thinks must be viewed in conjunction with each other as a necessary marriage (just as theory and methodology are reciprocally related in empirical research). Both aspects contribute to a better understanding of the problematical inquiry as well as a dissolving of the needless confrontation in ascertaining which of them is most important, most determinate. That is to say, both man and his ideas are, at one and the same time, socially rooted and located in a specific, temporal and spatial situation; hence, both are to be viewed as a function of human association and interaction.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>It may be of some interest to note that this approach reflects Charles H. Cooley's pioneering resolution of the nature versus nurture or the heredity versus environment issue; one dimension may be "perceived" to

The relevance of the above rationale for our study then is clear: the nature of the specific historical context and the message, appeal, and remedy of existentialism must be considered in relation to each other. In the broad perspective, these two dimensions, taken together, may be viewed as both necessary and sufficient general conditions for the rise of existentialism as a social movement. The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to clarify this statement. In short, the task now is to systematically organize the data already presented under the social and intellectual settings in order to explain the rise of existentialism as a social movement. This means that we will not give primary attention to existentialism as an end product inasmuch as an idea of freedom or value of man in itself is not a social movement;<sup>1</sup> rather, our approach is to give stress to the emergence of a collec-

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be of greater significance than the other, but the nexus is undeniable and crucial to the study of the social being of man. For a philosophical exposition on this matter, cf. Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960); for instance, on page 30, Whitehead remarks: "The ultimate facts of immediate actual experience are actual entities, prehensions, and nexus. All else is, for our experience, derivative abstraction."

<sup>1</sup>Smelser implies that there is the distinction between the collectivity or entity and end product of social movements; cf. Ibid., pp. 315-19. One can note that existentialism, protestantism, science, etc., may be viewed best as the end product of many different kinds of movements, as well as to stress the fact that it is a collectivity that moves against something (such as the legitimate political, economic, or religious systems) in



tivity attempting to promote the reestablishment of the individual as the sole unit of measure. It also means that our task will be made easier and more rewarding if we can be guided by a conceptual framework that is systematic, clear, and economically useful. Summarily, the sociological model presented in Smelser's Theory of Collective Behavior meets this criteria.

Let us hasten to add that our aim is neither to review the entire literature with respect to the generic field of collective behavior nor with the theorists who are specifically concerned with social movements; the interested reader will find that general reviews and discussions of these areas have been written recently by Turner and Killian, respectively.<sup>1</sup> In addition, our use

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which deliberate and widespread change is envisioned and --under certain conditions--brought about. For a statement and distinction "between the structure of a belief and the kind of action or social movement into which the belief ultimately is incorporated." see Smelser, op. cit., pp. 120-21.

<sup>1</sup>Ralph H. Turner, "Collective Behavior," and Lewis M. Killian, "Social Movements," in Robert E. L. Faris, Handbook of Modern Sociology (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1964), pp. 382-455. While Killian explicitly states that he is not attempting a definitive and exhaustive review of social movements in the Handbook chapter, there are notable omissions: e.g., J. Ortega y Gasset, The Revolt of the Masses (New York: W. W. Norton, 1932); Emil Lederer, State of the Masses (New York: W.W. Norton, 1940); Karl Mannheim, Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction (London: Kegan Paul, 1940). Also, in an effort to synthesize the "aristocratic" and "democratic" criticisms of mass society, see William Kornhauser, The Politics of Mass Society (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1959); his entire book is highly germane to the study of mass (social) movements.



of Smelser's conceptual framework does not require that it constitute the hermetic ultimate of collective behavior theorizing as some critics imply;<sup>1</sup> having said this, however, we shall not hesitate to take advantage of the theoretical contributions made by others when required for completeness or amplification.

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<sup>1</sup>Ralph H. Turner, Review of Theory of Collective Behavior by Neil J. Smelser, American Sociological Review, Vol. 28, No. 5 (October, 1963), pp. 826-27; Lewis M. Killian, Review of Theory of Collective Behavior, by Neil J. Smelser, American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 69, (November, 1963), pp. 297-98. Killian contends that Smelser disregards the "differences in the spatial and temporal dimensions of compact and diffuse collectivities." Both Turner and Killian find that Smelser placed too little attention on collective behavior as a consequence of interaction--characterized by differential participation--within the collectivity. It is interesting, however, to learn that while Turner adjudges Smelser's analysis as "primarily psychological," Killian sees his analysis as being "rigorously sociological, sometimes [to the extent] that it becomes sociologistic." Carl Couch, a rough draft entitled, "Collective Behavior: An Examination of Some Stereotypes," (Department of Sociology, Michigan State University, June, 1965), pp. 1-2; Couch feels that Smelser's framework (the same criticism, however, applies to those works by Brown, Blumer, Turner and Killian, Lang and Lang, etc.) is largely a restatement, though a highly sophisticated one, of LeBon's "classic" thesis since he examines the "basis of level of conduct." In short, he implies that Smelser is laden with a conservative bias (cf. Smelser, op. cit., pp. 8, 227, 316). James R. Hundley, Jr., "A Test of Theories in Collective Behavior: The National Farmers Organization," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of Sociology and Anthropology, Ohio State University, 1965), pp. 280-84, 288-314, and especially pp. 307-314. Most of the above criticisms seem to reflect a concern, in one way or another, at the high level of abstraction involved in Smelser's theory; at the risk of gross oversimplification, the dialogue continues within the problematic of the "Mac and Mike Show" (i.e., between the macrofunctionalists and the microfunctionalists). For discussion of this "problematic," see James B. McKee "Some Comments on the Theory-Research Nexus from a Histor-

Smelser's conceptual framework.--The social action formulation presented by Smelser is such that it permits one to classify, describe, and also explain both institutionalized and uninstitutionalized behavior. We take as axiomatic, however, that both are part and parcel of the social fabric. In the case of patterned and recurrent social behavior, for instance, the analysis may focus upon its static and inert nature--e.g., analyze the distribution of and relationship among the parts comprising the social system; look for consequences, etc. However, we have come to recognize and accept change, expansion (e.b., differentiation, specialization), and conflict, for example, as dynamic elements (processes) in our bureaucratic and technocratic society.

In this on-going, dynamic process change in the social order--e.g., values, norms, roles and organizations, technology, or all of them--may take place under certain specified conditions. This means that both cultural change (values and norms) and social change (roles and relationships among groups and individuals) are a function of social human beings who feel, think, and act relative to problems that emerge and are deemed temporally important. It also means that some groups and individuals

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ical Perspective," edited version of a talk presented at the Department of Sociology Colloquia Program, Michigan State University, November 2, 1962. (Mimeographed); and, among others, George C. Homans, "Contemporary Theory in Sociology," in Faris, op. cit., pp. 956-59, 963-67, and 973-76.

profit by these changes at the expense of other groups and individuals. The recognition of this dynamic, social phenomenon suggests, then, that any political, social, or economic "progress" produces as many demands or strains as it resolves (especially if qualified by a condition of rising expectations in a period of development and growth).<sup>1</sup>

What groups are affected and in what way is a key issue to be posed; that is, change is functional for whom and for what? The point of all this is that even if most social change is assumed to take place according to established patterns and well-defined procedures, there are other cases in which particular members (as well as numerous groups and collectivities) become dissatisfied with certain features of their social existence and find it necessary (e.g., when social malaise is not reduced by

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<sup>1</sup>Note that our view and statement of the problem is concerned only with reference to collective behavior. While our conceptual framework is by its nature restrictive, one can easily see the relevance of the above issue within a racial minority relations approach as well as within the area of social stratification which many contend comprises the core problem of social conduct. With respect to the latter, a recent nutshell articulation of national interest and aim in Vietnam was given by President Johnson at Camp Stanley, Korea: "Don't forget," said Johnson, "there are only 200 million of us in a world of three billion. They want what we've got and we're not going to give it to them." Ramparts, January, 1967, p. 12 (cf. also, pp. 12-16). For a discussion of science, theory, and "deformation professionnelle," see R. S. Lynd, Knowledge for What (Princeton University Press, 1945).

dissent alone) to create a new social order, or a part of it.<sup>1</sup> Hence, any attempt to circumvent the established channels and procedures in order to reconstitute a perceived disturbed social order, in whole or part, may be viewed as a function of inadequate, inflexible, or unresponsive social control agents, agencies, or mechanisms. Agents may be unaware of the problem; they may be unwilling to cope with or even recognize the problem; or they may be unable (for any number of reasons) to resolve the problem.

The discussion to this point suggests, then, that there are certain necessary and sufficient conditions that must be met in order for any collective behavior episode to emerge in concrete form. Hence, we need to know two things: (1) Does a collectivity attempt to reconstruct the total social order or only a part of it? and (2) under what conditions does a given outcome take place--i.e., what are the necessary and sufficient conditions? These are the crucial questions that Smelser attempts to answer by employing two constructs: (1) The "Components of Social Action,"<sup>2</sup> which describe and classify human behavior, and (2) the "Value-added process,"<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Couch, op. cit., pp. 21-23. See also, Wm. Bruce Cameron, Modern Social Movements: A Sociological Outline (New York: Random House, 1966), pp. 7-13; Smelser, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>Smelser, op. cit., pp. 9 and 23-46.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 13-20.

which serves as an explanatory model for why and in what way a given type of collective behavior occurs.

The utility of these two constructs becomes clear when viewed from our above discussion; that is, certain members of society are dissatisfied with it, in whole or part, and attempt to remedy the situation by creating a new social order (again, in whole or part). We learn from Smelser that the defining characteristic of collective behavior is the kind of belief under which behavior is activated. A more formal statement of his thesis is that "people under strain mobilize to reconstitute the social order on the basis of a generalized belief."<sup>1</sup> In turn, Smelser's formal definition of collective behavior is specifically identified. Collective behavior, he states, "is an uninstitutionalized mobilization for action in order to modify one or more kinds of strains on the basis of a generalized reconstitution of a component of action."<sup>2</sup>

What, then, are the general "Components of Social Action" that may be modified or changed? In a hierarchy of increasing specificity and concreteness, they are (1) values, (2) norms, (3) mobilization of motivation into organized action (i.e., the type of organization), and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 383.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 71.

(4) situational facilities. Values, while broad and abstract, give guidance to legitimate ends; norms refer to certain necessary rules and regulations for human interaction if values are to be attained; mobilization of motivation into organized action refers to roles, organization, and rewards for responsible and effective performance; and situational facilities become identified with those means (e.g., knowledge, skills, technology, general resources) that are instrumental or facilitate in the actual attainment of desired ends or goals. Hence, these components constitute the make-up of any kind of social action; a flow chart of action is thus evidenced.

While all four elements are temporally manifest in any social context, they may be classified and described analytically as independent of each other. Furthermore, we want to know which component under question (strain) may be subject to reconstitution via collective behavior. In this case, we again are alerted to Smelser's major proposition: "People under strain mobilize to reconstitute the social order in the name of a generalized belief." Smelser then goes on to identify the kind of belief associated with a given type of collective behavior<sup>1</sup>--viz., the panic, craze, hostile outburst, the norm-oriented movement, and the value-added movement.

Since we are concerned with existentialism as a

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 9.



social movement, we will limit our focus to the value-oriented movement. The omission of the norm-oriented movement poses no problem once we relate Smelser's notion of a social movement: a social movement is a collective "attempt to restore, protect, modify, or create values [or norms] in the name of a generalized belief."<sup>1</sup> Since we have noted that each type of collective behavior is oriented toward a specified component, it then follows that a social movement may be either value-or norm-oriented depending upon which component is to be reconstituted; therefore, the movement of existentialism is to be analyzed as a value-oriented movement inasmuch as it constituted an attempt to reconstitute the entire socio-cultural system. Once the value component becomes reconstituted, however, the less general components also become reconstituted. Thus, a change in values necessarily involves a reformulation of (1) norms; (2) roles, organization, and rewards; and (3) situational facilities.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 270 and 313.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 23-46; 79-130; and especially, pp. 33, 43. Note also that while we have been concerned with the relations among the components, the same logic applies with reference to relations within each component. Since Smelser posits 4 components and each component contains 7 levels of specificity, the model then consists of 28 categories that are hierarchically arranged to that any redefinition of any component at any point "necessarily involves a corresponding redefinition of all points below and to the right." (p. 43.)

So, to sum up, we have given Smelser's defining characteristic and definition of collective behavior; we have identified and discussed the four components of social action; and we have noted the major types of collective behavior that are treated by Smelser.

If the above permits one to classify and describe social action, it does not permit an explanation for the emergence of collective behavior episodes (of any kind, including existentialism as a social movement). Consequently, we are now aware of the need to identify the social conditions under which any kind of collective behavior occurs; hence, our return to Smelser's notion of the "value-added process" (or his second construct), which facilitates the organization of determinants in a systematic fashion.

Smelser's value-added scheme or model contains six necessary conditions or determinants that must be activated and combined according to a definite pattern. As was shown for the components of social action, the determinants also are ordered in a hierarchy of increasing specificity. The first necessary condition is structural conduciveness; the second necessary condition is structural strain; the third is the growth and devevelopment of a generalized belief; the fourth is precipitating factors; the fifth is the mobilization of participants for action; and the sixth and final determinant is the endogamous or exogamous operation of social control that is weak, absent, or

vacillatory either prior to or after the emergence of some kind of collective behavior.

It is important to stress that all determinants must be present, activated, and combine according to a definite pattern if any collective behavior outcome is to be realized. Each determinant adds its value or assumes its significance only within the limits set forth by the prior, more general determinant. When all necessary conditions are met, there is a sufficient condition for a given type of collective behavior. Let us note, however, that Smelser also stresses the need to distinguish between the "occurrence or existence of an event or situation and the activation of this event or situation as a determinant [since] any or all of these determinants may have existed for an indefinite period before activation."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, any event or situation may create one or several of the necessary conditions for collective behavior.<sup>2</sup> To summarize, we indicated that the "components of social action"--i.e., values, norms, etc.--may be subject, in whole or in part, to uninstitutionalized collective intervention and change. In order to remove this "maybe" or indeterminacy, the value-added process provides the basis for an explanation of when a given component may be reconstituted--viz., when all necessary conditions, taken together, are met, they constitute a sufficient con-

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

dition. However, it is instructive to emphasize that while structural conduciveness is the most general necessary condition for any collective behavior outcome, the "components of social action" (i.e., values, norms, etc.) point to the major types (and elements) of conduciveness; hence, both constructs are supplementary to each other. Smelser's method of studying collective behavior, then, is (1) to identify empirical events or situations which can be classified and described (viz., the components of social action), and (2) to explain the significance of those identified events and situations which occur under definite, specified social conditions.<sup>1</sup> On the basis of our documentation and discussion of the previous chapters, finally, we can reaffirm that the identification of existentialism as a social movement was classified and described as an attempt to reconstitute the entire French social order (i.e., the value component, and hence, the other three components as well), and that it took place under the general conditions examined in the "social setting" chapter.

The rise of existentialism  
as a social movement

Our presentation to this point has been focused on three major aspects: (1) the social setting, in which social aspects were traced from the French Revolution to

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<sup>1</sup>For a discussion of rejection of his hypothesis, see Ibid., pp. 385-87.

the Post-World War II period in France; (2) the intellectual setting, in which intellectual aspects were considered from the philosophical roots of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, the phenomenology and philosophies of Husserl, Sartre, Camus, and other literary writings; and (3) the theoretical perspectives guiding our analysis. Hence, origins, backgrounds, conditions, and theoretical formulations already presented are essential to bear in mind as we now attempt to provide a concise but formal analysis for the rise of existentialism as a social movement. Accordingly, major factors, documented in the preceding chapters, will be identified and interpreted as we apply the Smelserian model, with particular emphasis on structural conduciveness, structural strain, generalized belief, and precipitating factors.

Structural conduciveness.--This general condition refers to a given structural arrangement that permits the emergence of a value-oriented movement, for other options are not available. We will be concerned with three aspects of this condition: (1) the differentiation of the value component from other components of social action, (2) available grievance channels, and (3) the possibility of communicating shared dissatisfactions.<sup>1</sup>

(1) The differentiation of the value component from other components of social action.--This suggests a rather simple

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<sup>1</sup>Smelser, op. cit., pp. 319-38; cf. Cameron, op. cit., p. 10.

notion: that is, values are analytically separate from or different than norms, organizations, and situational facilities. Man is not created out of any ultimate idea (Hegel), nor do ideas pop out of manikins. Gillin, cited in Smelser, informs us that "religious sects will arise only when religion is the dominant interest. When political interests predominate, political interest will spring up."<sup>1</sup> In the same vein, we suggest that the existential movement in France was able to emerge because, for many Frenchmen, humanistic interests and concerns held priority over other values. Moreover, specific dissatisfactions and protests against political, administrative, economic, and social policies and regulations (often) became defined in existentialistic (humanistic) and value terms. That is, values and norms were no longer being differentiated, the result being a value protest as well as an expression for a change of values. (At the same time, our range of explanation must be clearly delineated: we do not wish to imply, even remotely, that existentialism was the only vibrant movement in Post World War II France; our avowed aim was to identify and discuss how existentialism operated as an alternative of several social phenomena--such as communism, socialism, épuratism, etc.--and how it provided specific outlets for a segment of that French society.)

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<sup>1</sup>Smelser, op. cit., p. 320.

(2) Available grievance channels.--Another essential condition of conduciveness for the rise of existentialism as a social movement "is the availability of means to express protests or grievances among [the French] population suffering from any kind of strain."<sup>1</sup> Not only must groups be potentially available to the dissatisfied, but in addition, different--i.e., selective--channels must be potentially available for any change of the value component. Granting that a value-oriented movement must be perceived as possible, Smelser delineates the significance of the further qualification that there must be a structural closing off of avenues for other kinds of collective behavior:

Value-oriented beliefs. . . arise when alternative means for reconstituting the social situation are perceived as unavailable. . . . [This] unavailability has three main aspects: (a) The aggrieved group in question does not possess facilities whereby they may reconstitute the social situation; such a group ranks low on wealth, power, prestige, or access to means of communication. (b) The aggrieved group is prevented from expressing hostility that will punish some person or group considered responsible for the disturbing affairs. (c) The aggrieved group cannot modify the normative structure, or cannot influence those who have the power to do so.<sup>2</sup>

However, it is one thing to say that a part of the French population felt powerless to reconstitute those components less general than the value component--since

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 324.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 325.

they were perceived as closed--and it is another matter to elucidate the nature of these unavailable grievance channels, which, in turn, permit, encourage, and force the crystallization of a value-oriented belief; if grievances are not heard or social reform is not met, value beliefs may easily arise. At this point we will largely restrict our consideration to those situations in which a part of the population was unable to express their grievances or to have access to means of reform.

One of the situations that poignantly illustrates the above is France's defeat and consequent period of Occupation by the Germans. Earlier, we examined in detail the manifold strains that resulted from this condition of German domination. What is important here, however, is the effects of the German's legal, economic, and military-police response, as well as the able assist given by the extensive Vichy legal and police machinery, in effectively thwarting the French attempt to ouster the power dominance of the foreign invaders. This does not deny the heroic, and at times successful,<sup>1</sup> undertakings by the Resistentialists, but it is a fact of national record that they failed, in and of themselves, to expel the Germans by

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Werth's report of the leading Resisters' comment and appraisal of their success eight years after the Liberation of Paris, op. cit., pp. 173-78. For instance, the resistance "was not constructive. . .; but it was valuable as a refusal, as a protest. . .[Stephane went on to say that] what mattered most was not the action of these people, but the attitude they adopted. . . . The resistance was not so much an action as a refusal. . .[and it was this refusal to submit] which saved our human dignity."



brute force since they lacked the necessary means of men, materials, organization, and so on.

If the above account shows that the Germans--assisted by the Vichy Government and the Church--were effective in eliminating attempts to expel them from French soil, there is another important and closely related dimension; the lack of available means to influence the Germans to reduce situations of strain through normative reform. Here again, however, the point of issue is whether the French people were able to express grievances or to secure social reforms. Another way of posing this is to ask in what ways did the Germans--again assisted by the Vichy Government and the Church--eliminate the channels for reform, and thus, force the creation of value-oriented beliefs.

The most obvious means of suppression was political disfranchisement, such as the right to vote, to representation, as well as to engage in party politics. Political and economic subordination was also apparent with the suppression of labor unions, the enactment of heavy levies and high taxes, the need for a rationing card as well as meager rationing standards, and other means of exploitation that prevented the development of social services and adequate means for other than basic survival.

Another factor that hindered the French from having access to channels for reform was their consequent decrease of freedom in their social activities, partly due to the

war operation itself, partly due to the policy dictate by the Germans and the Vichy Government. Of importance too was the blockade, travel restrictions, the disorganized transportation system, numerous kinds of censorship as well as the German attempt to vivisect the entire French social fabric which, in turn, engendered mutual suspicion, hostility, and pronounced cleavages. Finally, we can point out the fact that two million Frenchmen had been held in Germany as prisoners of war--indeed, as hostages. In addition, another one-half to one million Frenchmen had been deported to furnish the industrial labor in Germany under the "Compulsory Labor Service Act." (It seems evident that one cannot altogether discount their instrumental value for practices of blackmail and bribery of the Frenchmen at "home"--e.g., the demand for them to adhere to the German rules and policies.) In all of these examples the role of the German authorities, the Vichy Government, and even the Church was one in which peaceful reform activity was largely suppressed. In other words, the incumbent authorities, as social control agents, were effective in blocking channels of protest and unresponsive to reform demands.

This examination of the Occupation period has two important aspects for us. First of all, we showed that the attempt to expel the Germans by force failed, and that they further lacked direct access to means that would enable them to redress their situations of strain by normative or

other reform. Secondly, (while this period produced the emergence of the underground Resistance movement,) the most significant point is that it set the stage--i.e., it was conducive--for an early phase of the development of existentialism as a social movement. Thus, for many, this Resistance experience provided the impetus for membership as existentialists. In short, since channels were closed for redress of grievances within the facilities, organizations, and normative components, a part of the population was forced to turn to value-oriented beliefs that envisioned the elimination of numerous strains; this entailed the reconstitution of the entire social fabric.

We now want to analyze the social conditions after the Liberation of Paris and the following post-war period, described under the "social setting," that were also conducive for the rise and spread of existentialism as a social movement. We may well agree that the Liberation of Paris, initially, was a time of sheer happiness for the Parisians; it was a time of gay celebration, of hugging and kissing, of laughter and emotional release, of climatic ringing of the bells: of excellent military-civilian rapport. Political weakness and inflexibility on the part of the authorities as well as their incapacity to meet demands for reform, however, changed all this conviviality by dashing their recently raised hopes.

These major weaknesses, one will recall, were:

- (1) Weak executive and ministerial guidance
- (2) Rigid executive stance in military, diplomatic, and imperial affairs
- (3) Weak and corrupt regional and local administration
- (4) The re-emergence of France's traditional political divisions, factions, and rivalries
- (5) Inadequate economic policies in face of a shattered and near-bankrupted economy

The outcome of this was political and economic deadlocks in which protests went unheeded and channels effecting reform became blocked; Frenchmen had been promised economic and social reform but encountered an unresponsive and "do-nothing" government. Hence, lacking access and ability to influence those in positions of authority and decision-making, more and more Frenchmen began to redefine the basic values of their sociocultural system.

(3) The possibility of communicating shared dissatisfaction.--Value-oriented beliefs associated with existential thought were communicated by diverse means. One method involved the publication of newspapers. Foremost of these was Combat as attested to by Werth's appraisal:

As regards the immediate and early post-Liberation period, . . . [I quote] Combat much more frequently than any other paper. This was deliberate. Combat represented, and expressed more brilliantly and coherently than any other paper, the hopes, anxieties, disappointment and growing frustration of the non-Communist elements in the Resistance, who had hoped and believed

that a New France would really be built on the foundations laid by the CNR Charter.<sup>1</sup>

During this time Combat was being run by Albert Camus and Albert Ollivier. Combat had been started in 1941 as the official organ of "Combat" a resistance movement. Even then, Camus, Sartre, and Bernanos were active contributors to it. From a circulation of 30,000 three times a month in 1942 it had grown to 69,000 actual (as distinct from printings) daily sales in 1948.<sup>2</sup>

Sartre--in addition to contributing to the Le Monde, Liberation, and L'Humanité, among other dailies, as well as the weekly, Action--edited the highly influential Des Temps Modernes. Many of these monthly issues constituted valuable monographs, such as the "special issues on North Africa, Indo-China, The French Left," housing, the working-class conditions, etc.<sup>3</sup>

Other methods included lectures, the clubs and societies of the Resistance movement, the ubiquitous café talks, intellectual circles, dramatic play presentations, and the published books, essays, and plays themselves.

Structural strain.--Smelser defines strain "as an impairment of the relations among and consequently inadequate

<sup>1</sup>Werth, op. cit., p. xxx.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 139-40, 736. For a discussion of "The French Press from the Liberation to the Present Time," see ibid., pp. 735-42.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 746.

functioning of the components of action."<sup>1</sup> Strain is a necessary condition for the rise of existentialism as a social movement, but it is significant only when considered relative to the prior conditions of conduciveness as we have outlined. The task in this section is to outline those strains discussed under the "social setting." We also should bear in mind that "strain always expresses a relation between an event or situation and certain cultural and individual standards."<sup>2</sup> Thus, strain is important insofar as it is perceived as strain as well as when it occurs in situations of relative deprivation rather than in situations of absolute deprivation. While the sources of strain are diverse and of varying intensity, the framework that we will follow is the same, in the main, as that used earlier: the components of social action.

For the sake of convenience, the major kinds of strains that were produced by the Germans' invasion, defeat, occupation, and exploitation of France are reviewed below. It was shown that with the collapse of France's army, her capital, her position as a great European power, and her cherished values, beliefs, and institutions, she had become an occupied country that had been bombed, ravaged, starved, suppressed, oppressed, and divided into two zones--physically, socially, and psychologically. In short, France emerged from the

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<sup>1</sup>Smelser, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 51; dissatisfactions, rising expectations, and escalation of demands are of crucial importance from this frame of reference.

Occupation period in a ravaged, humiliated, and demoralized state. The consequences of this Occupation period were categorized as being fourfold: (1) value strain was a matter of conflicting claims made on the Frenchmen's ideological commitment; (2) normative strain concerned competing demands on their form of human interaction and conduct; (3) numerous deprivations were experienced as rewards for effective role performance and were disproportionately allocated or lacking altogether; and (4) adequate knowledge and other means were absent or lacking in the attainment of food, clothing, housing, and so on.

Following the Liberation of Paris, the strains, we have noted, became intensified. Hence, strain affected facilities, organization, norms, and values.

(1) Strain and situational facilities.--The principal kind of strain here "involves a condition of ambiguity as to the adequacy of means for a given goal;"<sup>1</sup> a concern arises as to the adequacy of available skills, knowledge, and other kinds of resources that facilitate some aim or objective.

First of all, resources were meager, indeed. There were shortages of food, materials, housing, schools, hospitals, and essential services, such as transportation, communication, medication, and administration. Economic

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<sup>1</sup>Smelser, op. cit., p. 51. The discussion to follow adheres closely to Smelser's formulation, pp. 51-54.

activity was severely restricted and housing and food conditions were especially unwholesome. Overriding all of these factors was the matter of inflation, the black market and governmental vacillation.

Another capstone source of anguish emerged as the A-bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. Werth notes Combat's reaction to this: "If Japan capitulated as a result of the Hiroshima bomb, that's all right; but it goes far beyond that, we fear. . . ."<sup>1</sup> (The fear, of course, was an accurate premonition of the Cold War and its many consequences.)

The above strains, in short, produced an ambiguous situation among the French sectors, organizations, and roles with respect to various kinds of objectives that involved the allocation, use, and manipulation of scarce resources. The crucial point is that ambiguity was produced from these conditions of strain. In turn, many people who were adversely affected by this chain of events lost confidence in their ability to predict or control their situation; that is to say, uncertainty and anxiety were direct outcomes of an ambiguous situation where inadequate skills and knowledge precluded the attainment of some desirable aim or objective.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., p. 256.

<sup>2</sup>See Smelser, op. cit., pp. 52, 29-39; note also Smelser's point that not all individuals will be similarly affected by various posed threats, p. 51.



(2) Strain and organization, roles, and rewards.--Strain on this level "concerns the balance between motivated activity and its rewards"--e.g., wealth, power, prestige, privilege, status.<sup>1</sup>

One identification of strain is de Gaulle's snubbing of the major Resistants and the following phasing-out of the Resistance organizations, including the FFI Army. Another is the stacking of the Court with ex-Vichyites performing magisterial duties--a gross absurdity for many Frenchmen--while prominent Resistants were barred from same. Inflation and the black market also served as sources of strain since the buying power for those people having frozen wages and fixed salaries was greatly reduced. Still another source of strain was the family institution; on the return of the prisoners and deportees, many of their families were broken, dislocated, or in the process of being dissolved. The lack of ministerial, administrative (both regional and local), and legislative power (as well as the racketeering within their domain) constitutes an additional source of strain. Finally, one of the most important sources of strain was the perceived misallocation of resources for foreign affairs rather than for immediate recovery efforts; the consequence of this was the deprivation of all other sectors except for those sectors that would directly benefit from this activity, such as the military, industry, and high

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 64-65.

finance and investment. In short, severe physical deprivations--e.g., hunger, disease, etc.--were encountered, and the statement--made by Combat upon de Gaulle's resignation in early 1946--could have been made at any time following Liberation Day that "there was no cataclysm, and the empty plate didn't crack."<sup>1</sup>

(3) Strain and norms.--"Normative strain concerns the integration of human interaction."<sup>2</sup> One of the most important factors to consider here is that France had emerged from World War II without any administrative and political apparatus; it had to be created on the spot before it could function properly, since the Third Republic was in disrepute and the Vichy government had been eviscerated by the CNR Charter. In addition, the anachronistic economic, fiscal, and administrative systems that had plagued France prior to the war were in the post-Liberation period especially unamenable to the immediate recovery efforts. In short, the restoration of the social order was particularly hindered by the absence of a firm, unified, and effective political and economic policy; while de Gaulle was concerned with foreign affairs, his ministers and administrators were left struggling with domestic problems. This situation produced a sterile "do-nothing" government characterized by politi-

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<sup>1</sup>Cited in Werth, op. cit., p. 282.

<sup>2</sup>Smelser, op. cit., p. 64.

cal and economic deadlock. The Frenchmen had been led to expect social and economic reform, but the ontic social conditions provided ample testimony to the pronounced discrepancy between the two. Another devastating effect of the war and its aftermath of disruption and disorganization was the severing of relations from both families and voluntary and communal associations. The consequence of this was that traditional ties to authority, work, the community, family, and so on, were severed concomitant with social obligations, demands, and rewards that normally reinforce meaningful social relations and human conduct. In turn, isolation, rootlessness, and uncertainty became manifested as a daily experience for many people.

We are well founded within the scope of existing sociological theory when we note these enormous societal effects in the lives of its members when the society manifests a widespread norm breakdown under the conditions of war, unstable governments, or other social upheavals. Norms may be inadequately defined (or weakly internalized), they may be inconsistent with the demands of the immediate situation, or they may be lacking altogether. Social rules not only regulate and allow for predictable behavior but also are essential for an individual's sense of personal worth and feeling of being "rooted" with others; when lacking, both social and individual life becomes disorganized, insecure, and marked by confusion and an inability to order their des-

tiny. Durkheim's study of "anomic suicide" is based on this premise: that life loses its meaning when man is free from all social ties and is thus abandoned, isolated, despondent, and wants to end it all.<sup>1</sup> Mannheim has also explored the correlation between the disorganization of society and the disorganization of personality,<sup>2</sup> as has Homans. In his examination of social disintegration, Homans says that it is a condition "marked by a decline in the number of activities in which the members of a group collaborate, by a decrease in the frequency of interaction between these members, and by a weakening of the control exercised by the group over the behavior of the individuals."<sup>3</sup> With respect to the individual, Homans goes on to say that if an individual's "group is shattered around him, and if he leaves a group in which he was a valued member, and if, above all, he finds no new group to which he can relate himself, he will, under stress, develop disorders of thought, feeling, and behavior."<sup>4</sup>

Other theorists,<sup>5</sup> as well, have dealt with these problems of social instability and what this means for members

<sup>1</sup>E. Durkheim, Suicide, trans. J. A. Spaulding and G. Simpson (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1951), pp. 219ff.

<sup>2</sup>Mannheim, loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>G. C. Homans, The Human Group (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1950), p. 369.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 457.

<sup>5</sup>Among others, see Kornhauser, op. cit., and L. Gross, "System Construction," in Behavioral Science Vol. v, (October, 1960), pp. 281 ff.

of the group or society. Under these conditions, undermining both the society and the individual, a conducive situation for the acceptance of existential values would appear enormously appealing indeed.

Qualifications.--At this point, we must interject two qualifications concerning what we have been referring to as a "normless" situation:

(1) To say that there is a "normless" situation means that it is in relation to an integrated situation, and this is "arbitrarily" established because of its very nature. Documentation, at best, is established according to the canons of scientific research, but the line separating "cogency" and "proof" of argumentation is in itself difficult to transcend when examining social phenomena. We rely on ideal types, correspondence, categories, statistical aggregates, and the like to guide us, but to measure how far norms have "slipped," collapsed, decreased, etc. is an extremely difficult task. Thus, while our conclusions, concerning "norms and strain," must remain as an open issue, insofar as a definitive verification cannot be fully established according to the strict canons of scientific research, we rely on the documentation already presented under the examination of political, economic, and social instability;<sup>1</sup> and,

(2) The "normless" situation would vary also according

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<sup>1</sup>Above, pp. 48-71.

to those quantitative factors being of a "conditional" nature. To illustrate, we merely point out that the German Occupation was largely urban (and regional); farmers were left relatively alone in relation to the urban population.

(4) Values and strain.--"Value strain poses the issue of commitment."<sup>1</sup> Smelser relates that "in many cases [value] strain results from the spread of other types of strain in society."<sup>2</sup> Thus, we have suggested on repeated occasions that numerous conflicts of interest became generalized as a direct challenge to the basis of legitimacy of the opposing groups (e.g., Gaulists vs. anti-Gaulists, monarchists vs. republicans). When strains between these factions were less diffused, we noted the conflicts between the extremes of representative government and autocratic rule as well as parties competing among themselves over particular issues, such as taxation, aid to Catholic schools, housing, social security measures, and so on.

While there is a definite distinction between the problem of securing (and maintaining) a majority within a governing body and the solution of the real issue (e.g., what to do in recovery efforts), the fact that political paralysis resulted from politicians being unable to reach a solution or even to accept any policy at all, constituted,

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<sup>1</sup>Smelser, loc. cit.; see also, pp. 62-64, 341-42.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 62.

for many, a need to protest against this social system that allowed such practices to occur and continue; that is, practices which made them unresponsive to public needs and distantly removed from the concrete struggles of daily life and personal experience. Though the existing heteronomic-autonomic balance was perceived to be decidedly weighted toward a heteronomic orientation, a deliberate and conscious effort to reverse this balance was clearly necessary if both self and society were to be reconstituted and if the ambivalence and disjunctures of everyday life were to be overcome.

The crystallization of existentialism as a value-oriented belief.--"Before collective action can be taken to reconstitute the situation brought on by structural strain, this situation must be made meaningful to the potential actors."<sup>1</sup> The relevance of the "Intellectual Setting" is now clear: existentialism as a value-oriented belief provided this meaning by identifying the source of strain, by attributing certain characteristics to this source, and by specifying certain responses (both institutionalized and non-institutionalized) to the strain(s) as possible or appropriate.<sup>2</sup> Besides the content of the belief itself, then, we want to focus especially on how it prepared individuals for collective action; that is, what did it do or what functions did

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

it perform as a message of protest, revolt, and challenge?

From "a condition of ambiguity rising from conditions of strain,"<sup>1</sup> we found, in turn, that anxiety was suscitated on the psychological level. Protests, then, became characterized as a criticism of those who led France down to defeat and national humiliation. We have seen that existential thought and literature was also highly critical of the role played by the Church and other collaborators during the Occupation. Another response was a sustained protest against the representatives of the reigning orthodoxies and ideologies (i.e., the bourgeoisie, the military, the politicians). Further, the custodians of the ruling systems became anathematized for their unwillingness to engage in seeking a viable solution to the pressing problems at hand as well as to vilify their act of "bad faith" in undelivered promises. Protests were geared toward corrective action in the immediate present, not for the distant future. Hence, we have the incipient emergence of a humanistic literature: a literature of necessity, of social protest, and of individual challenge. This demanded a decisive and resolute rejection of and dissociation with past orthodoxy, determinism, myths, deceit, as well as a ceaseless chatter of articulated platitudes and meaningless clichés. Failure to do so would result--as indeed it has, so it was believed--in a chaotic and unstable form of existence as

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 122..



well as a threat to the "values of civilization as a whole."<sup>1</sup>

Both Sartre and Camus reflected in their writings a concern for the powerless condition that enveloped their fellow countrymen. Their form of expression keynoted a willingness to take the existing person and his human situation seriously, to specify the problem, and to establish a meaning and remedy in which one could find his sense of purpose, his dignity, and his identity in the community of human concern, response, and association.

Further, both Sartre and Camus take a realistic approach to the human situation. They, as "rugged individualists," actively practiced what they exhorted others to do and refused to pretend that man's problems are merely a figment of the imagination; such a belief, in fact, can only result in what may be termed as "ragged individualism." They refused to take hope in empty and passifying platitudes that point to a better world just around the corner because man always has had difficulty in being able to make the turn around this enigmatic corner; instead, the life drama must be faced squarely and forcefully. Only then can there be a regeneration of values and a reconstitution of self and society.

Thus, the message and value of existentialism is both simple and profound: it gives meaning to man as a significant being. Man cannot deny, distort, or hide from the real meaning of his experience as a conscious and free existant.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

Man first exists and only then does he define or make himself out of his freedom and place in a given social milieu. Only then does he possess an essence in the sense of what he is going to be, in forging out his authentic self; this is the meaning of "existence precedes essence." Man alone, then, is responsible for himself for if God is dead, there is no longer any absolute or human nature to which man can appeal for certitude, reality, meaning, or value. At the same time man is no longer restrained by these absolute, determining preconceptions or promulgations that demand an unchangeable structure or essence. Man regains his true existence by creating his own raison d'être through the actions or projects that he chooses, and thus transcends an otherwise meaningless and absurd situation. Again, man makes himself, and he is no more than the total ensemble of his acts; he must be totally committed to a self-oriented life venture in which he stakes his very existence on an unconditioned acceptance of an absolute and objective uncertainty, for there is no handbook to lead him or tell him what to do.

Hence, existentialism as a value-oriented belief served to explain the universe, the universe of man who is the measure of all things, for all things emanate and are evaluated from his central position. As such, he is given a coherent frame of reference. Man then becomes the primary virtue in which his moral duty is made meaningful only from

his core position in the universe. This constituted an awakening to a special way of life in which the individual, in the here and now, found meaning, purpose, and dignity in an otherwise chaotic life situation. Man--as his own master in the pursuit of the unknown embedded in human experience--could act as if his actions made a difference. He had no alibis nor could he evade the responsibility of his choices. This was the awakening and promising challenge presented and the hope given for a more satisfying life experience and the forging of new personal identities.

The basis of this value-oriented existential belief, then, was both a negative assessment of those factors, events, and agents threatening the French social order in its entirety as well as a positive assessment that envisioned the elimination of those sources of strain and the establishment of the importance of the individual as the central, primary value.

Precipitating factors.--"A precipitating factor is an event that creates, shapens, or exaggerates a condition of strain or conduciveness."<sup>1</sup> The interpretations and solutions given by Sartre and Camus in the context immediately above is to be emphasized, for by their articulation of them, they also created (i.e., accentuated) selected areas of strain. Thus, their functioning in this capacity can be identified as the key precipitating factor. Their use of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 325.

ideas as weapons well illustrates this point. By doing so, they effectively linked the general existential belief to their immediate situation.<sup>1</sup> Another key factor could be identified as Sartre's talk at the Club Maintenant; however, we view this as subsumed under the above classification.

Mobilization of the movement for action.--The final determinant in the value-added process for the rise of existentialism as a social movement is the activation of its members for action. Two aspects of this process will be related: (1) the leadership, organization, and spread of existentialism; and (2) the fall of existentialism.

(1) The leadership, organization and spread of existentialism as a social movement.--We should like to emphasize, first of all, that it is not our intention to entertain any "great man" theory in the form of Sartre and Camus, for their leadership role must be considered according to its place in the value-added process. Having said this, however, we again note that they contributed partially to the creation of various strains, insofar as they identified and accentuated them. Moreover, we entertain the notion that the confluence of their early part played as concerned spokesmen for the oppressed and disillusioned, their belief

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<sup>1</sup>For a discussion of the intellectual role in this matter, see W. Kornhauser, op. cit., especially pp. 183-87; E. Hoffer, op. cit., pp. 119-31; and W. Cameron, op. cit., pp. 71-82; and R. Turner and L. Killian, Collective Behavior (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1957), pp. 332-33, 454-57, 464-66.

formulations, and their personal involvement in direct action programs served to telescope "several determinants of the value-added process--crystallization of belief, precipitating factor and mobilization--into a single empirical phenomenon, leadership."<sup>1</sup> While this may be likely, no absolute determination of this is possible.

At any rate, their role as leaders in organizing members for direct action takes on various forms. For both Sartre and Camus, this leadership role is identified in their numerous publications (novels, plays, magazine and newspaper articles), lectures, play presentations, café discussions, and the like. Particular programs of action included participation in the underground Resistance Movement, the creation of a new political party (MLN: National Liberation Movement) in 1945, and various public opinion promotions.

By identifying these forms of leadership and strategies, we are not suggesting that the existentialist movement possessed a highly formalized organization or singular program of action, as characterized by political parties. On the other hand, its organization structure was not limited to widely-dispersed individuals, who interacted on an infrequent basis. Evidence points to the contrary, such as the tightly knit groups who resided in the Latin Quarter, Montmartre, and Montparnasse districts, as well as other

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<sup>1</sup>For discussion, see Smelser, op. cit., pp. 355-56.

Parisian enclaves. Moreover, a legitimate point may be made for the establishment of a quasi-formal organization of the existentialist movement; namely, the highly influential Combat and Des Modernes Temps newspapers, edited by Camus and Sartre, respectively.

We now focus attention on the spread of existentialism as a social movement. While we cannot assert with dogmatic confidence the precise stages of growth of this movement, we can provide calculated guesses concerning them. Generally speaking, these stages conform to the pattern, involving three basic phases, of most social movements: according to Smelser, they are "the incipient phase, the phase of enthusiastic mobilization, and the period of institutionalization and organization."<sup>1</sup>

The first phase of the existentialist movement is much more difficult to identify than the second because of the conditions in which it occurred. It is suggested, however, by differences in the nature of structural conduciveness and strain, and we have tried to document it by contrasting the Occupational period with the post-liberation period; recall, thus, that social controls were much more effective, although not totally, during the Occupation period than later. In short, it is contended that this first phase occurred during the Occupation, but in a limited,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 298.

struggling fashion. We conjecture this primarily on the basis of the participation within the underground forces and the nature of the reception of Sartre and Camus' writings, including the Combat newspaper. Additional support for this is given by Heinemann. He argues that most of the French existentialists were members of the Resistance and that their participation went beyond a given class or the boundaries of a specific group.<sup>1</sup>

The second stage, following the Liberation of Paris, changes direction as existentialists enthusiastically engaged in open activities. The enormous increase of existential books and increased newspaper circulation, the vast audiences listening to Sartre's talks, the packed theaters playing long-running existential plays, and the ardent political participation, among others, were elements pointing to a movement attempting to improve or change their sociocultural system as well as their own individual lives.

Because of these various kinds of interaction, and thus reflecting differential levels of individual participation and involvement, the form of the movement can be characterized as being both diffused and compact, both involving action based on the incorporation of existential beliefs. Both Sartre and Camus were humanistically and politically oriented and had followers of a heterogeneous

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<sup>1</sup>Heinemann, op. cit., pp. 166-67.

nature. These included the avant garde intellectuals, authors, journalists, playwrights, movie directors, and so on; all of them being highly influential in the spread of existentialism. The social composition of this movement, however, also included politicians, communists, workers, taxi-drivers, café waiters, entertainers, artists, among others.<sup>1</sup>

It is in this context that we are led to believe that, on the whole, membership and participation in mutual concerns transcended class lines even though very little evidence is available regarding social origins by class. Still, the movement was not all-inclusive; it did not, for example, include the aristocratic or peasant segments of French society; thus, we again stress that existentialism may best be characterized as a basic intellectual movement.

Multiple motivations inevitably account for their becoming adherents to this movement. While some held views similar to Sartre, Camus, and de Beauvoir and engaged in mutual tasks and interests, others joined groups in order to secure geniality and fellowship or to enhance their status by being identified as one of the existentialists.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See, among others, S. de Beauvoir, op.cit., p. 222, ff; H. Peyre, The Contemporary French Novel, op. cit., p. 220 and appendix; Werth, op. cit., pp. 230 and 301; Ruggiero, op. cit., p. 25; and Barrett, op. cit., pp. 7-8.

<sup>2</sup>For a classification and discussion of these reasons, see Cameron, op. cit., pp. 52-55.



Thus, as in most social movements, the participants reflected a motley group, and in this case, ranged from university professors (no value judgment intended) to the colorful Bohemians with their "half-faces," their carefree life experiences and environment, and their unconcern for and even rejection of bourgeois life-styles. Hence, both real and derived<sup>1</sup> aspects of this second phase become apparent, and increasingly so with the institutionalization of a formalized existential philosophy in philosophy, psychology, and religion courses in the universities as well as by the emergence of the New Bohemians, the Beatniks, the Hippies, and, finally, the New Left and Yippies in France, the United States, and elsewhere, in which each group increasingly degenerates or "flattens" the existential belief and life-orientation.

The fall of existentialism as a social movement.--The meaning of this heading is as it says. We want to show why existentialism is no longer a value-oriented social movement; we do not want to say that it is dead as a general movement of thought.<sup>2</sup> What conditions had to change in order to produce the downfall of this social movement? If we were required to answer in three words or less, the response would be "instability to stability."

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<sup>1</sup>Smelser, op. cit., pp. 356-58.

<sup>2</sup>For discussion, see Ibid., p. 273.

Any commentary on French post-war politics would be a huge task in itself, as crises succeeded crises in government, political parties, constitutions, economic realms, and so on. In this sense, it was living up to its pre-war tradition. De Gaulle, for instance, has lived under three different Republics and through almost a hundred different governments.

But it is also de Gaulle who has achieved stability for France since he came to power in 1958. He received wide support from the Communist left and he crushed the Royalist anti-Republican right. His settlement of the Algerian problem also increased the unity of the country. In addition, the United States has relieved the French from the burden of Vietnam.

Further, de Gaulle's role in the European Common Market has given France not only prestige but also access to a much needed international market.

Other enormous economic gains have been made:

French farmers are now the world's third most efficient, after America and Canada. France is also the world's third producer of automobiles and fifth in machine tools.

The economic achievements since de Gaulle's return to power in 1958 are impressive. Workers pensions, up seventy per cent; gross national product, up from \$45 billion to \$92 billion; industrial production, up forty per cent; agriculture, up thirty-four percent, while, astonishingly, reducing the number of people engaged in agriculture by 2,000,000 workers who shifted to industry--whether or not this has advanced the pursuit of happi-

ness is another question. Veteran workers are not happy with some of the new methods. But they do not doubt that change had to come. Not only change in methods and structures, but inevitably, change in attitudes and values.

For example, in its origins, French labor was not principally trade unionist. Instead of concentrating on demands for better wages and conditions, the unions were politically militant, functioning mainly as the spearhead of the class struggle. But this is changing. The workers want the union to fight for higher wages and welfare benefits, and not for the dictatorship of the proletariat.<sup>1</sup>

The interpretation of the above is not that France has solved all of her problems, she hasn't. Housing remains one of the major ones, and there are others, such as business and industrial modernization and need for greater concentration in order to remain internationally competitive. Educational reform is another serious plaguing concern, and the list could be extended, as in any modern industrial society.

What can be said concerning the role of de Gaulle and the French setting is that the social institutions--political, economic, and social (familial, communal, religious, etc.)--appear to be functioning to the extent that the individual's needs are met and he is provided predictability and order in his life rather than being forced to rely on himself as the measure of his worth and identity. By establishing these stable and durable social relationships--within the family and among friends, co-workers, and so on--

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<sup>1</sup>"France Is Dead: Long Live France," N.E.T. Journal, (January, 1967), n.p.

the individual is forced to pay the social costs for these anchorages. Thus, inasmuch as existentialism remains a viable force, it appears to be influential with respect to a world outlook, for many people are guided by it in limited and specific participatory endeavors, rather than as an all-inclusive orientation to life and basis for everyday existence. It is in this context that we can say that the seeds of its own destruction were contained in the existential belief itself in that it asked too much of man and gave no recognition, no acceptance, no guide, aid, or comfort--man was indeed alone. While still an open issue--insofar as a definitive verification for our thesis cannot fully satisfy the strict canons of scientific research--this explanation for the fall of existentialism as a social movement is reasonably sound and firmly rooted within the scope of existing social-psychological theory.<sup>1</sup> Finally, if this interpretation has validity, we find that the last phase of

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<sup>1</sup>For instance, consider the following: "Responsiveness," on the part of the authorities (social controls), means that they attempt "to reduce the sources of strain that initiated the value-oriented movement." Specifically, "if authorities behave in these ways, we should expect the value-oriented movement either to disappear, to change into some other less threatening kind of movement (e.g., a norm-oriented movement) or to assume a value-oriented form which is containable within the system. . .;" Smelser, op. cit., p. 365 and cf. pp. 364, 344-45, and 273. Also, see G. Homans, op. cit.; K. Mannheim, loc. cit.; L. Gross, loc. cit.; E. Durkheim, loc. cit.; W. Kornhauser, op. cit., pp. 102-113 (cf. pp. 119-128); and R. Bendix, "Compliant Behavior and Individual Personality," AJS, (November, 1952), pp. 292-303.



this social movement does not conform exactly to the third phase of institutionalization and organization as suggested by Smelser, though it is consistent with his notion of social control which can function as a counter-determinant either prior to or after the emergence of a social movement.



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