The working definition of the Outsider as used in this thesis finds its most perfect embodiment in the Existential Outsider. He, like Franz Kafka, may feel a hollow space separating him from others. Believing that existence precedes essence, he repudiates social norms, traditional values and inherited codes of morality. He rejects all abstract ideals in favour of the concrete experience of the individual's existence. Man is viewed as a self-creating being who neither has a basic character given to him by heredity, environment and psychological factors, nor has an ideal character to aspire to as prescribed by God, religion or any call to perfection. Rather he has to choose his character and goals continually by acts of pure decision. Besides being thus alienated from individuals, society and God, the existential Outsider experiences a profound estrangement from the human condition itself. He becomes aware that man exists in a universe which is alien and sometimes even hostile. He realises that his existence as a being endowed with will and consciousness is different from other natural objects which merely exist without being self-aware. His longing for a meaning in life and a rational explanation of the universe meets with frustration when he confronts what appears to him as the irrationality and chaos of the world. Death as Nothingness is the only certainty that awaits him. When this realisation hits him he is stripped of his illusion about himself and faces his own insignificance. When the Outsider's self-alienation becomes acute he almost stands outside himself, observing himself with detachment and exercising stringent self-criticism like Dostoevsky's Underground Man or like Kafka when he writes in his diary:

Together with Blei, his wife and child, from time to time listened to myself outside of myself, it sounded like the whimpering of a young cat.

The existential Outsider is thus the individual who reflects over life, human existence and his own predicament in the universe and who becomes aware of his alienation from society, other men, God and religion, the human condition and his own self. This awareness may strike him in a personal crisis or a moment of vision or in what...
Karl Jaspers calls Grenzsituationen. After this, the more he reflects, the greater is the gulf between himself and the unthinking majority.

The existential Outsider proper appears in twentieth-century drama out of the intellectual background of existential philosophy. The dramatic protagonists of philosophers like Camus and Sartre embody their authors' metaphysical concerns like freedom, authentic living and a constant awareness of absurdity. Camus' Caligula and Sartre's Orestes are existential Outsiders par excellence.

Shakespeare's Hamlet may perhaps be seen as an anticipation of the existential hero. He experiences alienation from existence, though only as a temporary phase. His father's death and his mother's hasty re-marriage together form the boundary situation which precipitates him into a condition in which he is overwhelmed by a profound disgust for life, an awareness of the irrationality of the universe and of human action and a realisation of the futility of individual as well as collective endeavour. He is painfully aware of his alienation and speaks about it continually. His awareness that revenge cannot help him to overcome the burden of existence and his detached ironic attitude to death further qualify him as a forerunner of the existential Outsider. His self-loathing and the tension within him between the inner self and the role of revenger imposed on him reveal him as a self-estranged figure. However at the end of the play Hamlet transcends the disorienting experience of alienation. In this the Christian humanism of the Elizabethan age is seen to have helped him.

In this study the Outsider is seen as the product of the intellectual and social milieu in which he appears. Hence before examining Hamlet as a precursor of the existential Outsider, it would not be irrelevant to consider certain related aspects of the Elizabethan background.

The triumphant humanism of the Renaissance as upheld in the universities and the court asserted the independence and dignity of the individual as the supreme value. Des Cartes! "I think, therefore I am", was the accepted motto of the intellectual who explored the
unknown on wings of thought. The existing medieval interpretation
of the universe in exclusively spiritual terms was questioned by
sceptic Renaissance thinkers like Montaigne and Machiavelli.
Montaigne was to the Renaissance period what Camus is to the twentieth
century. Oscar Richard Oehri's Ph.D. thesis draws a comparison
between Montaigne and Camus. According to Oehri, both are

Relentless debunkers of illusion and mystification, who, present
to us in its nakedness our condition as Pascallian prisoners;
both denounce every-day-living as pitiful self-deception and
individual habits and social customs as shams; both, believing
that man has a native worth and dignity capable of finding what-
ever 'salvation' he needs within himself, reject transcendent and
absolute values.4

The gradual permeation of these sceptical thoughts through the
existing system of social and moral order created a state of
intellectual ferment. The prevailing atmosphere of uncertainty and
unrest in the intellectual, spiritual and religious spheres was
further aggravated by the question of succession during the last
years of Elizabeth's reign. This was a topic on which discussion was
forbidden by the Queen and a civil war was believed to be inevitable
before the problem was solved. Besides this threat and fear of civil
war, there were foreign wars and rumours of wars causing constant
anxiety. There was also a heavy and continuous drain of men from
England to engage in her wars abroad - in Spain, in the Low
Countries and in Ireland.5 The heavy toll of death caused by war and
that other fell executioner, the Plague, together with the question-
ing of orthodox beliefs concerning life after death, made Death a
horribly fascinating topic of contemplation. The shadow of death
loomed large over the intellectuals of the Elizabethan-Jacobean age.
It produced a curious and paradoxical love-hate attitude towards
life. Perception of the infinite possibilities of human life and
despair at the precariousness of the individual's existence were yoke
together. According to L.C. Knights, "The realization of death was on
of the most important factors in producing melancholy".6 The medieval
man had accepted death as a passage into eternal life from the world
which was only a testing ground for that life to come. But to the
Renaissance man, death spelt the end of all humanistic aspirations
and was therefore a dreadful, loathsome and unwelcome visitor. The
finality of death, its reduction of man to the quintessence of dust and a diet of worms, the ineluctable modality of existence and the transience of all human greatness and glory were all related topics which preoccupied the intellectual, thus isolating him from his more active and less meditative brethren in their robust enjoyment of life in a humanistic era. This double perspective on life, viewing it with triumphant humanism and with horror because of the certainty of death, is uniquely Elizabethan and Jacobean.

Out of this intellectual welter of doubt, uncertainty, self-assertive individualism fostered by humanism, the defiant questioning of traditional beliefs and the realisation of the horror of death, was born the quintessential Outsider in Elizabethan drama - Hamlet.

The origin of Hamlet's alienation may be traced to his father's death closely followed by his mother's second marriage both of which together could be seen as a "boundary situation" which forced him to face the absurdity of existence.

The finality of death which reduced a god-like father to nothing, not even a sorrowful memory to his widow and the complete obliteration of a great man's memory at court within two months of his death brings home to Hamlet the vanity of human life and earthly power. His father's death plunges Hamlet into a contemplation of Death itself, which according to Camus is the ultimate evidence of the absurd. Throughout the play, death becomes a matter for cerebration as the mind moves around death and measures itself against death. There is a dialectic between self and the event of death. The presence of an awareness of death perceived and expressed in intellectual terms brings Hamlet close to the existential hero. But the difference is that Hamlet's perspective on death changes continually, reflecting his own development from fragmentation to reintegration.

To Hamlet his mother's speedy remarriage to Claudius seems absurd and defies reason. The 'absurd' in existential philosophy is a relationship between the individual and the universe; it is the encounter between the individual's longing for order and rational explanation, and the absolute chaos and irrationality seen by him in the universe. Hamlet just cannot find a rational explanation for
his mother's hasty remarriage and especially for her choice of Claudius after being married to the Elder Hamlet. Hamlet's self-torturing contemplation of his mother's remarriage and its irrationality leads him to an absurd vision of the world and he toys with the idea of suicide as an escape from the burden of existence. In his first soliloquy these three stages in the logical sequence of thought appear in reverse order. First comes the death-wish, then a desolate view of the world and last of all appears the root-cause of alienation—the mother's remarriage. The desire for annihilation recalls Faustus' wish to be converted to drops of water and this is followed by a toying with the idea of suicide. This wish may perhaps be seen in the light of Camus according to whom suicide is one way of negating the absurd.

O, that this too too sullied flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew,
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter. (I.ii.129-132)

At the heels of this comes a world-vision of futility which accounts for this suicidal yearning.

O, God, God,
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie, on't ah fie, 'tis an unweeded garden
That grows to seed, things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely. (I.ii.132-137)

This desolate vision of the world as a waste land is followed by a tortuously repetitive account of the immediate circumstance which precipitated his fall into abyssmal despair at the irrationality of things, namely his mother's speedy remarriage. The speed really rankles him. "But two months dead, nay not so much, not two", "yet within a month", "a little month", "most wicked speed". The total irrationality of her action as seen by him is conveyed through a contrast with a beast.

O God, a beast that wants discourse of reason
Would have mourned longer. (I.ii.150-151)

There seems to be an inhuman essence exuding from her. This hasty remarriage seems inexplicable when viewed in the light of the visible love and devotion that had existed between his parents. Not only the speed but also the choice of Claudius strikes him as being utterly
unaccountable by any rational standard. The antithetical portraits which he draws of his father as an idealised Hyperion and of his uncle as a Satyr, a symbol of the bestial and the corrupt, convey the confrontation between his longing for an ideal order which is projected on to the past and to a dead and god-like father and his realisation of the actual chaos and corruption in present existence which is crystallised for him in the figure of his uncle. Each of the three themes in this thought-sequence recurs again in the play. The thought of suicide reappears as a contemplation on existence and non-existence, which is a central issue in the later soliloquy "To be or not to be". The note of world-weariness is sounded again and worked up to a climax in the presence of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in II.i.299-312. Here, Man is reduced to being just the quintessence of dust, while earth and air are a sterile promontory and a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. The contrast between his father and Claudius which makes Gertrude's choice irrational in his eyes is further elaborated by Hamlet in his interview with his mother in III.iv.53-71. "Look here, upon this picture and on this". This is not merely the "presentment" of two brothers but an image of man's encounter with the absurd when his longing for ideal order ruled by reason meets with the actuality of chaos and irrationality. The deep metaphysical implication of the mother's action alone can account for his overwhelming disgust towards life. Otherwise it would indeed appear as if the emotion was in excess of the facts as they appear. In the case of the Outsider, his existential disgust will almost always appear to be in excess of the facts because it cannot be adequately explained by the external circumstances.

Thus while the father's death leads him to a contemplation of Death, his mother's remarriage seems an image of irrationality. Together they form the "boundary situation" which compelled a confrontation with the absurdity of existence.

When the human consciousness is thus crushed under the weight of existence, it may become a prey to ennui. Convinced that all the uses of the world are "unprofitable" the individual is overcome by a sense of futility and becomes incapable of meaningful and decisive
action. Bradley describes Hamlet's state of feeling as one which is averse to any kind of decided action; the body is inert, the mind indifferent or worse; its response is 'it does not matter', 'it is not worthwhile', 'it is no good'.

This was identified as melancholy in the Elizabethan age. It finds its equivalent in the ennui of the modern alienated intellectual. Hamlet's melancholy and despair have something of this ennui which makes him indecisive and inactive.

At this critical juncture the Ghost appears and imposes a task on him, the carrying out of which would demand playing a role altogether alien to him. There is a tension between the role of avenger imposed on him and his inner self which is overpowered by a sense of the futility of all action. Laertes is drawn as a deliberate contrast to Hamlet in that he sweeps to his revenge and enlists the support of the people, thus highlighting Hamlet's inability to believe in both individual and collective endeavour. Erik Erikson describes this enforcement of a role on Hamlet in psychological terms. He sees Hamlet as a youth forced to assume the negative identity of a mad revenger. But Hamlet's experience of world-weariness and futility makes it difficult for him to be convinced beyond doubt as Orestes was, that an act of revenge would restore order and significance to life. While Orestes in Sartre's Flies takes upon himself the task of ridding the city of pollution which is incarnate in the murderer-usurper, Hamlet is reluctant to assume the responsibility of cleansing the age's corruption as personified in Claudius.

The time is out of joint, O cursed spite, That ever I was born to set it right. (I.v.188-189)

John Holloway cites the above lines and III.iv.172-175 to illustrate Hamlet's awareness that he is discharging the role of scourge and minister of vengeance. The tension between the imposed role and the inner self generates self-estrangement.

Besides this, there is also a gulf between his self-image as one capable of sweeping to his revenge "with wings as swift/ As meditation or the thoughts of love" and his real self which avoids action because of a fundamental disbelief in the effectiveness of any definite corrective action. When this gap becomes apparent to him
and he finds that he is unable to live up to this self-image he resorts to "self-flagellation," This happens notably in two soliloquies - II.i.553-609: "O what a rogue and peasant slave am I" and IV.iv.32-66 "How all occasions do inform against me". The intensity of self-loathing expressed in self-applied abusive terms like "dull and muddy-mettled rascal", "pigeon-livered" "whore" and "drab" in Act II is brought under control in Act IV where the self-criticism is carried out at the intellectual level of argument. Self-abuse conveys self-division and self-alienation. Thus Hamlet's self-estrangement is dramatically demonstrated through the tension between role and inner self, the gulf between self-image and the real self and through bitter self-criticism.

As a release from the inner tension caused by the confrontation of opposites, Hamlet resorts to clowning. In the time-honoured tradition of Erasmus the deliberate and conscious stooping to folly is a paradoxical sign of true wisdom. Nietzsche regards the comic spirit as providing a release "from the tedium of absurdity", and cites the satyr chorus as the salvation of Greek art. Both these approaches seem valid in examining Hamlet's grotesque behaviour. His "antic disposition" as when he plays the fool with Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern is indeed the wisest thing to do. But at the same time clowning is also used as a release from inner tension and from anguish. The delirious hilarity in the 'cellarage' scene is a kind of safety-valve mechanism. The unresolvable conflict between his own existential vision of absurdity and the ghost's call to the definite action of revenge drives him to seek relief in hysterical clowning. In the play-scene exchange with Ophelia he makes ribald jests on women and sex. What hurts most and is a cause of anguish is turned into a subject for grotesque mockery. Hamlet's clowning as a release from inner tension and anguish anticipates the use of clowning in modern drama as a release from the metaphysical anguish which accompanies the apprehension of absurdity.

In Hamlet, anguish is also released through a cruel irony seen in his savage speeches to Ophelia in the Nunnery scene. His indifference and callous comments on the deaths of Polonius,
Rosencrantz and Guildenstern reduce death to a matter of no importance, an attitude consistent with his world-view that finds life meaningless, "weary, stale and unprofitable". This aspect of cruelty in Hamlet is recalled while studying a later existential hero like Camus' Caligula. Cruelty and a savage humour are Caligula's way of dealing with the absurdity of existence. Caligula counters the violence and absurdity of death with a violence of his own so that he may impress upon those around him the absurd vision of life which he himself had attained at his sister's death. Thus in Hamlet both clowning and cruelty are used as a release from anguish.

To trace Hamlet's changing perspective on death is to follow his development from fragmentation to reintegration. Hamlet's thoughts on death, the effect of the death of others on Hamlet and his response to the death of others reveal an evolving attitude towards death. At the beginning of the play, his father's death is seen to have drawn him towards a contemplation of Death and makes him aware of the nothingness which swallows man after death so that he does not even survive in the memory of others. This is a matter of anguish in his first soliloquy, but is brought under control through irony in III.i.

"O' heavens, die two months ago, and not forgotten yet? then there's hope a great man's memory may outlive his life half a year, but by'r lady a' must build churches then." (III.ii.128-131)

Thoughts of death and what happens after death preoccupy him almost throughout the play. His very first soliloquy, as we have seen, begins with a desire for self-annihilation which arises from a world-weariness which views life as being meaningless and absurd. "Self-slaughter" becomes a matter for further contemplation in III.i.56-88. The opening phrase of this soliloquy "To be or not to be" is elaborated in the next four lines as endurance or opposition. So the phrase could mean, to passively bear the imposed human condition and "be" or to rebel against the present situation and refuse to "be". Then yet another alternative presents itself which is neither endurance nor rebellion. It is the temptation to throw up the struggle of life altogether and voluntarily embrace death. The pros and cons of death are viewed in a dialectical manner.
fascination of death lies in the release it offers from all the sufferings and burdens of a weary life. "'Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished". But the fear of the unknown after death terrifies man. So one who does not wish to jump the life to come has to endure all the anguish of life. The attitude to death in this soliloquy is therefore the ambivalent one of horror-fascination.\(^{22}\) At this stage the helplessness of man becomes clear to Hamlet. Man must either suffer the ills of life or face something worse after death which being unknown is all the more fearful. Whichever course he may choose, he is the victim of the cruel human predicament. The illusion of freedom, of being free to choose his course is given to man. But his choice cannot improve his condition.\(^{23}\) So the more he contemplates on such issues, the more is he convinced of the futility of all action. Death, which is a matter of philosophical speculation to Hamlet in this soliloquy, takes on a grotesque aspect with his killing of Polonius. This death which took place unpremeditatedly under a misapprehension, seems to confirm Hamlet's view of the absurdity of existence. The tone of casual irony with which he drags the corpse to a hiding-place could only arise out of a Weltanschauung which finds life meaningless and futile and so regards death as a macabre joke (III.iv.212-215). This attitude has something in common with Meursault's indifference and irony in viewing death\(^{24}\) in Camus' *Outsider*. Hamlet's jesting becomes more and more bizarre as the search for the body intensifies. The bantering tone in which the conversion of the human body into dust is dealt with in IV.ii.5-6,

What have you done, my lord, with the dead body?
Compounded it with dust whereto 'tis kin,

and the gruesome fantasy of Polonius "at supper", "not where he eats, but where a' is eaten," are examples of an attempt to come to terms with the absurdity of death by the use of the grotesque. All human endeavour is said to be finally a preparation for the worm's table:

Your worm is your only emperor for diet, we fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots. Your fat king and your lean beggar, is but variable service, two dishes, but to one table- that's the end. (IV.iii.21-24)

The reduction of the king, his father, to nothing by death had been his first intimation of the absurdity of human existence. But now
he is able to distance himself from the fact which had caused him existential anguish. He views with sardonic relish the progress of a king through the guts of a beggar. The grotesque is used as a release from the absurd.

In the killing of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Hamlet almost becomes an accomplice of absurdity, sardonically watching the unsuspecting victims moving towards death. He sends them to death in a grotesque parody of the irony of death. However his later review of this action is no longer tinged with the absurd view. Instead the light of the Providential vision of human life falls on it, making it part of an absolute pattern and not a random occurrence in an absurd mechanism.

The grave-yard scene where Hamlet reappears in the play after an absence of three scenes marks a change in his attitude to death. Earlier, in the scenes following the killing of Polonius, he had dwelt on the physicality of death with savage irony in order to overcome the nausea felt at the putrefaction of the human body after death. "If indeed you find him not within this month, you shall nose him as you go up the stairs into the lobby" (IV.ii.34-36). In Act V the tone is one of compassionate irony at the contrast between the present condition of the skull which is knocked about and the past dignity of the politician, courtier or lord to whom that once belonged. The reference to the "worm" is still there, but there is sympathy for the human predicament, not disgust seeking relief through the grotesque. "Did these bones cost no more the breeding but to play at loggats with 'em? mine ache to think on 't" (V.i.88-90). His empathy is such that he can now identify with an unknown person's skull and feel pain at the callous treatment meted out to it. When Yorick's skull is identified, Hamlet controls his sense of nausea ("my gorge rises at it" V.i.182.) with an ironic gibe at female face-painting, "Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come" V.i.187-189.

From the evanescence of human beauty Hamlet turns to a contemplation of the transience of earthly glory. His tone is close to the Contemptus Mundi attitude of religious asceticism. The words
of the rite of the dead "Dust thou art and to dust shall thou return," seem to be at the back of his mind as he conceives the dust of Alexander and Caesar stopping holes in a beer-barrel or a wall.

Ophelia's death and Laertes' behaviour at the burial briefly provoke him and Hamlet out-Herods Herod in ranting in a mixed tone of fury and irony. But he finally emerges from his mood, in calm of mind, all passion spent, as he tells Laertes.

What is the reason that you use me thus?
I loved you ever, but it is no matter,
Let Hercules himself do what he may,
The cat will mew, and dog will have his day. (V.i.284-287)

In general, Hamlet's attitude to death in the grave-yard scene reveals compassion and control. Hamlet's conversation with Horatio in V.ii. gives us an inkling into the nature of the change that had taken place in Hamlet during his brief absence from Denmark. He has begun to see the shaping hand of divinity in his life.

There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.(V.ii.10-11)

The vision of an absurd and random mechanism is replaced by belief in the Providential ordering of existence. It is this which restores meaning to life, not only life in the universe in general, but every individual's life is seen to be planned by a "special Providence". The fragmented world is reintegrated in his vision after the leap of faith. This new attitude is expressed in a passage resonant with Biblical allusion to St. Matthew. Disregarding omens and warnings he chooses to rest in faith in God.

We defy augury. There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now 'tis not to come - if it be not to come, it will be now- If it be not now, yet it will come - the readiness is all. (V.ii.217-220)

Here he is able to view the possibility of his own death with equanimity. This calm detachment and the acceptance of his own death at the time ordained by Providence is a far cry from the death-wish in the first soliloquy or the fear of unknown modes of being after death expressed in "To be or not to be". This new attitude to death could arise only from a new integrated approach to life itself.26

When death does overtake him at the end he regards it as a 'felicity' and does not fear the unknown any longer. His last act
is to seize the poisoned cup from Horatio's hand and dash it to the
ground, thus affirming life and disapproving of suicide. While
earlier, he expressed a suicidal wish but feared what came after
death, (both being negative attitudes towards life and death), here
he prevents suicide thus affirming life and at the same time accepts
his own death (both being positive attitudes towards life and death).
Thus a study of Hamlet's attitude to death in general and his response
to the death of particular people illuminates the development of
Hamlet from fragmentation to integration.

Hamlet's reintegration is to the Christian humanist universe.
It is here that Hamlet moves away from the existential framework.
The existential hero is heroic at the end because he has no props or
tradition with which he can bolster up his individual stance. Hamlet's
heroism is different and is related to the tradition of humanist
heroism. His concern about his good name after death, his request to
Horatio to tell his story to the world and the soldier's funeral
accorded to him derive from the humanist tradition of heroism. While
in modern existential and absurdist drama the absurd vision prevails
till the end, in Hamlet the providential vision of the universe and
humanistic ideals reintegrate the Outsider. Jan Kott's differentiation
between the tragic and the grotesque is enlightening in this respect.

The downfall of the tragic hero is a confirmation and recognition
of the absolute, whereas the downfall of the grotesque actor means
mockery of the absolute and its desecration.... tragedy brings
catharsis while grotesque offers no consolation.

In Hamlet, the alienation theme and The Outsider figure are
introduced in what would otherwise have been a traditional revenge
structure. The theme of alienation alters the structure of the
external conflict round which the dramatic action turns. In the
traditional revenge play the conflict is between the criminal and the
avenger, as for example in The Spanish Tragedy. Here the total
alienation of the Outsider figure at the various levels - social,
interpersonal and existential - turns the struggle into a one-vs.-all
situation. Hamlet becomes the sole combatant in a multi-pronged
battle against Claudius whose arm is strengthened by Gertrude, Ophelia,
Polonius, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern and Laertes, against the
corruption and dissolution of the court and the Elsinorean way of
life and against the absurd in human existence. It is not a pitched battle or headlong conflict but is spread throughout the play. Hamlet is repeatedly baited by the opposition which keeps a close watch on him using Ophelia as decoy, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as spies, Polonius as eavesdropper and Osric as glib messenger. Hamlet is aware of this and retaliates by being the observer as well as the observed. It is a continual cat-and-mouse game and one of the counter-moves by which Hamlet keeps watch on the antagonist is appropriately called the mouse-trap.

The presence of the Outsider is seen to modify the structure of the play. In traditional revenge-tragedy, the main action is revenge and it falls within a generalized pattern of crime, discovery of the criminal, the avenger's plan of counter-action, the execution of revenge and the avenger's death. In plays like *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Antonio's Revenge* and *The Revenger's Tragedy*, the protagonist's faculties and efforts are all concentrated on and directed towards revenge. But when the alienation theme and Outsider figure intersect the revenge plot, the revenge scheme is subverted. It takes a secondary position and appears intermittently.

In *Hamlet* the initial situation reveals the protagonist as an alienated individual, estranged from the court, society around him and from the human predicament itself. On him is imposed the role of a revenger. The struggle between the role with its demand for revenge and the person's disinclination for it introduces internal conflict and self-estrangement. It is his existential concern as an Outsider which prevents Hamlet from being completely submerged in the blood-thirsty role of revenger. As Helen Gardner points out, in other revenge tragedies the hero descends to the moral level of his opponents, in a vengeance as hideous as the original crime. Here Hamlet's metaphysical questionings of human existence, man's place in the universe and the purpose of human life and Hamlet's greater interest in grappling with his alienation than with revenge inhibit his complete corruption by the evil that surrounds him. The line of action is continually diverted from revenge towards philosophical speculation because of the Outsider figure. These digressions give
the impression of a rambling structure to the play. The Outsider's preoccupation with being and self is at variance with a premeditated revenge plan of action. Hamlet has to constantly remind himself of his role as an avenger. He is intermittently galvanized into action and talks of revenge as if suddenly reminded of his role. Thus the revenge structure is subsumed by the Outsider's alienation. When the revenge structure is invaded by the Outsider, the revenge action moves desultorily; it is subordinated to the revelation of the Outsider's existential concerns.

The extensive use of soliloquy in Hamlet is a structural device necessitated by the alienation theme and illuminating the Outsider figure. The dramatic use of the soliloquy in earlier Elizabethan plays, to further the action and to inform the audience of secret plans is hardly evident in the play. Instead it is used, almost purely, as a vehicle of self-analysis and self-revelation by the protagonist. An analysis of the soliloquies reveals the alienation of the Outsider at various levels and his response to the absurd situation in which he finds himself.

The first soliloquy in I.ii.129-159 expresses Hamlet's alienation from the human predicament and a desire to escape through suicide. Unable to communicate his inner feelings to others, he seeks the only available release in soliloquy. "But break my heart, for I must hold my tongue" (I.ii.159). In the second soliloquy which breaks out immediately after the ghost's revelation in I.v.92-111, Hamlet's disorientation seems complete. Here he makes his fateful decision to subordinate everything else to the role of avenger imposed on him by the ghost. His inability to put this into immediate practice leads to further alienation - an estrangement from self. In the third soliloquy, Hamlet heaps abuse on himself on realising the gulf between his earlier self-image as one who would sweep to his revenge on swift wings and his actual incapacity to do so. He finds release in vengeful words rather than in action. He is self-conscious enough to realise this and rebukes himself. He recalls himself only to lose himself again in metaphysical doubts about the ghost's origin. Hamlet's fourth soliloquy is perhaps his most famous one on which to a large
extent rests his reputation as an intellectual who loses himself in philosophical speculations and renders himself incapable of action. Here in III.1.56-88, the extended dialectic on existence and then on death gives a visible manifestation of how the active role of revenge may be subordinated to the anxious questionings of an alienated individual groping in the midst of uncertainties.

And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pitch and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And loss the name of action. (III.1.84-88)

The fifth soliloquy (III.iii.73-96) expresses the intention of revenge verbally but fails to carry it out in action. The use of the past tense in "Now might I do it pat" reveals the subconscious disinclination for present action. The last soliloquy is in IV.iv. Here again as in the third soliloquy he tries to goad himself on to revenge by contrasting himself with another.

How all occasions do inform against me,
And spur my dull revenge! (IV.iv.32-33)

Characteristically this is followed by a disquisition on the purpose of human existence, man's place in the universe and what differentiates him from animals.

What is a man,
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? a beast, no more:
Sure he that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and God-like reason
To rust in us unused. (IV.iv.33-39)

Again he wonders why he has not yet carried out the duty of revenge imposed on him. Self-condemnation is followed by a renewed resolution to take revenge. When Hamlet returns as an integrated individual in Act V, having acquired a providential vision of life which gives meaning to existence, it is significant that there are no more soliloquies. Perhaps with the end of alienation, there is no more need to soliloquize.

Hamlet's predilection for soliloquy in the first four acts conveys his alienation from others around him since he prefers to commune with himself than with others. Alienation often leads to a
breakdown of communication. But in drama this breakdown itself has to be conveyed linguistically as well as visually. Hamlet's estrangement at court is effectively conveyed in his first appearance through his laconic comments which stand out in stark contrast to the long-winded rhetoric of Claudius and his courtly exchange of compliments with Polonius and Laertes. Of the six speeches assigned to Hamlet in this scene four are cryptic responses of one line or less, one is a slightly longer speech on the theme of seeming and reality, hinting that theirs is seeming while his sorrow is real and the sixth is a fairly long soliloquy. Only the presence of Horatio draws forth normal exchanges from him. With most others he takes to deliberate mystification and speaks in riddles and tries to confuse them. Irony, mild or savage, comes into play in his conversation with Polonius, Claudius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, by which he succeeds, most of the time, in maintaining a distance between them and himself. But sometimes, irony as a distancing device breaks down and the incoherent language of fury takes over as in the nunnery scene with Ophelia.

The powerfully evocative imagery of disease and corruption that runs through the play expresses Hamlet's obsessive sense of disgust and world-weariness. This may be the renaissance equivalent to the existential Outsider's nausea. But while nausea is man's response to the encounter with the physical existence of objects, Hamlet's disgust arises from an apprehension of evil around him.

The last scene however is singularly lacking in linguistic signs of alienation. Even his parody of Osric is good-humoured and no longer smacks of a disaffection from other human beings. The melodic cadence of the penultimate speech expresses the integrated personality's desire to be reconciled to and reinstated within his milieu.

O God, Horatio, what a wounded name, Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me! If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart, Absent thee from felicity awhile, And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain, To tell my story. (V.ii.342-347)

He no longer stands in proud isolation from a corrupt universe but
wants his actions to be understood and his name redeemed. He has reached the stage of being-for-others which is a sign of de-alienation.

Hamlet may thus be considered as a quintessential Outsider. In reflecting the universal concerns of man regarding existence, being and nothingness and in experiencing estrangement and disgust, he anticipates the existential Outsider. His contemplation of his father's death fills him with anguish, a natural reaction arising from a confrontation with Nothingness; his mother's remarriage seems to be an image of irrationality. These two events form the boundary situations which precipitate him into an absurd vision of existence in the universe. His melancholy and disgust find their modern equivalents in the existential Outsider's ennui, and nausea. In Hamlet, his self-estrangement is enacted as a tension between role and inner self, self-image and real self and finds verbal expression as bitter self-criticism. Hamlet resorts to both clowning and cruelty as a release from anguish. But unlike an existential hero who transcends absurdity by accepting it and makes the acceptance itself a rebellion, Hamlet is able to transcend his unnerving experience of alienation by being re-integrated to the Christian-humanistic universe. It is in this resolution that Hamlet differs most from the existential Outsider. While Hamlet is assimilated to an inherited vision of life, the existential Outsider has to create his own vision, this being the difference between Christian humanism and existential humanism.

* * * * *

Hamlet regards plays and players as "the abstracts and brief chronicles of the time," which show "the very age and body of the time, his form and pressure". The serious drama of an age almost invariably contains traces of the social, cultural and philosophical environment in which it was born. According to Martin Esslin, "drama, the theatre, always reflects the cultural situation, the thought of its time". This is particularly true of the twentieth century where we find a symbiotic relationship between contemporary thought and avant-garde drama. Philosophy projects and propagates itself in concrete through drama, while drama gains in depth by its alliance
with contemporary thought. Existential philosophy and in particular
the concept of alienation in it form the soil out of which much of
contemporary drama has sprung. A basic knowledge of the existential-
ist view of the human condition enriches our understanding of the
modern Outsider. Hence a brief resume of certain fundamental notions
in existentialism, especially those related to human alienation is
included here. This supplements as well as reiterates the summary of
existential alienation found in the introductory chapter.

According to Walter Kaufmann existentialism is not a
philosophy but a label for several widely different revolts against
traditional philosophy. In particular Hegel's absolutist idealism was
opposed by the early existentialists like Kierkegaard. While
Kierkegaard made the "leap of faith" in a reason-transcending
decision to accept the paradoxes of Christianity, twentieth-century
existentialism is predominantly atheistic. Hamlet in his return to
the Providential vision of a Christian humanist universe is nearer
allied to the Christian existentialists of the nineteenth century
than to the atheistic existentialists of the twentieth century.
Albert Camus' Caligula and Jean-Paul Sartre's Orestes in Flies explore
their intimations of absurdity to the most extreme limits, refusing to
make any such leap of faith.

One of the basic tenets of existentialism is "Existence comes
before essence" as applied to human existence. For other things
like a table or a paper-knife, the idea or essence of the thing
precedes its existence. The existentialists claim that for man there
is no prior definition of what man should be. Man is only what he
does and what he makes of himself. He has the responsibility and
freedom to choose what he is to be and his choice involves the rest
of mankind also. The only relevant guiding factor in this choice is
the individual's own sincerity and authenticity. Such a creed has
far-reaching implications. To say that for man existence comes before
essence is almost to deny the ideal conception of man in Christianity,
as a child of God made in the image of God. Sartre carries this further
and denies the existence of God. "There is no human nature because
there is no God to have a conception of it. Man simply is". Long
before Sartre, Nietzsche's madman had intimations of the murder of God by men and the terrible consequences of this act, news of which had "not yet reached the ears of man".

God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we the murderers of all murderers, comfort ourselves? Loss of faith in God is accompanied by a dethronement of conventional morality and value systems. As Dostoevsky wrote, "If God did not exist, everything would be permitted." When man is regarded absolutely free and responsible only to himself, all external sanctions hitherto held in authority become invalid, whether supernatural or natural. God's laws, religious prescriptions, and social norms are all rejected as subverting man's freedom. Thus when the doctrine that existence precedes essence is carried through till the end it results in the alienation of man from God, religion, morality and social norms.

Anthony Quinton defines existentialism as

A body of philosophical doctrine that dramatically emphasizes the contrast between human existence and the kind of existence possessed by natural objects. Men, endowed with will and consciousness, find themselves in an alien world of objects which have neither. This brings us to man's estrangement from the human predicament itself as postulated in existentialism. The presence of will and consciousness in man sets him apart from other objects in the universe. Man's response to an encounter with the fluid and viscous existence of objects in the physical world is described as "nausea". To Sartre's protagonist Roquentin the contact with a pebble, a red plush seat, or the knotted black root of a tree can constitute a confrontation with the sticky mess of the existence of things and this generates an overwhelming nausea which swamps him. Cut off from all metaphysical solace, when man exercises his will and consciousness, he becomes aware of his death as the only certainty of his existence. According to Heidegger, Dasein, or "being" is to be seen solely in the perspective of death. The ineluctable nature of death has to be accepted by man. Death is the Nothingness (Sartre's Le Mêant and Heidegger's Das Nichts) which is man's ultimate destiny. When man confronts Nothingness, the resulting reaction is anguish.
Thus in the existential Weltanschauung the individual is alienated from God, religion, the traditional code of morality, the universe and the human condition. The contemplation of the human predicament arouses nausea, anguish and despair. However, everyone does not undergo this experience of alienation. Most people drift through life unquestioningly. Only the rare individual who is accustomed to metaphysical reflection becomes aware of the alienation which seems inseparable from the human condition. He is the Outsider.

The Outsider could be said to belong to the middle of the three modes of consciousness which have been classified as:

i. the instinctive, unreflective, unknowing state;

ii. the reflective, self-conscious and isolated condition, and

iii. the state of objective consciousness or being-for-others.

The Outsider is one who has crossed the state of unawareness in which most people drift almost throughout their lives; he is in the intermediate stage before reaching the point of reintegration after the experience of alienation. According to Sartre, those who are in the first state of being have actually protected themselves from facing the truth about human existence, by practicing self-deception. Their "bad faith" or "Mauvaise foi" prevents them from feeling nausea and anguish. Very often in twentieth-century drama a dialectic is developed by juxtaposing the self-deceiving herd in the sleep of unawareness with the intensely alive Outsider whose awareness of the human predicament estranges him from the insiders. This is seen in Caligula, Flies and Rhinoceros. In contrast to the insider mood of quiescence, the Outsider is in a state of existential anxiety, a condition approximating to shipwreck. To him "consciousness of shipwreck being the truth of life, constitutes salvation." To an existentialist like Sartre, standing outside society becomes a positive value, the first step in the quest towards authentic living and commitment to freely chosen values as against the bad faith of the herd.

The realisation of estrangement from the universe around, which makes an individual an Outsider, may strike him in a personal crisis or a moment of vision, or in what Karl Jaspers calls "a boundary
situation". In Hamlet it has been suggested earlier that his father's
death and mother's remarriage formed the "boundary situation". Such
a situation launches an individual into self-probing and a search for
values. If the individual does not make the leap of faith as
Kierkegaard did in real life and Hamlet in drama, he moves towards
atheism. Atheistic existentialism leads to the development of the
absurd sensibility. In Camus' *Myth of Sisyphus*, the absurd is the
relationship between the individual and the world of existence. As
already summarised in the introduction, the absurd is the encounter
between man's longing for reason and order in the world and his
experience of the irrationality and chaos in existence. The mecha­
nical rhythm of daily life, an awareness of the passage of time, a
sense of the inhuman hostility of the objects of nature, the obser­
vation of an inhuman essence in others and man's confrontation of
himself as a stranger in a mirror or a photograph may convey the
feeling of absurdity to man. Camus mentions death as the ultimate
evidence of the absurd. The death of someone, with all its impli­
cations about the nature of human existence, often serves as the
"boundary situation" which precipitates the reflective individual
into existential despair, after an encounter with the absurd. In
many of the Outsiders studied hitherto, the death of someone close
to them stands out as a landmark in their career of alienation.
Hamlet, Vindice and Jimmy Porter trace their estrangement from life
to the death of a father. Ferdinand in *The Duchess of Malfi* and
Caligula are deeply affected by the death of a sister. It is possibly
the perception of an inhuman essence that makes Hamlet reduce his
mother to a state lower than that of "a beast that wants discourse of
reason". Berenger's witnessing of the conversion of man into
rhinoceros is possibly a fantasy image of the inhuman essence that
exudes from men.

The existential Outsider is the man who has suddenly become
aware of man's finiteness, mortality, powerlessness, intrinsic
isolation and the meaninglessness of existence in a normless universe.
This awareness alienates him from the unawakened men and society
around him; from all traditional norms and beliefs concerning God,
religion and morality; and from the universe and the human condition,
After this disorienting experience the individual can choose one of many alternative courses of action. He can ignore his momentary vision of the absurd and relapse into the unconsciousness of the vast herd of insiders. Or he can commit suicide and destroy himself in the hope of putting an end to his own individual meaningless existence. Camus points out in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 50 that since the absurd is a relationship between the individual and the world, suicide tries to negate the absurd by destroying the individual. But in suicide, the individual destroys the only medium through which he can experience the absurd — namely himself. A third possible course could be the "leap of faith", where the individual transfers his allegiance to a transcendent reality. Kierkegaard made this leap towards God in faith and the religious dimension restored meaning to life. But to Camus, this step signified "philosophical suicide" by which Kierkegaard and Chestov, Heidegger and Jaspers, Husserl and Scheler, all attempted to destroy the absurd by negating the world, the second of the two categories involved in the absurd relationship. In making this reason-transcending decision, the individual denies the very thing — namely the severely limited human reason — that made him aware of the absurd at first. In these three responses the absurd is ignored, denied or transcended.

Other alternatives are possible which represent the Outsider's attempt to live with the absurd. Nietzsche's way was to be aware of the horror of individual existence and at the same time realize that one is "part of the life-force with whose procreative lust we have become one". 52 The doctrine of eternal recurrence preached by him enabled him to live with the absurd. Zarathustra's animals address their teacher:

Everything goeth, everything returneth; eternally rolleth the wheel of existence. Everything dieth, everything blossometh forth again, eternally returneth the year of existence. We know what thou teachest; that all things eternally return and ourselves with them and that we have already existed times without number and all things with us. 53

Nietzsche's motto was to derive the maximum enjoyment from the precarious human existence by living dangerously. 54 George Steiner describes this response as
The Nietzschean gaiety in the face of the inhuman, the tensed, ironic perception that we are, that we always have been, precarious guests in an indifferent, frequently murderous, but always fascinating world.55

Another way of living with the absurd is to accept it and emphatically affirm it. Camus' philosophy of the absurd is a good representative of this attitude. This involves a clear-sighted perception of the absurdity of existence, the precariousness of life, the horror of death, the estrangement from other human beings, the continual frustration of the individual's longing to commune with others and with the universe. To accept the absurd is according to Camus, to believe that no system or creed can eradicate it.56 Camus claims that the acceptance of the absurd paradox itself is a form of revolt against it. Instead of running away from the absurd, the absurd man faces it and fights it. "That revolt gives life its value. Spread over the whole length of a life, it restores its majesty to the life". Living itself is affirmed as the basis of meaning. The absurd man, by his simultaneous acceptance of and rebellion against the absurd, can arrive at positive values - individual human worth, the shared human nature and the solidarity which links all men in facing the absurd. Thus there are three stages in the absurd man's attitude to the absurd. He first becomes aware of the absurd as a tragic paradox of the human predicament; he then accepts it and affirms its inevitability; and then this refusal to escape and the facing of the absurd itself become a rebellion against it.

The authentic existence advocated by Sartre is also a course opposite to the Outsider. This accepts and affirms the absurd. Here the Outsider acknowledges his freedom and that of others and accepts complete responsibility for himself without blaming the gods, original sin, heredity, environment or upbringing for his condition. Discarding his self-delusions about life, he accepts his finite nature and death and faces the anguish of existence with dignified courage. Though life is constantly threatened by uncertainty, chaos, death and nothingness, he remains committed to life and continually chooses the kind of action which defines him. Like Orestes in Flies he believes that "Life begins on the other side of despair".58 He believes that in choosing for
himself, he chooses for mankind also. Sartre defends this response against accusations of pessimism, nihilism and inertia and claims that it is an ethic of action and self-commitment.

While the first three responses—the relapse to unawareness, suicide and the leap of faith, are attempts to deny the absurd, the next three, Nietzschean gaiety, Camus's acceptance and Sartre's commitment are all affirmations of the absurd and attempts to triumph over it.

Three other responses to the absurd are also possible. One is to oppose the tyranny of the absurd by exercising tyranny oneself. Caligula exemplifies this response of simulating the absurd by his cruelty imposed on others around him. Another possible reaction is to indulge in deliberate clowning. The comic absurd may be used in an attempt to circumvent the absurdity of existence itself. This is found in the Outsider appearing in absurd drama, where yet another response can also be detected—a kind of apathy and a refusal to react to the absurd in any active manner.

From the 1950's "commitment" has taken on a social colouring stressing the individual's primary obligation to society. To quote Northrop Frye,

Commitment and engagement are attitudes that imply the superiority of the continuum of society to the person who is caught up by it. This return to the community after withdrawal is regarded as the third stage in the individual's being, signifying reintegration and de-alienation.

A character's return from withdrawal is meant to symbolize his coming to terms with reality, his affirmation of life in this world.

The development of concern and the sense of belonging to a community are essential in overcoming alienation. According to Frye, "The genuine individual is so only after he has come to terms with his community." In this third phase of development the individual is no longer an Outsider and so this does not come within the scope of the present study.

Albert Camus explores his philosophy of the absurd and the idea of revolt in concrete in his novels and plays. On drama's
Serious drama is like the parable. It can manifest in concreto what moral philosophy treats in the abstract. As in the parable, the generality of the topic is disguised by making the characters highly individual, even improbable. The dramatist presents abstract universal notions in concrete persona terms. The emergence of an individual as an Outsider after an encounter with the absurd is dramatically presented by Camus in Caligula.

The play exists at two levels. At the intellectual level, the play explores one particular response to an encounter with the absurd. But it has also a firm historical basis in the chronicle of Suetonius. Historical incidents and the naturalistic character traits of Caligula in history are interpreted in the light of the absurd sensibility. In this play Caligula is conceived as a tyrant with absolute power who enforces an idea with relentless logic. He is not a stereotype tyrant exercising power for self-aggrandizement or other selfish motives; neither is he just a power-seeking Outsider who finds in evil absolute freedom in the exercise of his will. He uses the tyrant's power to demonstrate ideas. He functions like a scientific investigator who starts out with a hypothesis, simulates favourable conditions in the laboratory and conducts experiments to establish it. Caligula carries out a series of experimental demonstrations on the absurdity of existence, using human beings as the experimental subjects. But at the end he discovers that his method was wrong.

Following the dictum that existence precedes essence, greater importance is given to the actual situation in which the characters exist than to the portrayal of characters conceived in their essentia qualities. Caligula may be seen as a character created in terms of existence, not essence. There are no literary paradigms to which he approximates as a character, such as Satanic, Herculean or Promethean. He is placed in a situation of absolute power from which he explores the implications of his encounter with the absurd. Commenting on the plays of Anouilh, Camus and Simone de Beauvoir, Sartre said,
What is universal to their way of thinking is not nature but the situation in which man finds himself; that is, not the sum total of his psychological traits but the limits which enclose him on all sides...... As a successor to the theatre of characters we want to have a theatre of situation.65

It is perhaps this priority given to exploring the metaphysical implications of situations rather than to probing the character of the individuals involved, that gives rise to adverse criticism; George Steiner denies the name of theatre to the plays of Sartre and Camus and regards them as merely "uses of the stage".

Sartre and Camus make of dramatic action a parable of philosophic or political argument. The theatrical form is nearly fortuitous; the plays are essays or pamphlets declaimed and underlined by graphic gesture. In these allegories we hear voices, not characters.66

However in Caligula the protagonist is more than a voice. He comes alive as an Outsider and even grows larger than life in pushing his ideas to their logical conclusions. He is predominantly an existential Outsider though he also has traces of incest, power-madness and even the zeal of a reformer to bring a new world into being. The play's theme is the existential Outsider's attempt to grapple with the absurd, attacking it, becoming its accomplice, carrying its implications through to their farthest limits, hoping to triumph over it, being defeated by it but refusing to submit till the end. The struggle is represented vividly and concretely.

The historical Caligula, according to Suetonius,67 had started his reign with a sincere attempt to be a good and just emperor. But after the death of his sister Drusilla, for whom he had an incestuous love, he apparently changed overnight and became a mad tyrant. Camus also retains this break or discontinuity in Caligula's nature. Using a retrospective technique, Camus presents vignettes of a compassionate and just Caligula in the past through the reminiscences of Cherea (p.9)68 and Scipio (p.17). This forms an ironic counter-point to Caligula as he emerges through his actions in the play.

As in history, Camus also traces the drastic transformation in Caligula to the death of Drusilla. But in the play it is not so much the external circumstance of her death or the loss of the beloved, but rather the inner response of Caligula to it which is significant.
Her death held deep metaphysical implications regarding human existence. Her death was the "boundary situation" which brought Caligula to an encounter with the absurdity, futility and nothingness of human life. Scipio describes Caligula near Drusilla's corpse:

He went up to Drusilla's body. He stroked it with two fingers and seemed lost in thought for a long while. Then he swung round and walked out. Calmly enough...... (p.10)

This description makes it clear that Drusilla's death is just the launch-pad which sends him hurtling through dark and yet unexplored regions of thought. Perhaps the nothingness to which death reduces the once throbbingly alive human body, the sheer physicality of death plunged him into the abyss of existential anguish. Caesonia interprets his reaction as arising from the pain of losing a loved one. But Caligula repudiates love, loss of which is nothing compared to what seems to him the fundamental wrongness of the world. "Do you imagine love's the only thing that can make a man shed tears?" "Men weep because...... the world's all wrong" (p.22). Caligula explains how he arrived at his desolate world-vision from the initial starting point of her death. Her death brought home to him the inevitability of death and the unhappiness of human beings. He says "her death is not the point; it's no more than the symbol of a truth that makes the moon essential to me" (p.14). Caligula then formulates the truth which he had discovered about human existence in a toneless voice, with eyes averted - "Men die and they are not happy" (p.14). The realization of this causes anguish in him. He describes it in terms evocative of nausea.

Oh, Caesonia, I know that men felt anguish, but I didn't know what that word anguish meant. Like everyone else, I fancied it was a sickness of the mind - no more. But no, it's my body that's in pain. Pain everywhere, in my chest, in my legs and arms. Even my skin is raw, my head is buzzing, I feel like vomiting. (p.23)

Anguish, in existential philosophy, is the reaction of the man who has had a vision of the absurd and realised the nothingness, the void that is at the centre of all existence. Here for Caligula, it is not a metaphysical response, but a physical pain and nausea.

When Caligula returns after his encounter with the absurd, he tries to control and release his metaphysical anguish by an exercise
of tyrannical power. He uses cruelty to fight absurdity. His cruelty in the play arises from his anguish and his desire to force others also to become aware of the absurdity and pain of existence. Caligula wants to make it his life's mission to awaken the sleeping multitude and make it realise the bitter truth about human existence which he had learnt. He has the power to force his subjects towards such a realization and he decides to use that power. "They're without understanding and they need a teacher," (p.15). So Caligula decides to give them lessons in the absurdity and meaninglessness of existence. As Donald Lazere puts it,

Camus suggests symbolically that Caligula........ feels a Christ-like, messianic mission to make men free by forcing them to know the truth of life's absurdity.69

In particular Caligula wants to bring home to them the meaninglessness of life and the arbitrary nature of death. Death, he has discovered, is an absurd fact robbing life of all meaning and significance. Caligula decides to become the accomplice of the absurd and inflict death and suffering without rhyme or reason, merely carrying out the logic of the absurd to the farthest possible limit. By using his own power as a tyrant, he wants to enforce on their consciousness the tyranny of existence. All the actions that follow are a systematic working-out of this decision.

The play acquires an episodic structure because the action becomes a scientific demonstration of a theory, through a series of experiments. The actions are not causally linked to one another in logical sequence but arise from Caligula's purpose, which is to demonstrate the absurdity of existence. The first episode is Caligula's edict concerning the treasury, by which all Patricians must disinherit their sons and make over their estates to the state-treasury; then a list would be drawn up fixing the order of their deaths:

Obviously the order of executions has no importance or rather, all these executions have an equal importance - from which it follows that none has any. Really all those fellows are on a par, one's as guilty as another. (p.19)

The arbitrary nature of death and its absurdity is thus enforced on them. Death is indeed Caligula's favourite theme. He gives demonst-
ration lessons on it, expresses a teacher's pride and pleasure on finding that the pupils have understood, writes a monograph on it and even conducts a poetry competition on the theme to examine the students' comprehension. The end of the first act presents him as an ally of the absurd, sitting in judgement over his subjects all of whom are seen as men condemned to death.

Bring in the condemned men. I must have my public, Judges, witnesses, accused - all sentenced to death without a hearing. (p.25)

In Act II Caligula is on his way to an execution. He is surprised to find that no one questions him on this matter.

What's this? None of you ask me why I have sentenced him to death.... Good for you! I see you're growing quite intelligent...
It has dawned on you that a man needn't have done anything for him to die. (p.33)

He is delighted as a teacher to see that he has enforced on them the lesson that every man is under a sentence of death, arbitrarily imposed on him, irrespective of whether he is guilty or not. Caligula is only duplicating the irrationality of existence in collusion with the absurd. Caligula's "little monograph on execution", excerpts from which are quoted by Helicon deals with this theme of universal condemnation to death.

Execution relieves and liberates. It is universal, tonic, just in precept and in practice. A man dies because he is guilty. A man is guilty because he is one of Caligula's subjects. Now all men are Caligula's subjects, Ergo, all men are guilty and shall die. It is only a matter of time and patience. (p.39)

The argument is a parody of the human predicament itself and is not confined to Caligula's subjects alone. Camus writes in The Rebel

Nihilism—rejects the idea of any limit and in blind indignation, which no longer even has a reason, ends with the conclusion that it is a matter of indifference to kill when the victim is in any case already condemned to death.70

Caligula reaches this nihilistic extreme in his indifferent response even when it is proved to him that he had executed Mercia on an unjust suspicion. "No matter. It all comes to the same thing in the end. A little sooner, a little later.....". (p.43)

In Act IV Caligula conducts a poetry competition: "Subject death; time limit - one minute" (p.84). He claims to have composed a poem on it himself; a poem which is lived by him. "Other artists
create to compensate for their lack of power. I don't need to make a work of art: I live it," (p.85). Death had brought him to a recognition of the absurdity of human existence and he had converted his life itself into a poem on death. The indifference with which Caligula treats the death of others is directed towards the prospect of his own death also. When Helicon brings the details of the conspiracy against Caligula, he deliberately ignores it. Caligula believes that absolute power such as he has enjoyed must be paid for by accepting its logical consequence. Here he faces the possibility of his death and deliberately chooses not to forestall assassination. "No, there's no return. I must go on and on, until the Consummation" (p.66). There is no turning back in an experiment like this. He is not an ignorant sacrificial victim, but consciously accepts his certain death at their hands. In Northrop Frye's terminology Caligula is the Alazon as "obsessed philosopher," who does not become a Pharmakos. The use of the word "consummation" to signify his death seems deliberate, recalling Christ's "It is consummated," which was also echoed by Marlowe's Faustus in his last moments. "Consummation" suggests that here death is seen as the fulfilment of life's mission. Thus as in Hamlet the death of another leads Caligula to contemplate Death and attain an absurd vision of the world. Alienated from the human predicament, he tries to enforce the same awareness of the absurdity of existence on others also.

The Venus episode in Act III enforces the meaninglessness of the universe, elevating it into an article of faith. Caesonia as high-priestess intones the dogma in a mock-serious manner in the "Litany of Venus yclept Caligula". "Make known to us the truth about this world - which is that it has none........." (p.54). Here again Caligula tries to enforce his own absurd vision of the meaninglessness of human existence on others. Besides revealing an alienation from the human predicament, this incident also demonstrates his rejection of God and religion. In this grotesque masquerade as Venus, Caligula makes a mockery of religion through the use of simulated thunder, the burlesque litany and the insistence on gifts. Vexed by the power ascribed to the gods, he carries out aggression on them, usurps their omnipotence and assumes god-head. He also wishes to
make people realise how arbitrary and irrational the gods are. He tells Scipio:

For someone who loves power the rivalry of the gods is rather irksome. Well, I've proved to these imaginary gods that any man without previous training, if he applies his mind to it can play their absurd parts to perfection. (p.57)

Caligula claims to use his power cruelly in order to get even with the gods. "Any man can play lead in the divine comedy and become a god. All he needs do is to harden his heart" (p.59). In thus blaming the gods for their cruelty and then becoming cruel himself, "Caligula is shown to be typical of blasphemers against the Deity and mankind." Caligula aspires not only to equal the gods, but also to supercede them. He tells Caesonia:

No, it's something higher, far above the gods, that I'm aiming at, longing for with all my heart and soul. I am taking over a kingdom where the impossible is king. (p.24)

As a result of his encounter with the absurd, Caligula acquires two insatiable longings which define the existential Outsider - to extend the frontiers of individual freedom and to achieve the impossible. He had first got his freedom when he recognized the unimportance of the world. "This world has no importance; once a man realizes that he wins his freedom" (p.21). He is proud of being "the one free man in the whole Roman Empire" (pp.21-22). He constantly explores new ways to assert his freedom. His decree "Famine begins tomorrow" (p.38) is one such declaration of his freedom. The assumption of deity in the Venus episode is another "small advance.... made upon the path of freedom" (p.57). The path of freedom leads him finally to terrifying loneliness where he discovers that "Beyond the frontiers of pain lies a splendid, sterile happiness" (p.92). The knowledge that everything is ephemeral is to him the pinnacle of freedom.

I know now that nothing, nothing lasts. Think what that knowledge means! There have been just two or three of us in history who really achieved this freedom, this crazy happiness. (p.92)

Intoxicated by the heady wine of freedom he makes his last maniacal asseveration of his freedom which leaves him in total isolation as the complete Outsider cut off from all bonds. He deliberately strangles Caesonia, speaking in exultant terms all the while:
I live, I kill; I exercise the rapturous power of a destroyer, compared with which the power of a creator is merest child's play. And this, this is happiness; this and nothing else - this intolerable release, devastating scorn, blood, hatred all around me; the glorious isolation of a man who all his life long nurses and gloats over the joy ineffable of the unpunished murderer; the ruthless logic that crushes out, human lives (he laughs), that's crushing yours out, Caeonia, so as to perfect at last the utter loneliness that is my heart's desire. (p.93)

Together with freedom, the experience of the absurd brought also an unquenchable thirst for the impossible. Camus identifies this as the signal theme and chief motivating force in the play. He writes,

For the dramatist the passion for the impossible is just as valid a subject for study as avarice or adultery.73 Profound dissatisfaction with the existing unendurable world-order makes Caligula long for something out of the world. The moon becomes the symbol of this unattainable ideal. His search for the moon is the poetic image of his ambition to make "the impossible possible" (p.20). This enigmatic phrase is elaborated in an impassioned speech in which he envisages a new earth with a new order of things. There would be no suffering or death in that New Jerusalem.

And when all is levelled out, when the impossible has come to earth and the moon is in my hands - then, perhaps, I shall be transfigured and the world renewed; then man will die no more and at last be happy. (p.24)

Language operates in a richly evocative manner here. The word "transfigured" with its new testament connotation74 of the incorruptible, radiant body, the echo of Christ's claim in Revelations "Behold I make all things new" and the apocalyptic vision of the Millennium of happiness raise this speech to the level of messianic aspiration. Philip Thody sees an apostolic zeal in Caligula's propagation of his creed.

In his personal attempt to transform the world Caligula becomes also a kind of apostle of the absurd, a prophet determined to enforce recognition of his new gospel.75 Caligula believes that one man's revolt and courage to change the subsisting scheme of things would liberate the whole of mankind. In this Caligula resembles the conqueror described by Camus in The Myth of Sisyphus.76 Both diagnose their dilemma with lucidity
and seek release in intensity. Both carry out their revolt against the absurd in the name of mankind and its thwarted ambitions. The perseverance in sustaining the revolt becomes more important than the actual attainment of the objective.

Caligula's career in the play is thus ruled by three main motives - the didactic purpose of bringing others around him to a realization of the absurdity of existence, achieving intensity of his own individual consciousness through an active assertion of his freedom and the messianic mission of bringing into being a new world. In steadily pursuing these motives he is alienated from existence, from religion and the gods and from the society around him. As an existential Outsider he enacts a paradoxical response to the absurd. Caligula revolts against the absurd and yet becomes its accomplice, repudiates the gods for their cruelty but becomes more cruel himself, affirms his individual freedom but infringes on the freedom of others. E. Freeman describes this nihilistic response of homicide - "The absurd man attempts to become the ally and propagator of the absurd, rather than its victim". 77

The dictum existence precedes essence is true of the conception of Caligula as a dramatic character. While the heroic Outsiders of the past approximated to a pre-existing paradigm of human excellence, the existential Outsider becomes his own paradigm. He creates his own values and is perpetually evolving, even up to the moment of death, like Caligula. According to Colin Wilson, "developing till the day of death is the essence of existence philosophy". 78

At the end, when death by assassination becomes imminent there is a new awakening in Caligula. He realizes that he has failed in his mission of making the impossible possible. Painfully conscious of his failure he has to face the certainty of death at the hand of the conspirators. For the first time he experiences fear. It is a humiliating self-realisation but by looking at it steadily from the absurd point of view he reduces it to nothing.

And I'm afraid. That's cruellest of all, after despising others, to find oneself as cowardly as they. Still, no matter. Fear, too has an end. Soon I shall attain that emptiness beyond all understanding, in which the heart has rest. (p.94)
For him the peace that passeth all understanding lies in the void of nothingness. He realises that the method adopted by him to make the impossible possible was a wrong one. It is an agonizing realisation.

I have chosen a wrong path, a path that leads to nothing. My freedom isn't the right one... Nothing, nothing yet. Oh how oppressive is this darkness! Helicon has not come; we shall be forever guilty. The air tonight is heavy as the sum of human sorrows. (p.94)

The last sentence almost captures the atmosphere of Gethsemane. Only at the end Caligula achieves the clarity of vision to see that his freedom was wrong because it destroyed others and led to nihilism.

In his production note to the play in 1945 Camus wanted the play to be taken as a warning and a moral lesson.

Unfaithful to man through fidelity to himself, Caligula accepts death when he has understood that no man can achieve salvation for himself alone, and that one cannot be free against other people. But still even after the realisation of wrong choice and the acknowledgement of failure, Caligula does not end his life in despair but in an affirmation of life. Even as he is being stabbed repeatedly he explodes into mad laughter which turns to gasps. In his last gasp, laughing and choking, Caligula shrieks out, "I'm still alive" (p.95). His laughter as he is stabbed reveals an intellectual enjoyment of the logical resolution of his career as demonstrator of the absurd. As an existential Outsider, he wagers in favour of existence and absurdity till the end.

At its first performance the play seemed to explore a situation of great contemporary significance. It was performed in 1945 though it had been written in 1938 itself. Caligula's nihilistic reaction was found to resemble the fanatic zeal and mercilessness of totalitarianism in the second quarter of the twentieth century.

In 1945 Caligula seemed to bear a superficial resemblance to Hitler and Mussolini, two imperial megalomaniacs. Camus himself made a connection between the play's dialectic and Nazism. In his letter to his imaginary German friend he pointed out that his play and Nazism both originated from the same sort of drama of the mind - the sudden realisation that there are no absolute standards and no ultimate divine sanction. The play explores the implications of absolute power when it is sometimes concentrated in the hands of an
individual who regards himself responsible to nobody and nothing else. The arbitrary wielding of such power becomes an image of the absurd universe ruled by unpredictable irrational forces. A terrifying human situation is dramatised in the play and this accounts for its powerful enactment and popularity on stage. A connection is established between absolute power and the dehumanization of the individual. According to Germaine Brée, in this play,

Camus was obviously marking his distance from all doctrinarians and from the neo-Nietzscheanism of the Nazis in their attempt to revitalize society through violence. He was alert to the destructive potentialities of totalitarian views of human existence and totally sceptical of their claims to infallibility.82

The play is also absorbing in the modern context because Caligula may be seen as a modern man trying to find the meaning of life. The play deals with the individual's struggle to understand life and raises poignant questions regarding existence.

In Caligula the alienation theme and the conception of the protagonist as an Outsider structurally impose the logic of the absurd on historical material. Camus is reported to have said that he invented nothing, added nothing, but accepted the account of Caligula given by Suetonius. But in spite of the solid historical basis Caligula is very different from a historical play. Just as in Hamlet the revenge structure is subsumed by the probing of the Outsider's dilemma, here too the historical background is subordinated to the Outsider's metaphysical concerns. Camus himself is said to have stated that in its fundamentals Caligula is not a historical play.83

The demonstration of absurdity through a series of lessons and experiments breaks the cause-effect link essential in history and makes the play episodic; the events of the play are not generated through the interaction of characters but arise from the central figure's vision of life. So the action is non-linear, with no causal progression. The structure approaches a myth where causal links are destroyed, fantasy and the irrational take over charge and meaning lies below the narrative surface. It may be regarded as an intellectual quest-myth, where each episode is a stage in Caligula's quest for the meaning of life and his attempt to endow his life with meaning. However, it is not a myth in the archetypal sense of an eternally
recurring pattern. Rather it is an "existential" myth, which exists independently of any natural dispensation, a myth of the intellect.

All the action in the play is initiated by one character - Caligula. This is usually typical of the comic structure of Plautus and Terence, where an intelligent servant manipulates all the other characters and engineers the plot to bring it to the conclusion that he wills. Caligula however is not a clever servant but a powerful tyrant. When thus one character is powerful and controls the action according to a fixed principle, the action becomes mechanical, because the other characters are puppets pulled by the central character. The mechanization of dramatic action is the structural equivalent of the absurd vision which perceives the mechanical rhythm of human existence and stresses the mechanization of the individual in philosophical terms.

The presentation of the protagonist as an Outsider signifying a philosophical response to the absurd, affects the portrayal of the other characters also. They primarily represent other responses to life. The Patricians stand for the unawakened consciousness content to live with comforting illusions - Scipio's response to a confrontation with the absurd almost approximates a Nietzschean gaiety as seen in his poem on death:

Pursuit of happiness that purifies the heart,
Skies rippling with light,
O wild, sweet, festal joys, frenzy without hope. (p.86)

Cherea has possibly had a dizzying vision of the absurd and yet managed to come through it to find meaning in life. He says,

All I wish is to regain some peace of mind in a world that has regained a meaning. What spurs me on is not ambition but fear, my very reasonable fear of that inhuman vision in which my life means no more than a speck of dust. (pp.30-31)

Here the use and repetition of the word "regained" suggests that once he too had lost his peace of mind in a world that had seemed to lose its meaning. But now meaning had been restored to the world and he himself strove for peace. This, together with his clear understanding of the nihilistic implications of Caligula's vision suggests that he has passed through the stage of the alienated consciousness and emerged as a reintegrated individual. He is now committed to
the integrated vision of the universe and has thrown in his lot with the Patricians in group-action to combat Caligula's nihilism.

The other characters exist, as it were, for Caligula. What they are in the play is to a large extent, composed of what their attitude towards Caligula is. What a man is in this play is what he does in relation to Caligula. The Patricians are cowardly in passively accepting Caligula's insults and become hostile because of their humiliation. Helicon's loyalty as the slave-companion, mouth-piece and errand-runner of Caligula and Caesonia's sensual yet compassionate love for Caligula in the midst of everything, are their very being as far as the play is concerned. Cherea exists as Caligula's antagonist and his opposition to Caligula originates purely at the intellectual level. Cherea says:

What is intolerable is to see one's life being drained of meaning, be told there's no reason for existing. A man can't live without some reason for living. (p.30)

All he wants is "to live and to be happy," and both would be impossible if the absurd is pushed to its logical conclusions. He believes in social and moral norms which restrain passing fancies for murder and fornication. He believes that some actions are more praise-worthy than others while Caligula reduced all to the same worthlessness (pp.68-69). Cherea's stand is thus antithetical to Caligula's.

There is brief rapport between Caligula and each of the important secondary characters but Caligula deliberately destroys it and stands in total isolation at the end. At the physical level, Caesonia labours to establish and maintain contact with him and her recompense is to have life squeezed out of the very same body which she had used to keep in touch with him. Caligula and Scipio share a moment of perfect communication at the emotional and imaginative level when they discuss Scipio's latest poem in an almost poetic, antiphonal dialogue (pp.47-48). But after building up an idyll of fragile beauty, Caligula deliberately shatters it with an ironic quip - "All that's a bit..... anaemic". Scipio recoils as if stung. It is almost equivalent to an emotional killing - of love. The bond between Caligula and Cherea is at the intellectual level. Cherea understands the rationale behind Caligula's actions. Like Brutus
who wanted to kill only the spirit of Caesar, Cherea wants to destroy the ideology of the absurd that Caligula stands for. He feels no personal rancour against Caligula and would be content to kill the idea at the intellectual level, if that were possible. Thus Caligula's relationships with other individuals at the physical, emotional and intellectual levels are all cut off by him and he is left alone in a "ghoul-haunted wilderness" (p.50).

The dramatic conflict in this play is not between the individual and society but between the Outsider and the absurd universe. Caligula has society fully under his control so that society is reduced to a non-entity. The usual conflict of the Outsider Vs. Society here takes the form of the Outsider Vs. the Cosmos, society being a pawn in the struggle. In striving against the absurd universe, the Outsider takes up the paradoxical position of becoming the accomplice of absurdity and tyrannising over society in the hope of bringing a new world into being through one man's daring in carrying ideas to their logical conclusions.

The play's dialogue is influenced by the Outsider protagonist who is intensely conscious of his existential alienation and constantly analyses it. The dialogues between Caligula and each one of the other four major characters - Helicon, Caesonia, Scipio and Cherea serve the purpose of presenting and discussing Caligula's philosophic position and contrasting it with the stand taken by the others. They are not meant to be naturalistic dialogue but more in the nature of a dialectic. They are often a commentary on the action of the play and as such are based on the traditional dramatic expectation that action is explicable. The explanation of the philosophical positions and the action arising out of them in cogently argued language suggests a belief in the validity of language. Language is considered capable of expressing the absurd experience by the use of logic and reasoning. According to E. Freeman it is Camus' "Cartesian approach to language and structure" which prevented him from solving "the problem of communicating the feeling of the absurd in the theatre". Thus in Camus, language does not itself become a metaphor of absurdity as in the absurd drama of the second half of the twentieth century.
Camus however adds an extra dimension to his play by an imaginative use of recurrent symbols. The moon and mirror images are particularly ingenious adaptations of the eccentricities of Caligula to suit the metaphysical purposes of Camus. Caligula's prolonged quest for the moon is symbolic of his aspiration for the impossible. Caligula's antics in front of the mirror are grotesque but meaningful. At the end of Act I he makes a symbolic gesture of effacing the present images in the mirror, by which he signifies his desire to destroy from the face of the earth the existing order of things, the past, all memories and the masks of self-deception. In their place stands Caligula, the destroyer of all illusion:

All gone..... An end of memories; no more masks. Nothing, nobody left, Nobody? No, that's not true. Look, Caesonia. Come here, all of you and look........ (p.26)

One person alone is left, Caligula, the only real individual, the only one who has perceived the truth about existence. Thus the mirror represents Caligula's self-image - his projection of himself as the only free individual in the Roman Empire, the teacher of his people, the one who is to usher in a new order of things when death and suffering would disappear from earth. It is only in the last scene that he realises that this image is also an illusion. He now repudiates this self-image and all that it implied. He looks into the mirror and his voice rises to a scream.

See, I stretch out my hands, but it's always you I find, you only, confronting me, and I've come to hate you, I have chosen a wrong path, a path that leads to nothing. (p.94)

He hurls a stool at his reflected self, screaming, "To history, Caligula! Go down to history!" (p.94). The shattering of the mirror symbolizes the annihilation of the exalted self-image on realisation of wrong choice and failure. This moment coincides exactly with his physical destruction by assassination. The symbol (mirror), the self-image and the person are all destroyed in the same instant. The insights derived from the exploration of the absurd in this play are incorporated in Camus' later philosophical work The Rebel. Especially significant is the use of the mirror-image in describing the nihilistic position. "The absurd, which claims to express man in his solitude, really makes him live in front of a mirror," "The mirror with its fixed stare, must be broken". Thus Caligula is not just a dramatisation by Camus of philosophical positions discussed earlier.
in the Myth of Sisyphus. Rather it is an exploration and evaluation of a new response to the absurd directly through drama. At the end of the play this nihilistic response to the absurd is rejected.

While in Hamlet there is a faint anticipation of existential alienation, Caligula embodies one variation of the existential Outsider. Both Hamlet and Caligula encounter the absurd after the death of someone dear. It is not the death itself but the inferences drawn from it regarding the evanescence of human existence and the irrationality of the extant order of things that grant them a desolate vision of human existence.

As a result of the encounter with the absurd, Hamlet experiences a disgust for "all the uses of the world" and even toys with the possibility of suicide as a release from the absurd. His response to the absurd is a blend of ennui, clowning and cruelty and leads to widely different moods of inaction, hilarity and violence. In Caligula, the confrontation with the absurd causes anguish which includes physical pain and nausea. But it makes him determined to enforce his absurd vision on everyone through cruelty and tyrannic power. Hamlet's lack of remorse at the deaths of Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern reveals a streak of cruelty and disregard for human life which may be traced to the vision of nothingness and irrationality which confronted him at his father's death. In this, there is a point of contact between him and Caligula who launches on a career of arbitrary killings as a counter-move to the cruelty of the absurd.

However, the difference between the world-views of the two plays becomes apparent at the end of the plays. Hamlet dies at peace with himself and the universe and even shows concern about gaining the good opinion of others. Caligula dies at war with himself, with others and with the human condition, an Outsider till the end. Hamlet moves from an alienated and fragmented condition to being an integrated individual reconciled to the universe after accepting a providential view of life. By a leap of faith towards the Christian-humanist vision, Hamlet overcomes his sense of dereliction in a hostile universe. Caligula realises that he has made a wrong choice
in using his freedom to destroy others. But by a fidelity to the absurd vision Caligula achieves lucidity. These are the differentia between an age of faith and an age of sceptic anxiety, between Christian humanism and existential humanism.

In Sartre's Flies as in Camus' Caligula, the protagonist's stand is that of existential humanism. Ultimately the significance of man and his individual choice regarding existence are asserted. Sartre's Flies presents a protagonist who begins as an uncommitted 'man alone' but is drawn towards realizing his duty towards society. Orestes begins as a social Outsider standing aloof from other men and society but ends as an existential Outsider carrying the burden of his own freedom and responsibility. Sartre's self-portrait in the seventies traces a similar development in himself from social aloofness to social commitment, the war being the turning point of his career.

It was then, that I abandoned my pre-war individualism and the idea of the pure individual and adopted the social individual and socialism. That was the turning point of my life; before and after.87

The opening situation presents Orestes as a stranger in Argos, the city of his birth. He is not only an Outsider in Argos in a literal sense, but is also an individual who stands outside religion and traditional beliefs. He considers himself free from all human bondage. He belongs nowhere and has no home, no roots and no memories.

For memories are luxuries reserved for people who own houses, cattle, fields and servants. Whereas I -- I'm free as air, thank God. My mind's my own, gloriously aloof. (p.20)88

As yet, to Orestes, freedom consists in being uncommitted. But to Sartre "degagement is only a mockery of freedom.... a form of running away from freedom". 89 However, in Orestes, together with self-sufficiency there is also a touch of wistful longing. Though he declares, "These folks are no concern of mine" (p.22), there is a desire to legitimately become one among them. Orestes tells his tutor,

But, mind you, if there were something I could do, something to give me the freedom of the city; if, even by a crime, I could acquire their memories, their hopes and fears, and fill with these the void within me; yes, even if I had to kill my own mother.... (p.22)
Orestes' complete estrangement from his people is not surprising. They continually live in what Sartre would call a state of 'bad-faith'. They represent what Germaine Brèe describes as "Sartre's perennial whipping-boy: the bourgeoisie". They had maintained a culpable silence on Agamemnon's return and had secretly gloated over his sensational murder by Clytemnestra. But though they had been silent accessories to the crime, they subsequently disclaimed their responsibility and began to wallow in penitence. Their repudiation of personal responsibility and subsequent self-deception is an unbridgeable gulf between them and Orestes who believes in authentic living. Thus at the beginning, Orestes is seen as an Outsider alienated from his people at Argos.

His complete alienation from the supernatural comes in II.i. Until then, despite his tutor's lessons in scepticism (p.18) Orestes still had vestiges of religious belief in him, as in "And I thought the gods were just!" (p.12). In II.i. bewildered as to which course of action he must choose - passive acceptance or active resistance, Orestes appeals to Zeus for guidance.

Now I am weary and my mind is dark; I can no longer distinguish Right from Wrong. I need a guide to point my way. Tell me, Zeus, is it truly your will that a king's son, hounded from his city, should meekly school himself to banishment, and slink away from his ancestral home like a whipped cur?— Oh Zeus, I beseech you, if meek acceptance, the bowed head and lowly heart are what you would have of me, make plain your will by some sign; for no longer can I see my path. (p.58)

Zeus readily obliges him by sending out flashes of light from the stone, thus conveying his own wish that Orestes should leave Argos immediately. Orestes gets the sign that he had asked for but he realizes that this alone cannot resolve the dilemma because he must interpret the sign for himself. A sentence from Sartre's lecture Existentialism and Humanism illumines this dramatic incident.

Neither will an existentialist think that a man can find help through some sign being vouchsafed upon earth for his orientation; for he thinks that the man himself interprets the sign as he chooses.91

Orestes stares at the stone in silence. Suddenly something snaps within Orestes and he experiences the break-down of the bond between him and the gods, between him and the universe. The dissolution of
the link between him and the supernatural order places him outside the reach of all laws of god, religion and morality—"from now on I'll take no one's orders, neither man's nor god's" (p.59). The break with the gods makes him instantaneously an alien in the midst of a hostile universe. The former warm and friendly atmosphere of nature which surrounded him is now replaced by a chillness and an emptiness,

Until now I felt something warm and living round me, like a friendly presence. That something has just died. What emptiness! What endless emptiness, as far as eye can reach! (p.59)

For him it is the "awful birthday" of freedom when a "beautiful fusion with the things of this world was over". At this point Orestes is a complete Outsider, alienated from society, other individuals, God, religion and the universe.

In working out the alienation of Orestes, the predominant existential theme of freedom and responsibility is brought into sharp focus. The realisation that the freedom of choice lies entirely within himself is a momentous discovery. This has important consequences. It casts on him the burden of responsibility for his own decisions and actions. It renders the gods irrelevant to human existence. It excommunicates the free individual from a rapport with nature and the universe. In The Flies, the crucial moment is Zeus' intervention with the sign. The sign vouchsafed by Zeus ordered his submission to Zeus' will that he should leave Argos immediately. But together with the sign came also the realisation that he as a man was perfectly free to disobey Zeus. In the choice poised between passive acceptance and active resistance, Zeus requires the first, "to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune", whereas Orestes chooses the second "to take arms" against tyranny. In retrospect from the last act, this moment seems cataclysmic to Orestes, when freedom crashed on him like a thunderbolt setting him free forever from subjection to the gods. In Act III Orestes describes to Jove his life before and after that moment. Until then it was Jove who seemed to give meaning to his life.

You were my excuse for being alive, for you had put me in the world to fulfil your purpose and the world was an old pandar prating to me about your goodness, day in, day out. (p.95)
He had felt one with nature which sang the praises of the goodness of Zeus and taught him gentleness and forgiveness.

Suddenly, out of the blue, freedom crashed down on me, and swept me off my feet. Nature sprang back, my youth went with the wind, and I knew myself alone, utterly alone in the midst of this well-meaning little universe of yours. I was like a man who's lost his shadow. And there was nothing left in heaven, no right or wrong, nor anyone to give me orders. (p.96)

This was the exact moment when Orestes became an existential Outsider. Consciousness of absolute human freedom and the open-endedness of human existence snapped the bonds which tied him to the gods, to his fellowmen, to nature and the universe. This was both a release from bondage and an alienation from God, men, nature and the universe. In Caligula a similar experience took place off-stage after which Caligula returned like one intoxicated with his freedom, accountable to nothing and to no one outside himself and completely alienated from men, society and the human predicament.

The course of action decided on by Orestes after this is not merely an assertion of his own individual freedom. In choosing for himself he chooses for all men in Argos too, in true existential style. His individual decision is also a society-oriented one. Orestes wishes to take over the sense of guilt from all the people of Argos by killing Aegisthus and Clytemnestra. That would give him the freedom of the city of Argos and also set the people free from the guilt imposed on them by their king. To him, this deed would not be primarily a revenge for his father's murder, or merely a sacrificial act which would make him the scape-goat to gather up their sins. It would be a definitive act by which he established his identity and asserted his right to be in Argos. It would be an existential act. When the murder is accomplished in the next scene, Orestes cries out in exhilaration - "I am free, Electra. Freedom has crashed down on me like a thunderbolt" (p.78). Orestes also realises that freedom brings responsibility and is therefore a burden. He has committed a deed for which he alone is responsible. Unlike Electra, Orestes does not wish to repudiate the deed. On the contrary, he wants to be "the deed's creature" and bear the burden of it himself. In Eugene O'Neill's Mourning Becomes Electra this situation is reversed. There it is Orin who feels remorse and seeks escape while
Electra is prepared to bear the burden of guilt till the end. I have done my deed, Electra, and that deed was good. I shall bear it on my shoulders as a carrier; at a ferry carries the traveller to the farther bank... The heavier it is to carry, the better pleased I shall be; for that burden is my freedom. (p.79)

The idea of freedom that emerges from this passage is an important tenet in Sartre's existential philosophy. According to Maurice Cranston, to Sartre "freedom is a burden on mankind, something to be borne with courage, at times with actual heroism." In The Flies, the denial of the relevance of the gods to human life follows as a corollary to the protagonist's realisation of man's complete freedom. Both Zeus and Orestes are aware of this link between human freedom and the denial of the supernatural. Zeus confesses helplessness before the rare phenomenon of a free individual.

Once freedom lights its beacon in a man's heart, the gods are powerless against him. It's a matter between man and man, and it is for other men, and for them only, to let him go his gait, or to throttle him. (pp.74-75).

Orestes too, is fully aware of Zeus' lack of power over him after he has attained his freedom. He says that when man was created free, he became independent of the Creator. He tells Zeus "I am my freedom. No sooner had you created me than I ceased to be yours". Once the existential Outsider realises his freedom and rejects God in asserting freedom, there is no retracing of steps after that. Neither the threat of torture by Zeus, nor the self-inflicted suffering of Electra can make him regret (p.89). Zeus' offer of safety and protection in return for "a little penitence" is rejected by him in disdain. To him, repentance or regret would be equivalent to disowning his own past deed and his responsibility for it; and to do that would be to live inauthentically and in bad faith. In his opinion, "The most cowardly of murderers is he who feels remorse," (p.93). He hurls defiance at Zeus and stands firm on his freedom. Zeus threatens to excommunicate him from the natural world.

Beware lest the very seas shrinka. back at your approach, springs dry up when you pass by, stones and rocks roll from your path and the earth crumbles under your feet. (p.94)

Dr. Faustus had experienced a similar cosmic alienation and had traced it to his rejection of God. But while Dr. Faustus had been torn with
remorse and terror, Orestes maintains his position with calm tenacity.

Let it crumble! Let the rocks revile me, and flowers wilt at my coming. Your whole universe is not enough to prove me wrong. You are the king of gods, king of stones and stars, king of the waves of the sea. But you are not the king of man. (p. 94)

The last menace posed before him by Zeus is the prospect of being forever an outcaste from mankind, like a scabby sheep or a leper. Orestes accepts this destiny also with equanimity. He would indeed be the complete Outsider, forever alienated from God, men, nature and the universe.

I know it. Outside nature, against nature, without excuse, beyond remedy, except what remedy I find within myself. But I shall not return under your law; I am doomed to have no other law but mine. (pp. 96-97)

This is where freedom has brought him. According to Maurice Cranston, the central moral of The Flies is outlined in one of Sartre's essays, "Human freedom is a curse; but that curse is the unique source of the nobility of man". Thus in Sartre, the Outsider's alienation at various levels is traced back to his acceptance and assertion of his freedom.

In The Flies the individual's urge to establish his identity and assert his freedom is related to his liberation of society. Orestes kills Aegisthus and assumes responsibility for his deeds. He also takes upon himself the guilt which had weighed heavily on the people after the murder of Agamemnon.

As for your sins and remorse, your night fears and the crime Aegisthus committed - all are mine, I take them all upon me. Fear your Dead no longer; they are my Dead. And, see, your faithful flies have left you, and come to me. (p. 102)

He therefore bids them start life anew. "Try to reshape your lives. All must begin life anew" (p. 102). As Orestes strides out the Furies/Flies which had infested the people for fifteen years leave them. Raymond Williams points out that here,

It is not the revolt of the citizens, .........which liberates the city. Their freedom is brought to them by the desperate Outsider, who in acting for himself is acting for them. 

Thus the definitive action of one man asserting his existential freedom brings liberation to society also. This responsibility of the self to others is a constant dialectic in Sartre. In (Orestes,
his attempt to establish his identity and work out his freedom and personal salvation has also a concrete social relevance. Though he acts in his individual capacity he carries the rest of the world with him. There is a fusion here of the individual purpose and the general social action. It is a harnessing of individual energies against a concrete tyranny for a common end relevant to the whole of society. However, at the end his is a lonely destiny. He is not the kind of liberating hero who is acclaimed by the people whom he set free. At the end of the play he leaves Argos as an outcaste who hopes to achieve authentic human life "on the far side of despair" (p.97). The loneliness brought by freedom and authenticity is a favourite Sartrian theme.

It is on the lonely awareness of the individual and not on the individual's integration with his society that his attention centres. In Sartre's world rational awareness is in inverse ratio to social integration.98

Orestes is thus an existential Outsider whose authentic living estranges him from society which continually practises bad faith. The realisation of his freedom makes God irrelevant to him and alienates him forever from God and religion. When he chooses freedom for himself, he also wins salvation for society though he still remains a lonely figure.

Both in Camus and Sartre, the Outsiders try to transcend absurdity through humanism. But their humanism is different from the Christian humanism through which Hamlet was reintegrated at the end. Theirs is an existential humanism which concedes no pre-existing props or value-structures. They have to forge their own values as they evolve. The individual's freedom, responsibility, assertion of identity and his involvement in his society as its guide towards authentic living are some of the values they arrive at in the course of their own individual and authentic existence.

The play is clearly a product of the age with its existential concerns of freedom, responsibility and authentic individual existence in a world where pre-existing value systems have collapsed for most people. Besides probing the contemporary attitude to life, the play also reflects the political situation of its time. It is common
knowledge that when the play appeared in 1943 it seemed to be a political allegory of the situation in France during the German Occupation. Aegisthus stood for the German invader/usurper/governor and Clytemnestra for the French collaborator. The Flies were the Occupation Army and Orestes represented the French Resistance Movement. The mythological parallel was a veil to hoodwink the Nazi censor but which was transparent to the Frenchmen themselves. It was both a justification of the Resistance and a call to fellow-countrymen to rally together in resisting political tyranny supported by orthodox religion, by asserting their birthright of human freedom. The existential task which Orestes poses before his people is to start life anew out of the ruins of the past. What is enforced in the play has its corresponding equivalent in the modern world where entire nations like Germany, Japan and Israel have had to re-create themselves out of the ashes to which they had been reduced. While Camus turned to Roman history for his basic pattern of events, Sartre drew his inspiration from Greek mythology. In twentieth-century drama, particularly in the French Theatre, there has been a return to the Greek tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles, which are re-interpreted in the light of modern experience. Commenting on the use of Greek archetypes in French drama in the thirties and forties, E. Freeman suggests that this may be a response to the need of the French collective unconscious, and not merely a theatrical fad or caused by the political contingency of having to perform under the nose of the Nazi censor. As Raymond Williams put it,

A known and traditional action is used to express, a structure of feeling that has been cut free from contemporary detail, yet is still expressing contemporary experience.

In Sartre's Flies, the figure of an existential Outsider is introduced into the mythological framework. In Aeschylus, the structural movement is from pollution to cleansing. Orestes is the cleansing agent who has been ordered to the task by Apollo and is therefore under the protection of the Gods. In Sartre, the plague of flies visibly represents the pollution which takes the form of an irrational guilt-ridden fear that has infected all the inhabitants of the city. Orestes as an existential Outsider faces a moment of choice
and he freely chooses to commit a deed which would deliver the people of the city. The Greek myth which is oriented towards the will of the gods is replaced in Sartre by a man-centred world-view. Contrasting Sartre's play with the Oresteia and Samson Agonistes, William Earl Slaymaker concludes,

Thus while Aeschylus' Orestes and Milton's Samson share the responsibility for their acts with the gods or God who have given them heroic tasks to perform, Sartre's Orestes must bear the complete responsibility for his own decisions and acts. Richmond Lattimore sees in Aeschylus' play, an old barbaric order as represented by the Furies being superseded by Hellenic culture as represented by Athena and Apollo. In Sartre's play, the older order is the god-centred, theological view of life, which is replaced by a man-centred creed of existential humanism. Together with the gods, the older motive of revenge in the myth is also completely obliterated and replaced by the theme of freedom, characteristic of the existential Outsider. By a definitive deed of murder, Orestes asserts his own freedom and also liberates the city. The avenger of mythology becomes the existential liberator. Thus the existential Outsider's concern with freedom dictates a shift of focus in the play from revenge to freedom, from revenge dictated by the gods to freedom denied by the gods but asserted by man. The same act of murder is an act of obedience to the gods in Aeschylus and an act of defiance of the gods in Sartre. The sanction of murder in the myth permits a crime to be shown as being justified and liberating. Commenting on this advantage in the use of myth Raymond Williams says Sartre's Orestes can do what Ibsen's Brand cannot do; and the alteration of possibility is in terms of the fable. The single desperate act, which will liberate a whole people is converted from fantasy to a persuasive theatrical action. Thus the introduction of the existential Outsider makes the familiar dramatic action drawn from mythology into a parable of freedom. Sartre upholds a theatre of situation rather than of character, which, according to Margaret Chatterjee, is "in keeping with his rejection of the transcendental ego in his philosophy." Envisaging the development of the theatre of situation Sartre says No more characters; the heroes are freedoms caught in a trap like all of us. What are the issues? Each character will be nothing but the choice of an issue and will equal no more than the chosen issue.
Accordingly Orestes exclaims "I am my freedom" and the other characters exist in relation to the theme of freedom. Hence the interaction between Orestes and the other characters is also limited to questions of freedom. This makes Orestes appear to be distant and detached from the other characters. For example, his concern for the people of Argos is only that they should be shaken out of their bad faith, realise their freedom and be free. Apart from that he says that he might even wring their necks as if they were mere cackling fowls. His detachment as an existential Outsider is most evident in his attitude to Electra as he watches her slipping into an inauthentic existence, unable to bear the burden of freedom and the responsibility that comes with it. He dispassionately diagnoses her suffering and suggests the assertion of freedom as the remedy. "Her suffering comes from within and only she can rid herself of it. For she is free" (p. 89). Both Zeus and Aegisthus oppose Orestes purely on account of his freedom. Aegisthus says, "A free man in a city acts like a plague-spot. He will infect my whole kingdom and bring my work to nothing" (p. 74). Thus the identification of the existential Outsider with freedom affects both the representation of the other characters and the Outsider's attitude to them which is total detachment. It is his uncompromising stand on freedom that differentiates and finally alienates Orestes from the other characters. Those who understand the concept, Aegisthus and Zeus, are shown to be enemies of freedom. The people of Argos, who should value freedom and affirm it, can hardly comprehend it. Electra, though she understands it, finds it impossible to bear its heavy burden and deserts him. The tutor, from his sceptic and uncommitted stance finds no use for it. The lonely exit of Orestes at the end of the play is a visual image of his estrangement from all the other characters in the play. The one-versus-all structure of the dramatic conflict, which is a characteristic of most Outsider plays, is thus found in The Flies also.

The overhanging image casting its multi-winged shadow across the entire play is that of the Flies. They are the visible equivalents of the pollution which plagues the city and from which the Outsider will liberate the city by his decisive act. They are the externalisation of the guilt, fear and penitence (which in Sartre is nothing but an
eschewing of personal responsibility), which gnaw at the hearts of the citizens. While the image of the flies is used to represent the forces against which the Outsider wages a battle, the axe-image is applied to the Outsider. This is a recurrent image in Aeschylus and is appropriated by Sartre's hero in self-description.

I'll turn into an axe and hew those walls, asunder, I'll rip open the bellies of those solid houses and there will steam up from the gashes a stench of rotting food and incense. (p.60)

Though this is predominantly a destructive image, it is also accompanied by a faint sense of release in the very act of destruction, in keeping with the release from guilt which the Outsider's deed will bring to the city.

A significant image which conveys the Outsider's alienation is that of the flock from which Orestes is excluded. The sheep-fold and pasture are rich in Judaeo-Christian associations and recall biblical verses like "The Lord is my Shepherd" (Psalm 23) and "I am the good shepherd" (John 10/11). In the Outsider theme however, a flock immediately suggests the herd mentality which is repudiated by the Outsider. Zeus tells Orestes that the price of his freedom is being cast out forever from the fold.

Remember, Orestes, you once were of my flock, you fed in my pastures amongst my sheep. Your vaunted freedom isolates you from the fold; it means exile. (p.96)

It is as though his freedom is a disease which has turned him into a scabby sheep that must be kept apart. Zeus tries to win him back to the fold while the disease is still young, but Orestes refuses to retrace the steps which had brought him thus far away from the fold.

Comparing the portrayal of Orestes with that of Caligula, it is seen that he too is drawn as a messianic figure. Orestes, like the Messiah, came unto his own and his own received him not. He tells his people, "I had come to claim my kingdom and you would have none of me because I was not of your kind" (p.102). The notion of one man releasing mankind from bondage is a motif oft-repeated in Messianic literature and is applied here to Orestes with reference to the people of Argos. Though he has earned the right of kingship over them, he renounces it because he realizes that his kingdom is not of the ordinary world. He says, "I wish to be a king without a
kingdom" (p.102). However the one quality of a world-redeemer which is missing in Caligula and Orestes is a compassionate love for their people. While Caligula oppresses his people and denies them their freedom as individuals, Orestes, in spite of all his professions of love feels contempt for them. His final declaration, "My people, I love you, and it was for your sake that I killed," (p.102) must be juxtaposed with his earlier scorn, "I said I'd house your penitence, but I did not say what I'd do with all those cackling fowls; may be I'll wring their necks" (p.61). It is rather strange that atheistic existential dramatists should have included a messianic strain in their Outsider heroes. Their messianic aspiration to liberate men is not a parody but is presented in all seriousness. Perhaps, despite the modern disavowal of a historic messiah who claimed divinity, there is in every human heart an unconscious longing for a messiah who would redeem all mankind by his individual act. Perhaps this is part of the general process at work among men who have declared God to be dead. As Raymond Williams says,

The universe that is taken as given is in fact the shadow of a supernatural universe. Absence of purpose has weight because of the memory and denial of purpose. Atheism as so often, is merely a heresy, and not an authentic belief.109

As Outsiders, both Caligula and Orestes are estranged from nature though both have memories of a former harmony with nature. Caligula tells Scipio that nature could no longer satisfy his insatiable appetite suggesting that it had once satisfied him. Orestes rejects the idea of a return to nature because he believes now that "Nature abhors man" (p.96).

Cut away from all former bonds, both Caligula and Orestes shape their own career with the ruling motive of asserting their individual freedom. Both choose the course of active resistance to the existing order of things. Both have in them traces of the public-spirited reformer who wishes to enlighten and liberate the unthinking majority. But their objective does not lie in practical reform through definite corrective measures. The change they wish to bring about is not in the physical world but in the metaphysical condition of people. The mission of the existential hero is to awaken the sleeping majority to a state of awareness. Caligula wants to make them aware of the
absurdity of existence while Orestes wants them to be aware of their freedom and lead an authentic existence. Both of them strive to rise above and go beyond the slough of despond which confronts them. Caligula speaks of achieving a happiness beyond the frontiers of pain while Orestes believes that "human life begins on the far side of despair". They are representatives of a militant kind of existentialism which actively strives to transcend the absurdity and anguish of human existence by a dedication to freely chosen subjective values and/or by socially committed action. They are dynamic rebels. They are thus a far cry from the passive submission or clowning or defeat which marks some of the characters in more recent absurdist drama. Both Caligula and Orestes rebel in the name of freedom. Orestes fights against a concrete tyranny as represented by the dictatorship and exploitation of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra, aided and abetted by Zeus representing religion. Caligula opposes the tyranny of existence itself, where to be born is to be under a sentence of imprisonment and death. It is paradoxical that Caligula's revolt against the tyranny of existence, itself takes the form of tyranny. In Sartre, the existential Outsider is a hero who combats tyranny as embodied in a tyrant. In Camus' Outsider, the hero and the tyrant coalesce into one figure who mocks the universe as the real tyrant. The chief difference between Caligula and Orestes lies in the method they choose to put their principles into practice. Caligula chooses one which destroys the freedom of others in exercising his own, while Orestes tries to liberate others through the very act of establishing his freedom. At the end Caligula acknowledges that he had made a wrong choice but still he dies with a triumphant cry on his lips affirming life—"I am still alive". Orestes knows that he is not wanted by the people he sought to liberate but he strides out alone into an unknown and uncertain future, proud and with erect head. The exit of the existential Outsider is a triumphant assertion of his individuality.

The difference in the nature of the Outsiders accounts for the difference in the structure of the plays to a large extent. Caligula's attempt to override the absurdity of existence through the tyrannical absurd has its impact on the dramatic action which seems arbitrary and
irrational most of the time. There is no logical movement leading rationaly from one scene to another. The structure is episodic and all the episodes are rooted in the caprice of Caligula. The banquet scene in Act II, the Venus masquerade in Act III and the Poetry Competition in Act IV are manipulated and staged by Caligula as absurd spectacles in the drama of existence. By these he tries to impose his vision of human life, death, the gods and the absurd on others. In Sartre's play the socially directed purpose of the hero and his need to communicate and be intelligible to his people seems to affect the structure also. The action is cogent, coherent and logically ordered with a beginning, middle and end. Similarly the principle behind the portrayal of other characters also changes according to the nature of the Outsider. In Caligula where the focus is mainly on the individual consciousness of the Outsider, the other characters exist only in relation to Caligula. In The Flies where the Outsider is also socially conscious, the characters are organised, not around the individual figure but in their relationship to the principle of freedom enunciated by him both on his own and society's account.

Comparing Hamlet and Orestes, as far as external details are concerned, they are in similar circumstances - with a murdered father and a mother who has married the murderer. But in working out this situation there are marked differences which may be attributed to the different ages in which the Outsiders appear. Aeschylus' Orestes belongs to an older code of values which demands revenge whereas in Hamlet the revenge motive is subsumed by the Outsider's grappling with his alienation. In Sartre the revenge theme is completely deported from the play, its place being taken by Freedom which is the chief motivating force in the modern existential Orestes. The father's death which is a matter for revenge in Aeschylus, becomes to Hamlet a boundary situation which gives him an encounter with absurdity. In Sartre's play no importance is attached to it, but instead the killing of Aegisthus is invested with significance. The freedom of which Orestes had intimations earlier, is now made a reality and a burden which brings with it responsibility for his own deed. There is a progression in the attitudes towards deity. Aeschylus' Orestes is god-fearing and acts in strict obedience to the
will of the gods as conveyed through Apollo. Hamlet passes through a period of doubt and uncertainty and finally emerges as a reintegrated individual affirming the Providential view. Sartre's Orestes rejects the gods and deliberately defies their will by setting his freedom as a man against it. Hamlet is poised in doubt about the veracity of the ghost reflecting the Elizabethan uncertainty regarding ghosts, interpreting them variously as souls of the dead from purgatory, devils in disguise or figments of a melancholic imagination. Sartre's Orestes, the child of an age of scepticism which denies anything preternatural or supernatural, feels nothing but indignation at the suggestion that Agamemnon's ghost walks on earth.

Though Camus' emphasis on individual revolt and Sartre's advocacy of social commitment are usually stressed as constituting the major difference between their stands, in the presentation of the Outsiders in these two plays, the difference between Camus and Sartre is seen to be more one of degree than of kind. Though Caligula carries out an individual revolt against the absurd, he had first started with a social aim of awakening his people to awareness. At the end when he acknowledges his wrong choice, he negatively subscribes to the idea of the rebel's social relevance, which Camus later formulates in "I rebel - therefore we exist". Though Sartre's Orestes feels socially committed and works for the liberation of the total social reality, at the end of the play he leaves Argos alone, triumphant in his individual assertion of freedom and not much concerned about his social obligations any more. The later stand taken by Camus distinguishing revolt from revolution, favouring the first and condemning the latter, and the position of Sartre championing historical revolution and accepting its accompanying violence are not yet fully developed at this stage. Caligula's revolt takes a violent turn which is shown to be wrong, while Orestes is as yet only an embryonic revolutionary who is unable to muster up group-action and has to act alone.

The existential Outsider who appears in the drama of Camus and Sartre is indeed the quintessential Outsider, alienated at all the levels in a very intense manner. Since he believes that existence
comes before essence, he rejects all religious ideals of perfection and all pre-existent norms of conduct. Alienated thus from tradition and from society which safeguards tradition, he is isolated from the other individuals around him most of whom owe their allegiance to society and religion. He sees bad faith and self-deception being practised by others and feels estranged from them. The existential Outsider becomes aware of the presence of an alien and hostile universe around him. He is overwhelmed by a sense of the futility, irrationality and meaninglessness of human existence in the universe. Besides being thus alienated from the human predicament where the only certainty is Death, he also feels self-estranged and views himself with detachment. The alienation of the existential Outsider at the various levels is in general more acute than in the other Outsider categories studied in earlier chapters.

The existential Outsider in drama arises directly out of the intellectual background of the age. It is significant that the dramatists who created the existential Outsider are also philosophers. Many of the concepts of the twentieth-century existential philosophy are made incarnate in this Outsider. The contemporary political situation is also reflected in these plays, Certain definite attitudes in the political scene of the day - like Nazi totalitarianism and the French Resistance movement - were identified in these Outsiders by the audience revealing the close relationship between the Outsider in drama and the age in which he appeared.

The dictum 'existence comes before essence,' when applied to the theatre, leads to a drama of situation rather than character. This results in an episodic structure as in Caligula. The causal sequence becomes subterranean and the play approaches a mythical structure. Characterisation and motivation are no longer of primary importance. The protagonist becomes the most complete embodiment of the Outsider realised at various levels of alienation. The other characters in the plays are not individuals but different complementary responses to and attitudes towards the Outsider and the themes or concepts he stands for. They are ranged around the Outsider as foils to set off his alienation.
It is remarkable that in Shakespeare's Hamlet there is an anticipation of the existential view of life. Hamlet's desolate world vision, the factors that led to it and the means adopted by him to come to terms with it are all probed with an astounding breadth of vision. His alienation from the corrupt court society, his disgust with the world and horror at its irrationality, his self-estrangement and self-loathing arising from the gulf between his self-image and the real self make him a quintessential Outsider more intensely alienated at all the levels than any other Outsider in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. In the Elizabethan power-seeking Outsider the main focus is on theological alienation while in the Jacobean Malcontent Outsider the emphasis is on social alienation. In Hamlet, as in the existential Outsider, the spotlight is on existential alienation from the human predicament and the universe. Though Hamlet is a forerunner of the existential Outsider in this respect, his final re-integration after the experience of fragmentation reconciles him to the Christian-humanist universe of the Renaissance. It is this which differentiates Hamlet from the existential Outsider of twentieth-century drama in whom Hamlet would otherwise find a kindred spirit.

Existential alienation continues to be a dominant strain in the plays of the second half of the twentieth century also. The absurd protagonist in the drama of Ionesco, Beckett and Pinter also experiences acute existential alienation but his response is different from that of the existential Outsider. This will be studied in the next chapter.