CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE
Existentialism is inextricably bound with the names of Jean Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus and Gabriel Marcel. They constitute the principal figures in the complex philosophico-literary movement which later came to be known as existentialism. To work out a comprehensive and systematic genesis of the basic themes and ideas of existentialism, we have to include the names of Martin Heidegger, Carl Jaspers, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Søren Kierkegaard.

Existentialism has been described as an anti-religious movement which seems to have captured the intellectual mood of the times which gave birth to it. Jean Paul Sartre was a dominating figure not only of this movement but also of the European tradition. He symbolised synthesis of philosophical and literary thoughts and styles which resulted into a comprehensive philosophy of literature.

In fact, the lines which divide literature from philosophy in the traditional sense of the words collapse totally in the writings of Jean Paul Sartre. The realms of philosophy and literature intermingle with each other in total harmony and unison. In fact
each realm derives its sustenance and meaning from the other. The literary writings of Sartre would not be so unique if they did not spring from the philosophical roots which Sartre took years to imbibe from the totality of his thinking and experience. Similarly, his philosophical ideas would not find a complete and singularly meaningful manifestation if they were not expressed through the literary forms of his plays, novels and stories.

Sartre, as such, is indeed a philosopher in the great tradition of the French moralists, because for him as for Voltaire, works of imaginative literature i.e., plays, novels, stories are as much a medium for the exposition of philosophical ideas as is the conventional essay or treatise. In fact Sartre goes a step further as, for him, the social and the political writings incorporating his intimate experiences and perceptions are an integral part of his philosophico-literary works.

In Sartre the philosopher, the literary artist, and the man of total experiences of life find a complete cohesion and unity. He explicates the notion of consciousness in relation to being and the other
as well as art, literature, history, and society. His *La Nausée* contains a glimpse of his deeply individualistic outlook. In fact it symbolises the transformation of his deep aesthetic sense into a structural pattern of a novel par excellence. However, the same individualistic approach slowly and gradually, yet systematically transforms into a new socio-political theory in his *Critique of Dialectical Reason*.

One often wonders as to what constituted the basis of this movement of thought. Is it the transcendence of the bleak and the disenchanted spirit of the age, which finds expression in the philosophy, novels and plays of Sartre, the metaphysics of Heidegger and the novels of Camus? The question derives its relevance further from the philosophical question raised by Sartre himself whether the greatness of work of literature can be evaluated in terms of its relation to the times and the age from which it emerges.

These existentialist philosophers partly reflect a pervasive post-war intellectual mood in Europe - an experience that shattered the traditional social
and moral values that had been cherished for so long. It was an experience of absurdity and despair, of a feeling of loss of faith, and a sense of desolation. It awakened an interest in human freedom. A sense of responsibility and awareness of existence, not chosen by man, gripped the minds of these philosophers. They found themselves confronted with such questions as:

What is the meaning of life? What is the place of man in the total scheme of this ontological existence? What makes life worth living?

Albert Camus' most famous essay 'The Myth of Sisyphus' had imbibed and given expression to such questions. It is implied in this work that the task undertaken by Sisyphus, that of rolling the stones to the top of a mountain and then on reaching the top letting them fall down, was endless and hence, absurd and pointless. Camus suggests here that the human situation is like that, i.e., pointless and absurd as we cannot justify it either by reference to religion or to humanism.

Nothing in the world can improve the lot of mankind or make a man a happy or a self-fulfilled individual. If this be so, on what grounds can we
justify perpetuation and continuation of life? Why
not put an end to all this and opt out once and for
all? It is argued by Camus that it is in this recogni-
tion and willed acceptance of his absurd fate, that
man learns to transcend his faith and destiny.

He says in this context about Sisyphus - the
absurd hero:

I leave Sisyphus at the foot of the mountain!
One always finds one's burden again. But
Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that
negates the gods and raises rocks. He too
concludes that all is well. This universe
henceforth without a master seems to him
neither sterile nor futile. Each atom of
that stone, each mineral flake of that
night-filled mountain, in itself forms a
world. The struggle itself toward the heights
is enough to fill a man's heart. One must
imagine Sisyphus happy.1 (Italics mine)

Going back still deeper into the origins of
existentialism in the nineteenth century we find Soren
Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche crystallizing the
concepts of existentialism. Therefore it can be said
that existentialism began long before the advent of
Sartre and Camus. The first existentiaлистs were
Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Jaspers. Then came the
Christian existentialism of Gabriel Marcel and the
aesthetic existentialism of Sartre. It was like any
other philosophy or ideology shaped and influenced by its age and period.

The chief concern of Søren Kierkegaard was to rescue Christianity from institutionalism, while for Friedrich Nietzsche it was the advent of a superman. Kierkegaard is best seen as a religious prophet who tried to awaken the men of his age to a realisation of what it is to be a real and authentic Christian. He advocated that being a Christian does not necessarily imply believing in a set of doctrines or performing certain rites; rather it meant a certain basic attitude to life or 'a life style'. He called Christianity "an existential communication". In his opinion one imbibes Christianity by immersing oneself deeper and deeper in existence. As such, being paradoxical Christianity flouts reason. Nevertheless, the unbeliever can be shown the essence of Christianity in terms of his own experience.

He speaks of the aesthetic and the ethical ways of life which are transcended by the religious way. The aesthetic life is the life of personal inclination pursuing one's own interests and ideals - making one's life a work of art. The ethical way of life, on the
other hand, is actively concerned with the good of others and is intimately connected with universal moral principles. This kind of life is exemplified by Socrates, for he was willing to sacrifice his own destiny for the good of others and for the sake of supreme moral principles having a unique universality of their own.

According to Kierkegaard, the religious way of life symbolises the transcendence of both the aesthetic and the ethical. In so far as it implies going beyond what is required by a principle, it signifies willingness to do more than what an obligation demands. Kierkegaard had always deemed Abraham of the old Testament as the great symbol of the religious mode of existence.

The question arises here whether it was this religious dimension of Kierkegaard's thought or his insistence upon the significance of the individual and his lived experience which shaped the development and direction of existentialist thought. Kierkegaard says here:

The ethical thesis that every man has a calling is the expression for the fact that
there is a rational order of things in
which every man, if he will, fills his
place in such a way that he expresses at
once the universal human and the individual.\textsuperscript{2}

It is significant to note what Sartre has to say about
Kierkegaard in this respect:

\textit{Kierkegaard is alive in his death in as
much as he affirms the irreducible singu-
larlity of every man to the history which
nevertheless conditions him rigorously.}\textsuperscript{3}

The existentialists of the later times share with
Kierkegaard his distrust of abstract speculative thought
which objectifies what is essentially subjective and
personal and which generalizes what is essentially unique
in the particular. He is in revolt against the kind of
pure speculation which leads us to think about things and
to stand apart from reality instead of immersing ourselves
in it and actually living it.

Kierkegaard’s defence of Christianity is obvious
from the following:

\textit{Here Christianity begins with the doctrine
of sin, and therefore with the individual.
For it is Christianity to be sure which has
taught this about the God-Man, about the
likeness between God and man, but Christianity
is a great hater of wanton and impertinent
forwardness. By the help of the doctrine of
sin and of the individual sinner God and Christ
have been secured once for all.}\textsuperscript{4}

So total was the influence of Kierkegaard on Camus,
Sartre and Heidegger that each one of them attributed
significance to what Kierkegaard said about the religious way of life. What was said in connection with the religious kind of life was accepted by everybody as true of life in general. In other words, Sartre, Camus and Heidegger secularised the Kierkegaardian religious view of man. Some people attribute a paradoxical character to this influence of Kierkegaard on the subsequent philosophers. It seems that these people took over the philosophical methodology from Kierkegaard and did not much bother about the content for which Kierkegaard was using his method.

The main feature of the methodology adopted by Kierkegaard was his insistence that the important questions facing man are questions which can be discovered in the concrete particular human existence of the individual. In fact it is this insistence on these kinds of questions which bring philosophy very close to imaginative literature in the conceptual framework of Kierkegaard's thought.

The issues of concrete existence force themselves to get objectified into a particular kind of philosophical undertaking on one hand and to the realm of
literary fantasy on the other. The philosophy and literature therefore become expressions of a deep concern about the fundamental being of man, the central dynamics of being human and the diversified structures of strains and stresses to which human existence is subjected.

Consequently, the chief and the foremost concern in Kierkegaard's philosophy ultimately is the emphasis upon the individual. Apparently there does not seem to be adequate discussion in Kierkegaard's writing of how a man can enter into any social relationships. Yet it seems paradoxical that being exposed to philosophies like that of Hegel and Marx, Kierkegaard preferred to pose a radical and extreme individualism in which the individual is considered in isolation from history and from the norm of social relationships within which he otherwise finds himself embedded.

Marx, on the other hand, situated the individual in the context of history and society. Yet both expressed disillusionment with the society which confronted them. Each described society as it was constructed and organized as the potent source of estrangement and alienation. Their philosophies and
literary writings emerged in reaction to social conditions and also in response to the demands which society made on them. It was coming to an enlightened awareness of the dictates of individual responsibility. Kierkegaard had accused Hegel for his demolishing of the individual. The perception that Kierkegaard had of Hegel's philosophy, visualized a total loss of individual self in his philosophy. Contrary to this view, philosophers such as Marcel and Jaspers thought that they cannot realize their individuality in the full sense of the term except through the social relationships.

In contradistinction to earlier philosophical concern with epistemological questions like the validity of knowing, the existentialist philosophers find themselves enormously concerned about subjectivity, with how you live. This was a search on their part for a philosophy of life. In brief it symbolizes the entire Kierkegaardian question.

Kierkegaard seeks to intensify consciousness, arouse the passions and commit the individual to a course of action which will engage his total self. As Kierkegaard puts it, a value is one for which an individual is prepared to live and for which if necessary he is
willing to die. Speaking about truth and knowledge

Kierkegaard says:

All essential knowledge relates to existence
or only such knowledge as has an essential
relationship to existence is essential
knowledge. All knowledge which does not
relate itself to existence, in the reflection
of invasiveness, is, essentially accidental
knowledge. (Italics mine)

and again,

Subjective reflection turns its attention
inwardly to the subject and desires in
this intensification of invasiveness to
realize truth.5 (Italics mine)

The existentialist values have a common source,
a common function and common identifying characteristics.
Their common source is an acute awareness of the tragedy
inherent in human condition. Their common function is
to liberate us from the fears and the frustrations of
everyday life. And their common identifying charac-
teristic is intensity. Therefore, the entire existen-
tialist thought accepts a deliberate espousal of
anguish and suffering. It is in this context that
Sartre's emphasis upon freedom of choice and a certain
type of individual dignity becomes significant and
relevant. The function of existentialist literature
is to come to grips with this anguish and suffering as
a necessary condition of human experience and to liberate
men from these degenerate and ugly forms of anguish.
Kierkegaard is the apostle of the doctrine that subjectivity is truth. He says,

> When subjectivity, inwardness, is the truth, the truth becomes objectively a paradox; and the fact that the truth is objectively a paradox shows in its turn that subjectivity is the truth.⁶ (Italics mine)

This conception of human condition is, therefore, not specifically Sartrean but belongs to a continuing thread and stream of existentialist style of thinking - originating from Kierkegaard. He conceives this predicament of the existing individual as arising from his being the synthesis of the temporal and the eternal.⁷ For Kierkegaard, as for Sartre, the temporal and the eternal are contradictory categories. And a being which is simultaneously both is in a predicament.

Man cannot but desire the completion of being which God alone possesses but at the same time he cannot but cling passionately to the pleasures and pains of finite existence. This paradox in man's nature is at the very centre of Kierkegaard's philosophy. For a perfect and immutable being it is impossible to create and still more so to get incarnated in flesh, suffer and die.

In his *Philosophical Fragments*, Kierkegaard says:

> All coming into existence takes place with
freedom, not by necessity. Nothing comes into existence by virtue of a logical ground, but only by a cause. 8 (Italics mine)

According to Sartre, man is seeking to realise God and this seeking constitutes Universal structure of his being and a necessary motive of his behaviour. Yet he can defy God and the values which haunt him. Herein consists his salvation. The explicit consciousness of the human situation and of man's total freedom is revealed in anguish. It gives to the individual a new perspective in terms of which fundamental structure of his being may be completely altered through a radical conversion.

Kierkegaard's discussion of despair makes a direct reference to objectivism and subjectivism. The despair of the objectivist is called despair of necessity by him. He writes,

the determinist and/or the fatalist is in despair and in despair he has lost himself. The self of the determinist cannot breathe, for it is impossible to breathe the necessity alone...9

Kierkegaard also speaks of dread, fear and sickness into death.

With the help of faith, dread trains the individual to find repose in providence. So also it is with regard to guilt, which is the second thing dread discovers. 10 (Italics mine)
In the end Kierkegaard lapses into the realm of the beyond - the realm of religious consciousness which transcends the aesthetic and the ethical. He says with regard to the concept of faith,

Faith therefore is not an aesthetic emotion but something far higher, precisely because it has resignation as its presupposition; it is not an immediate instinct of the heart, but is the paradox of life and existence.11 (Italics mine)

Another important and dominating influence is Nietzsche whose beliefs were diametrically opposed to those of Kierkegaard. Nietzsche carried out an unrelenting crusade against Christianity which he described as a form of decadence. He was overwhelmingly in favour of giving impetus to the life-affirming spirit after the image of the Greek God 'Dionysius'. He was out to reject Christ and Christianity and alongside it the very notion of God. He was a great exponent of the theory that man can realize his full essence if he creates his own moral values for himself. He advocated full realization of responsibility.12

The influence of Nietzsche seems obvious when we find the concept of free will unfolding itself in the philosophy of Sartre. For Sartre very seriously believed that man must accept himself and his freedom
with utmost sanctity. Both Nietzsche and Sartre seemed to believe that religion constitutes one of the alienating influences in man's life separating man from his true self and evading the full consequences of his freedom. Sartre also seems to suggest that if God exists, then man cannot be free and if man is free, then God cannot exist.

Sartre, Camus and Heidegger implicitly adopt Nietzsche's ideal of the "Superman" - the man who symbolized the burden of his freedom in Dionysian joy and affirmation. In his book The Rebel, Camus says that "one must learn to live and to die and in order to be a man to refuse to be a God."

The influence of Nietzsche is also explicitly visible in Sartre's essay Existentialism and Humanism, wherein he discusses Heidegger's concept of abandonment. He says:

when we speak of abandonment, the favourite word of Heidegger - we only mean to say that God does not exist, and that it is necessary to draw the consequences of his absence right to the end.\(^{13}\) (Italics mine)

This influence of Nietzsche also leads to the Sartrean formulation of existence preceding essence, i.e., one will never be able to explain one's action
by reference to a given and specific human nature which further implies that man is free and man himself is freedom.

The implications of Nietzsche's influence on Sartre's thought in so far as the realm of values is concerned is that there are no a priori values which can legitimize our behaviour. Hence we have no luminous realm of values nor any means of justification for our actions. Sartre says in this context:

We are left alone, without excuse that is what I mean when I say that man is condemned to be free. Condemned, because he did not create himself, yet is nevertheless at liberty, and from the moment that he is thrown into this world he is responsible for everything he does.14 (Italics mine)

Nietzsche was fond of writing aphorisms which tried to probe the difficult terrain of complex relationships between fantasies and resentments, desires and impulses of human nature which have a direct impact on human actions. He writes about a philosopher:

A philosopher: a man who constantly experiences, sees, hears, suspects, hopes, dreams extraordinary things; who is struck by his own thoughts as if from without, as if from above and below, as by his kind of events and thunder claps; who is himself perhaps a storm and pregnant with new lightnings.15 (Italics in original)
Nietzsche was also an esoteric irrationalist. As such, he initiated the movement against the rationalism of Kant and the liberalist thought of John Stuart Mill. He considered reason to be subordinate to will in human life. He shows how men acts out of desire first and thinks afterwards; he explains how we rationalize our conduct.

It is at this juncture that the question of morality and rationalization arises. In human culture, civilization and philosophy, Nietzsche found lot of ambivalence and wrote:

You want to live 'according to nature'? You noble stoics, what fraudulent words! Think of a being such as nature is, prodigal beyond measure, indifferent beyond measure, without aims or intentions, without mercy or justice, at once fruitful and barren and uncertain; think of indifference itself as a power - how could you live according to such indifference? To live - is that not precisely wanting to be another than this nature?16 (Italics in original)

Nietzsche attacked the question of morals in a radical way so as to accommodate the abandonment of God, along with the implication that there are no absolute values. He wrote in this context:

The will to truth...that celebrated veracity of which all philosophers have hitherto spoken
with reverence, what questions this will
to truth has already set before us! What
strange, wicked, questiable questions!
It is already a long story - yet does it
not seem as if it has only just begun?17

Nietzsche speaks eloquently of how dependent we
are on values, at the same time pointing out how we are
also crippled by values. Consequently, he pleads for
seeing through fantasies, ideals and the various systems
of thought, which he claims, are stultifying to the
individual in a truly existentialist sense. This does
not mean that Nietzsche was not aware of the danger of
his attack on values because at the end of this concept-
ual possibility we shall be left with "nothing".

Nietzsche's undermining of values in the context
of his theoretical formulation of the non-existence of
God leads him to explanations of values through choices
- an influence which very directly found a central place
in the literary and the philosophical writings of Sartre.
Sartre believes that it is only through authentic choice
that people are able to escape from 'mauvaise foi' or
bad faith.

The third stream of the existentialist thought seems
to consist in the contribution of Husserl. His aim was
to find a method which would enable philosophy to become
a body of rigorous, necessarily certain, universal, self-evident and self-justifying truths. This method he called phenomenology, which consisted of a philosopher putting himself in a position from where he could intuit and describe things as they appear to him directly or immediately before he began reflecting or interpreting or placing his constructions on what he experiences.

The description of this primordial contact with the world and unreflective and spontaneous experience upon which all our other relationships with the world are constructed is, for Husserl, the chief task of philosophy. This process is supremely difficult for the obvious reason that we have to purge our minds of all kinds of preconceived ideas and expectations which prevent us from seeing things as they really are.

A description of primordial experiences can lead to the conclusion that it is some kind of a subjectivist return to experience. For how can it be ensured that the objective world is in fact how we describe it? This objection has been met by Husserl through his key notion of 'intentionality'. He says in this context
that all our conscious acts are intentional, that is to say, they are not just psychological processes which take place within us in some inner, private, subjective world. All these acts are directed outwards to the objective world. Therefore, to think is not a psychological process occurring within the privacy of the psyche; it is rather to be conscious of some object outside the psyche. Similarly, our conscious acts are also object-directed or 'intentional'. These acts in so fact involve us in the world outside ourselves.

These two fundamental ideas of Husserl have been taken over by the subsequent existential philosophers and assimilated into their conceptual schemes. The later existentialists reject Husserl's ideal of philosophy as a body of necessarily true, self-evident, and self-justifying truths. But they retain his idea that the method of philosophy must be that of intuitive understanding and the description of basic primordial experiences on which everything else is constructed. They also retain his idea of 'intentionality' which undercuts classical separation of the inner private subjective world of consciousness from the outer objective world of things and facts.
The true aim of phenomenological epoché, i.e., of putting the world in brackets is seen as the unravelling of the constitution of objects. In attempting to rid ourselves of all pre-conceptions and in particular preconceptions about reality of objects in our world, we uncover the way in which these objects have been constructed by us. This relates itself to the meaning of our immediate experiences.¹⁸

Husserl further explains how construction of the external world is made by the constituting intellect. According to him, it is the transcendent ego which is the source of the meaning which we ascribe to things. This raises another question whether Husserl is or is not an idealist and whether he does or does not intend us to believe that objects exist in the world independently of any observer.

Husserl was very deeply involved in exploring the way in which consciousness constitutes its own world. He brings in the question of time in this context. He was trying to examine Brentano's account of our perception of a long sustained musical note. That we perceive the sound at any given moment implies its
past and its future and a certain duration. Therefore, it cannot be explained away as a series of momentary bursts of sound. This perception of time produced by transcendent ego carries with it the notion of duration and objectivity. In his opinion, if one understood the genesis of the concept of time, one would understand everything.

The second problem that engaged his mind was the problem of other people, how we know that they exist and what the relationship is between the transcendent ego and other persons in the world. In a way this problem is an aspect of the general enquiry into the constitution of objects in our world. This problem of the other people or intra-subjectivity is discussed in the last of The Cartesian Meditations which was published posthumously in 1950. This particular aspect of Husserl's philosophy seems to have exerted the profoundest effect on the historical genesis of existentialist thought and on the development of Sartrean literary and philosophical position in particular.

Husserl shows great reverence to Leibniz's conception of persons who maintained that human persons
have their own perception of this world in which objects occur as they do in our own world. Husserl’s theory of our perception of the world is a complete break with the Cartesian theory and also with the British empiricists. Descartes had insisted on clear and distinct ideas as the foundation of philosophy. But this led to some difficulties. Firstly, ideas which seem to be clear and distinct at best are mathematical ideas. Secondly, he regarded ideas as the contents of the mind and as having certain properties of their own. The question raised in this context was how were these ideas related to anything in the world outside the mind. Descartes failed to solve this problem and therefore Husserl’s philosophy had come like a lightening flash like that of Merleau Ponty’s perception of the phenomenal world. 20

Another extremely important influence on Sartre is that of Heidegger. In fact some scholars treat Heidegger as the first true existentialist. He argues that we need to cultivate a new way of thinking, a kind of meditative, passive, prayerful stance before being, so that reality reveals or discloses itself to
us in all of its unpredictable variety and richness. Philosophy, according to Heidegger, is not a matter of explaining or proving or justifying; it is rather a matter of evocation, of bringing to light, of making explicit what was implicit.

The concerted effort of all these existentialist philosophers is to emphasise the fact that existentialism is a new way of doing philosophy. Further, that it sees the whole object of philosophy to be the individual human existent, Heidegger calls this individual human existent Dasein and Sartre calls it être-pour-soi, that is man in the world. This concept of Dasein indicates the 'man-centredness' of existentialist thought in general and of Sartre in particular. Both philosophy and literature make it a central point to discuss man in the world.

The world is seen as encompassing man. Literature and philosophy both describe and enquire into the relationships of man with the world and of man with one another. This new orientation defines philosophy as a discipline which studies man as a whole and man as situated in the world. The ultimate value of philosophising lies in the attempt to answer such questions as
Why are we in this world? What is our relationship to people who negate our being?

In the words of Sartre the existentialist engagement with such questions is aimed at directing, guiding men towards the idea of freedom. Man is conscious of this freedom but he disguises it under false names. In fact to speak about what freedom consists of is to define the very nature of man.

The basic relationship between human beings and the world is described by Heidegger as that of concern (Sorge). If we can analyse what is meant by this concern we shall have gone a good way towards understanding Heidegger's early thought. According to Heidegger, concern is the significance which being in the world has for human beings. It is essentially connected with temporality, and in fact the time structure of human life which is the same as the concern which human beings feel about the world. That is to say that if a human being had no concept of time, he would not be concerned or involved in the world in a specifically human way. The awareness of the passage of time by human beings explicates the fact that their connection with the world is through concern. Concern
with the world consists in the thought that there is something to be done which entails the thought of a future time. Concern with the world and freedom to do things in the world are one and the same. Only human beings can be creative of their essence.\textsuperscript{25}

However, the question that arises here is how concern was discovered to be the essential connection between man and the world. This relates us to the question of method of its discovery - the question which Heidegger seems to have tackled in his \textit{Being and Time}, where he calls this philosophical method - hermeneutic phenomenology. The term phenomenology, however, means the revealing of the truth about the phenomena in the world. He writes in this context "the term phenomenology means primarily the concept of method".\textsuperscript{26} The phenomena which has to be revealed is, of course, \textit{Being}.

Heidegger, therefore, is more and more concerned with different ways of grasping \textit{being}. The nature of \textit{being} of man is central as a means of elucidating the nature of all \textit{being}. He has rejected the concept of transcendental ego which was conceived as the
undifferentiated vehicle of all concepts.

Heidegger also makes mention in his Being and
Time of the concepts of existence, choice, authenticity, fear, anxiety, self-discovery and nothingness. He also speaks of history in relation to temporality of what is revealed by human beings. He relates the awareness of one's destiny with understanding the past.27

An important aspect of the phenomenology of this part of Being and Time is the distinction which Heidegger draws between two related but different attitudes, that is between fear and anxiety. We experience fear as we recognize some specific threat, constituted for us by our situation, a threat to our life itself. We experience anxiety, on the other hand, in the face of nothing in particular in our situation. We are driven by fear, and this is its sense or purpose, to save ourselves; we are driven by anxiety to drown ourselves in the trivial, the social, and in the ingredients of inauthentic existence.28

Authenticity consists in a realisation of one's
position in the world, one's isolation, and one's inevitable orientation towards one's own death. But the present, for the authentic human being, is a synthesis of past and future, since he knows what he was, and what he resolves to be, and it is this upon which he has concentrated. This self-knowledge is referred to by Heidegger as 'conscience'. We are said to be drawn by conscience towards our final solitary goal, which is death.

Sartre was older than Merleau-Ponty, however it seems the two philosophers did interact with each other because Merleau Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* does contain some specific criticisms of Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*.

Merleau-Ponty saw himself as a direct descendent of Husserl. His first book *The Structure of Behaviour* was intended to form the foundation of philosophy. The most fundamental concept that he examines here is the concept of perception itself. Through the analysis of this concept we can understand the relation between consciousness and the world. Speaking about the significance and the primacy of perception Merleau-Ponty
said in a lecture:

By these words the "primacy of perception" we mean that the experience of perception is our presence at the moment when things, truths, values are constituted for us, that perception is a nascent logos, that it teaches us outside all cognition, the true conditions of objectivity itself, that it summons us to the tasks of knowledge and action" (Italics mine).

We can see the commitment, the involvement, and the practicality of Existentialism in these words. Then, there is the concept of transcending — the given (dépassement). Man is able to project his intentions and interpretations on what is physically before him. He is able to construct his own world. But his perception of this world is ambiguous because what one perceives is not identical with nor limited to what is there.

Merleau-Ponty argues that each philosopher must find his own phenomenology for himself. He says the most important feature of phenomenology is its rejection of science which is connected by him with the primacy of perception.

Another significant theme discussed by Merleau-Ponty is the sense of Cogito. The meaning of Cogito is that it is a kind of vestigial "residual" self-consciousness which may be compared to what Sartre refers to as
pre-reflective cogito which accompanies all actions and thoughts and all understanding of the significance of the world. This consciousness is inseparable from the body and is grounded like all knowledge in perception. This vestigial consciousness of myself, Merleau-Ponty identifies with my existence. He thinks that it is primordial and is there even before language.

Lastly, Merleau-Ponty introduces the concept of freedom. At this point he also introduces the idea of other people and of social philosophy. Freedom, to him, is the possibility of actions which in itself presupposes time. He rejects the view that there could be a causal connection between my action and the world. For one thing to cause another they must be thought of as two separate things or events. He seems to think that my action cannot be caused by the physical world since the relation between me and the world is too close. The world and I are one. Hence, if my actions are not caused by the world they are free.

To sum up, Merleau-Ponty said that man is totally free but he is also a part of the physical and the social environment. However, the two positions are
apparently incompatible. He says in this context:

Man is not just possibility of action. If he were then he might really be said to choose himself, but in fact he is deeply embedded in the real world and he has commitments, presuppositions, attitudes and habits from which he cannot disengage himself at will. So what does this freedom amount to? 34 (Italics mine)

Merleau-Ponty’s answer seems to suggest that freedom is ambiguity. Therefore, consciousness, temporality, sociality and freedom all come in some manner as entailments from the connection between a man who is a part of the world and the world of which he is a part.

Gabriel Marcel is an existentialist who is more akin to Sartre in so far as the question of relationship between philosophy and literature is concerned. Gabriel Marcel’s plays deal with philosophical themes and to that extent these are 'engaged' or 'committed'. Marcel insists that a play must be allowed to speak in its own dramatic terms, and that any kind of dogmatism or dialecticism is completely out of place. For Marcel, drama dictates to philosophy and not vice-versa, in that drama evokes in a spontaneous, pre-reflexive way, the great themes of human existence
and so provides material for the philosophers' reflections.

The theatre, according to Marcel is the natural matrix of metaphysics. In his play, Le Monde Cassé (Broken World) we are presented with a character, Christiane, who is what Marcel calls "a soul in exile". She loved a young man who had subsequently entered a monastery. She later marries a self-centred man without any real love for him and spends most of her time in a meaningless and empty social life. She says her life is 'broken' like a watch without a spring. She has the feeling of living in a broken world. In addition to this, she learns about the death of the young man whom she had first loved. She discovered that he had known of her love for him and regarded it as "a mysterious responsibility," and decided to offer it to God as a sacrifice. Christiane is enormously moved by this sacrificial act and she understands for the first time that inter-personal communion is possible. As Marcel puts it "she enters into a "communion of souls."^{35}

Marcel takes up precisely these kinds of human experiences of love, disenchantment and communion as
themes for philosophical reflection and for writing of plays. He, like Sartre, stresses the importance of human body in the analysis of human individual. In so far as an individual lives by flesh, his life centres in "possessions". The body with all its perfections and imperfections, its cravings and fears acquires the other possessions which dominate his unceasing dreams and disappointments. Beyond the lure of positions, there is the striving for a 'being' rather than for mere 'having'. This can be realised according to him only in the personal existence which constitutes love. This may be looked at as a viable alternative to Sartre's bleak theory of the continuous conflict.

Another point which may be mentioned in the case of Marcel is that he emphasises the primary significance of God as the center of spiritual life. Faith, according to him, is the recognition of God's existence, love of his perfection. It is faith that gives meaning and possibility to love, for only faith in God makes 'love of thou' possible. He calls God the first metaphysical diary and all love depends upon Him. The second diary, as Marcel puts it, is the existential
project 'l'engagement which can be meaningful only through God. Gabriel Marcel also emphasised a particular form of 'anguish' and the question of 'space-time' relationship. Human existence is essentially an affair in time and space and is, therefore, radically different from the timeless and immutable being of the in-it-self.

The notion of fidelity also seems to be central in Gabriel Marcel's system of thought because he defines man as the being who makes promises. For him as for Jaspers, a person can have fidelity only in personal relationships between two concrete beings. There can be no personal relationship between an individual human being and abstract humanity. He who loves mankind does not love at all. One who sacrifices himself in the name of humanity is not acting out of universal love. He is merely betraying his own incapacity for personal love.

Marcel as also Dostoyevsky, contrary to the existentialist philosophers, who considered compassion to be an insult to human dignity, feel that a world with compassion is better than a world with suffering.
There is a very interesting engagement of existentialist philosophers with regard to the concept of authenticity. It seems clear that authentic human relationships must be based upon mutual respect for one another’s freedom. Sartre, however, insists upon the inevitability of conflict in personal relations. He criticises Heidegger for not having fully realised the inevitability of this conflict. Gabriel Marcel, on the other hand, criticises Sartre for having too much insisted upon its inevitability.

Sartre and Camus, however, are not concerned with literature merely as a means of phenomenological description of the human condition. For them literature and indeed all art must be "engaged" or "committed". They seem to subscribe to Marxian position namely "Philosophers have only interpreted the world, the point, however, is to change it."

For both, the novelist or the dramatist must inevitably take up a political stance and must feel concerned to move and change men both in their personal and social attitudes. Sartre says in this context:

Philosophy is concerned with man - who is at once an agent and an actor, who produces and plays his drama while he lives the contradictions of his situation, until either his
individuality is shattered or his conflicts are resolved. (Italics in original)

Sartre continues further:

a play (be it epic, such as Brecht's or dramatic) is the most appropriate vehicle today for showing men in action, i.e. men. It is with this man that philosophy from its own point of view, should be concerned. That is why the theatre is philosophical and philosophy dramatic.37 (Italics mine)

Sartre rejects the theory of art being pursued for the sake of art alone and correspondingly the same position holds good even for literature. Rejecting the idea of pure literature, Sartre says:

If literature is not everything, it is worth nothing. This is what I mean by commitment. It wilts if it is reduced to innocence, or to song. If a written sentence does not reverberate at every level of man and society, then it makes no sense. What is the literature of an epoch but the epoch appropriated by its literature?38 (Italics mine)

'The engaged' and 'committed' literature, for Sartre, means literature in the service of human freedom and socialism. Being very subtle and sensitive, an artist and a writer does not allow his novels and plays to be converted into mere forms of propaganda but rather uses subtle concepts with deep philosophical meanings having a literary lucidity par excellence.
Camus's position on engaged literature is very similar to that of Sartre. In fact, it is perhaps a little more subtle. Camus conceives the writer and the artist as having certain inescapable responsibilities. First, he has the responsibility to act as a witness and a voice to those who cannot speak. As he says in his 'Myth of Sisyphus':

The miner who is exploited or shot down, the slaves in the camps, those in the colonies, the legions of persecuted throughout the world - they need all those who can speak to communicate their silence and to keep in touch with them.39 (Italics mine)

Further, Camus says the artist has an obligation to preserve the purity of language as an instrument of public communication. For Camus art is of its very nature communal and therefore, truth unites men and lies divide them. Finally, for Camus, art or literature is intrinsically concerned with human liberation and in this context he says:

There is not a single true work of art that has not in the end added the inner freedom of each person who has known and loved it... Tyrants know there is in the work of art an emancipatory force.40 (Italics mine)
REFERENCES


6. Ibid. p.183.


17. Ibid. p.15.


20. Ibid. p.314.


25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.


29. Mary Warnock, op. cit., p. 69.

30. B. J. Fletcher, "The use of Colour in La Haine", 

31. Footed in Mary Warnock, op. cit., p. 91.

32. See Ralph Henry Johnson, The Concept of Existence 
in the Concluding Unscientific Postscript, (Nagura: 

33. See Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, 
et al. E. Smith (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1945), 
pp. VIII.

34. Ibid., p. 89.

35. See Max Charlesworth, The Existentialists and Jean 
Paul Sartre, p. 33.

36. Karl Marx, The Communist Ideology, (Moscow: Progress, 

37. In interview with Sartre in 1959 on "purpose of 
writing" in Between Existentialism and Marxism, 

38. Max Charlesworth, op. cit., p. 32.

39. Albert Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus, and Other Essays, 
p. 150.

40. Ibid., p. 150.

See also, James M. Edie, "Transcendental Phenomenology 
and Existentialism" Philosophy & Phenomenological 
Research, XV, 1 (September, 1960), p. 32.