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Existentialism Theory: Its Relation and Application to Contemporary Communication

Ed Milanich

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Existentialism Theory:

Its
Relation and Application to
Contemporary Communication.

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May 27, 1968.

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The crisis has come as an unwanted but permanent guest. And there is no escape. Wherever we turn, somebody hurls the word 'crisis' at us, whether it be in a newspaper, book, or sermon or discussion. No wonder there has begun a fervent, frenzied soul-searching for the causes of this crisis.¹ Resulting diagnoses have varied. The "technicians" have maintained that the malady of modern man is the result of a particular, simple-to-grasp problem, such as the dwindling thickness of the topsoil, the decrease in population.
The mood of crisis has come as an unwanted but permanent guest. And yes, there is no escape. Wherever we turn, somebody hurls the word 'crisis' at us, whether it be in a newspaper, book, or sermon or discussion. No wonder there has begun a fervent, often frenzied soul-searching for the causes of this malaise.¹ Resulting diagnosis have varied. The "technicians" have maintained that the predicament of modern man is the result of one particular, simple-to-grasp problem, such as the dwindling thickness of the topsoil, the population
explosion,
the need for a better world
organization, "bringing ethics into
line" with our advanced technology. They're all convinced that a quick repair is all
that is needed. The "traditionalists" denote
the illness of contemporary western man to his straying away from time honored and well proven
ways. Others have put the blame for our predicament on what they consider the stifling rout-
ine of modern life and have suggested non-
conformity as the cure. "The Prophets of doom", finally, have all along
asserted that the mood
of
crisis
shows our culture to be in
its declining phase. After
a brief period of fascination; all of
these prescriptions begin to pall and doubts
arise about the analyses of both the optimists
and pessimists alike. This disenchantment, in
turn, has become a strong incentive to explore
EXISTENTIALISM and its suggestions.²
One can safely say that the most common Am-
erican reaction to existentialism has been
a widespread bewilderment. Both oppen-
ents and advocates have had their
share in bringing about
this
bewilderment.

To speak of Existentialism,

one must define it, and to difficulty

it belongs. It may seem that this word is

not to be oriented to a category, or even stated as pure theory as a philosophy. Existentialism is a 'label' for several widely different revolts against traditional philosophy. Most of the living existentialists have repudiated this label, and a bewildered outsider might well conclude that the only thing they have in common is a marked aversion for each other.

Existentialism is not a school of thought nor
reducible to
a set of theorems. Certainly
Jaspers, Heidegger, and Sartre are
not in agreement on essentials. Pascal
and Kierkegaard differed from all of these
by being dedicated Christians - Pascal a Cath-
olic and Kierkegaard a Protestant. To include
Nietzsche and Dostoevsky, we see an antichrist-
ian and a Greek-Orthodox Russian. With the in-
clusion of Kafka and Camus, it is plain that
one essential feature shared by all of
these - is perfervid individualism.
It may be stated then that "the
refusal to belong to any
school
of thought, the
repudiation of the adequacy
of any body of beliefs whatever, and
especially of systems, and a marked dis-
satisfaction with traditional philosophy as
superficial, academic, and remote from life--
this is the heart of Existentialism.
It is a timeless sensibility that can be discern-
ed here and there in the past, but only in re-
cent times has this hardened into a sustained
protest and preoccupation.4 What is
this thing we label as Existentialism?
Although one can define purest
subjectivity, there
does exist a relation to the existent, for the word carries a dualism, and this implies ATHEISM and THEISM. He who claims atheism in Existentialist meaning does so by implying "Existence precedes Essence." This means primarily the non-belief of a God. Man, first of all, exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world---and defines himself afterwards. If man, as the existentialist, sees him as not definable, it is because, to begin with, he is nothing. He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of him-
self. Thus,

there is no human nature,

because there is no God to have a

conception of it. Man simply is. He is

what he wills, and as he conceives himself

after already existing---as he wills to be af-

ter that leap towards existence. Man is nothing

else but that which he makes of himself. 6

Theistic Existentialism, on the other hand, or,

Essence precedes Existence, implies as such.

When we think of God as the creator, we are

thinking if Him, most of the time, as

a super-artisan. When God does cre-

ate, He knows exactly

what
He is creating. Thus, God makes man according to a procedure and a conception, in other words, He does so following a definition and a formula. Therefore, each man, individually, is the realization of a certain conception which dwells in the divine understanding. Feodor Dostoevsky, in his "Notes from the Underground", initiated in literary content man’s inner life, his moods, anxieties, and his decisions, that are moved into the center until, as it were, no scenery remains. To Dostoevsky, man is a stage in a titanic struggle of forces.
with cosmic dimensions. All that actually matters is this struggle which, in each man, has the crucial result of either losing or winning himself, and this is always with reference to God. In his writing, Dostoevsky's characters continually wrestle with "cursed and everlasting questions."

For Dostoevsky, the core of man's being is freedom. It is a freedom of, not the innate rights of man, but the very condition of man's life. To exist as a being endowed with freedom is existence. Reason is an excellent thing, there is no
disputing

that, but reason is nothing but
reason and satisfies only the ration-
al side of man's nature, while the will
is a manifestation of the whole life, that
is, of the whole human life including reason
and all the impulses. Man appears as a
puzzle with two valid answers—sin and greatness. The term sin is used instead of evil; to Dost-
eevsky, sin and evil are identical, and, if
they are, freedom and evil are linked to-
getter, and they both need a God in or-
der to be meaningful. Therefore,

God exists because free-
dom
and evil exist.

God, man, and freedom stand
in a dynamic relationship full of
momentous tensions. To abolish these tens-
sions may look attractive, but leads to the
death of both God and man. So here the suggest-
sions of Existentialism and its themes appear:
The world and man's life cannot be pressed into
the mold of a logical system. The man Dostoevsky
has created holds out for what traditional
Christianity has called depravity, or, de-
moralization. Existentialism is
a fundamental position from which
to view human experience.

It
represents a strand of thought present in every age and among all peoples; the persistent sensitivity, the fundamental mood, the disturbing awareness which it represents, is stamped on every product of the human spirit that attests man's radical ontological insecurity, born out of the deepest self-consciousness. This is the tradition of existing man's concern with his individual self--with his own soul. He has forever reflected upon the irremediable contingency of his being, his mortality, his forlorn-ness,
his solitariness,

his uncertain fate. And under

gyrations of his mood, existing man

has time and again become aware of his un-
nessentiality of being and essence-lessness.
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. This tradition is one in
which the subjective core-reality of the ex-
isting individual's being has awakened to
its desperate sense of freedom and per-
sonal responsibility in the face
of death and nothingness.9

It is a
freedom
in which the will exercises itself independently of any
determinant whatsoever, be it instinct, impulse, passion, rational or moral motives, character, or, the "self." It has no other cause than the spontaneous power to decide and will, whose choices and volitions are explainable simply by its mere existence and exercise. Freedom and spontaneity, hence, are synonymous.

Martin Heidegger once said "man, as a unique being, can be said to be the only being that really is there, since he alone knows"
himself to be there. In this way, he discovers himself to be the only being who exists. Other things merely are; they do not exist. Man finds that he chooses neither his existence nor his world, even though he remains free to commit suicide, or change his surroundings in limited ways, at any moment. In the dream, as in art, life and the world are projects founded on spontaneity which sustains them in being. Things do not have to appear or to happen as the theoretical or practical consciousness requires.
Time

can move backward, forward,
or not at all; spacial orderings
are determined by spontaneous feeling and
imagination alone.\textsuperscript{10} We can live and die a-
gain many times over, within a single play, as
the case may be. However, the individual project
itself has here no other necessitation than spontaneity itself.

In view of life's con-
tingencies, we may say that anything is poss-
ible.\textsuperscript{11} "Anything is possible"

in this sense carries with it the no-
tion that nothing-absolutely noth-
ing-\textsuperscript{has} to be, and that
everything,
absolutely
everything, can be. For the
first time, perhaps, we have come
suddenly to see, to understand, that ex-
isting man is his possibilities; that exist-
ence precedes essence; that man is his own free-
dom; that man is a self-in-the-making; that man is
a being that must make itself in its own absence.

Frederich Nietzsche pointed to a state
of being that few existentialists after him
neglected. The unrestrainedly free has an-
other, darker side which is ego en-
dangering, easily degenerating
into frenzy and mad-
ness.
"God is dead.

God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we, the murderers, comfort ourselves?" With God, meaning and value systems depart from the world. A situation arises which threatens human dignity itself. But this also—as Nietzsche would confidently say—offers the first and supreme challenge for man to realize himself fully. Because of this, he hopes man will become part of a "Higher History" than all history hitherto.

Nietzsche never ceased to protest against a science of man which loses itself in the
worship of one method. He accused Christian-
ity of remaining on the plane of mere
morality, as in codes of conduct which re-
quire adherence, rather than stimulating creat-
iveness out of one’s full personal life. Thus,
Christianity sins against the very principle of
life itself—which demands that creativeness go on
as long as there is life in this world. To throt-
tle this is to kill life itself. Christianity
serving such a function is, to Nietzsche,
an instrument of decadence. Having a
God implies divine providence,
and divine providence leaves
no room for human freedom.

Man, says Nietzsche, should strive for the truly human in himself. To do this would make him free and independent of what hampers his spontaneity and creativity, whether it be traits of character, powerful traditions, or other restraints.

As can be seen, Nietzsche challenged his contemporaries to see and admit that, despite national glory and material progress, it is still the individual existence which is at the core of all that is human. In some relatedness, people will relate the counterpart of existential-
ism, and that is
phenomenology, or, in short,
life philosophy. But the two differ
in that the phenomenologist has fervent desire to find the certain and absolutely unquestionable beginning of all knowledge, an aim far removed from the existentialist purpose, which is to let each person come to the realization of his own unique existence. The Phenomenologist thus proceeds to find and exactly describe the phenomena of consciousness, whereas the existential thinker does not alienate the conscious from the actual existence of the individual.
Hence, we have existentialism reinstating philosophy as a way of life rather than seeing it solely as an academic exercise. All in all, one gains an impression of a life led in a sincere search for the meaning of human life, characterized by honesty and involvement, and this, simultaneously, leads to a search and definition of one's Being. Martin Heidegger attempted to define it in his writing Sein and Zeit, or, (Being and Time). He explains "Being and beings are linked together without loss to either, though it is true that
man can

lose himself in the realm of

beings without being aware of their

common ground. The ever-present relations

between Being and beings are to be brought to

light. To think is to let something become visible, in this case, something which we are, in which we are forever stable and which completely penetrates us. The search for being thus would take very seriously the phenomena of experience and try to discover its meaning by relating it to its common ground, and that, IS BEING. "There is at least one being whose existence comes
before
its essence, and that is
MAN."¹² He will continually try to
deny his defining himself, and strive to
be self-contained. Sartre's introduction of 'Nothingness' is the attempt of man to
deny responsibility and flee to the shelter of
the self contained being. This is the attempt to
live unauthentically, the nothingness leading to
his annihilation, his total destruction. BUT, it is
this encounter with nothingness and its fright-
ening certainty that it will destroy man,
which, states Sartre, brings forth
human Freedom, and opens
man's
life
to conscious-being, (or
man as giving a meaning to it).

It is freedom, then, that expresses
the very lack of fixed content in man, his
lack of being something. Man, says Sartre, is
condemned to be free, a creative aspect of fill-
ing his world with freedom, the very heart of au-
thentic existence. This would denote exist-
ence in the sense of truly being man. It is re-
alyzed only in deeds which are committed alone,
in absolute freedom and responsibility,
and which therefore always have the
character of true creation.
There does remain

the problem; it is called 'God'.

Sartre never sees in God, whom he denies, anything but a supernatural artisan. Is not man that being which first exist's and in his existence designs his own meaning and purpose? If so, what function could 'God' possibly have?

God has no justification for existence in Sartre's universe and so, is entirely dispensable. He, however, sees quite clearly and admits that 'God's' nonexistence is extraordinarily inconvenient for man. It makes him free and lonesome, and obligates him constantly
to create, Man

is not a well finished creat-
ure, but a desperately struggling being.

That man should be the center of this world
and its history is not at all determined by
the organization of this world itself. Man is
freedom, and since freedom indicates openness to-
ward the future, man will always remain in the
state of determining what he is. It is man-each
man, not just the great heroes-who does this
determining for himself and for mankind.

The absence of God leaves a un-
iverse without a pre-set meaning.

Man, the new creator,
Soren Kierkegaard would state indifference to this.

To him, God is synonymous with the principle of eternity, infinity, and the absolute. In man's freedom, he estranges himself from God. Here the element of Theistic Existentialism enters, and Kierkegaard could personify it no better, for he, through one long and searching experiment in the relationship between man and God, established three modes of life that determine man's existence. They are the Ethical, the Religious, and the Aesthetic;

The ethical mode sees man as
abandoning

the attitude of the spectator and making commitments. It involves a general code making demands, and man makes decisions to live according to it. He decides once, but the consequences are lifelong. It is, however, intrinsically deficient. Ethics are based on rational considerations, which make way for man's submission to society, which eventually leads to a dead end.\(^{13}\)

But to break this containment, man seeks relationship to God, says Kierkegaard. Man, therefore, recognizes himself as the unique
individual **He**

is. As an example, he be-
comes immersed in a Christian Ex-
istence; hence, the religious mode, or, 
man's struggle to be worthy. The

Aesthetic mode shows man deeply involved in
the world of immediacy. According to Kierkegaard,
the aesthete always tries to remain in the moment
of pleasure and to forget all continuity and
personal involvement in his life. He is easily
fascinated, and just as easily tires. He is,
says Kierkegaard, the best known Theor-
etician, not making committals to
anything. And it is here

that Art makes
its entry;
what is Art and Communication
and its relevance to existence?
To answer this, one must try to
define man, as being the FREEDOM of which he
can create. How does it feel to exist as a man?\textsuperscript{14}
The mark of the free man is a mark of be-
ing a sane and healthy man-he is unpredictable.
He may, of course, be reliable and trustworthy,
but that is another matter. A free man is one
who can still choose \textbf{not} to function as he
\textbf{should}.\textsuperscript{15} No action or system
of actions, no thought or system
of thoughts can appease
the hungering for BEING, which is existence, closing the gap between being and NOTHINGNESS. Our condition of being is also such as to put into question every institutional promise of human happiness which costs the fearful freedom that is living man. Time itself issues forth from our lack of being, for without a living man, there is neither past nor future in the concrete experimental sense, but only meaningless motion. Past and future, hope and despair, conscience and consciousness, mark the presence not of A BEING, but of a reaching out
for
a BEING. Nature's

own peculiar indifference attends
our formation and expulsion from the womb;
a man may be conceived through negligence, rape,
maintenance, of artificial insemination—nature cares
not how. It is such that one can only stare ex-
istence in the face like an appearance out of no-
where, without reason. In the brief span of
life marked by an implacable death sentence, a
man is alone in the decisions he must make in
order to give his being meaning. All his
decisions are like jumps off a
cliff—only rumors and hear-
say give him
an idea

of where he will land.\textsuperscript{18}

But he runs a race with inevitable
death—a race which he must lose in any
case in the humiliating and preordained exist-
ence which turns him into an inert thing that
must be hidden from sight. A man is ready
to die as soon as he is born.\textsuperscript{19} It is a mis-
conception to think that the spontaneous and child-
like is something which must be left behind or
silenced before a mature man or culture can
come properly to being. This spontaneity
and nothing else is precisely what
becomes and must become the
adult man or
culture.

Those who are not victims of Puritanical habits of thought or of unconscious fraudulence know that just as the adult who loses his childlike spontaneity becomes ill, and indeed ill; for this in turn creates a culture which loses its original enthusiasms. Hence, men and cultures lose faith and courage to BE when they are depleted of pre-reflected spontaneous energies. We can say, then, that the aesthetic and the spontaneous is prior to the practical and the intellectual; that is, in its essence, feeding the main life-stream of existential
activity.

It is also, and above all, operative and present in every moment of our human experiential reality.

Aesthetic intentions move neither toward nor away from action or existence, but move in them. There is the suggestion that in the aesthetic, the original spontaneity of existence returns to free and indifferent reality-making for its own sake. If, with respect to absolute being, the practical and the theoretical realities remain forever unfinished, aesthetic reality, although, is prematurely so. In this resides
its pathos,
its suffering. In this tragedy, man is a being who must dream
his answer to the question: Does being have any meaning? If a work of art stands witness to man's lack of being, and to the pathos of his naïve hurried attempts to play at possessing being, it likewise reveals a submerged, dreamy memory of what it means really to be; but the indefinable remembrance, or, the nostalgia of being—significantly involves no turning back to a past. Existential ontology (the nature of Being and Reality) rests on concrete,
empirical,
psychological fact. To
grasp the recollective elements in
art, one must catch himself in the act in
which the artwork is intimately owned like a
long-lost but now recovered part of one's very
being. Art keeps alive our sense of the
omnipotent; it feeds the soul with its most pro-
found intimate thing we call BEING. The settled-
ness of being is a characteristic of all art;
everything is, nothing is becoming, or, has
need to become. It is Art that has provided
the experiential model and prototype
for all philosophies, moved
by a want
for timeless
BEING, and for the cessation
of all strife. The temporality
of our existence presents itself under many
aspects which have many times been noted and
dwelled upon. We live also in expectation, wait-
ing for something which is not death, but the ful-
fillment of life itself. The very structure of the
time of our existence is such, that, as Sartre has
said, we are what we are not, and are not what
we are. The reason for touching on
existential time is to show that it is,
in its very structure, 'aesthetically'
oriented; that is to say,
oriented
toward the
actual, the immediate, and
the directly felt whether it ever
achieves them or not. Time thus "runs"
in order that it may "stop", and the very chase
must be lived-in, savored in its immediacy to
be loved and enjoyed for its own sake.
It can be stated that Art cannot ever be the sol-
ution to the problem of existence, but it does
bear all the earmarks of an ideal and final
solution; it offers the most illuminating
analogy. It also permits a perspective
on life which makes life meaning-
ful, without resort to the
usual criteria
of meaning
and unmeaning. All art
is contemporaneous in its very nature:
it is always now by the fact that its being
is to be nothing else but presence. Notwith-
standing the merely useful fiction of the his-
torical mind, there is, really, no primitive art
which belongs to other times. It is all art that
places on exhibit a way of validating existence,
however meaningless or meaningful it may be:
it holds before us value in its pure possibil-
ity, not in its enlisted and preferential
forms.
It is for this reason
that the aesthetic, as an
attitude and
a perspective,
makes life itself meaningful
and tolerable. The ability to
view life through aesthetic eyes casts it
in a special kind of meaningfulness. This is
not the meaningfulness which derives from the
sight of coherent, logical, orderings, but is the
kind which derives from disengagement and detach-
ment. It is an ability to make life with
all its "slings and arrows" innocuous, as some-
thing no longer happening, but remembered;
now as in a dream, a dream that is un-
mistakedly ours.25 The
aesthetic dramatization
of life
hides a deep-rooted will to resist the nihilism which stealthily destroys the very soul of modern man. Against the view which makes of living and of the difficulties of living a rat-maze statistic, it forces a personal, super-purposive human significance on life.\textsuperscript{26} The aesthetic attitude is the arch-enemy of the impersonal, the leveling, the non-purposive.\textsuperscript{27} It is also the arch-enemy of all fakery and the phoniness in life.

Against quantity it enhances quality; against unbounded optimism it enhances courageous
pessimism;

against self pity-ing pessimism it enhances healthy laughter;

and against self-righteousness, 'deflating contempt. Thus, the aesthetic is uncommitted in its very nature, and by so much is equally friendly and open to every possible honest commitment. Existentialism has unfailingly protested against the images of man formed and cherished by their contemporaries.

The image of man which behavioristic psychology suggests and which transmits to the social sciences is based on a Darwinian theory (the changing due to demands
of an environment. Everything from art to religion is understood as a tool of survival under given conditions. Consequently, the supreme aim of man's life is mere satisfaction of all his wants and drives, of which physiologically are the basic ones. All ideals are viewed as habits. The existent-ist image presents a contradictory to all of this. HUMAN LIFE is the supreme venture and the supreme mystery. It is the dramatic event. Over against the organism with a passively accepted superstructure of habits, which behaviorists call man,
the existential thinker puts the idea of free and responsible man. He grapples with the uniqueness of himself and forms the true drama of human life. At the very core of each philosophy there is the wish to bring fulfillment to the human longing to find the meaning of life. Through Existentialism, it is found only in authentic existence.\textsuperscript{29}

Consequently, unauthentic existence is the direct opposite, or antipode, of fulfillment. Therefore, the purely functional or organizational man is the model of the unauthentically
living man.

Unauthentic existence should rightly be overcome. In it, man has not yet overcome his estrangement from what is truly human. To remain in this state is truly not worthy of a human being, since it actually is the denial of the great potentialities of man.\textsuperscript{30} There is a demand by existentialist thinkers 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.
When the terms anguish, despair, abandonment, and nothingness become defined, they may result in an approximate and appreciable misunderstanding or misinterpretation. Anguish, in this sense, means; when man commits himself to anything, he is not only choosing what he will be, but at the same time acts as a legislator for all of mankind. Therefore, a man cannot escape from the sense of complete and profound responsibility. Despair means: the sum of probabilities causes us to rely on what our volition states.

In other words, one does not rely upon any
possibilities

beyond those that are strictly concerned in one's action. With abandonment, we can only mean: God does not exist, and that it is necessary to draw the consequences of His absence right to the end. Everything would be permitted if God did not exist, stated Dostoevsky at one time. And man, in consequence, is forlorn, for he cannot find anything to depend on either within or outside himself. If existence does precede essence, one will never be able to explain one's action by reference to a given and specific human nature; in other words,
there is no
DETERMINISM—man is free man,
man is freedom. Thus, we don't have
behind us or ahead of us any means of justification or excuse. We are left alone, without excuse. That is what Sartre meant when he said, "Man is condemned to be free!" He is condemned because he did not create himself, yet is nevertheless at liberty, and from the moment that he is thrown into this world, he is responsible for everything he does. That is what we, ourselves, do; we decide our being.

"Nothingness" does have further implications.
The fundamental truth about life is that it must die. It came out of nothing and will, more than anything, return to nothing. The backdrop against which the tragedy of human existence is played is a blank. 32

"The final dimension of the human predicament," as Heidegger said, "is nothing, unrestrained nothing!" "Man, then, is nothing else but what his life is," says Sartre.

This implication, or, I should say, what this does not imply, is, that an artist is to be judged solely by the works of art he creates,
for a thousand
other things contribute no
less to his definition as a man.

This is exactly where Existentialism is
not to be noted as a pessimism, as many think
it to be. It is the sterness of optimism more
than anything else. It is the destiny of man that
is placed within himself. Existentialism
doesn't make man an object, which many means of
materialism seek to do. The theory disagrees
with Descartes' Cogito. It is not only one's
self that he discovers in the I Think,
but those of others too. It is in
the presence of the other
that one attains
himself.

In his own existence, he cannot be anything unless others recognize him as such. And in Sartre's words, "I cannot obtain any truth whatsoever about myself, except through the mediation of another," the discovery of oneself is at the same time the revelation of the other as a freedom which confronts. Thus, man finds himself in a world of "intersubjectivity."

It is not by chance that the thinkers of today are so much more ready to speak of the condition than of the nature of man. Historical situations are
variable:

man may be born a slave in

a pagan society, or a feudal baron,
or a proletarian. But what never varies are
the necessities of being in the world, of hav-
ing to labor and to die there. These limitations
are neither subjective or objective, or rather
there is both a subjective and an objective as-
pect of them: Objective—because we meet with them
everywhere and they are everywhere recognizable,
and Subjective—because they are lived and are
nothing if man does not live them.33

Our outlook and general at-
titude on life itself is a
project,
perhaps the
most fundamental of all our
projects in which all the others find
their life-breadth. And there is not a sin-
gle work of art, which does not present us with
a possibility of novel outlook and global persp-
ective. If this is truly aesthetics, it is a con-
crete and actual possibility. It is one that is
fused, and tasted with one's very BEING in the
ENACTMENT.34

No man who really reads
Sartre's The Wall or Camus' The Stranger
can look upon death and our contempo-
rary values as he did before the
encounters.
There is among mankind the dull and insensitive human who has either only very superficial aesthetic experiences or none at all. The kind of man who particularly must interest us is the complete victim of conformism, the "institutionalized" man in whom the institution has succeeded in pouring the immobilizing 'lead' of the 'true', the 'good', and the 'beautiful' according to prescription. This is the man who buys seasonal tickets to the concert, but does so to hold his notoriety; who reads Henry Miller avariciously, but makes love to his
wife

by schedule in darkness,

and in the assured crumb of salvation which comes from properly condemning himself for doing it, or for any excess passion; and who reads the *Grapes of Wrath* with avidity, but who simply knows that the 'minimum wage law is just another step toward communism.'

For such a man, art is completely irrelevant to the business of living. A closer look reveals this kind of man to be of that mercantile mentality of which Eric Fromm speaks.

The unspontaneous man is not one, but many: he is a noisy crowd
rather than a
single personality. This di-
vided and self-oblivious state fuses
him with what Heidegger calls "Das Mann",
the epitome of depersonification, where he
reaps all the benefits of individual irrespon-
sibility, others' approval, and, of course, mat-
erial security. He is a "one hundred percenter"
of whatever you like. He is of all the ingred-
ients of the 'unauthentic' person.
Thus, the unauthentic man has the conscience
suited to his role: the conscience of
unfreedom, whose distinguishing
mark is the incapacity
for
self-forgiveness
(and therefore, incapacity
to forgive others). The aesthetic
man is the stranger, the outsider, a-
midst a world in which the suicidal and the
absurd become more desperately active in prop-
ortion as they become more self-contradictory and
impossible. This whole phenomenon remains
the same when we look at it in the small, when
the world collapses around the existing man.

The central role of man makes its
presence felt amidst all the masks thr-
ough which he must still "make
sounds". The man revisits
his own
private fount
of spontaneity in secret,
often in disguise even from himself
in moments when he can be and do "of his
own accord." The relationship between
the aesthetic and the practical living is ana-
logous to that between the dream and the waking
condition of man. The "dream" in art is a dream,
but it stands always as a reminder to us of our
own capacity to be the original free-thinkers
of our self-in-its-world, whether in the
dream, or in the waking condition and
its involvement. The rev-
olutionary aspect of such a
dream
consists not
in that it proposes revolt
against, or changes of, anything, but
in that it always holds, before us the possibility of choosing to be the freedom that we
are, and therefore of doing or undoing our self-in-our-life-world. It is well to remember that aesthetic purposing makes the actuality of all the realities of man's experience. Thus, perception itself, whether visual, auditory, or tactile understood as the work of purposive activity, is ever renewable by the enactments of art. In the aesthetic vision, we lift out and hold
in an actuality
all their own the "elemental" materials out of which the experiential reality is made, and for no other purpose than to make, order, and present them in their pure possibility of being, and also, at the same time, to present a being-our-self at the same time. The artist is under no restrictions as to how the world must be put together and for whom. Most important of all, the elements and their organization are never abstractions, but concrete actuality. Sometimes the artist chooses to build his world so that these elements and
their orderings speak for the spontaneous supposing which makes, simply, elements and their orderings. And this is what a non-objective work of art can be interpreted to be. As mirror and recapitulator of life, Art and Communication has exhibited a great number of interpretations of the outcome and condition of Western man and his civilization. It was first to put to awareness the deathly mechanization and depersonification of the existing man in our time. One has to have experienced what Sartre calls "le Nausea" to know the
honesty

of certain modern expressions. In much of this, there is all

the explosion and dismemberment of the

human soul, and the distortion which, to anyone who cares to look, can easily find in our troubled world. If in this the object of perception and the whole world of such objects have fallen apart in violence, so also has the mind and soul of modern man. What remains is to find the point at which the necessities of our situation are met by the contributions existentialists have to offer.

In this search, one encounters
sooner or later
a basic ingredient of the
contemporary situation: the American
dream of a world in which a free man lives
in a free society. Existentialism and
the new venture in liberty call for a reaffirm-
ation of the creative and responsible man. The
view of liberty as a comfortable accomplishment
which everybody can participate in without nec-
essarily contributing anything to it no long-
er suffices. What emerges—and existentialist
thought has had a major share in bringing it to light—is the most fund-
amental aspect of liberty,
namely
that liberty must be worked for by everybody all the time. THEN does it transcend the level of a tool for a better standard of living and become a life-fulfilling quest.

The new concept of liberty, or, if one prefers, the EXISTENTIAL concept, brings above all, vitality and a constant 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. 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 different. In the last analysis, this means that liberty resides as a potential force only in the individual and cannot be produced by laws, institutions, or a natural benevolent force. As a genuine upheaval is brought about in the life of the individual man, the various fields of human endeavor would soon show its influences.

The field in which the fateful
organization
of the power of one man over
another-POLITICS; or mildly speaking,
BUREAUOCRACY, would indicate the death of
the concept of the last "great revolution,"
that which would abolish all wrongs and rekindle
the spark for the coming of the kingdom of a heaven on earth. In its place, however, would come
a highly dynamic concept of justice tied to existing man, his ideas, ambitions, and yearnings.
The only never-changing element in it will be the presence of free and responsible man. Existentialism is keen-
ly aware of how incomplete even
man's most perfect
strivings are, and, with it,
of failure. This awareness stems from
the knowledge of the immense mystery which
surrounds the human life. There is, therefore,
a plea to abandon the ideas of a "final" solution to our practical problems and to our longing for the truth. Instead of the ideal of a "final" solution there is the demand to fill our lives with a genuine search and not to be content with pre-formulated answers and past accomplishments. Throughout history, that search has been changing constantly. Thus, every birth of a human being must signal the
beginning of a
drama in a unique setting,
but with the same obligation to search.

"I want honesty," Kierkegaard is supposed to have exclaimed shortly before his death.

"Truth is courage and error is cowardice," Nietzsche added to this. And, in a sense, this passionate willingness to search and find and to witness for this supreme personal experiment with one's whole personality is the core of existentialism. It forms the basis for authentic existence; it is the key to the overcoming of estrangement, and it gives the highest promise for the preservation of free and responsible man.
FOOTNOTES


2 Ibid., p. 4.


4 Ibid., p. 12.

5 Ibid., p. 290.

6 Ibid., p. 294

7 Ibid., p. 290.


FOOTNOTES
(continued)

10Ibid., p. 34.
11Ibid., p. 53.
12Novack, loc. cit., p. 73.
13Breisach, loc. cit., p. 22.
14Fallico, loc. cit., p. 56.
16Fallico, loc. cit., p. 58.
17Ibid., p. 59.
18Ibid., p. 70.
19Novack, loc. cit., p. 79.
20Fallico, loc. cit., p. 63.
21Ibid., p. 68.
FOOTNOTES
(continued)

22 Ibid., p. 74.
23 Ibid., p. 80.
24 Ibid., p. 81.
25 Ibid., p. 123.
26 Ibid., p. 83.
27 Ibid., p. 84.
28 Ibid.,
30 Ibid., p. 30.
31 Ibid., p. 106.
32 Ibid., p. 95.
33 Ibid., p. 96.
FOOTNOTES (continued)

34 Fallico, loc. cit., p. 110.
35 Ibid., p. 111.
36 Ibid., p. 33.
37 Ibid., p. 127.
38 Ibid., p. 130.
39 Breisach, loc. cit., p. 237.
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