Existentialism and the Freedom Theme

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EXISTENTIALISM AND THE FREEDOM THEME

by

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Kalmin D. Smith
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CHAPTER I

THE DIMENSIONS OF FREEDOM

The problem of freedom is at the center of modern political thought. The central question is how to combine order with freedom. Black liberation and white reaction, hostility to the social structure and Spiro Agnew's attack upon intellectuals and students and the question of war and the draft all relate to the problem of man's struggle to be free.

The problem of freedom is new. Plato and Aristotle were not concerned with this problem. Plato was concerned with justice and the ordering of the political community. Aristotle talked of freedom but was concerned with change and order and a potential world in which order would exist. Pericles was concerned with participation in political life but his concept of political participation did not extend to the liberal concept of freedom from the state or the Christian concept of psychological freedom. Nor was it of interest in the medieval corporate state where men thought of themselves in terms of groups and classes rather than as individuals.

The ideal freedom in the West developed with the emergence of the idea that each man is an individual separate from the group and that freedom is personal and related to the individual self. The roots of this concept are found in Christian thought. It emerged with the collapse of medieval society and the rise of capitalism.

Freedom is restricted in two ways. First, it is restricted by coercion and manipulation from outside the individual personality. This
coercion may come in the form of government or private violence or in group pressure to conform. It is overt. Manipulation is less obvious and comes from both public and private sources through propaganda and group pressure designed to influence opinion and control activity. Freedom from manipulation and coercion is sought by individuals to the extent that they recognize these restrictions upon freedom.

Sensitivity to coercion and manipulation is most acute for those attuned to the aesthetic dimensions of human life. Thus the anti-authoritarian rebellion of modern America is led by those who are most aware of the value of freedom of sensual experiences and artistic creativity. The struggle against manipulation and coercion is a struggle for negative freedom. Negative freedom implies restrictions upon the sources of manipulation and coercion.

A second threat to freedom is internal. The psychological needs and drives of human beings cause man to surrender his freedom to authoritarian figures or to seek domination over others. Fromm\(^1\) tells us that in its extreme political form, masochists submit totally to the authority of the state or a dictator and sadists glorify in the domination and persecution of minority groups and weaker nations. Freedom from this internal threat is called psychological freedom.

Negative Freedom

Negative freedom or freedom from external control is threatened by man's need for security. Freedom is threatened because we recognize that

freedom without physical security is dangerous. Sartre\(^1\) recognizes this as he discusses the threat of one individual to another. Hobbes finds that freedom leads to anarchy which ultimately destroys the most basic freedom, freedom of life. To preserve freedom of life, Hobbes advocates the surrender of all freedoms than life. Total government with its coercive and manipulative aspects would preserve life by the destruction of less crucial freedoms. Freedom under total government is lost with one exception that the right of government to destroy life is negated.

Liberal political theorists immediately began to expand Hobbes' view of security to extend the sphere of freedom beyond freedom to life. They recognized the threat of state coercion to extended freedom and argued that the state must guarantee a wider variety of human freedoms. This led to the concept of natural rights and bills of rights. Still, the power of the state and the importance of order remain central to the liberal view of freedom. Order with its inevitable restrictions is preferred to anarchy. Freedom must be sacrificed to some extent for security or freedom will be lost completely. To liberals, total freedom becomes an impossibility. Thus one must accept limitations upon physical action and turn to other concepts of freedom or embrace the dangers of anarchy. One alternative to anarchy is to conceive freedom to be a psychological phenomenon at least partially independent of physical coercion.

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Psychological Freedom

The study of human personality confirms that man's enemy is his own destructiveness. Negative freedom is the result of restrictions placed upon institutions and groups which seek to enslave individuals. The ultimate failure of the "negative approach" to freedom has been the inability of its advocates to recognize the psychological aspects of the freedom problem. Historically, we have seen freedom movements, again and again, become authoritarian and oppressive. Those who deny the fascist potential of the New Left are as blind to reality as the self-righteous defenders of the old order. Niebuhr's¹ "children of light" have failed to recognize the evil that lurks within their own personalities.

Negative freedom only blunts the destructive expression or internal fears and hostilities. All men are susceptible to unconscious drives and forces leading to the elimination of restraints and the destruction of all freedoms. Politically, the least stable and most dangerous personalities are the authoritarian and the anti-authoritarian personalities.

Adorno² described the authoritarian personality as one which adheres rigidly to conventional values and condemns those who violate his values.


He submits uncritically to the strong leaders of ingroups and seeks to dominate those weaker than himself. He projects his troubles to scapegoats and thinks in terms of stereotypes and superstitions. In contrast, the anti-authoritarian personality irrationally opposes all standards and commands supported by authorities.

The authoritarian personality is deficient in psychological freedom because he represses his hostility to authority figures. Instead, he channels all his aggressions toward outgroups. Because of his simplified concept of the world, he is unable to face the ambiguities and other anxiety-provoking aspects of reality. The anti-authoritarian personality is deficient in psychological freedom because he refuses to recognize his own weakness and dependency needs. He conceives all authorities to be wicked and all weak people to be exploited and persecuted. He, too, is prone to black-white thinking. He cannot tolerate complexity or ambiguity in the world and becomes self-righteous about violations by others of his particular value structure. It appears clear that much of America's "silent majority" shares the authoritarian personality type while the New Left and other radical elements tend toward the anti-authoritarian type.

Psychological freedom, then, may be defined as the absence of the subconscious fears and hostilities found in authoritarian and anti-authoritarian types. The modern question of freedom is a struggle for both internal and external freedom. Existentialism is deeply involved in this struggle and it is at this point that existentialism contributes to the political theory of freedom.
The Existentialist Perspective

Existentialist thought is often misunderstood as a contribution to the dialogue of freedom because of its abstract terminology. It emphasizes particular human experiences in which it conceives the full dimensions of human life to become visible and which may clarify the problem of identifying what freedom really is as well as leading man to that freedom.

There is a place for rationality in these experiences although they cannot be fully grasped by reason alone. Rather than being emotional, existentialism is a personalistic philosophy in the sense of always being concerned with the whole, the living person. It emphasizes the experiences of contingency, anxiety, and despair, because they are important parts of the life of each person. Each of these experiences is particularly relevant to the existentialist concept of freedom.

Contingency is the realization that man has been born into a strange world and that he will soon die. To the existentialist, this notion of contingency leads man to freedom from death. The recognition of death frees man psychologically from its restraints. Through knowledge of death, the existentialist transforms it into the great force which can lead to an ennobling of man's life. Thus, by giving finitude a central place, existentialism converts death into an enhancement of life. It initiates man's wondering about the meaning of life, projects him out of superficial comfort, and is the major challenge to authentic life.

Closely linked to contingency is the disposition of anxiety. Existentialists conceive anxiety according to behaviorist psychology, to
result from maladjustment. Man is unable to meet the problems of his situation since he has not yet mastered the techniques of adjustment made available by his society. The consequence of this is man's failure to gratify his needs to their fullest extent. This anxiety is defined as the result of a lack of ability to conform. It prevents man from transcending the psychological restraints to freedom.

However, existentialists interpret anxiety to go beyond the inability to adjust to prevailing norms. To them, behaviorists do not understand that anxiety is also linked to an emerging awareness of nothingness. Nothingness is the awareness that contemporary institutions and values are a hollow shell. They contain no substance and have no meaning to the finite individual who is alienated from them by his awareness that he is finite and helpless to assert his being or true essence within the structure of society.

This experience is not one to be avoided. Nothingness taken 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 psychological survival but is transformed into a guide to what man is beyond his organic life. Consequently, anxiety is the call to become oneself, rather than the signal for an increased or improved conformity. In this sense, anxiety is a form of psychological freedom as the existentialist intuits his true self and transcends his organic limitations to live the fullest life by mastering his finitude and the anxieties produced by society. He becomes an authentic being by discovering and living his essence.

Existential despair is becoming aware of one's being alone in those
matters which count most. Man is lifted out of the security offered by his social and political institutions to an awareness that where a man's life is at stake, no other man and no human institution can lift the burden of responsibility and decision from his shoulders. Here man is totally submerged in a whirlpool of freedom in which he alone can find his way to an authentic existence.

This transition from dependence to authentic existence or essence is difficult. Ever since Kierkegaard, existentialists have spoken of the leap into authentic existence. This leap occurs as a result of the experience of contingency, anxiety, and despair, leading to an awareness of man's true condition and a determination to transcend social and philosophical conformity to exercise true freedom or authentic existence based on these experiences.

To existentialists, authentic existence is knowing and freedom are synonymous. Authentic existence might be better understood by analyzing Aristotle's concept of essence. Aristotle is concerned with the problem of discovering that which makes matter into a particular, individual thing. He concludes that each thing contains an essence which is not another element in the thing nor anything compounded out of its elements. Thus he rejects any materialistic understanding of the essence and treats it as the principle of structure of the concrete thing.

Like Aristotle, the existentialist is concerned with the principle of structure or essence of his individual self. For him, authentic existence is an awareness of and living of man's individual essence. The
experiences of contingency, anxiety, and despair occur when man begins
to realize that he has been denied realization of his authentic existence
or essence and serves to bring awareness of that essence. This aware­
ness breaks the existentialist away from all the psychological restric­
tions that have been integrated into him through society and thrusts
him into the openness of true freedom which is the crucial point in all
existentialist works. This true freedom is not one blessed moment of
conversion but a style of life in which despair and authenticity are
never far distant from each other.

Aristotle's concepts of becoming, potential, and actuality also are
analogous to existentialist thought. Aristotle is interested in the
potentiality in a single thing of passing from one state to another.
Essentially, he holds that before "A" actually was in the state "B" it
must have been potentially so. To him, change cannot be explained with­
out potentiality. Existentialists are in agreement with this position.
A major concern of existentialism is the passage of man from his contem­
porary existence of unauthentic life to authentic living which is poten­
tially his. Indeed, it is the spark of potential freedom that creates
despair at the lack of freedom in man's existence and causes him to seek
authentic life.

Aristotle goes beyong awareness of the potential in man to argue
that change does not come by potentiality alone. To him, nothing is
promoted from potentiality to actuality without the agency of something
actual and this actuality is the end to which potentiality points. For
the existentialist, actuality is also the catalyst of change. The actu­
ality stimulating change from nonauthentic to authentic existence is human experience including the three experiences discussed above. Thus, like Aristotle, existentialists argue that man has the power of initiating change and of becoming that toward which his potentiality points.

Aristotle's concept of becoming which finds man to be moving from what he is to what he potentially may be is also analogous to existentialist thought. The man who is experiencing contingency, anxiety, and despair has moved beyond man as unauthentic being and is in the process of becoming authentic man or reaching the immanent state. This immanent state or potential, conceived differently, is existentialist thinking and is the major source of difference between Christian and non-Christian existentialists.

The disagreement among existentialists on interpretation of authenticity is clear in the thoughts of Heidegger, Sartre, and Jaspers. Heidegger\(^1\) finds estrangement to be a life detached from Being, which is the mystical force or relationship of all those living in authentic existence. Authentic existence is the awareness that one is standing-out from Being and finding a way home to it. In this sense, Heidegger's authentic existence is man becoming his highest potential which transcends individual potential to the essence of its structure or the master plan of that essence. Death is the great caller to such a life,

because through it man faces the mystery of Being in all earnestness.

For Sartre,\(^1\) authenticity is creation of meaning. Like Nietzsche, he wants man to know himself to be alone and without support from God. To be authentic is to be creative in spite of the ultimate futility of creation. Jaspers\(^2\) calls man to an authenticity which is essentially a determination continuously to journey; the aim being variously called the encompassing, transcendence, and God. To affirm wholly, yet nevertheless to go beyond this position and to affirm again endlessly means to live authentically. Others have interpreted the existentialist breakthrough into the openness of freedom as one which enables a true human experience of God. The "I" really becomes "I" by personally relating itself to God in freedom. This is so in Kierkegaard, Tillich, Marcel, Buber, and Berdyaev.

The importance of the existentialist call for authentic existence cannot be overemphasized. To existentialists, it constitutes the rebirth of genuine individualism in a time which has lost the ardent desire for it despite all outwardly expressed enthusiasm. This concern for individual authenticity is a call for both psychological and negative freedom. All subsequent existentialist commentary upon society, man and the state have at their root the fear that social relationships as we know them today destroy freedom and therefore frustrate man's need to know his essence and to live authentically.

\(^1\)op. cit., p. 62.

CHAPTER II

FREEDOM AND SOCIETY

The existentialist, despite the high priority he placed upon the individual's right to authentically express his personality free of restraint or coercion or the opinions of other beings, recognizes that the existing individual does not move in a vacuum and attempts an analysis of man's environment as it relates to him. This chapter shall address itself to the problem of freedom within the confines of society.

Existentialists, like most social scientists, clearly distinguish between the terms "society" and "state". They insist that the state is a lesser form of society. It is separate from society in organization and purpose but not in conflict with society. The state serves social institutions and the goals of society by using violence and the threat of force to stabilize those institutions and subject the will of the individual to the general will of society. The public media, belief in systems and the fear of individuals to become socially ostracized by refusing to conform, also serve to subject the will of the individual to society. Thus, the struggle for freedom is more than a struggle from the state. At its roots, it is a struggle between the individual and society.

Existentialists find society to be an abstract concept. Men relate together to form a group or society and relate to society as an empirical reality apart from its individual members. In contrast, existentialists find groups to have no empirical reality. Society
is composed of individuals who by glorification of the group merge their identities with this abstract concept. In this sense man loses his true identity. Thus the danger to individual freedom is for individual man to identify himself with this abstract concept rather than to recognize himself as an individual subject to individual empirical experiences and capable of authentic existence.

All existentialist thinkers fear society because of this belief that society robs man of his sense of individual reality. Kierkegaard¹ deplored life in the age of abstraction and was joined by Heidegger² who warned that relationships with others causes man to forget his authentic existence. He found the forces of society to impersonalize man and mold his personality to that of society in general. Faced with this problem, Heidegger³ finds that authentic man cannot live as an abstraction. He must choose between subjecting himself to some abstract concept of man or asserting his authenticity by withdrawing from society.

Existentialists fear society and find it to pervert authentic man for several reasons. First, the abstraction of man which forces him to surrender his empirical reality to the abstract concept of a social whole makes him susceptible to the evils of the mass media.

³loc. cit., p. 124.
In society, the mass media function to maintain the whole and to continue the process of separating man in society from his unique self. Kierkegaard\(^1\) notes this as he deplores the mass media for substituting gossip or verbosity for genuine action. To him, the circulation of newspapers is an indicator of the extent to which freedom has been destroyed because freedom is found in the authentic inwardness of man and the mass media is a wholly external mode of discourse.

A second characteristic of society which served to dehumanize man by depriving him of his freedom is its tendency toward egalitarianism. Egalitarianism, like the mass media, represents the abstract quality of public life and contributes to it. Kierkegaard\(^2\) sees the egalitarianism of the modern age to be a levelling process which represents the victory of the abstract over empirical existence. It is the victory of the public over the individual. This public, he\(^3\) finds:

> consists of unreal individuals who never are and never can be united in an actual situation - and yet are held together as a whole.

To Kierkegaard, reduction from status as a man to become one of equals composing an abstraction is the antithesis of freedom.

Heidegger\(^4\) finds that the egalitarianism of society creates impersonality since we are all alike and thus interchangeable. Reduc-

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\(^1\) op. cit., p. 52.
\(^2\) loc. cit., p. 53.
\(^3\) loc. cit., p. 38

tion to equals creates a categorical imperative to behave like everyone. This too, is a denial of the freedom to be creative. Jaspers also fears the levelling process as detrimental to human freedom. To him\(^{1}\) the elimination of differences means the debasement of the superior to the average. Thus he finds that the universal is always the most superficial. Yet, says Jaspers, we doggedly pursue this process in the hope that we may bring about the unification of mankind.

Marcel\(^{2}\) agrees with Jaspers. To him, the attempt to obliterate genuine distinctions is necessary to bring man to identify with the public or group will. Thus society drives to render illegal former liberties which have come to be considered intolerable privileges. These privileges are suppressed until the situation of each individual resembles that of his neighbor. To Marcel, society fears individual liberties as anarchic in terms of its stability and seeks to suppress human freedom.

A third characteristic of society endangering freedom is its emphasis upon acceptance of certain types of ideologies. These ideologies reduce fear and funnel individuals into an abstraction as they identify with the system rather than their own empirical experiences. The confidence given to the individual by acceptance of a philosopher system negates such experiences as contingency, anxiety, and despair which are necessary prerequisites to total freedom.


Existentialists find these ideologies or closed systems of thought to block freedom for several reasons. First, they believe that it is impossible for man to build a universally valid system of thought which will enable him to view truth from the outside like any other object. Belief in a universally valid system, existentialists fear, will give man a false sense of security and spare him anxiety and despair which lead to awareness of his condition and authentic existence in freedom. Second, they find such systems to breed intolerance and to seduce people into imagining themselves in possession of absolute truth which results in religious and political suppression and injustice. Nationalism is an example of this problem.

Third, even if fanaticism and intolerance should be avoided, existentialists fear that closed systems or ideologies breed lack of interest in further questioning one's life. This attitude, as Buber\(^1\) puts it, "...is one of satisfaction that one has built a house in which one can live comfortably from now on, and from which one can look out upon the world with curiosity but without serious concern." In this view, instead of being an adventure, life turns into a secondhand life as most people do not create their own systems but merely accept them. To the existentialist, even the creators of systems often just put them together without ever involving their personalities wholeheartedly in them. Thus, acceptance of systems causes man's estrangement from what he can be. Tolstoy\(^2\) sheds light on this alienation as he traces

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the growth of Ivan Illyich from submission to a system to authentic existence.

Central to this existentialist hostility toward closed systems is a deep fear of social movements or "isms" which seem, to the existentialists, to afford a universal explanation of the world and thus to offer to man comfort and security. Through these systems man can rest assured in a 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, existentialists saw these "isms" to hold that all this could be achieved by merely changing the institutional organization of society or social engineering. All of these promises of the systems could have only one effect, the denial of authenticity to the individual who placed his trust in them and avoided the existential crisis of despair followed by authentic existence through a new freedom.

Obviously, extreme devotion to "isms" is not a characteristic of all systems. However, existentialists would argue that although all intellectual systems do not incorporate all the evils demonstrated to be characteristic of extreme systems, all systems do result in the loss of individualism to a greater or lesser degree. Thus the distinction between systems is one of degree but all systems destroy human freedom.

Existentialists find liberalism to be an example of such a closed system. They find liberals to serve their purposes to the extent that
they support negative freedom. Yet, they criticize liberals for the inability to realize that there are other restrictions upon freedom in addition to the state.

Dostoevski\(^1\) and Nietzsche\(^2\) attack liberalism for three reasons. First, they fear that it attempts to convert freedom and individuality into a formula for achieving the best of everything. Second, they see liberalism as attempting to create a "utopia of happiness" by belief in the validity of the liberal model finding freedom in the balance of individuals and groups with the state. Third, they fear that this utopia will encourage individuals to seek comfort and security rather than face the reality of authentic existence in freedom.

Liberals and existentialist have much in common. Central to liberalism is a concern for the individual. Existentialists do not attack this concept. With the exception of those liberals who reduce man to part of a great social machine or subject him to determinism, most liberals seek individual freedom and openness and tolerance just as existentialists do. Indeed, in noting the merging of some liberal and existentialist concerns, Hughes\(^3\) has gone so far as to label Sartre "an old-style European intellectual, perhaps the last truly great one that the twentieth century was to see." Revealing Sartre's concern

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for the oppressed and his liberal attitudes, Hughes found him to be a liberal in the tradition of the great French moralists. Existentialist criticism is aroused at the seeming inability of liberalism to attack all restrictions upon freedom. To existentialists, liberalism has failed to the extent that it has become a closed system based upon a particular model of freedom rather than man's own creativity in total freedom.

One of the problems of this existentialist criticism is its failure to distinguish different types of liberalism. For example, many liberals would agree with the existentialists that public institutions such as the press tend to direct and channel human thought rather than promoting human creativity. To this extent, existentialist scholarship has been sloppy. However, it is important to remember that existentialists are addressing themselves to the problem of human freedom and are not concerned with defending favorable aspects of any system. Existentialists recognize the importance of reason and proper scholarship. However, at its core, existentialism is an introspective humanism or theory of man which expresses the individual's intense awareness of his contingency and freedom. The existential awareness of restriction within liberal society and within liberal thought is sufficient in itself for condemnation of liberal thought. To the existentialist, any attempt to structure or order human relationships is anathema. Any philosophy which orders human beings is evil regardless of its fine qualities or its divisions of thought.

It might also be argued at this point that the tendency to lump existentialists together regardless of the time in which they wrote,
where they wrote, or their general political ideology, is not a good thing. For example, it seems strange to bring Dostoevski, Nietzsche, Tolstoy, and Sartre together as they reflect upon liberalism. Certainly, Nietzsche's attitude toward liberalism takes the form that it does less because he is an existentialist of some sort than because he is a 19th century German intellectual who shares that group's prejudices against liberalism.

The existentialist would respond to such criticism by noting that existentialism, by its very nature, is not a systematic ideology amenable to orderly division. Rather, existentialism as a philosophy is a disorderly collection of human responses toward restriction and a series of individual attempts to express the totality of human freedom. Any author who expresses a criticism of human restriction or desire for an increase in human freedom is an existentialist to the degree of freedom he seeks and the extent to which he achieves the authentic life. Therefore, existentialists see no need to order their thought in terms of time or any other division. Such a systematic approach would mute the individual's cry for freedom and violate the existentialist emphasis upon the uniqueness of each individual existence.

Existentialists are far less charitable toward nationalism as a closed system than toward liberalism. Existentialists find nationalism to attempt to give man's life meaning by submerging him in the group and totally dedicating his life to it. Nietzsche¹ attacked

nationalism as supporting the uncreative trends in man, his laziness and fear. For Nietzsche, the modern state represented no more than a fairly complicated herd, against which individuals would have to rise if they did not wish to be swallowed up. Thus Nietzsche, like other existentialists, viewed nationalism as not worthy to fill out a man's life but actually as annihilating his life by making man a state slave.

Existentialists do not clearly distinguish between Marxism and socialism. They tend to express a certain sympathy for what they see to be existential aspects of Marxism and socialism but go on to reject these schools of thought as additional systems of thought with the same restrictions on freedom as other ideologies.

Existentialists find a wide gap between Marx's early probing into a man's destiny and the consequent systematic orthodoxy of socialism. Berdiaev\(^1\) finds Marx's interpretation of capitalism from the standpoint of its social relation to be existential in nature. Marx's more lasting contribution to existentialism is his research on the relationship between the individual and his economic environment. He adopted the factory worker as a symbol of how man could be estranged from his existence as a human being. This is certainly existential in nature. Existentialists find Marx to have revealed a cardinal concept in existentialism as he discovered disharmony in the midst of proclaimed progress as whole groups of persons became merely tools.

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rather than persons. This occurred as the modern worker became subject
to a machine over which he had no effective control and which came to
engulf him through its control of his work.

Unfortunately, to existentialists, Marx attempted to solve this
existential problem by adopting Hegel's idea of incorporating the prob­
lem and its suggested solution into a vast system. In it the idea or
world spirit of Hegel is replaced by the forces of production. History
is determined as it moves toward the establishment of the social so­
ciety where man will become fully man. Thus, to the existentialists,
Marx has properly labeled man's alienation but incorrectly found its
solution in a logical system leading toward a determined end. As in
Hegel, history denies man the freedom to shape it, and the system with
its promise of happiness and security replaces the free man living in
authentic existence to shape his own destiny.

Nietzsche reacted violently against this Marxist system. To him,\textsuperscript{1}
the tragedy and paradox of this is that socialism which strives to use
society as a means to the ultimate happiness of the individual succeeds
in subjecting his individuality to the community. Dostoevski\textsuperscript{2} also
feared the subjection of man to the community under socialism. He
feared that thousands of his fellow men might be killed in order to
usher in the "new era". But tragically, to Dostoevski, after all the
destruction of life and property, instead of the ideal society would

\textsuperscript{1}Nietzsche, Friedrich, \textit{The Joyful Wisdom}. New York: Macmillan
Co., 1924, 152.

\textsuperscript{2}Dostoevski, Fedor, \textit{The Best Short Stories of Dostoevski}. New
appear one in which freedom had been sold for the comforts of food and shelter.

Sartre is an exception to this existentialist attitude toward Marxism. In his Critique of Dialectical Reason, Sartre\(^1\) engaged himself with Marxism as an intellectual discipline. Sartre sought to join Marxism and existentialism. He accused the Stalinists of turning Marxism into a cult of fixed ideas and hoped that existentialism could rejuvenate its existential nature.

In the Critique, Sartre\(^2\) argued that scarcity places limitations upon men and is the origin of violence. Thus Sartre held that human freedom is less complete than he had imagined when he had written Being and Nothingness. He now saw that freedom for scarcity became actual only when men grouped themselves together for mutual assistance.

At this point, Sartre turned to terror as the instrument of political action. He\(^3\) spoke of terror as "the very bond of fraternity," and looked for isolated individuals to be fused into a group inspired by a single aim. To him, this revolutionary violence was both inevitable and moral as man's freedom gave him a special license to condone the terroristic practices of the revolutionary left.

Sartre's attempted marriage of existentialism and Marxism was


\(^2\)loc. cit., p. 49.

\(^3\)ibid.
a failure. As Hughes has said:

It was neither Marxism nor social science – nor did it offer the prolegomena to a new understanding of man. Both amateurish and old-fashioned, it closed rather than inaugurated a major phase in French intellectual history.

Four years later Sartre published *The Words* in which he seemed to take back or refute much that his Marxism treatise had asserted. He now saw that his striving toward universalism had the opposite of the effect he had desired. Thus Sartre moved closer to his original position and the approach of most existentialists to Marxism. Further reference to Sartre in this thesis will refer to his pre-*Critique* contributions as descriptive of his position as an existentialist unless otherwise specified.

Existentialists also oppose any scientific or psychological approach to the social sciences which suggests that man is not free to make his own way in the world or that his actions are determined in any way. An example of the attitude they reject is seen in Skinner's postulate that human action "is a lawful datum, that it is undisturbed by the capricious acts of any free agent – in other words, that it is completely determined." In Skinner's *Walden Two*, the psychologist-manager of his model community concedes that it might never be possi-

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1 op. cit., p. 51.


ble to prove that man is not free. "But," his manager went on to say, "...the increasing success of a science of behavior makes it more and more plausible."

Buber, like all existentialists, rejects any deterministic interpretation of man. To him, the sciences are wrong. Like Jaspers, he views the sciences as practical and useful but unable to find the whole meaning of human life. Whenever the sciences set themselves up as the last authority on man's needs and goals, they are outright harmful and dangerous since they then become the main source for man's estrangement. In line with all existentialist thought, Buber denies that a system can swallow up the concrete and free individual. To him, Darwin with his biological interpretation of the world and Spengler with his historical scheme both surrendered to a fate they themselves had designed.

To existentialists, closed systems of thought and world views which take man's freedom from him are highly objectionable. Subscription to these systems causes unauthentic existence which must be overcome. This unauthentic existence finds man in the world to be driven rather than to drive. In it man has not yet overcome his estrangement from what is truly human. To remain in this state is not worthy of a human being, since it is the denial of the great potentialities of man. Existentialists see doors by which to leave this lowest level

1ibid.
2op. cit.
of human existence to be wide open for those who wish to use them. They are opened by certain fundamental experiences shared by all mankind. The problem is that these systems of thought prevent man from feeling those experiences. They do this by causing him to view himself as "driven," and to see himself as securely established within a world view and sure of himself and the world. They also do it by encouraging him to conform to particular modes of thought and enticing him to sacrifice the freedom which would have led to despair and awareness in exchange for material freedom. The existentialist demand that the full immediacy of such experiences as anxiety, risk, boredom, despair, death, and nothingness be preserved. Only then can they provide the jolt necessary to project man out of his unauthentic existence to true authenticity in freedom.

Society then, by providing false security through closed systems of thought, egalitarianism, forced regimentation through the state, and manipulated regimentation through the mass media, functions to strip man of his uniqueness and merge his identity with that of an abstract public. The alternative to this process is to withdraw from society. Thus, individual man must become a social deviant to preserve his freedom. In effect, he becomes a rebel.
CHAPTER III

FREEDOM AND REBELLION

The deviant in society represents the spirit of rebellion. How does society react to this individual who refuses to become a cog in the great social machine and asserts his right to seek authenticity through individualistic action? The solution to this challenge to society is the state which is authorized by the public to enforce the will of society. This raises a further question. What is the obligation of the individual to authority and the state? We shall seek enlightenment on these questions by observing the state as an agency of society, analyzing the existential perspective of morality and the place of rebellion in the existentialist philosophy as represented by Camus and Sartre.

The State: An Existentialist Perspective

In exploring the existentialist concept of the state we must note that the state is given power by society. This power has been placed in the hands of the state on the premise that force or the threat of force is necessary to the creation of an orderly society directed toward accomplishing the general welfare through collective action. Presumably, the state through its agencies, acts at the request of society in the best interests of a majority of the individuals in society. Unfortunately, to existentialists, this attempt to enforce conformity restricts individual freedom and continues the levelling process. Thus, to accomplish the good things resulting from organi-
zation, it is necessary for the state to do bad things by directing the dissenting individual against his will. Thus existentialists find any threat to tradition or convention to be stifled by the state in support of the static-society.

This problem is not recognized by existentialists alone. It is a widespread observation among many social scientists. Strauss\(^1\) notes that Augustine recognizes it as he discusses the problems of obeying political authority and living the Christian life. Paine\(^2\) was not unaware of the problem when, referring to the injustices done to the individual by society, he commented that true social progress necessi-tates less government. Niebuhr\(^3\) also found government to be an evil necessary to maintaining an organized society.

The existentialist asserts that all through our social life we are faced with the tragic fact that our means are defective even though our ends might be good. Government, meant to accomplish good things, becomes the institutionalization of distasteful tasks and objection-able to the individual as an interference with human freedom. The draft would be an example of this as the state, representing the pub-lic, denies the individual his authenticity as it enslaves him to per-petrate an unauthentic and abstract society. Therefore, to the existen-tialist, every collective action can be seen to contain this defec-


\(^2\)loc. cit., p. 595.

\(^3\)op. cit.,
tive element and threaten individual freedom. Few can preserve their integrity against society which is threatening to become a leviathan fattening on the lost freedoms and possibilities of individuals. To existentialists, the state through organization and forced collective action, substitutes its purposes for the integrity of the individual.

Morality and Authority

The existentialist concept of morality and truth is relevant to our study because it determines the decision existentialists will make in choosing whether or not to subject themselves to the authority of the state. Existentialists find that the state has traditionally justified its monopoly of power by claiming to represent some universal right or code of morality. This morality has served as a strong incentive for commitment to others and to the state. Kings ruled by divine right and politicians roused the masses to action by raising the banner of God and righteousness.

In the view of existentialists, contemporary society forms the notion of an overarching ethical system and men are required to live according to the principles of that system. Deviation from the system is considered a violation of moral law or ethics and justifies action on the part of the state to enforce conformity. In this view, draft dodging is seen to be immoral as well as illegal. Thus, failure to comply to the norms of society is viewed as a violation of ethical standards as well as customs.

Questioning this defense of authority, existentialism takes a
relative approach to the question of ethics and the obligative relationship of the individual to authority. Williams\(^1\) finds contemporary existentialism to hold that:

> The way to truth and morality lies in and through the experience of the self. The human being, in his own deep inwardness, is the starting point for arriving at any adequate knowledge of truth and morality. Vital truth, it is claimed, is grounded in human subjectivity.

Existentialists, then, find truth and morality to be made relative by the human nature. The quest after truth and morality is thought to be essentially the quest of the solitary individual. Sartre\(^2\) said that "...subjectivity must be the starting point." Jaspers\(^3\) found the approach to truth to lie through one's own existence and Heidegger\(^4\) found man to be the door to reality. Thus, by asserting the relativity of truth and morality, the existentialist denies that any one principle or set of ethics exists to which he owes obedience. This leads him to question the right of the state to limit the individual's possibilities and act as a coordinating power directing individuals in the name of tradition and conformity.

This restrictiveness of the state is seen by existentialists to inhibit the authenticity of those who wish to be free and construct

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their own morality and gives rise to the "freedom theme" which bubbles up in the form of rebellion against any authority which violates this freedom. Nietzsche's view of truth and construction of a "Higher Man" is an example of one existentialist's attempt to escape the shackles of institutionalized morality which is based on the premise that the collective will of society must reign as an absolute. This attempt to escape authority in search of authenticity is a major theme in existentialism and repeated in many ways by all existentialist philosophers and social critics.

Thus, existentialists find that men need not obey the authority of the state. To them, the obligative power of the state should not extend to the denial of freedom. The individual must be free to seek his authentic existence, even if his search jeopardizes the collective security of society.

Rebellion

Existentialism can now be seen as a philosophy emphasizing individualism and non-conformity. Consequently, all existentialists share the belief that it is up to the individual himself to solve his own existential problems. Society cannot do it for him. Society should no longer designate him to fulfill a particular function and he is free to seek his own perfection as an authentic being rather than a smoothly functioning cog in the great social machine. Therefore, the existentialist, seeking authentic existence, must rebel against the forces

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restricting him to unauthentic living.

The existentialist approach to rebellion may be divided into a conservative and liberal approach. In this investigation, we shall distinguish liberal existentialism from conservative existentialism by the degree to which each hopes to carry the existentialist rebellion and the scope of that rebellion. All religious existentialists support the basic conservative view while the secular existentialists are divided. Sartre and the liberal approach are synonymous. Conservatives are not as united in their views but Camus adequately represents their position.

A comparison of the social and political positions of Sartre and Camus reveals the split between conservative and liberal existentialists. The major area of divergence is in the meaning and result of conflict which recurs as men revolt against their objectification by others either into systems or as individuals. This difference is epitomized in their distinctive ways of defining the concepts of revolt as the rebellion of the individual who refuses to be a part of the evils of society while asserting his own individual freedom and authenticity in a nonviolent way. Sartre fluctuates between the conservative and liberal positions. At times, as a conservative, he asserts that the individual stands alone and will lose his authenticity if he participates in any collective activity. In recent years, as a liberal, Sartre has seen the necessity of collective action as groups participate in revolution which can be violent. This revolution is a realistic program of action charted toward definite ends and moving
with the course of history which it directs and modifies.

This conflict can be seen in a survey of the fiction of Sartre and Camus. Frequently these two men create story situations where friends represent divergent attitudes. Neither man causes his characters to clash head-on nor finally merge but Camus ultimately establishes a kind of unity in difference, the balanced tension of the bow, whereas in Sartre the conflict finally rends the two friends assunder and destroys at least one of them.

Unlike Sartre, Camus has gradually worked out a political philosophy of rebellion and stuck to it. His philosophy is one of limits and of moderation. It does not advocate passivity but if violence occurs, it is not legitimized. It is the result of calculated risk and personal responsibility. One may resort to any violence only as an extreme limit which is opposed to another extreme violence. To Camus, 1 "The authentic action of revolt will consent to take up arms only for institutions which limit violence, not for those which codify it." Just as the philosophy of revolt seeks a dynamic mean between violence and absolute nonviolence, so it holds that justice and freedom must find their limits with each other. Neither the real nor the ideal must be pursued at the expense of the other. To justify action and systems in the name of what it is, denies man's transcendence and enchains him to the material world. The rebel, for Camus, must be like the artist, who squarely confronts reality without escaping from it. Revolt is uncompromising as to means but will accept approximation in

achieving its ends. It lives in the relative and abhors absolutes.

In *The Plague*, Camus discusses the problems of political action and revolution in avoiding committing the very sins they aim to irradiate. In the novel, two men are drawn together in a rare experience of friendship by their awareness that each, in his own way, is fighting against the same disease. In taking care of the sick, Dr. Rieux has been closely associated with Tarrou, who has organized the citizens into groups of emergency workers.

Tarrou had believed that the society in which he lived was based upon the death sentence and that in seeking to tear it down, he would be fighting against murder. Hence, he joined a political group which was dedicated to the ideal of setting up a better society. He realized that their program of action occasionally resulted in condemning certain people to death, and he found it hard to accept that fact. However, his companions persuaded him that these few had to die in order that there might be a world where for the rest of time there would be no death sentences. Then came the day when he saw a man killed by a firing squad. Suddenly he realized that during all those years when he sincerely believed that he was fighting against the plague, he too, was one of those who had the plague and was spreading its contagion.

Here Tarrou discovers that we are all infected with the plague. Patriotism in America means death for children in Vietnam and our sincere efforts to bring a better and peaceful life to all men results in destruction and death to men of goodwill and ill will alike. He concludes that there are only pestilences and victims; by refusing to
side with the pestilence one may at least be an innocent murderer, doing the least possible harm to men and occasionally perhaps even a little good. Thus for Tarrou in the face of evident evil, such as the epidemic which has struck the city of Oran (or the Nazi occupation), he will do what he can to help the victims but will not take part in political action which infects at the same time that it seeks a vaccine. Tarrou is uneasily aware that this course may result in leaving the task of making history to others. But, he feels that his own part for attaining peace must be sympathy, his morality comprehension.

Tarrou's position accents the principle idea of The Rebel, that the revolution which takes away man's freedom for the sake of absolute justice is no better than the unjust despotism set up for the purpose of securing the unlimited freedom of a few. There are certain absolute limits which one cannot trespass in the name of any ideal without thereby corrupting that ideal from within.

Camus' idea of absolute limits is tied up with the idea of a human nature or essence. When he says that there are limits which men must observe, he is declaring that all men share an absolute value. To this extent, he is holding that essence precedes existence and thereby rejects Sartre's position that man is totally free to create his own limitations. However, this absolute value does not allow for the formation of systems or ideologies. It assumes the absolute value of the human person over all things including all other absolutes. Thus Camus stands with Sartre in opposing the Christians, Hegelians, and Marxists, whose doctrines or original sin, the Absolute Idea, and economic de-
terminism all subordinate the individual to an historical process which is in some part outside him.

Yet, Tarrou is not identical with Camus. Rieux is more realistic than Tarrou in that he rejects Tarrou's struggle to obtain an impossible innocence. He believes that the best man can do is struggle against death and meaninglessness which are the structure of the human condition. Here, Rieux expresses Camus' belief that man must struggle if he is to be truly a man. He cannot refrain from rebellion as Tarrou has done.

In The Rebel, Camus' doctrine of pure revolt shows an interweaving of ideas derived from Rieux and Tarrou both. The rebel realizes that for him the only alternative to the acceptance of oppression and injustice is a calculated culpability. He will not work in the name of party or principle which seeks to justify murder as expedient, but he realizes that in life today one cannot act or even refuse to act without risking or consenting to the death of others just as the conscientious objector tacitly consents to the horror of war by cooperating in the system that spawns war even though he himself does not kill. Therefore he cherishes, like Tarrou, the hope that he may be an innocent murderer. But the greater emphasis on action and the specific nature of this calculated culpability suggest Rieux more than Tarrou. In The Rebel, Camus says:

If revolt could found a philosophy it would be a philosophy of limits, of calculated ignorance and of risk. The man who cannot know everything cannot kill everything.

1 loc. cit., 257.
Here we find a connection between right conduct and clear-sightendess. But this time it is the rebel's Socratic knowing that he does not know which makes him realize that he cannot treat living men as expendable for the sake of men yet to be born. The rebel, like Rieux, realizes that in preferring to serve man rather than God he must not make the mistake of trying to become God. He remains faithful to his original principles, willing to abide by the primary rule of today which Camus has phrased as: "Learn to live and to die, and in order to be a man, refuse to be God."

Perhaps the truth of the matter is that Tarrou and Rieux represent two aspects of Camus himself. On the one hand, there is the thirst for purity of heart and the feeling that it is wrong to compromise with any society or with any party which permits the sacrifice of individuals for the good of the majority; on the other hand is the realization that preoccupation with one's own innocence and retreat from the world form one more way of consenting to the evils which already exist. If men are to be saved, Camus admits there must be rebellions; but if the revolutionary movement is not to destroy both men and principles, he insists that it must preserve the rebel at its heart.

In The Plague, the two methods are symbolically reconciled. Rieux and Tarrou recognize their differences, but each of them sympathetically comprehends what the other wants. In this moment of comprehension both men feel a strange happiness which comes when two human beings understand one another's differences, accept them, and tolerate one

\[^1\text{loc. cit., 277.}\]
another in a short reprieve they had been granted from the intolerances and evils of the disease. This situation is the balanced tension of the bow which Camus has created in his political philosophy as the best possible situation for the rebel and his momentary escape from the plague.

In sum, Camus affirms the right of rebellion but is concerned that it might be carried to some extreme denying the very principle of individual freedom for which it stands. Therefore he calls for rebellion to contain limits and moderation. This rebellion must be an individual thing and not part of a mass, organized social movement. It is the simple action of the individual who, because of a troubled conscience due to the "wrong" action of his state, merely ceases to support or cooperate with those things with which he disagrees. Political action is to be avoided because it tends to adopt the evils of the system it opposes and often calls for the sacrifice of the individual in its search for freedom for all. Violence is only to be tolerated when it is used to oppose some other extreme violence. It is to be avoided whenever possible. Rebellion must preserve the spirit of the rebel by leaving room for differences and deviations in its attempts to create a new order. Ultimately, rebellion must seek some balanced tension between freedom and justice similar to the spirit of two individuals who accept their differences but tolerate one another and commune in harmony and friendship and understanding.

It is difficult to discuss the philosophy of liberal existentialists because they are a small minority of existentialist thought
and have only one influential leader. That leader is Sartre who, unlike Camus, presents a philosophy which appears to contain conservative as well as liberal elements.

Sartre began as a conservative but now champions a more liberal position. As a conservative, Sartre was more conservative than most religious and secular existentialists whom we have labeled conservative. To him, the permanent state of man's social relations is conflict. Its origin lies in the human inability to fuse two subjects into a harmonious whole. This is a radical individualism more conservative toward the possibility of constructive social action than any other existentialist. It is a war of every man against every other man. In addition, he found man to always act in an historical situation which is unique, a fact which gives unpredictable content to man's creation. Thus men can only work together temporarily to overcome a third antagonistic force. Once that force is overcome they will war with each other.

At this state, Sartre opposes Marxism with its reliance on mass revolution to solve social ills. To him, man is only what he is and his authentic existence can only be realized in deeds which are committed alone, in absolute freedom and responsibility. For him, human existence carried no meaning beyond itself. Man exists solely for himself and his own task which is to live his own existence to its highest fulfillment.

Sartre's philosophy of rebellion is based on the premise that all

\[Sartre, \text{op. cit., p. 221.}\]
men are by nature free. We can see this truth, he claims, in the fact that men are capable of recognizing oppression as distinct from other kinds of afflictions. One rebels against men or Gods but not against storms or earthquakes. The guiding ideal of revolution, to Sartre, should be respect for the freedom of all men and the factual liberation of all. Revolution does not aim at bestowing upon certain minorities privileges which have been previously denied them. It must be in the name of all men and for the good of all. Sartre's ideal revolutionary looks on any society as merely a human fact which he may accept or try to change.

Sartre has summarized the essentials of his philosophy of revolution into four basic principles which are consistent with both his conservative and liberal positions. First, man is unjustifiable and his existence is contingent. No providence has designed his being, nor was he himself ever free not to exist or not to be free. Second, since there is no external justification for individuals, this means that no collective order which men may establish has any privileged claim to "rightness". Men may at will surpass any such order in the direction of other orders. Third, the system of values prevalent in any society reflects the social structure of that society and tends to preserve it. Fourth, as a natural consequence, men may always seek to go beyond an existing set of values toward other new values which are anticipated and even invented by men's very effort to pass beyond the present society.

This Sartrian philosophy of revolution allows for a continual transcendence, always in the direction of greater freedom and an open
future. Even if the ideal of maximum freedom for all could be real-
ized by one generation, it would have to be reformulated by the next,
in order to remain freedom. Moreover, the belief that men are free
leads Sartre to reject completely what he calls the materialist myth.
Men are not things. They are not subject to determinism by obscure forces
of history. Economic determinism is just as much a myth as determinism
by heredity or environment. A person cannot be defined just by his
class. Individual members have individual reactions. Most important
of all, no results of men's actions can be guaranteed, neither their
actual working out, nor their effect on other men, nor the judgment
which the future will pass upon them. For all these reasons, Sartre
argues that men must not be sacrificed either to a mystic idea of the
state or to a vague utopian future.

Sartre began to develop his new liberalism in 1952. His shift
from a conservative to a liberal existentialist was completed as he
came to conceive existentialism as an ideology with the sole purpose
of rejuvenating the teachings of Marx. When the conversion was com-
pleted, Sartre expected existentialism, having done its work, to sim-
ply disappear. His book, Critique of Dialectical Reason, was intended
to hasten that disappearance.

Hughes\(^1\) argues that Sartre, in his Critique of Dialectical Reason,
began to abandon the individual as he now saw that freedom became actual
only when men grouped themselves together for mutual assistance. It
is here that Sartre's revolutionary romanticism begins to shift his

\(^1\)op. cit., p. 49.
philosophy of revolt. Hughes\textsuperscript{1} quotes him as speaking of terror as "the very bond of fraternity." He now abandoned his earlier affirmation that man could act only alone and celebrated the moment of "apocalypse" when a series of isolated individuals fused into a group inspired by a single aim. In this new view, Sartre found revolutionary violence to be both inevitable and moral, that is, in conformity with history. Thus, in contrast to his conservative mood, he now sanctioned the sacrifice of life or liberty in the service of a promised future.

The new Sartre has shifted from his own previous thought and traditional existentialist thought regarding revolt in three ways: (1) he came to view his existentialism as an ideology while conservative existentialists oppose the concept of ideology as confining man to a particular world view, (2) he began to abandon the individual by revealing a new appreciation of group activities and placing long term goals over current individual interests and, (3) he affirmed the value of violence which conservative existentialists opposed except in extreme circumstances. It is these three significant differences that distinguish the liberal existentialists from traditional or conservative existentialist thought.

Liberal existentialism has proven to be weak for two reasons. First, Sartre shows a great deal of instability and uncertainty in his work and appears to vacillate between traditional and liberal existentialist thought. It is difficult to discover exactly which

\textsuperscript{1}loc. cit., p. 51.
position he actually holds and the reader is often uncertain as to whether Sartre is sure of himself. After publication of his \textit{Critique of Dialectical Reason}, he published \textit{The Words} in which he appears to refute much of his Marxian treatise, particularly his ideological commitment. Thus, his true position seems unclear.

Second, Sartre's new existentialism extends revolution to such a scope that one can seriously question whether it remains existentialism. His abandonment of the individual for the discovery of a new freedom in group activities and his tendency to place long term goals over current individual interests is a serious break with existentialism. Existentialism has traditionally insisted that the freedom of the individual to choose his own possibilities in freedom is the foundation of the existentialist philosophy. In view of Sartre's new positions, it may be that liberal existentialism is not existentialism at all and that the new Sartre, as Hughes\textsuperscript{1} contends, "belongs with the ideologists of the previous century." Consequently, liberal existentialism has few followers and only one leader, Sartre himself. In reality, Sartre is liberal existentialism. Without him, it would not exist.

Unlike the new Sartre, most existentialists distrust revolutions because in their attempt to inject ideas into history and to reshape the world to fit a theoretical structure, they are likely to shove mankind into a strict system denying him his freedom. If revolutionists are to succeed, they must have power and to get it they kill both

\begin{footnote}{\textsuperscript{1}ibid.}\end{footnote}
men and principles. Revolt, on the other hand, is an incoherent but specific impulse which remains faithful to its origins. It is less a program for action than a testing stone against which all conduct, action, or passivity, must be measured. To most existentialists, revolutions tend to justify all in the name of efficiency. Revolt, says Camus, seeks rather to be effective. He went on to say:

When the end is absolute - that is, historically speaking, when one believes it to be certain - then one can go so far as to sacrifice others. When it is not, one can sacrifice only oneself in a struggle where the common dignity is at stake. Does the end justify the means? Possibly, yes. But what will justify the end? To this question which historic thought leaves dangling, revolt answers - the means.

The general consensus of existentialists is that no collective order has any exclusive claim to rightness and man may legitimately seek new values to pass beyond the present society. This is the role of the rebel who by creative insight and application dares to reject authority and bring change to society. Revolution is wrong when it sacrifices human beings for some future ideal or the good of the majority but retreat from the world merely gives tacit consent to the world as it is. To traditional existentialists, society must find a place within it for the rebel if it is to allow freedom and creativity.

In conclusion, it appears clear that existentialists find morality to be situational in terms of individual decisions rather than absolute. Thus the state may not exercise its obligatory powers in

\(^1\) op. cit., p. 261.
the name of any supreme value or ethical system. To remain an authen-
tic man, it is necessary to reject the authority of society and to seek change. Change must come through individual and non-violent rebelli
on rather than through revolution which tends to sacrifice individu
al freedom for the public good. Freedom and rebellion are synony-
mos. To rebel against restraints is to create a new and authentic self which is the antithesis of the restrictive society.
CHAPTER IV
FREEDOM IN ANARCHY

Awareness of the existentialist emphasis upon rebellion raises questions of interest to political science and of special concern to those interested in the concept of freedom. What is the result of the existentialist rebellion and what are its implications in the context of large-scale rebellion? If such rebellion results in the destruction of society, will anarchy prove as detrimental as organization to freedom? In this new anarchy, will the necessities of freedom to live and freedom to move such as sewage disposal and highways be destroyed? Is civilization possible in such anarchy? An evaluation of existentialist literature gives us clues to these questions.

It seems clear that the end result of rebellion on a large scale would be the destruction of society and the state as we know them by denying the state the right to enforce collective action even though the ultimate goal might be good. Camus is representative of existentialist thought as he insists that only one yardstick may be used to measure human action. That standard is respect for the ultimate value of the human being himself. The individual is the prime concern and freedom to become authentic the goal. Existentialists find collective action, by its very nature, to crush individual aspirations in subjection to the public and therefore would free the individual from any obligation to society as an institution or system. To them,

\[\text{op. cit., p. 261.}\]
the deviant who does not attempt to enforce his will on others should be free to act as he wishes, free of any obligation or duty to institutions representing the collective authority of the public.

This new anarchy existentialists call for would be a post state, post religious (in an organized sense), post ethical, post judicial, post moral, and post ideological era. It would abandon all formulas for the classification or the clarification of the relationship of men. Following Nietzsche's assertion that all things are options, existentialism would have no law and no possible method of describing an unacceptable act in its new anarchy. There would be no citizen's action or social activity which would be prohibited.

It is now clear that the non-society of existentialist thought is completely alien to the mainstream of political thought. Its sympathies lie with the nihilism of the Cynics and the thought of anarchists who have opposed the state and society. Any form of compulsory collective action must be abandoned as law withers away in favor of the social anarchy of the new order. This social anarchy does not mean license nor does it mean the absence of cooperation. It is an orderly anarchy for only the coercive element is abolished. The door is open for an orderly community based on wholehearted cooperation and voluntary adherence to customs or traditions while allowing all men the necessary freedom to be creative, to live authentically, and to develop their individual selfhoods. In this ideal community the traditions accepted are under constant scrutiny and are reevaluated by each individual and each generation to maximize freedom for all. It
It is this fluid society of orderly anarchy toward which all existen-
tialists move.

At this point a distinction between the terms "society" and "com-
munity" is in order. Williams\(^1\) conceptualizes the distinction through
the thought of Ferdinand Toennies who founded two types of societies:
Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft. Toennies identified Gemeinschaft as
the type of society which has grown organically through generations
into a unity. It is homogeneous and characterized by a natural alle-
giance shown to the traditionally established customs, morals, and
beliefs of such a community. Unlike Gemeinschaft, Gesellschaft is seen
by Toennies as an aggregation of people living together because they
find it useful to do so. This society might be called a consumer's
organization as the institutions of this group have been arranged by
the members with a view to their individual wishes. Thus, to Toennies,
Gemeinschaft is an organic unity while Gesellschaft or society is an
artificial one created by man for specific purposes.

Existentialists would view contemporary society as a Gesellschaft.
Their best possible social situation is comparable to Gemeinschaft.
To them, only a community of individuals relating to one another as
seekers of authentic existence is free. Negative freedom or freedom
from state restrictions is only half of the battle. The false belief
that liberal society is true freedom lulls one into forgetting that
the norms and standards of the Gesellschaft and the creation of mass
man also limits one's freedom to become an authentic person. Only in

\(^1\)op. cit., p. 48.
the ordered anarchy of the Gemeinschaft can man escape submergence into the public and establish one's own identity yet relate to others.

Existentialists have shown two basic attitudes toward the possibility of establishing an ordered anarchy or contemporary Gemeinschaft. Non-religious existentialists find ordered anarchy to be a goal man can never reach but toward which he should always strive. Religious existentialists find ordered anarchy to be both possible and necessary to the fulfillment of man. Yet, the ordered anarchy they seek is basically a spiritual and therefore non-concrete community. That is, faith in God and a wholehearted cooperation of community members to become authentic existences creates true community or community in God. Once community in God has been achieved, the question of whether to have a Gesellschaft or Gemeinschaft community in the sense of non-spiritual relationships is secondary and therefore receives little attention.

In seeking Gemeinschaft, Buber finds human existence to be intrinsically a life of relationships the most important of which is the "I-Thou" relationship. The meeting of the "I" with a "Thou" challenges the "I" to become truly human in a relationship between two real persons. The free man overcomes the "I-It" relationship of Gesellschaft to establish the "I-Thou" relationship of ordered anarchy. Freedom means to meet one's destiny and to strive continually to establish the "I-Thou" relation and through it authentic self.

Buber's Gemeinschaft grows out of the free decision of authentic persons. The new ordered anarchy must be established without destroy-

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ing the personal independence which man has achieved by centuries of struggle. Community must be based on the mutual recognition of the dignity of the individual person which in turn demands free persons working together in voluntary cooperation.

Marcel also considers man's relationship with other persons to be a gateway to the experience of freedom and a necessity for its very emergence. It is by blocking genuine relationships that society may restrict man's freedom. Once freedom is defined and the threat to freedom established, Marcel seeks to escape the restrictions of society in a spiritual sense through the love of God. Like Kierkegaard and all religious existentialists, the best hope for Gemeinschaft that he can offer is that man will eventually awaken to his peril and seek the authentic life. In the meantime, those who are aware of the situation will find psychological freedom in faith in God even though their physical actions must conform to society. Hopefully, when enough men awake to this peril, society will slowly disintegrate as men withdraw their allegiance from false government and abstract society and reformulate their relationships based on total freedom for all in ordered anarchy.

Berdyaev also recognizes the distinction between society and community. To him, everybody's decision for or against freedom in his own life determines the course the future will take. The end is the common task of all men, rather than an event mankind passively waits

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2 Berdyaev, op. cit., p. 59.
for. Every creative work of man is a contribution to the final transformation of the world toward ordered anarchy. Man is put into a field of tension between the old and the new, the Gesellschaft and his participation in the realm of freedom. Berdyaev demands with Kierkegaard that man must either live from the ground of one's being (freedom) or become separated from God in a life given to the world of Gesellschaft.

Berdyaev, then, seeks to establish a Gemeinschaft community as a free union of men in the spirit of brotherhood. For him, freedom is exercise of creativity and free thinking rising above the conformity of modern society and is to be experienced in a Gemeinschaft relationship with others. Thus Berdyaev advocates an anarchic community for the social life of man but, like other religious existentialists, it is an ordered anarchism.

It becomes clear that the approach of the religious existentialists to intersubjective relations and community does not clearly develop a structure or form of government or method of revolution to bring men complete freedom in the objective world. Indeed, this would be a violation of existentialist teachings which deny the value of systems and fixed principles and find them to be evil. Buber does suggest a new form of decentralized society but does not give us concrete guidelines to shift society from its contemporary form. Berdyaev raised the possibility of a spiritual anarchy and Kierkegaard, Marcel, and Jaspers all look to some shift in man's relationship to other men as well as society through love based on faith in God. Yet, no one presents a clear plan of action to achieve these goals. Ordered anarchy will only
come when all men seek authentic existence and rebel against society.

It appears that once the injustices of organized society have been exposed, religious existentialists are helpless to alleviate that problem in the objective world and thus seek true authenticity in subjectivity. In general, religious existentialists echo the hope of Kierkegaard that their writings will awaken some men to the crisis of existence and cause them to seek authenticity by becoming more tolerant in the objective world while finding freedom for themselves in the subjective. Coupled with this possibility of subjective freedom for the individual is the possibility of authentic existence. Perhaps the chains of confinement in the objective world will slowly wither away, not by violent revolution but by lack of use as a new tolerance and a new era will occur not only for subjective man but for his objective reality as well.

Heidegger and Sartre represent the thought of existentialists not committed to God or faith on intersubjective relations and perfect community. Sartre is an atheist while Heidegger is an agnostic.

Heidegger found men to live together for economic purposes but not within the existentialist concept of perfect community. Instead, men exploit one another in the process of becoming existents. Sartre pursues this analysis of man as a social being which Heidegger had begun. He goes on to criticize religious existentialists for failure to recognize that Gemeinschaft or ordered anarchy is impossible.

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1Heidegger, Being and Existence, op. cit., p. 107.
2Sartre, Being and Nothingness, op. cit., pp. 246-71.
To him, they adequately discuss the influence of the fear of being different and mass media on the individual but do not account for the reciprocal relation of recognition and struggle which results when the individual is confronted by another individual being as opposed to the average or the abstract. This is because they have failed to come to grips with the problem of intersubjectivity. To Sartre, this problem negates any possibility of the community religious existentialist's hope to find through faith in God as men are inevitably in conflict and thus cannot relate constructively in an ordered anarchy.

Sartre discusses the subjective self and its relation to the social object which he calls alter. Alter is another existing being who views the individual and judges him. He is someone I see but who also sees me. This reciprocal relationship is of the utmost importance for Sartre. It is only when man is looked at by another person that he becomes an object. He is only an object in the presence of someone else. In his own consciousness he does not treat himself as an object. To illustrate this, Sartre takes the example of shame. Man experiences the feeling of shame, of being ashamed of himself, by virtue of having performed some act seen by another. Shame is by nature recognition. Man recognizes who he is after alter views him. Shame is the shame of the self before alter.

The significance of alter is that no comprehension of being is possible without taking into account the relation of being with that of alter. Were there no alter, man would never experience himself as

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1 loc. cit., p. 281.
2 loc. cit., p. 306.
an object. In that sense, alter negates the self as a subject. This negation of the individual by alter results in conflict.

Sartre finds conflict to be the essence of all intersubjective relations. It is this concept of conflict that negates the possibility for Sartre and Heidegger of the ideal community of the religious existentialists. Sartre views subjective consciousness as unconditioned freedom. To him the authentic being is an absolutely free agent who makes himself what he is. The self is the only transcendent in the world of being and its freedom is the unique source of values. However, his freedom is placed in jeopardy by the presence of other, for in looking at and regarding me as an object, alter petrifies my self into a thing among other things. Once objectified, man loses his freedom. Thus all men are in danger of becoming annihilated by their fellow man.

People do not exist together. Man must be either the subject or the object. Once objectified, he must liberate himself from the grip of the other to regain his freedom. However, alter has also become an object. The result is a dynamic, reciprocal struggle. Each man must reduce the freedom of others (their existence as an ego) to a state of subordination if he wishes to regain his own freedom.

Thus, for Sartre, social relations consist of a battle to the death where there is no victory for one or the other. It is a continuous and unbreakable circle of conflict. Sartre does leave room for cooperation but this cooperation is far from the cooperation of selves in Gemeinschaft relating together in a harmonious search for authenticity. Cooperation is a struggle by two or more men against a third

1 loc. cit., p. 722.
party that viewed them both as objects.

For Sartre, man is not a means to an end as Heidegger described him. He is a block standing between man and his goal. You may cooperate for a short time in order to annihilate another person or body of persons, but in the final outcome it is still you against every other particular person. When all others become objects in your consciousness, then you are free to exist. Consequently, Sartre's view on intersubjective relationships becomes to be virtually identical with the Hobbesian notion of the war-of-all-against-all. Every consciousness is in potential conflict with every other consciousness. His social philosophy is summarized best in his own play, No Exit, "Hell is others."

We have distinguished between religious and non-religious existentialists and may conclude that religious existentialists seek authentic existence in freedom through some transcendent reality wholly other than the reality of the empirical world. Kierkegaard calls this ultimate reality God. Buber calls it the "I-Thou" relationship and Jaspers calls it Transcendence. The essential point is that these existential thinkers see the freedom of man grounded in something greater than the individual. To them, perfect community is possible as all men find faith in God or ultimate reality. As all men find faith in God and communicate with their fellows subjectively and authentically as God's coworkers this subjective freedom will become synonymous with the objective world and perfect community will exist at

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1 Sartre, Jean-Paul, No Exit. New York: Samuel French, 1958, 52.

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all levels of human comprehension. However, the religious existentialists offer no plan of action to bring all men to accept God. Rather, they merely hope that this miracle will eventually occur bringing a gradual withering away of the state and society to be replaced by an ever growing community of God's coworkers.

In contrast, the non-religious existentialist denies any possibility of reaching perfect community. Perfect community rests upon the assumption held by religious existentialists that men may relate to one another in a constructive and even holy manner creating a community where fear and jealousy and conflict are absent and yet individual authenticity is preserved. Non-religious existentialists deny the possibility of any such community by insisting that individuals find it necessary to combat other individuals as well as society to preserve their authenticity.

Religious existentialists follow the lead of earlier theologians who often resented the obligative relationship of man to the state but found it necessary and of little importance beside the future society of God toward which every Christian must direct his concern. Consequently, life was seen more as a vale of tears which must be endured in one's journey to God and rebellion to a new freedom on earth was not viewed with the concern of modern atheistic existentialists. Augustine exemplifies the thought of many earlier Christians in his belief that the protection of the state and the material benefits of an organized and lawful society free of violence is the only joy on the non-elected. To him, the elected citizen must endure this regulation on earth for
the good of the condemned until final judgment and the Kingdom of Heaven.

Likewise, with freedom found in some notion of a reality grounded in something greater than the individual, the radical concept of rebellion seen in Sartre and the plea for social action by Camus will not be so great in the religious existentialists and less emphasis will be placed on rebellion from actual political authority in the empirical world than on achieving transcendence. This means that the religious existentialists, on the whole, will spend much time philosophically discussing the evils of restrictive systems, standardization and forced conformity but will be unlikely to translate this fear into actual life situations and unlikely to recommend physical rebellion against the state or any aspect of it. In effect, religious existentialists are much more conservative in working toward change in the objective world than are non-religious existentialists.

Therefore, we may conclude that existentialists do not seriously expect the Gemeinschaft community of ordered anarchy to replace Gesellschaft. Non-religious existentialists find perfect community impossible and religious existentialists believe that perfect community must first develop in terms of a spiritual relationship in God before it is extended to include the activities of daily life.

Existentialists are not idealists and realize that the new social order (or lack of it) may never come into existence. For this reason, they do not insist that society make changes to which it is violently opposed (Sartre in his radical moods is an exception). Instead, exis-
tentialists seek limited goals in the form of more tolerance and the removal of as many coercive restrictions as possible. They do this by refraining from the support of political parties or institutions or any movement requiring subjection of the self to a principle and by using existentialist literature and their personal social action or nonaction as an example to encourage others to join the long process of ultimately destroying the coercive, confirming, and organizational aspects of society. They place their hopes on a gradual breakdown of society and claim to see it coming in a lessening of sexual restrictions and a general loosening of restrictions in social relations as segments of society grow more tolerant.

In sum, the social anarchy of existentialism is to be characterized by the absence of the state, law, ideology, morals, or any other system that restricts the individual; tolerance toward others and an openness to new ideas and creativity; respect for individual freedom and autonomy as the governing principle; and a continual re-evaluation of human relationships by each individual. For the present, the inability to achieve orderly anarchy requires existentialists to restrict their activities to achieving the best possible order. Thus they will continue to work for more tolerance and freedom and do whatever possible to bring about a gradual weakening of the power or desire of the state and society to enforce conformity.
CHAPTER V

THE EXISTENTIALIST AS SOCIAL CRITIC

The issue of freedom occupies the center of modern political thought. Existentialism is a philosophy which deals with the scope of our awareness of freedom and limitations upon that freedom. It seeks to explain the human condition by clarifying the fundamental problems of human existence and prescribes a basic end.

The problems of freedom today for citizens and governments is no small thing. The questions relating to the draft, black depression, civil disobedience, and campus regimentation all involve conflicting concepts of the nature and content of human freedom.

Existentialists join liberals to support the maximim possible extension of negative freedom. Indeed, existentialism is the most thoroughgoing philosophy of individualism in our time. It champions the spontaneity of the individual menaced by society and the state and seeks to safeguard the dignity, rights, initiatives, even the vagaries of the autonomous personality against any oppressive authority, organized movement or established institution. With individual liberty as its watchword, existentialism is a creed for nonconformism. In addition, existentialists seek psychological freedom. They are averse to routine, externally imposed ideas or disciplined modes of behavior, and whatever is uncongenial to the desire of the ego. All submission to pressures and presences not freely chosen is evidence of "bad faith."

The targets of existentialist protest are as diversified as the interests and inclinations of its exponents. These have ranged from
religious orthodoxies to philosophical systematizing, from capitalist exploitation to Stalinist regimentation, from bourgeois morality to worker's bureaucratism. Kierkegaard set about to disturb the peace of mind of the hypocritical Danish middle class. Nietzsche heralded the superman who was to rise above the herdlike crowd and transcend good and evil. The favored heroes of Camus and Sartre are rebels and outsiders. Simone de Beauvoir and Sartre analyze writers like the Marquis de Sade and Jean Genet whose ideas and lives have outrageously flouted the ordinary canons of moral conduct.

However, the critical observer will note that the existentialists do not always succeed in shedding completely the values of the society they rebel against. Kierkegaard assailed the sluggishness and self-deception of the smug citizens around him only to embrace the Christian God with more passionate intensity. Sartre, who attacks stuffed shirts and stinkers for their egotism, clings to the concept of the totally free person beholden solely to himself as the pivot of his philosophy and moral theory. Existentialism proclaims the urge of the individual to develop without hindrance. Yet, its aversion to organized action of mass movements determined by historically given circumstances renders it incapable of finding the effective solution of the problem for the bulk of humanity. For this reason, it would be justified to label existentialism a nonconformative rather than a revolutionary theory. In other words, this theory of individualism seems only workable in the smallest of societies and applicable to the most creative and intellectually capable individuals. It may be that we need more than what
the existentialist is providing. Perhaps the philosophy of existen-
tialism is as antiquated in mass society as the thought of Plato and
Aristotle was to life beyond the polis.

A strong argument can be made that it is the individual rather
than society which is the abstraction. Everything distinctive of
man, from toolmaking, speech, and thought of the latest triumphs of
art and technology, are the products of his collective activity over
the past million years. Take away from the person all the socially
conditioned and historically acquired attributes derived from the cul-
ture of the collectivity and little would be left but the biological
animal. It may be argued that the specific nature of the individual
is at least partially determined by the wealth of his social connec-
tions. This would apply, then, not only to his contacts with the out-
side world but to the innermost fibers of his being: his emotions,
imagination, and ideas. Existentialists do not deal adequately with
this problem.

It is questionable, then, whether existentialism as a non-conformist
philosophy for individuals can provide an adequate method of social
change and political action. Since the social structure shapes and
dominates the lives of individuals, it is logical to assume that only
a collective struggle is capable of eliminating the conditions that
repress individuality and create an environment suited to the unhampered
cultivation of the capacities of each living human being. The noncon-
formist activities of individual existentialists may accomplish spiritual
and limited material freedom for each individual rebel, but it is diffi-
cult to imagine how the example or witness of a creative and articulate minority can possibly motivate the masses as individuals. Yet, if change is accomplished through the leadership of masses or classes, the individual will again be crushed by the impersonal and the goal of existentialism as a free society for each individual member will again be crushed in the mechanism of mass organization.

According to its supporters, the supreme merit of existentialism is its capacity to explain and safeguard man's freedom. In this concern for freedom existentialism merges with a basic ingredient of our contemporary political situation, the liberal dream of a world in which a free man lives in a free society. The problem has been how to understand this mysterious and seemingly bottomless liberty and how to put it into everyday reality.

Existentialists, in reality espousing a philosophy of nonconformism rather than social revolution, are more concerned about the narrow dilemmas of personal responsibility than with the broader problem of the interaction of freedom and necessity in social evolution. The ethics of existentialism is uncompromisingly libertarian. The individual creates both himself and his morality through his uncurbed choices. Authentic freedom manifests and fulfills itself in the deliberate adoption of one's own self. Thus the works of the existentialists concentrate upon such "either-or" situations as whether to accept God or reject Him. To join one side rather than the other or to turn traitor rather than remaining loyal to one's comrades and finally, to live or to die.
Although existentialism is not a social philosophy as such, its common concern for the whole man as the starting point for social theory, its common fear of the suppression of the individual by society and its common goal of the ultimate or perfect harmony or society may be legitimately discussed and analyzed as social theory. In these common attitudes and others, it can be affirmed that the basics of the existentialist philosophy as social theory or political philosophy is not pluralistic. Existentialists agree on these propositions and goals. However, existentialists are pluralistic in that they take many divergent paths in moving out of the original human condition toward that common good society. The religious, like Buber and Tillich, try to find a way to God through harmony or communion between men. The unbelievers seek a solution through a transcendence of the situation without the aid of communion in God. This quest has led the most radical of them toward the Marxist philosophy of a revolutionary struggle of the working class. Yet, they cannot completely merge themselves with the aims of any movement because of their stand on the insurmountable ambiguity of everything and their concern for the individual free of any coercion or group pressure.

If existentialism exists to move all men to the good society or authentic life, it remains fundamentally a failure. Only by treatment of individuals as part of a group is it possible for all to be reached and this would destroy the basic principle of existentialism which finds each individual unique and not to be regarded as part of a group but free and authentic being. Therefore, the attempt to lift society
from what it is to what it should be inevitably falls short of its realization. For Camus, every act of rebellion against oppression is justified but installs a new form of servitude. For Sartre, the act of transcendence negates itself in the very process of materialization. It must be followed by a fresh exertion of creative revolt which in turn will not reach its goal. We are swindled by the limitations of time. History and death nullify our fondest hopes.

This pessimism tends to overshadow the hope of permanent transcendence of communion in God which could achieve ideal society for the group. The expectation that every venture must turn out to be a lost cause can stimulate spasmodic expenditures of energy in social struggle but the expectation of defeat spreads scepticism and cripples the steadfastness of the inwardly divided individual at every step and weakens existentialism as anything beyond social theory.

Existentialism attempts to explain why people now feel that the major forces governing their lives are inimical and inscrutable and beyond their capacity to control or change. This feeling of helplessness occurs because men have been dehumanized by the alienations they suffer in group life. Alienation expresses the fact that the creations of men's mind and hand dominate their creators. The victims of this servitude become stripped of the qualities of self-determination and self-direction which raise them above the animal level.

For existentialism, man's alienation is a primordial, indestructible feature of human existence. The free and conscious human being is irreconcilably estranged from the world into which he has been hurled.
Although he can introject meaning, value, usefulness to it, this does not efface its alien and absurd nature.

Since the sources of alienation are ineradicable, we can do no more than clear-sightedly confront and stoically bear up under this somber state, trying to cope with it as best we can. All the diverse ways in which existentialists seek to transcend their fate, religion, artistic creation, good works, liberalism, social revolution, are by their own admission only palliative and superficial. They may make life tolerable and meaningful but do not and cannot end the condition of alienation. Free men are obliged to try and overcome their alienation in ways most suitable to themselves but their efforts prove unavailing. This is the melancholy destiny of man. Alienation is the equivalent to the concept of original sin. Instead of indicating any exit from the state of alienation, existentialism makes it the permanent foundation of human life, reproduction, and justifying it in metaphysical terms.

Here we discover a major paradox in existentialism. We have seen the roots of a social philosophy built in existentialism explaining man's fundamental existence and carefully leaving an opening through transcendence of his situation to a metaphysical order which has historical possibilities. This ordered anarchy is seen as communion among men in God or merely transcendence of the life situation to a new understanding of one's self and other selves. In this new order each individual is free to live authentically and an ordered anarchy is established in which men live and function harmoniously through free choice.
The law as a coercive instrument of society is no longer present. However, authentic existence in the harmonious society would seem to necessitate the elimination of alienation and the conflict of beings. No indication has been given that communion in God or existence in the ordered society would leave room for conflict and alienation. On the contrary, the reader is led to believe that alienation will be eliminated in the new ordered anarchy. Yet, existentialists also have established alienation as a fact which cannot be overcome. Apparently, they cannot decide whether they do or do not want to wait for Godot. Also, despite the eternal hopes of men that the ideal or good society might someday be established, existentialists do not share this view. Therefore they are troubled by a contradiction between what society or man's existence is and what it should be. Individuals may reach the best possible situation on occasion but by their very nature will objectify the situation, restore alienation and return to man's natural state.

Despite their concern for the real world and emphasis upon action, existentialists fail to see the possibility of establishing universal freedom for all men. Instead, the best to be hoped for is spiritual freedom for the individual who temporarily escapes the restrictions of society to establish authentic existence for himself as an individual. In this sense, existentialism itself becomes a conservative social philosophy as it substitutes spiritual and mental freedom for the creative individual as a replacement for the ordered anarchy.

This view is not completely fair. Perhaps existentialism could
more correctly be labeled a realistic philosophy. It might be called
realistic in the sense that existentialists do not harbor the faintest
hope that utopia will be ushered in to eliminate all the problems of
existence. First, it recognizes that there will always be those who
avoid the venture and find comfortable shelter in both the old and the
new systems. Second, existentialists are keenly aware of how incom­
plete even man's most perfect strivings are and, with it, of the ever­
present possibility of failure. This awareness stems from their knowl­
edge of the immense mystery which surrounds the human life. It erects
an insurmountable obstacle to the easy hope of utopia, whether scien­
tific, religious, or political. It also bans finality in any sense
as something man can command.

Existentialists have therefore called on man to abandon the ideas
of a final solution to our practical problems and to our longing for
truth. Instead of a final solution, the image of the ordered anarchy
is raised as the impossible goal as a challenge to fill our lives with
a genuine search and not to be content with pre-formulated answers and
past accomplishments. Throughout history, that search alone has evoked
the great and the truly humane in man, while of course the situation
in which it has been carried on has been changing constantly. This is
a severe prospect, but to the existentialist, to avoid this experience
is to never have been really born.

Of all the contributions of existentialism to social thought, the
most valuable is its reaffirmation and broadening of our concept of
liberty. In a period when men feel restricted by the bonds of society
and categorized and specialized by the chains of modern production,
existentialism calls for reaffirmation of the creative and responsible man. It seeks to offer man the possibility of negative and psychological freedom. Perfect community can only occur when all men are free and responsible. Only then does it transcend the level of a tool for a better standard of living and become a life-fulfilling quest. The repercussions of liberty understood in such a dynamic way would be most vigorous.

The existentialist concept of liberty brings vitality and a sense of purpose to the individual life. This is because it implies the need for the constant overcoming of what man is at a given moment in favor of a richer personality, to never be a prisoner to a once-formed self, a routine world, an easy secondhand life. Liberty thus becomes linked to uniqueness and creativity on the part of each of us. The free person can only be a creative person, creative in the sense of asserting his uniqueness against all that might destroy it and especially against his own inclination to be indifferent.

In the last analysis, this means that liberty resides as a potential force only in the individual and cannot be produced by laws, institutions, models, or a natural benevolent force. It means further that even in a free society only those are free who valiantly strive after freedom while the others are slaves of the greatest of enemies, indifference. This existentialist concept of liberty becomes mainly a battle against human indifference; an indifference which seduces us to seek the comfort of the faceless mass and destroys our uniqueness in thought and action by causing us to believe we are still free because we happen
to live in a particular society. This concept of liberty would not make life more restful but it would certainly be more experimental because it would open man to empirical experiences and free him from identification with abstractions.

This would be particularly true of politics. The field of human relations in which the fateful organization of the power of one man over another is established would see the death of the concept of the last great revolution which would abolish all wrongs and blaze the trail for the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. In its stead would come a highly dynamic concept of justice tied to man as creative being with his ideas, ambitions, and yearnings. The only never changing element in it will be the presence of free and responsible man.

If finality in the sense of perfect accomplishment is impossible, what about the finality of existentialist philosophy? Existentialists have at no time considered themselves the last prophets of mankind. But the philosophy of the future will never be able to forget their revolt against any political philosophy which treats man only in special aspects. If nothing else survives of all the existentialists have said, it will be impossible to forget the utter seriousness with which they have dealt with human existence. In a sense this passionate willingness to search and find and to witness for the supreme personal experiment with one's whole personality is the core of existentialism. It forms the basis for authentic existence, is the key to the overcoming of estrangement to the extent that it may be overcome, and gives the highest promise for the preservation of free and responsible man.
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