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Existential Man and the Creative Act

By

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Man exists.

This simple yet ultimately complex contention performs the necessary function for all philosophical, metaphysical and scientific reasoning. It provides the given - the necessary premise for any/all induction and abstraction that one chooses. Yet the principle of man's existence inherently subverts all manifestations of this existence, whether in the scientific, ethical or philosophical endeavor. For the persistent awareness of one's existence pervades all other concerns and thus, these concerns are reduced to inessential contingencies in relation to the ultimate truth - that of man's existence.

It is this philosophical reductive reasoning which determines the nature of Existentialist thought. Quite simply stated, existence is prior to essence and all knowledge is subjected to this principle. It is a modern philosophy attempting to reinterpret human nature in terms of human subjectivity itself. The existentialist approach denies the validity of cognitive and religious rationalism, repudiates metaphysical thought and vehemently opposes any systematic epistemology. It functions phenomenologically, for as man's existence is its primary principle, thus man's purposive actions are validating evidence for his existence.

It is from this existentialist phenomenological premise that the act of artistic creation can be most meaningfully interpreted and understood. The existentialist propositions of Kierkegaard, Sartre and Camus are concerned with man's obsession with his being and his infinite awareness of himself. It is from this awareness that the act of creation arises. Yet it is impossible to understand the motivations for artistic creation through the sole consideration of self-awareness. For although the basic premise of existentialist philosophy is that of the primacy of existence, it is in the
realm of the implications of this principle that an understanding develops.

The modern existentialist theory of Jean-Paul Sartre is most revealing of an understanding of artistic creation, for although much of Sartre's explication is based on the existentialism of his predecessor Soren Kierkegaard, it is Sartre who removes the philosophy of existentialism from the realm of the theological. Kierkegaard proposed the major tenets of existentialist thought and in his work *Philosophical Fragments*, he determined the nature of man's existence as a subjective one. Kierkegaard revolted against the intellectualist nature of society for its encroachment upon ethics:

In our time it is especially the natural sciences which are dangerous. Physiology will at last spread so that it will take these ethics along. There are already traces enough of a new tendency to treat ethics like physics, whereby all of ethics becomes illusion, and the ethical element in the race comes to be treated statistically with averages, or to be reckoned as one reckons oscillations in natural laws.

Kierkegaard proposed a departure from the strict systemization and objectification of current philosophy. He favored a non-cognitive, non-objective approach, for he felt that a generalized systematic morality was a denial of man's basic existence. He applied Emmanuel Kant's humanistic approach to philosophy, yet rejected Kant's basic epistemological system of objective morality. As Kierkegaard determined that a generalized objective morality was incompatible with the subjective nature of human existence, he proposed a more suitable philosophical code. Kierkegaard presented a philosophical system stressing a turn to the intensive life of subjective introspection. He rejected the knowledge of the general and the abstract, for these were meaningless in relation to man's basic isolated existence. Man must gain knowledge of the particulars of his own personal existence. Kierkegaard also introduced another basic tenet of existentialist philosophy in demanding an introspective subjective position. His philosophy as such became a phenomen-
ological motion toward indirection.

Kierkegaard's writings determined the basic attitude adopted by the later Existentialists yet ironically the denial of one of his major tenets provided the impetus for a more radical departure from the philosophical mainstream. Although Kierkegaard proposed the highly personalized indirect method of introspection in accordance with the proposition that man is an isolated individual, it was for a theological purpose that he did so. For Kierkegaard was actually proposing, in an obscured way, a theoretical interpretation of Christianity.

He was concerned with man's basic existence, which motivated his existentialist position, yet his major concern was the relationship of man's existence to God. He rejected the systemization and objectification of most philosophical systems because of their manifestations in the theological realm. The elaborate theological edifices constructed were motivated by the quest for an answer to the problem of man and his relationship to God. Yet Kierkegaard rejected these for their failure to deal with the actuality of man's existence. They were irrelevant to man's existence.

Most systematizers in relation to their system fare like the man who builds a huge palace and himself lives next door to it in a barn.2

In Kierkegaard's quest for the ultimate subjective truths relating to man's existence, can be found his theological interpretation of the Christian experience. For subjectivity can be truly subjective, according to Kierkegaard's existentialist theological position, only in the confrontation of the individual with God.3 The religious experience for Kierkegaard lies wholly in the self's awareness of its infinite distance from the God whom alone it loves.4 And in acknowledging this infinite distance, Kierkegaard acknowledges the plight of the existentialist man - isolated, alone and des-
pairing.

Kierkegaard's portrayal of the plight of man had a devastating effect upon later existentialist philosophers, yet it was a movement in denial of his theological determination which had an equally devastating effect on modern society.

For Jean-Paul Sartre's adaptation of Kierkegaard's Existentialism provided a contemporary atheistic philosophy with the denial of the existence of God based on those same existentialist notions offered by Kierkegaard. And although the introspective activity stressed by Kierkegaard was to remain a basic tenet, it was to be the denial of faith rather than faith itself which provided the motivation for a subjective position. This subjective position is resumed by Sartre through a logical determination of the non-existence of God according to the existentialist attitude toward existence.

The atheistic position of Sartre, based on existentialist principles of necessary and contingent existence, is arrived at rather obliquely, yet its acceptance is assumed in all contemporary existentialist philosophy. Sartre's rejection of rational logic and epistemology in his philosophical treatises is evaded temporarily in his endeavor to arrive at a coherent denial of God's existence. Sartre's atheistic deduction is based upon the impossibility of a Divine existence due to an ensuing contradiction in basic tenets. God is impossible because to be God is to exist from the necessity of his own nature alone. To be the cause of one's self is to stand in relation to one's self, to be at a distance from one's self. Necessary existence implies its own contradictory, contingent or unnecessary existence and is therefore impossible. If God existed, he would be contingent
and hence, not God.5

The implications of this proposal are devastatingly far-reaching, for they serve to define the terms of man's existence. If there is no divine existence to determine the limits of man's boundaries, then the only limits that exist are related to man's basic contingency. "Heaven is Empty" Sartre declared and with this, he annihilated the concept of objective morality. He, at the same time, introduced the motivation for all of man's actions and promulgated the motivation, most specifically of man's most intrinsically important action - that of artistic creation.

With the understanding of the basic tenets of modern atheistic existentialist philosophy, it becomes possible to understand the nature of art and its importance relative to man's existence. For Sartre proposes the status of man's existence as one of radical ontological insecurity. Man is master of his own destiny and as such, is "condemned to freedom". This ultimate freedom of man, bound only by his mortality as defined by the nature of his existence, is the cause for man's infinite self-awareness. And this self-awareness ultimately reduces man's thoughts to the knowledge of his unessentiality.

Under the sway of this mood, existing man has time and again become aware of his unessentiality of being, his essence-lessness, as if awakening naked and homeless in a Parmenidean universe of immobile essence... This surely is the state of awareness which has ever instilled in existing man the feeling of being a stranger, a wanderer without abode or destination or a prisoner awaiting release or execution for some original forgotten crime.6

Nietzsche determined this same boundless limitless status of man through his proposition "God is dead. What shall take his place?" He presupposed this state of being before Sartre determined man's condemnation to freedom, but unlike the later existentialists, he attached to the situation
a joy in man's gift of freedom. There is no joy in Sartre's declaration of man's freedom; instead there exists a dread and profound sense of uneasiness. But with this freedom of man comes an awareness of the reality of man's existence.

The detestibility of existence: The mind of man, which he did not ask to be given, demands a reason and a meaning - this is its self-defining cause - and yet finds itself in the midst of a radically meaningless existence. The result: impasse. And nausea.7

This analysis of the dread and uneasiness so pervasive in all of Sartre's writings is vitally important to the act of artistic creation. For it portrays man as a despairing isolated self when confronted with the brutality of his own essence-less existence. Man's condemnation to freedom and his brutally barren existence, reaffirmed by the "nausea" of this awareness, are threads which run throughout Sartre's novels and plays. They create a backdrop for the artistic act and provide insight into the motivations of man to express himself artistically.

Sartre's novel Nausea is the most devastating declaration of this inherent ontological dispossession of man. The anti-hero of the novel, Roquentin, voices most desperately the anguish of man when faced with the reality of pure existence and its inherent void:

Everywhere now, there are objects like this glass of beer on the table there. When I see it, I feel like saying: "Enough." I realize quite well that I have gone too far... Somehow I am not at peace; I have been avoiding looking at this glass of beer for half an hour. I look above, below, right and left, but I don't want to see it. And I know very well that all those bachelors around me can be of no help: it is too late, I can no longer take refuge among them. They could come and tap me on the shoulder and say, "Well, what's the matter with that glass of beer?" It's just like all the others. It's bevelled on the edges, has a handle, a little coat of arms with a spade on it and on the coat of arms is written "Spartenbrau." I know all that, but I know there is something else. Almost nothing. But I can't explain what I see. To anyone there: I am quietly slipping into the water's depths, toward fear...8
In this perception of the beer glass, Roquentin analogously perceives the void of his own existence. When reduced to the base elements, the beer glass has no value to Roquentin and as a symbol of his situation causes fear and dread. It is this reductive awareness of existence at its base level as nothingness which consistently occurs throughout Nausea. Roquentin encounters a chestnut tree later on and Sartre creates an even more wounding representation of self-doubt and existentialist anguish.

So I was in the park just now. The roots of the chestnut tree were sunk in the ground just under my bench. I couldn't remember it was a root any more. The words had vanished and with them the significance of things, their methods of use, and the feeble points of reference which men have traced on their surface. I was sitting stooping forward, head bowed, alone in front of this black, knotty mass, entirely beastly, which frightened me. Then I had this vision.

It left me breathless. Never, until these last few days, had I understood the meaning of "existence" I was like the others, like the ones walking along the seashore, all dressed in their spring finery. I said, like them, "The ocean is green; that white speck up there is a seagull," but I didn't feel that it existed or that the seagull was an "existing seagull"; usually existence hides itself.... And then all of a sudden, there it was, clear as day: existence had suddenly unveiled itself. It had lost the harmless look of an abstract category: it was the very past of things, this root was kneaded into existence. Or rather the root, the park gates, the bench, the sparse grass, all that had vanished: the diversity of things, their individuality, were only an appearance, a veneer. This veneer had melted, leaving soft, monstrous masses, all in disorder - naked, in a frightful, obscene nakedness...

We were a heap of living creatures, irritated, embarrassed at ourselves, we hadn't the slightest reason to be there, none of us, each one confused, vaguely alarmed, felt in the way in relation to the others. "In the way": it was the only relationship I could establish between these trees, these gates, these stones...

Roquentin continues, deeper and deeper in anguish to the nothingness of existence at its purest level. And in such a way, Sartre exposes this level at which man exists primarily. Yet he even further expounds upon the despair of man's situation when man goes beyond this inconclusive experience of reflection and arrives at a state of 'irreparable action'.

-7-
which he must identify himself. For Sartre, as a phenomenological existentialist, chooses to go beyond mere reflection as a resolution of the problem of self-identity and faces an even more devastating situation. That of non-action.

In Sartre's Resistance play "The Flies," Orestes, the protagonist, is faced with a similar experience to that of Roquentin. Yet "The Flies" exposes through Orestes the basic existentialist dilemma faced at the base level of man's existence. Orestes is more existentially advanced than Roquentin in his acknowledgement of the despair inherent in the situation of man. He succeeds in sublimating this despair yet is, as such, confronted with his inability to cope with the freedom to act.

The Tutor: No memories master? What ingratitude, after I've spent ten years of my life providing you with memories! What about all our trips together? All the towns we visited? And the course in archaeology I presented just for you. No memories? Palaces, shrines, and temples--with so many of them is your memory stocked that you could write a guidebook to Greece.

Orestes: Palaces! True enough. Palaces, pillars, statues! With all those stones in my head, why am I not heavier?... Some men are born with their path laid out in front of them; they did not choose it, it was assigned to them, and at its end there is something for them to do. Their deed awaits them. They go their way, their feet press down on the ground and are bruised against the rocks. I suppose that strikes you as commonplace--the joy of going somewhere. And there are other men, those of few words, who feel in the depths of their hearts, the burden of their imaginings, troubled and earthy;... As for me, when I was seven, I already knew that I was an exile. The scents and sounds, the noise of the rain on the roof, the rippling of the light, I let them all slide past my body and drop down around me. I knew they belonged to others, I could never make my memories out of them. For memories are a heavy rich diet which nourish those who own houses, cattle, servants and fields...

Orestes sees things that should have been his but are not. He never put them to any use in action and thus, there is nothing with which he can identify himself as his own. He experiences the crisis of self-alienation through inactivity. In Orestes' perception of the external, Sartre attacks
the noumenal approach of Kantian philosophy as inconclusive. There is no satisfaction for man through the mere reflection upon things. And it is here that Sartre adapts the approach of Husserl, who promulgates the program of turning back from subjective idealism to things themselves. But it is from this crucial point that Sartre proposes the basis of the creative act - the yearning to determine man's purpose through the perception of his world.

The descriptions, analyses and discoveries that man offers in his perception of these things which exist around him, find their full meaning only in the light of what they can say about the existent being and his condition of being. For man's existence is that of subjectivity; man is what he makes himself and thus what he chooses for scrutinization remains bound by its intentionality to the observer (man). For this reason, inspection and analysis of the object leads back to the intending observer whose thought about it defines the object being observed. And with the freedom dictated by the condition of his God-less existence, man becomes the agent of all concrete activity.

As man is thus contingent upon and comprised of his possibilities, man is a self-in-the-making. He is a void at the base level of existence and thus hungers for a meaning and a purpose. And it is at this primal level of existence that the artist emerges. As Arthur Fallico suggests:

> The experience of the nothingness which is the indifferently possible puts both subjective and objective being into question... suddenly we come to doubt the cognitive modes of our experience: the law of causation seems suspended; unrestrained, spontaneous being makes its entrance like a Dionysiac god.12

It is with Fallico's allusion to the Dionysiac god of Nietzsche that the setting is complete for the emergence of the creative being. As
man at his purest level of existence, shown through the eyes of Roquentin and Orestes, is consumed by fear and dread and yearning, there arises the impulse and motivation of the artistic soul. Man is meaningless and empty in Sartre's writings because he has yet to act upon the primacy of his existence. He has yet to exercise the limitless powers of his freedom - he has yet to create. But from the pathos of the void of Sartre's characters emerges the Dionysian god of Nietzsche.

Nietzsche discusses the pure possibility of man in terms of the mythological Dionysus and his cult. Man now expresses himself through song and dance as a member of a higher community; he has forgotten how to walk, how to speak, and is on the brink of taking wing as he dances. Each of his gestures speak enchantment; through him sounds a super-natural power... He feels himself to be god-like and strides with the same elation and ecstasy as the gods he has seen in his dreams... The productive power of the whole universe is now manifest in his transport. For man understands the absence of being at the center of his existence and thus, must become God.

At this level of creation, man is joyous and God-like. Yet Nietzsche's interpretation of the motivating act of creation denies the pathos inherent in all aspects of man's creation. For the yearning and hunger that Sartre proposes as the basis for man's artistic creation is not totally appeased through the act of creation itself. As an existentialist proposition, artistic creation is the most illuminating analogy for the pure possible that is man. It is a means of validating existence for "under the aesthetic posture of our being we are what we say and we say what we are - we are existentially what we say, precisely because we are able to say it, and we are able to say it, because we are it."
Yet man's art will never exist completely in the enchanted world of Nietzsche's Dionysus for as art is motivated by the pathos of man's barren existence, it will always speak pathically.

It is upon these suppositions that the true nature of existentialism and the nature of man's existence emerges. It is through the aesthetic formation that man's condition is illuminated. For the aesthetic vision is the only possibility for knowledge of the self. Sartre has created this premise in his literary works as a means of dealing with and repudiating the conventional methodologies inherent in the nature of man's self-awareness.

The yearning of man for purpose and knowledge had been traditionally dealt with philosophically through the methods of perception through reflection. But the problem inherent in the method of reflective self-enclosure, when consciousness concludes that the self of which it has become reflexively conscious is impregnable to deception, is that the self that one becomes conscious of is an outcome and not an antecedent of the process. Sartre maintains that the only outcome of an attempt to achieve self-consciousness through reflection upon the self is necessarily a self-deception. His process of emancipation involves a subversion of the Cartesian distinction between indirect experience of external things and the direct experience of the self. In doing so, he restores the importance of the immediate experience of the pre-reflective consciousness of things and man's involvement with these things. Thus, what becomes reflection is the "mirror" of the pre-reflective consciousness, which is recognized to be presupposed by the operations of reflection.

Sartre further expounds upon this important concept in his work *The Transcendence of the Ego*, in which he condemns Husserl's transcendental
ego as a relapse into Cartesian idealism. When man becomes self-conscious, he is reflecting upon his pre-reflective consciousness of something else. Thus, the self (the ego) of which man has become conscious is not the subject performing this act of reflection, but is instead its intentional object, which has emerged in retrospect from the pre-reflexive consciousness that man is reflecting upon.\textsuperscript{16} With this repudiation of the Transcendental Ego, self-consciousness no longer yields self-knowledge. Thus, self-consciousness is not knowledge but a story one tells about oneself.

And at this crucial point, the creative act again emerges, in all its primal glory, as a means of truth. For art is the expression of a consciousness which antecedes both reflective thought and practical action. It is only on the phenomenological level of artistic creation that the problem of self-identity can achieve resolution, devoid of the deceptions inherent in the reflective process.

The necessity of the phenomenological act of artistic creation is intrinsically implied by the nature of man's existence. It is such that man at his base level of existence is confronted with his own deeply-lying indeterminacy and his fear and dread of his own ultimate freedom. Thought and action, the theoretical and the practical, are the fundamental means of mobilizing against this indeterminacy. Yet in their conventional forms, they have little aptitude for the appeasement of the hungers inherent in the nature of man's existence.

The very presence of artistic creation evidences a profound and frank admission of defeat in the existentialist endeavor to arrive at being and fulfillment by practical, conventional means.\textsuperscript{17} The pathos of man's existence is an intimidation of the logical, the metaphysical and the religious. They are impotent in the face of the overwhelming
nature of base existence.

When a young man finds himself at the threshold of life, on the brink of any undertaking, he often feels grave weariness and profound disgust at the pettiness and vanities that have soiled him even as he tried to deny them; an instinctive aversion rises in him. His pride revolts at everyday life, which grows even more humiliating. He doubts: ideas in general, social conventions, everything he has received. A graver matter, he also doubts the deepest feelings: Faith, Love. He becomes aware that he is nothing. There he is, alone, and at a loss. But he knows that he desires, therefore that he can be something: he must at all cost define his potentialities... His drama: he must choose. Is it God, or Art, or himself. What does it matter?

And then only, does the adolescent, who just now shrank from life, go beyond it and forget it. Thus does Art rise above life.

In this poignant portrayal of the transcendence of man above the base level of his essenceless existence, Albert Camus reaffirms the Sartrian proposition that art arises from the pathos of man's existence. It is the existence of art that cites most profoundly the defeat of fulfillment through logical, metaphysical and religious means. Out of the pain and anguish that is man at his primal level of existence, arises the artist. Barnett Newman, the modern painter, acknowledged the pathic nature of human existence and its motivation for artistic creation:

Man's first expression, like his first dream, was an aesthetic one. Speech was a poetic outcry rather than a demand for communication. Original man, shouting his consonants, did so in yells of awe and anger at his tragic state, at his own self-awareness, and at his own helplessness before the void.

As such, art is primordial as the expression of a consciousness which antecedes both reflective thought and practical action. The artistic act implies that all reality beyond the void must be made. And the aesthetic possibility appears to have no predeterminable limits at all. The aesthetically impossible becomes only that which cannot be felt or imagined. And as the aesthetic formation is truly an extension of that same limitless spontaneity and pure possibility that is
dictated by the nature of man's existence, it is boundless.

As artist, man is the agent of all activity. He is the do-er, and the act-or and at this level of artistic creation, man himself must become god. For the Nietzschian Dionysian man (the artist) understands the absence of being at the heart of human existence and seeks to control this. The necessity of having to make the unreal out of the real and the real out of the unreal, due to the pathic nature of existence, provides man with his entrance into the empty heavens. Art keeps alive the sense of the omnipotent, so cruelly annihilated by the atheistic doctrines, and thus it "feeds the soul with its profoundest intimations of the divine-- of the memory, that is, of Being itself." 20

There are vast implications of this intimation of divinity that arise from the primal nature of artistic creation. Nietzsche illuminates this intimation and elevates the position of the man who creates (the Dionysian) to a level of deliverance from his ego, implying the possibility of a radical self-transcendence. For Nietzsche, the artist transcends the pathic existence of man and is consumed by the joys of omnipotence. But this attitude is not shared by all others concerned with the creative act. For Paul Klee and Barnett Newman, the intimations of the divine inherent in the creative act do not annihilate the pathos of man's existence. They merely exaggerate it and thus are the cause of further pain and confusion beyond that inherent in the base level of existence.

In Paul Klee's diaries, he articulates the paradoxical anguish that exists within the artist as a result of this brush with the divine. He laments:

I am God. So much of the divine is heaped in me that I cannot die. My head burns to the point of bursting. One of the worlds
hidden, in it wants to be born. But now I must suffer to bring it forth. 21

I am my life's debtor for I have given promises. Frightened I
jump up from the bank, the struggle begins anew. Bitterness has
returned. I am not Pan in the reeds... to be anchored in the
cosmos, a stranger here, but strong--this I suppose will probably
be the final goal. But how to reach...?... Peace doesn't exist,
the peaceful man devoured himself... 22

Am I God? I have accumulated so many great things in me. My head
aches to the point of bursting. It has to hold an overflow of
power. May you want ( are you worthy of it? ) that it be born to you. 23

Klee is obviously not the realization of the Dionysian vision of
Nietzsche, for he is not overwhelmed by the enchantment of his creative
omnipotence nor is he consumed by the joys of the creative dance with the
gods. He suffers with his powers and reveals the pathetic nature of man,
the consuming of all manifestations of man's existence. As man's existence
is pathetic so are his creations, and the concept of radical self-transcendence
offered by Nietzsche takes on an air of frivolity and naivete in relation
to the true nature of the creative act.

Barnett Newman also reveals the naivete of the Nietzschian
god/man, the artist, yet he denies this image in a way very different from
that of Klee. The intimations of the divine in Nietzschian analysis are
pondered by Newman in light of other pathetic implications.

The fall of man was understood by the writer and his audience
not as a fall from Utopia to struggle, as the sociologicians
would have it, nor as the religionists would have us believe
as a fall from Grace to sin, but rather that Adam, by eating
from the Tree of Knowledge, sought the creative life to be,
like God, a "creator of worlds," to use Rashi's phrase, and
was reduced to the life of toil only as a result of a jealous
punishment.

In our inability to live the life of a Creator, can be
found the meaning of the fall of man. It was a fall from the
good, rather than from the abundant life. And it is precisely
here that the artist today is striving for a closer approach
to the truth concerning original man than can be claimed by the
paleontologist, for it is the poet and the artist who are
concerned with the function of original man and who are trying
to arrive at his creative state. What is the raison d'etre,
what is the explanation of the seemingly insane drive of man
to be a painter and poet if it is not an act of defiance
against man's fall and an assertion that he return to the
to the Adam of the Garden of Eden? For the artists are the first men.24

The creative act for Barnett Newman is a symbolic one, for it reflects an artistic yearning for a knowledge of man's relationship to God. Newman echoes the anguish of man in his Kierkegaardian existentialist dilemma, aware of his infinite distance from God. Yet the paradoxical nature of the creative act is further illuminated by Newman who perceives the artistic man in light of his theological anguish and his humanistic anguish. Man suffers with his awareness of the infinite distance to God the creator, perceived by the creative act, yet he also asserts himself as a creator in defiance of this distance. He is removed from God; he cannot be God; thus he must be man. Yet as artistic man, he can be omnipotent. Thus he can be god-like. An interesting paradox is disclosed here, as Newman further asserts the anti-Nietzschian anguish inherent in the creative act. The Dionysian joy of creativity is tainted by the pathos of man's existence.

The intimations of the divine manifested in the existentialist analysis of the creative act create a further dilemma for man, for they produce a confusing paradox for him below the heavenly level. Man as creator becomes confused about himself for as he interprets his external environment, he also creates his own essence. The integral relationship of creation of externals and creation of essence causes an obliteration of the more obvious distinctions between man and his essence (his creations). Man's position becomes obscured and he has trouble determining what he is as a distinction from that which he creates.

I dream of myself. I dream that I become my model. Projected self. Upon awakening, I realize the truth of it. I lie in a complicated position, but flat, attached to the linen surface. I am my style.25

Paul Klee articulates this confusion and assimilation of the
self and the creation. But a distinction must exist just as the distinction exists between man's existence and man's essence. And the only means of ascertaining this necessary distinction is through the analysis of the art object itself in relation to the existence of man.

The nature of the art object is a symbolic one, standing as a manifestation of the existent's (man's) need and yearning for being. Therefore it presents pure possibilities of being created in, for and of spontaneity itself. It is this necessity inherent in the creation of the art object that determines its existence. Thus it offers neither truth nor goodness of itself. It offers only a clear vision of the despair and/or joy and possibility of meaning of man's existence.

Everything in the art object stands fully realized, unchanging and fully viewed. Nothing is inessential and everything is necessary. It confirms nothing of itself and contains no objective truths, for by nature of its purely contingent existence, it contains only subjective information concerning its creator's (man's) existence.

Just as the whole of the art object is a free essence, sustained in being by the spontaneity of the creator, so also its elements and separate parts have no objective reality.

The elements of the art object (lines, spaces, shapes, textures, colors, mass, volume) speak for the spontaneous ground of existence - for the existent is the spontaneity of his essential being. The relationship that they bear to the brute sense-materials (pigments, soundwaves, words, the theories of the theoretical consciousness, historical actions and so on) is one in which feeling and image pass from an obscure unself-possessed existentially dumb and unnamed state to one in which the existent can speak and disclose his feelings to himself. The relation is one of conquest, of resolution of the inert and voiceless into the articulate word of the subject.  

Collingwood determines here the inessentiality of both the elements and the art object in relation to the act of creation of man. For he echoes Kant's description of the art object as a representation
of the work of a "purposiveness without purpose." Klee submits to this analysis of the elements in his lament: "Fearfully sober things these: the canvas, the painting surface, the base. Not much more exciting: the tracing of lines, the treatment of forms... how far away the true experience of these things still is."  

Thus the confusion that man experiences in the relationship of his existence to his creation can be resolved, for the distinction exists on an existentialist level. The subjective and contingent nature of the work of art embodies that which the artist is conscious of. But due to the inherently articulative and selective nature of consciousness in its creative activity, the structure of the work of art is also a structure of decisions whose interrelationship comprises the artist's "choice of himself." The work of art is implicitly a self-portrait. An existentialist man, through his creative activity, has gained the ultimate knowledge of himself. His existence has determined his essence.
FOOTNOTES


3 Ibid., p. 20.

4 Ibid., p. 21.


8 Ibid., p. 8.

9 Ibid., p. 127.


11 Ibid., p. 236.


17 Fallico, *Art and Existentialism*, p. 70.


22 Ibid., p. 123.

23 Ibid., p. 186.

24 Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art*, p. 552.


26 Fallico, *Art and Existentialism*, p. 29.

27 Ibid., p. 43.

28 Klee, *The Diaries of Paul Klee*, p. 120.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Technique</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Acrylic on Canvas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
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