CHAPTER-II

EXISTENTIALISM : A WAY OF LIFE

Man is nothing but,
Sum of his Choice and Action.
There is no Soul, no Religion and no God,
'Man is all in all' of the Universe.*

Over the years, many men of thought and action have been preoccupied with philosophical studies searching for new ways of life which have resulted in the birth of many philosophical trends. Likewise, the philosophy of existence, even though not in the present form, appeared in 19th century Europe challenging the then existing absolute objective idealism of Hegel (1770-1831).

Actually the origin and development of the philosophy of existence is quite old. In this regard, Socrates (469-399 B.C.) the man of principles, who originated the way of thought for human evolution, asserted the need for self-understanding, while Plato (427-347 B.C.) and Aristotle (383 (4) - 322 B.C.) who propounded the theory of 'Being and Becoming' thought 'Being' was existence and 'Becoming' transcendence. They upheld the view that 'Being' is to be considered always in relation to 'Becoming'. But they said very little about the thread that binds together the various meanings of 'Being' and 'Becoming'. Anyway, the Greek philosophers concluded that 'Being' is a synthesis of 'being'

* From the writer's own composition.
and 'non-being' and 'Becoming' a perpetual transformation of one phase into another.

In medieval times, many scholastic philosophers, almost anti-Aristotelian developed the theory of 'Being and Becoming,' which culminated in existentialist ethic in the 19th century. They thought 'Being' is either a collective name of all the individuals (Nominalists), or a realm of properties (Realists), and 'Becoming' a temporal change. Another thinker, St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), an Aristotelian, considered 'being' as either a genus or a property, but George Berkeley (1685-1753) rejected this view regarding 'Being' a percipient or the perceived. These thinkers, however, agreed that 'Becoming' is change in time.

In modern times, the views of ancient and medieval philosophers about 'Being and Becoming' have been retained. These modern philosophers, interested in the concrete empirical features of 'Being and Becoming', began to explore psychologically the meaning of 'Being and Becoming'. In this regard, philosophers and psychologists, such as George Berkeley, A.N. Whitehead (1861-1947), John Dewey (1859-1952), Benedetto Croce (1866-1952), William James (1824-1910) and Henri Bergson (1859-1941) supported the Aristotelian theory of 'Being' in relation to 'Becoming'. They also supported the view that 'Becoming' is closely related to 'Time'. They believed that 'duration' (Time) introduces an element of novelty. But Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and G.W.Leibniz
(1646-1716) rejected this view saying that time flows unrelated to change.

The existentialist thinkers accept the view of Aristotle as far as 'Being' is existence, 'Becoming' transcendence and their inter-relationship. But they do not accept Aristotle's view of pre-destination which curbs human freedom and responsibility for self-realization. They think 'Being' is superior as it precedes 'Becoming'. In this connection, they reject Hegelianism which attempts to idealize human existence and adjust it ('Being') to thought ('Becoming'). Instead, as a reaction to this inconsistent conformation, existentialism proposes a subjective interpretation of life and conforms thought to life. In fact, existentialism reverses the old system in order to interpret human existence in the light of subjective will.

The main aim of existentialism is to focus on the problems of human existence with a view to provide solutions. As a result, the leading existentialist thinkers have reinforced the importance of the subjective attitude towards life. They have undermined the importance of the objective way of life, which either materializes human existence or makes it artificial. That is why the Spanish existentialist thinker, Miguel de Unamuno, affirms, "Philosophy is a product of the humanity of each philosopher, and each philosopher is a man of flesh and bone who addresses himself to other men of flesh and bone like himself... He philosophizes not with the reason only, but with the will, with the feelings, with the
flesh and with the bones, with the whole soul and with the whole body".¹ Thus, it implies that existentialism is certainly a subjective interpretation of life, and it is mainly concerned with human existence in its totality.

Existentialism is not something irrational and absurd or pessimistic and atheistic. It is a new philosophical trend or an attitude which manifested itself in Germany and France to make human existence secure, stable and authentic. Existentialists, who revolted against Hegelian idealism, justify the requirement of freedom and responsibility for man to become a free and responsible human being both in his biological and social environments.

The distinguishing features of existentialism can be summarised as follows.

Existentialism is a philosophy of freedom and responsibility which has beset the people of the 20th century in all aspects of its culture and civilization, the private as well as public, because it is both frightening and liberating. It is frightening in the sense that it hardly believes in the existence and benevolence of God and it is liberating in the sense that it emphasizes freedom and

responsibility for an individual's self-preservation and self-realization.

Broadly speaking, existentialism is a subjective interpretation of human life. Although, it appeared as a reaction to the then existing Hegelianism, it renewed human existence in relation to transcendence. It is a way or a philosophy of life which enables every human being to lead an authentic mode of life. In fact, it is an ethic for human action and involvement for self-realization. Karl Jaspers defines existentialism as "the way of thought by means of which man seeks to become himself:.....". Similarly, Jean Paul Sartre says, "... by existentialism we mean a doctrine which makes human life possible and, in addition, declares that every truth and every action implies a human subjectivity. " In this regard, Soren Kierkegaard, exhorts man not to follow the dogmatic religious system, while Friedrich Nietzsche thinks that there is 'no ideal, no religion, no soul and no God' and 'man is the master of universe'. Similarly, the later existentialist thinkers uphold the view that human existence should be in relation to

transcendence. They think man is nothing but a sum of his choice and action, and there is nobody or nothing either to guide him or to alleviate his misery and suffering. Therefore, the existentialist thinkers advise man, first, to know what he should be or become and by what ways and means, then prepare himself for the realization of his aims and objects. Thus, existentialism is a philosophy that confronts the human situations in its totality to know the basic conditions of existence and to establish man's significance emerging out of those conditions.

The basic tenets of the philosophy of existence are right thought, right choice, heroic action and responsibility. On the other hand, it emphasises atheism, agnosticism and humanism for full and purposive life of human beings in the purposeless universe. It emphatically insists on man's leading an 'authentic mode of life' which is possible only for man, as he is an emotional, rational and intellectual being.

It is apparent from these features of existentialism, that the main aim of existentialism is to make human existence possible and endurable. In this regard, whatever may be the singular character of the thought of each one of the different thinkers, they all dwell alike upon the question of human existence based on subjectivism.

Existentialist thinkers regard man as a unique being, ruled by his passions, and driven by his desire for consolation and contentment in the world in which he is
placed. According to them, man is free to think and act according to his choice. Here he is not free to breed anarchy and harm the environment and society around him, but he is free to have harmonious co-existence with his community. Moreover, man is responsible for whatever he does in accordance with his flexible nature and preoccupation. He suffers, not because of any external forces, but because of his misuse of freedom and responsibility. Moreover, man's future is highly unpredictable, for his nature is largely flexible in the flux and reflux of human actualities. Nevertheless, existentialism as it is solely concerned with problems of man's life, insists on the transcendence of man with respect to his real life. Hence, it is opposed to objectivism, scientism, solipsism and epistemological idealism. As a whole, it assumes an agnostic position and becomes radical atheism and humanism.

As far as existentialist ethic is concerned, there are two branches — theistic existentialism and atheistic existentialism. The first was developed by the 19th century Danish thinker Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855). In fact, the term 'existentialism' was first coined by him to emphasize the importance of authentic mode of human existence. In this regard, he tried to liberate human existence from the Hegelian idealism. He believed in the existence and benevolence of a divine power, but he did not believe in the benevolence of the religious practices. He says for a better
life, man must pursue either 'aesthetic life', devoting himself to art, music and drama, or 'ethical life', seeking happiness in family life, business and profession. He advises people to experience life for better understanding. This kind of thought was later developed by the French existentialist thinker Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973) and the German existentialist thinker Karl Jaspers (1883-1969).

The other branch, atheistic existentialism, which is popular today, was propounded by the 19th century German thinker Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). It was later developed by J.P.Sartre (1905-1980) and Merleau Ponty (1908-1961) of France, Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) of Germany, Nicholev Berdyaev (1874-1948) of Russia, J.O.Gasset (1883-1955) and Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936) of Spain and Nicholas Abbagnana (1901- ) of Italy. These thinkers deny the very existence of the two omniscient powers, soul and God, which have played an important role in human life in the past. The main reason for their disbelief in these powers is that these two things can never be proved by reason. They agree that even thinking about the existence and benevolence of these supreme powers is an expensive hypothesis not worth further discussion. Hence, they believe that there is only one being, and that is man, a being all in all, and superior to all forms of life.

Whatever may be the divisible forces between the two trends, they take off from a common ground. All thinkers uphold man as the complete master of his biological
environment and material world. Man, whose existence is a transition from nothingness to transcendence, with the help of his predominant will-power and action, may avail himself of the position of superman. However, his life is interrelated with his biological environment, society and his own inner self. If he works in harmony with his own self, society and biological environment and makes the right choice and works accordingly, he may attain selfhood. Otherwise, disunited with these respective spheres, he will ruin himself and become a victim (Dasman or Helot) of circumstances.

Though modern man does not believe in the religion-oriented traditional way of life, his close connection with the biological environment (Nature), community (Society) and conscience (Inner self) cannot be denied. In other words, an individual is related to the following three dimensions:

a. The biological environment (Umwelt).
b. The society (Mitwelt).
c. The inner self (Eigenwelt).

The remaining part of this chapter concentrates on man's relationship with these spheres of his existence and his gradual alienation from them and his consequent desperate struggle to attain self-realization through his superior consciousness and heroic action.
As far as man's relationship with biological environment is concerned, there has been a close bond between the two from time immemorial. The main reason for this is, Nature is all in all the 'Creator', the 'Preserver' and the 'Destroyer' of both animate and inanimate objects, including man of the earth. Therefore, man has been an intimate part of Nature so much so that it is impossible to consider him as an alien or outsider. He depends on Nature not only for food and shelter, but also for happiness, fulfilment and harmonious co-existence. Moreover, his love of Nature leads him to love of his fellow beings. He loves Nature as he loves his own life; he treats her as mother; and he gains everything from her domain, to satisfy his needs. In fact, he cannot live without her support. As a result, she has always been treated as the mother and deity. Indeed, she has been regarded as an embodiment of life.

Though, 'Man' and 'Nature' are indivisible, man, being a rational creature with superior conscience and will-power, has to resolve whether he should be friendly with Nature and achieve self-hood through harmonious co-existence, or remain hostile and be ruined by her malignant forces. In this connection, the most important thing is his attitude towards Nature that either makes or mars his relationship with her as well as his life on this earth. For this reason many philosophers since the time of Aristotle have exhorted man to treat Nature with love and veneration and co-exist with her flora and fauna taking her into confidence. They
have also warned man that he must not depend entirely on her for everything, for she is not perfect. According to them, Nature does not have an adequate system which will alleviate human misery and suffering. Aristotle said Nature is imperfect and blind. Corroborating with this view, Jaspers describes Nature as ".... the encompassing Being which is all, and from which all is, it is the total life to which we ourselves belong completely; or Nature is assumed to be the Given, the Other, as contrasted to ourselves, it is the unconscious, that which is merely occurring without freedom; without choice". Even Hardy, the poet seems to be of the same opinion.

As far as "Man-Nature" relationship or Nature's benevolence to human existence is concerned, existentialist thinkers hold different views. Jaspers, a theist, firmly believes in the benevolence of Nature towards the existence of human beings. He states that Nature is an inexhaustible source of food, shelter, happiness, harmony, beauty, bounty, consolation and contentment. According to him, man may get both profit and pleasure from Nature. However, he does not deny the fact, that she is also a destroyer of human existence whenever man opposes her system. Therefore, he emphasizes man's need to treat Nature as not only a fellow

being, but also a friend, a mother and a deity. Subsequently, he assures man the possibility of attaining selfhood if his relationship with her is based on love, veneration, regard, sacrifice, compassion and mutual understanding. In other words, man's relationship with Nature must be ideal and durable. In existentialist ethic, this kind of 'Man-Nature' relationship is called the 'I-Thou' relationship, which enables every human being to attain self-realization.

But, in reality, the facts of life reveal a different story owing to the advent of science and technology which has mechanized human existence in every sphere of life. On account of science and technology, everything is measured in terms of its practical utility and importance. Moreover, human values have been misused or violated on the pretext of social welfare. Similarly, man has become extremely utilitarian and materialistic. As a result, forgetting the real worth of Nature, he has begun a process of exploitation of Nature in order to amass wealth. Consequently, his harmonious co-existence with her has come to an end. Albert Camus (1913-1960), the French thinker and writer, affirms this view, when he thinks that modern man, by destroying Nature, has deprived himself of the means of meditation; for, "When Nature ceases to be an object of contemplation and admiration, it can be nothing more than
Man's mastery and control over the biological environment is not bad in itself, if it is utilized judiciously for the mutual upliftment of both man and Nature. In fact, his knowledge of the biological sphere must be properly used to enhance and enrich his relationship with Nature. On the contrary, industrialization, urbanization and commercialization have all disturbed 'Man-Nature' relationship in every respect. Therefore, existentialist thinkers criticise the misuse of science in every walk of life. Heidegger hates science "... for being founded on presuppositions, for leaving existence out of consideration, for being based on the subject-object opposition, and for operating with a system of pure representation". Man's extreme attachment to science has made even his instruments alien to her. There is no sign of reconciliation between them at present.


As opposed to the positive view of Jaspers about the implicit benevolence of Nature to the existence of human beings, almost a negative view is propounded by Sartre and Nietzsche. Sartre, the leader of atheistic existentialism, rejects Jaspers’ view, that Nature is not hostile to man’s life unless he is hostile to her. On the contrary, he considers Nature as not only neutral, but also indifferent to human existence. It is indifferent in the sense that Nature is blind to and unconscious of the misery and suffering of human beings. To Sartre, Nature appears to be nothing more than a mine of scattered wealth and "disorganized masses"\(^7\) of the purposeless universe. According to him, man’s relationship with Nature is characterized as absured, a mere illusion, "Absurd, irreducible: nothing, not even some secret deep-down madness in nature could explain it"\(^8\). All natural phenomena, including the flora and fauna and the elements seem to be a mute mass of biological and cosmic objects. Nietzsche supports Sartre’s view of Nature when he remarks that the biologists have to rear strong individuals instead of working on the evolution of new species. These thinkers often bother about the natural calamities like flood, drought

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and storm which overshadow the positive aspects of life by their poignancy and horror. Indeed, in the advent of science and technology, the wealth of Nature appears to them either a mere illusion or a mute mass of biological environment.

Following this hypothesis, Sartre rejects Jaspers' view that there is a possibility of establishing harmonious relationship between man and Nature. He thinks 'Man-Nature' relationship is highly impossible as Nature is not only neutral but also indifferent and malignant to human misery and suffering. According to Sartre, Nature is imperfect and lacks a coherent system of its own. This aspect of Nature's imperfection, neutralism and malevolence has also been recognized by many thinkers since the time of the great Greeks. As already mentioned, it is Aristotle who first exhorted man not to depend on Nature for everything since she is imperfect. Sartre, too, denies the possibility of a congenial 'Man-Nature' relationship.

Subsequently, man either because of his non-adjustment with Nature on account of his interest in the promotion of science and technology or because of Nature's malevolence on account of her lack of an adequate system, alienates himself from her and seeks consolation and contentment in his own community.

Man's painful alienation from the meditative and benevolent Nature deprives him of a natural harmonious life. As a result he remains in a state of unrest, ambiguity, dread
and disappointment.

Man after his active detachment from Nature turns to his fellow-beings for consolation and contentment. For this he seeks adjustment and reconciliation with his neighbours. In order to establish a peaceful and productive social relationship, an individual loves and respects his neighbours; he understands and trusts them; and finally he sacrifices something for the welfare of his fellow-beings. He also devises various means and ways of harmonizing his relationship with society. In fact, he tries to establish a cordial social order of life based on the virtues of 'equality', 'liberty' and 'fraternity'.

Existentialist thinkers like Jaspers and Ponty regard man's relationship with society as indispensable. They accept man's unsteady and unpredictable nature, but they reinforce the necessity of human desire for mutual understanding and co-operation. They also emphasize the need for sublime virtues like love, sympathy and sacrifice in man to establish a harmonious inter-personal relationship. According to them, man must be aware of the world which he immediately and intuitively discovers and experiences, and must be conscious of his existence in point of space and time. Following this, they believe the relationship between an individual and society is usually successful barring some conflicts. Anyway, man's relationship with others, either ill or well, is an essential phenomenon, and without it an
individual's existence is bound to end in conflict or failure. Therefore, Ponty remarks, "We are involved in the world and with others in an inextricable tangle". Indeed, man is in society because he finds himself among other people; and he is in the world because he is surrounded by the biological and material environments. Similarly, Heidegger considers this state of man's involvement in society an essential phenomenon. Likewise, Jaspers who does not believe in Sartre's absolute ethical isolation, declares, "Being-there (the objective world known by observation and experiment), Being-oneself (the personal existence of one who is awakened to his liberty and assumes his historicity and affirms himself in decision and choice), Being-in-itself (the Transcendence of the world, manifested in the world and inseparable from it), these three realms of Being are in no sense reducible to one another". These three spheres, the subjective 'I', the objective 'world' and the transcending 'society' are inseparable from one another. Jaspers calls this mode of inter-relationship as 'Communication'.


established for the sake of harmonious co-existence of human beings. Though Sartre clung to his idea of absolute isolation, he clearly states that man cannot live alone. According to him, 'Being-in-itself' (the world), 'Being-for-others' (society) and 'Being-for-itself' (the man or nothingness) all constitute the concept of existence. He does not deny the need of society for the ascendance of man in his social setting. Like Jaspers, he thinks man has to unite with others in such a way as to stand in life wrestling with his difficulties. Indeed, "In order to bring in a greater element of control over his affairs man unites with others to form a group".11 In this connection, one thing must be remembered, and that is man’s life with others involves the concept of responsibility. Sartre’s idea of responsibility as detailed in his work Existentialism (L'Existentialism est un Humanisme 1947), is two-fold. Firstly, an individual must be responsible for the authentic existence of 'himself' and his or her 'respective spouse' and secondly, he or she has to be responsible for the welfare of 'others' (society). However, in the former a person is closer and more intimate, whereas, in the latter, a person is just a detached observer as a member of the society.

According to Jaspers, man’s relationship both with his respective 'spouse' and 'community' will be harmonious

and endurable, if it is based on love, compassion, willingness, fidelity, brotherhood, equality, reciprocity, understanding, adjustment and a spirit of sacrifice. Otherwise, 'Man-Woman' or 'Man-Society' relationship is based on enmity, cruelty, jealousy, selfishness, indifference, mistrust and misunderstanding, it will certainly end in man's alienation from others, instead of leading to his self-realization. As a result, such an individual will be deprived of his freedom in society. Therefore, Kierkegaard asserts, "The task is not to exalt the one at the expense of the other, but to give them an equal status, to unify them in simultaneity; the medium in which they are unified is existence". The relationship with others is requisite for one's freedom which depends entirely on the freedom of others. Sartre thinks if man is aware of himself he is also aware of others, others are as important as himself, if he understands himself wholly and thoroughly, he can understand others well. Similarly, he observes, "In order to get any truth about myself, I must have contact with another person. The other is indispensable to my own existence, as well as to my knowledge about myself. This being so, in discovering my inner being I discover the other person at the same time....."

This is the world in which man decides what he is and what others are. "13

Even in sexual relationship the virtues of love, veneration, equality, co-operation and sacrifice become indispensable for higher co-ordination between man and woman. Hardy supports this view when he says, "Love withers under constraint: its very essence is liberty; it is compatible neither with obedience, jealousy, nor fear.... A husband and wife ought to continue united only so long as they love each other."14 As great love deserves sacrifice either on the part of one or the other, human relationship is possible and successful only in the context of absolute love, fidelity, respect, mutuality and willingness. That is why, intrigues, hostility, self-deception and pretences must be avoided in 'Man-Woman' relationship.

Similarly, inter-personal relationship on the broader level in society must also be based on equality, liberty, fraternity, sacrifice, mutual respect and genuine understanding. Otherwise, 'Man-Society' relationship will deteriorate and end in man's alienation from society.

On the whole, existentialist thinkers, led by Jaspers, conclude that man may succeed in his attainment of selfhood, if he is capable of adjusting, readjusting and reconciling with his respective 'spouse' as well as 'society'. They also believe that as man is a social animal, the harmonious relationships both between 'Man and Woman' and 'Man and Society' will be possible and successful.

On the other hand, Sartre takes the issue too far. He emphatically states that man's relationship with his respective 'spouse' as well as 'society' will hardly be successful on account of man's flexible nature and unpredictable future. According to him, man's vices, shams, pretences, unworthy aspirations and self deception on account of his growing desire to lead comfortable life, to amass wealth and to dominate others, certainly crush his interrelationships in both dimensions i.e., man's relationship with woman as well as man's relationship with society. Man's inner greed, ambition, avarice, enmity, disbelief, disregard and misunderstanding surely degenerate his way of life and style of functioning. For instance, on account of man's greed, the prevailing systems of 'prostitution' and 'slavery' show the glaring failure of 'Man-Woman' and 'Man-Society' relationship respectively. In existentialist ethic, this kind of inhuman relationship is characterized by the term 'I-It'. 
According to Sartre, as far as 'Man-Woman' relationship is concerned, the most serious factor in destroying love is the lover's or wedded person's greed for 'possession'. As the human virtues like equality, liberty, purity, willingness and mutual understanding are violated or misused, the relationship between man and woman ends in sexual exploitation and seduction as it is clearly seen in prostitution. Thence, such a broken relationship ends either in conflict or in mutual destruction. Both, Sartre and Kierkegaard are of the same opinion as far as seduction and sexual exploitation of woman is concerned, which according to them, is the result of man's sexual compulsion. In this context, they say, a man always desires other women, while a woman always clings to one man, for Nature makes her intuitively and consciously care and pursue a supporter and protector of her future off-spring.

Similarly, Sartre thinks 'Man-Society' relationship hardly succeeds on account of one or another's desire for domination. The reason for this crisis, Sartre believes is that 'I' is primary and more important than the secondary 'Thou' as 'existence precedes essence'. Consequently, to an existing individual, the other seems less important than 'I' the self. This devaluation of the other causes disaster in human relationships. Hence, an individual alienates himself from the 'society' as "Man is in absolute
ethical isolation and totally responsible to himself to do whatever he thinks fit for an authentic mode of life. Therefore, Sartre says, harmonious 'Man-Woman' relationship is impossible on account of man's desire to be free from an 'arrested mode of life' or 'lostness in the crowd'. So he closely reaffirms, "As far as I am concerned, another person is no longer a representation of another person; he is a subtilized object." This leads him to say that one's freedom (society's domination) is another's (an individual's) doom. To avoid this doom, (sexual and social crises) Sartre prefers alienation and life in isolation. On account of this social anarchy, many existentialist thinkers express their contempt for the society which hinders the way of individuals to prosper. They think 'Man is kind but men (society) are cruel'. Kierkegaard speaks contemptuously of society by describing it as 'crowd' and 'trampling geese'. He affirms that it is always the individual versus the crowd, and the crowd is the greater destroyer. "A crowd not 'this crowd or that, the crowd now living or the crowd long deceased, a crowd of humble people or of superior people, of rich or of poor, etc. - a crowd in its very concept is the untruth, by reason of the fact that it renders the individual completely

15. J.P.Sartre, quoted by H.J.Blackham, Six Existentialist Thinkers, op. cit., p. 147.
impenitent and irresponsible, or at least weakens his sense of responsibility by reducing it to a fraction." Indeed, a crowd is merciless, malignant and irresponsible, hence it is not a company. This aspect is also evident in the works of Shakespeare, Sartre, Camus and Kafka. Nietzsche who does not distinguish an individual from the society, but makes a distinction between 'village folk' and 'city people' advocates man, the virtues such as simplicity, sincerity, nobility, novelty, hardwork, determination and straightforwardness for his progressive enlightenment in society. He is also anxious about the future of interpersonal relationship owing to the advent of science and technology. Therefore, he remarks our scientifically minded age, in losing its living faith in sublime virtues like charity, nobility, simplicity, sincerity, hardwork, cooperation and sacrifice is on the verge of complete extinction.

So these thinkers Sartre, Kiekegaard and Nietzsche uphold almost a negative view of 'Man-Society' relationship. They vehemently conclude that in the pride of power, prestige and fortune all personal and social relationships are bound to fail and end in man's ethical alienation from society.

Man after his estrangement from society stands in solitude as a forlorn consciousness striving for higher phases of life. His goal to exalt and become superman is temporarily hampered by his inevitable abandonment of the society. In this Crusoe-like existence, he is only counterbalanced by his patience, superior consciousness and intelligence. In this circumstance, Sartre asserts, man's life will be a success or a failure according to his quality of conscience, choice and subsequent action. Though, like Kierkegaard, Sartre does not give importance to inner reality for man's self-purification, he states man must be courageous and confident for his future. Indeed, the growth of conscience, heroic action and responsibility are essential for man's self-preservation and self-realization. Human consciousness is a key to the knowledge of biological environment and material world. In fact, as the Indian philosopher, Sri Aurobindo thinks the world can only be deciphered by consciousness. Even the Indian schools of philosophy Dvaita, Advaita and Nyaya Vaisesika emphasize 'consciousness' (cit=awareness) for 'being' (sat = existence) and 'becoming' (jnan-essence). They consider consciousness as something born out of meditation of the soul. But many existentialist thinkers do not believe in this concept as they disbelieve in the very existence of soul. On the other hand, in Western philosophy the Kantian subjective legacy of regarding consciousness as creative of reality has been accepted by existentialist thinkers. Similarly, Hardy thinks that consciousness is the main power for 'being and
becoming*. Like Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) and Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), the American transcendentalists, he thinks mind is a transcendental force and it is pure intentional activity for transcendence, but not transcendence in itself. Moreover, Hardy, like Sartre, states self-consciousness must be the very being of the mind in action. Even Heidegger maintains the same when he thinks consciousness as the starting point of existence "... there can be no consciousness unrelated to the 'world', and no 'world' unrelated to consciousness, and the two together constitute a bi-une-reality which we call human existence." 18

Above all, consciousness is not an alien faculty. Indeed, it is inseparable from man. It is both knowing and living. So it remembers the 'historicity', anticipates the 'future' and engages itself in the 'present'. Nevertheless, man cannot live only by his consciousness good or bad, he needs authentic mode of life and style of functioning. He lives only when his inward consciousness and outward actions are coherently related and worked together. In this respect, the subjective way of life is more beneficial as man gets inspiration and encouragement by his emotions and feelings which are more powerful. As a result, man's attachment with reason is curtailed in the philosophy of

existentialism. Nietzsche aptly puts it thus: "Destroying the passions and cravings, merely as a preventive measure against their stupidity and unpleasant consequences.... (is) an acute form of stupidity."\(^{19}\) Man's instinctual passions which constitute life, and inspire actions are fundamental for human existence. In R.A.Sinari's words "The becoming of an existent is nothing but the manifestation of a passion to live, and live infinitely. 'It is impossible to exist without passion'."\(^{20}\) It is true that emotion is the motive power of human activities. Oscar Wilde (1856-1900), the exponent of aesthetics, thinks that great emotions give us quickened sense of life, but the growth of reason dries up the source of creative life. The most enduring things in the world of growth and change are the human emotions and passions. It is also observed that most of the miseries of mankind stem from the suppression of passions. Another thinker, Jean Wahl affirms, "..... existence is becoming. Passion and decision are movements. Existence is not definable, but by calling it a movement, a becoming, we characterize it legitimately, for we define it in terms of


something that is itself undefinable. Existence is temporality, continuous becoming, a task...; it is not a logical becoming, but one that grows out of choices and decisions made in the heat of passion.21 Hardy the poet also gives much importance to the emotional aspects of human existence when he says, "Poetry is emotion put into measure"22.

With this passionate state of consciousness and mental tension, an alienated man remains in a state of angst (Kierkegaard), 'dread' (Heidegger), 'anguish' (Sartre) 'anxiety' (Nietzsche) and 'nothingness' (Hardy). As the bereft man's consciousness weakens, his loneliness, ambiguity, despair and anguish grow to such an extent, that finally he is led to psychic tumults and tensions. This is because of his clash and conflict between his 'inner conscience' (cit=awareness) and 'outer commitments' (kriti=action). Consequently, this state of human existence leads to 'self-alienation' (vinash=destruction).


In recent years, existentialism has concentrated its attention on the problem of alienation, which has various implications. It includes an extraordinary variety of psycho-social disorders like ambiguity, dread, despair, anxiety, loneliness, nothingness, isolation, pessimism, atheism, absurdism, loss of faith and selfhood, rootlessness and meaninglessness. Kierkegaard, the founder of the philosophy of existence does not differ much from the view of traditional thinkers. But he emphasizes the need for alienation to restore human destiny and individuality. However, his follower Marcel supports him saying that alienation is necessary to man to exercise his freedom of choice and action. Similarly, Heidegger and Sartre state that man's existence in the world is fundamentally with others, but active attachment of an individual to others will be 'an arrested mode of existence' or 'lostness in a crowd'. According to them, man's 'arrested mode of existence' results in his inauthentic mode of existence and loss of identity or individuality. Marcel and Buber who do not agree with Sartre's idea of freedom that 'Man is condemned to be free', opine that man must alienate himself from his biological environment and society only to make a better use of freedom and responsibility for the attainment of selfhood. In this regard, the way they recommend is 'stoic-resignation'. Berdyaev, the Russian existentialist thinker also supports the view, that psychic isolation or alienation is amply rewarding for it opens the gateway of truth and authenticity.
He asserts that man can be or become aware of his personality, originality, singularity and uniqueness from the rest, only when he is free and alone. Indeed, man's alienation from Nature and Society at the psychological level has been considered fruitful in the philosophy of Marcel, Heidegger, Sartre, Buber and Berdyaev.

However, the characteristic feature of existentialism is that man's separation from his biological environment, society and his own self is to establish some universal form of justification which will enable him to readjust himself with the actualities of life. Nevertheless, the lone man whose existence after his inevitable alienation from Nature, Society and his own Self is considered insignificant in society, is counterbalanced by his growth of superior conscience, will-power, heroic action and responsibility. Similarly, man even in his trials and tribulations of life achieves self-realization. Consequently, the existence of such a liberated and self-reliant man is hailed as an authentic mode of existence, and his existence is considered as the personification of the will to power or 'superman's existence'.

It is true the process of 'becoming' is more important and essential than 'being' to an individual who is in quest of selfhood. Albert Camus thinking that man should go on achieving something even in the face of his alienation and absurdity, observes thus: "... the true greatness of man is to fight against that which is greater than he. It is not
happiness that we must wish for today, but rather a certain grandeur in despair. "23 Therefore, like Nietzsche, he advocates man to create his own order of life and exalt and elevate his existence amidst the face of glaring misfortunes. In a similar spirit Sartre affirms, "Man is nothing else than his plan; he exists only to the extent that he fulfills himself; he is therefore nothing else than the ensemble of his acts, nothing else than his life."24

After man's estrangement from his biological environment, material world and inner self, the necessary ingredients of human existence such as conscience, choice, freedom, action and responsibility which often go together, play an important role in the course of man's self-projection, self-preservation and self-realization. These virtues are, in fact, interrelated, for there is no decision without 'thought', no choice without 'decision', no action without 'choice' no responsibility without 'action' and none of these without 'freedom'. Here 'freedom' which is all in all, is identified with choice, awareness and selfhood. Indeed, to choose means to be free, and man's freedom is his existence in relation to transcendence. However, the

significance of heroic action for man's escape from rootlessness to self-realization is never denied in existentialist ethic. That is why Jaspers states, "Freedom is experienced as both spontaneity and action; it is thus more important to act and be an homme engagé than to observe and be a theoretician."25 Here man is nothing but his choice and action. Yes, 'he is a sum of his total acts' (Sartre), the novelist of himself' (O.Y. Gasset), and 'his own master' (Hardy) who makes promises, determines his future and accordingly shapes it.

Man has no priori values like thought and destiny but only existence and attainment of essence. "Existence 'does not come within the province of thought to think'; above all, thought is not superior to nor a substitute for existence."26 So thought is secondary, instrumental and subordinate. Sharing this view, Nietzsche asserts that until then only values assessed that personality of a human being, but now a human being taking on himself the full burden of freedom and responsibility, raises himself to

the mode of atheistic and authentic existence. If man does this, he (Nietzsche) thinks, he will not only conquer God, but also conquer nothingness. Indeed, existence is higher than thought in which "one should be prepared to raise above the 'herd' and be 'exceptional' and individualistic for the sake of the truth to which he is committed."27

However, existentialist thinkers deny man any help either from God or religion. They also disbelieve in the absolute benevolence of Nature and Society. They reject the dogmatic conceptions like fate, superstition and witchery. According to them, "No one gives man his qualities neither God, nor society, nor his parents and ancestors."28 Hence, "Man is man's future."29 He is nothing other than a sum of his acts. Consequently, "One can win the great triumph only if one is true to himself."30

Now the question is who is the authentic existent in the new order of human society? The most modest answer is this: the man who is most sublime in his virtues and withstands a maximum amount of difficulties; and the man who is heroic in actions and responsible to his commitments good or bad—such a man is a hero, the strongest authentic man of mankind. No doubt, it is true what the Mughul king Babur (1483-1530) thinks, "The world is his who exerts himself" and it is also true what the Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen (1826-1906) observes, "The strongest man in the world is he who stands most alone." Indeed, "The man who can really stand alone in the world, only taking counsel from his conscience—that man is a hero."

The philosophy of existence is similar to Buddhism. Indeed, it is a philosophy of action and involvement, and there is no place for Dasman or Helot. People may sympathize with such a man but they are not likely to care for him or console him.

On the other hand, the exalted and elevated individual is hailed a SUPERMAN.

Existentialism in Literature

After World War I, the existentialist attitude spread and grew everywhere for man's quest to secure a stable and harmonious human existence. This new phase produced a great galaxy of existentialist philosophers, thinkers and writers like Soren Kiekegaard in Denmark, J.P. Sartre, Gabriel Marcel, Albert Camus and Merleau Ponty in France, Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger and Jean Wahl in Germany, Nikolai Berdyaev in Russia, Ortega Y Gasset Jose and Martin Buber in Spain and Nicholas Abbagnana in Italy. Similarly, literary writers like Franz Kafka, Andre Gide, Thomas Hardy, Graham Greene (1904- ), Iris Murdoch (1919- ), Samuel Beckett (1906- ), Nae Ionesco (1890-1940) and Norman Mailer (1923- ) are all in a sense existentialist writers.

The philosophical as well as literary works of these great men reflect one or another aspect of existentialism. Sartre's works such as Nausea (1938) and The Flie (1947), Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra (1892), Heidegger's Being and Time (1927) and Jaspers' Man in the Modern Age (1932) and the literary as well as philosophical works of Beckett, Ionesco, Greene, Kafka, Murdoch, Camus and Hardy are enough to understand and assess
the impact of existentialism on literature in the present century. On the other hand, the works of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche show deep influence of existentialism in theology.

Though the philosophy of existence seems to be quite modern, it can be traced back to Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), St. Augustine (354-430) and even to Socrates. But it was fully developed in the 19th and 20th centuries. Its immediate sources are the philosophy of St. Augustine and Lord Buddha (566-486 B.C.), phenomenology of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and the doctrines like 'equality' 'liberty' and 'fraternity' of the French Revolution (1789). However, it suddenly appeared in the 19th century as a reaction to Hegelian idealism and the materialism prevalent in European thought.

The philosophy of existence spread everywhere in the fields of science, social reform, politics and literature. In the field of literature, writers whether theists or atheists, began to think on new lines. Writers and thinkers alike in European nations hoped to create a new order of life in the then existing systems. Nietzsche, Tolstoy, Bentham, Mill and many others, reacting against the traditional way of life, upheld the view that human life must be changeable and adjustable according to the needs of man's existence. Kierkegaard severely reacted both against Hegelianism and traditional religion. Similarly, Nietzsche announced the death of God and asserted that religion is a bundle of dogmas and rituals. The thoughts of these two
thinkers were developed by later existentialist thinkers such as Sartre, Jaspers, Heidegger, Marcel, Buber and others. These thinkers gave a strong jolt to the orthodox religion, the concept of God and Providence, benevolence of Nature, Society and the traditional way of life. Similarly, in the field of social reforms and politics, Jeremy Bentham, the father of utilitarianism, pleaded for the greater good of the greatest number. He and his followers, like Rousseau, believed and preached absolute freedom of the individual. J.S. Mill, the great social reformer of Victorian England taught people the importance of individual liberty. Mill was also a great believer in the equality of sexes, and his advocacy of the cause of women led to a better appreciation of their status in society. In a similar spirit, many scientists brought revolutionary changes. Lyell's works on Geology (1830-1863) established the fact that the earth was millions of years old, and man too had lived on earth for a much longer period than that given in the Bible. Darwin's monumental work *Origin of Species* (1859) and *Descent of Man* (1871) related man to lower forms of life and demonstrated with evidence that man has descended from the ape. The discoveries of science agitated man's mind and brought a new perspective in human existence.

However, the influence of existential philosophy is greater in the field of literature. Almost all writers all over the world directly or indirectly came under the influence of the basic tenets of existentialism. People in
modern time, regardless of their interest in literature, philosophy or theology came to realize the fact that God is indifferent to the misery and suffering of human beings. Even some people thought that there was no God and man was all in all in the universe. They also thought that religion which was mixed with dogmas was defective. Consequently, they concluded that because of God's malevolence and defective religion, man's existence in society was difficult. They also expressed the view that owing to his limitations and social codes man could not lead a harmonious existence.

Nevertheless, the possibility of a happy and harmonious human existence is never denied in the philosophy of existence. A close inspection of the works of Camus, Kafka, Gide, Sartre, Berdyaev, Hardy, Greene, Murdoch, Beckett, Mailer, Ionesco reveals the fact that making life harmonious or otherwise is fully dependent on man himself. The main idea of these writers is that if man lives in perfect harmony with his biological environment, society and his inner self, he may attain whatever he best deserves. If he wills otherwise, his life ends in self-alienation.

For instance, in the works of existentialist thinkers like Sartre, Camus, Kafka and Dostoyevsky, one may clearly see, how an individual tries to establish a new order of life and why he often fails in his mission due to his limitations and social codes.
In Sartre's novel *Nausea*, the hero Roquention tries to adjust with society. But when he finds that it is difficult for him to co-exist with society, he alienates himself from it. Similarly, in Kafka's novel *The Trial*, the hero Josef K suffers due to the erratic system of government. Likewise, in Camus and Dostoevsky's novels, one may explicitly find a clash and conflict between an individual and society for the establishment of supremacy.

In the works of modern writers, a clear diffusion of existentialist ethic is evident. Almost all writers, who directly or indirectly are aware of the importance of existentialist philosophy, have expressed their views on man, Nature and Society, and their relationship with one another on the one hand, and God, religion and the moral and social order of life and their relation to man on the other. They have pictured man's life in his fortunes and misfortunes with a view to delineate man's struggle for existence in a new perspective.

In modern literature, the works of all writers of all climes, taste and temperament have depicted one or the other aspect of existentialism. For instance, Alfred Tennyson's poem 'Oenone' expresses the view that man must be self-conscious or be aware of his sense of duty, limit of freedom and responsibility to attain self-realization:

...
Self reverence, self-knowledge, self-control. These three alone lead to sovereign power. Similarly, another Victorian poet, A.C.Swinburne, expresses views which are opposed to the traditional way of life, religion and God:

By the name that in hell-fire was written, and burned at the point of thy sword,
Thou art smitten, thou God, thou art smitten: thy death is upon thee, O Lord.
And the love-song of earth as thou diest resounds through the wind of her wings-
Glory to Man in the highest! for Man is the master of things.

Hardy’s views regarding this are elaborated in detail in the following chapters.

The philosophy of existence is also evident in modern fiction. The novels of Charles Dickens, George Meredith, George Eliot, Graham Greene, Thomas Hardy reveal the impact of existentialism on fiction. As we know, Dickens in his novels depicts an individual’s struggle for existence and his relationship with his environment and society. He exposes the evils of moral and social order in the life of

his times. His novels like *Hard Times*, *Bleak House*, *Great Expectations* and others are a scathing criticism of life of his age. Similarly, George Eliot, George Meredith, Thomas Hardy and many other modern novelists have dealt with different aspects of existentialist ethic. They have pictured the lives of their heroes in the light of existentialism.

The philosophy of existentialism is similar to that of Romanticism and is the basis of the modern theatre of the absurd. It is similar to the first as far as its emphasis on man's emotional aspects of existence are concerned. Existentialism, like Romanticism, restores man his dignity as a human being. It marks a most important stage in the history of human self-consciousness. It introduces a subjective way of life in which an individual in his own depths continues to be himself and fulfils his destiny. Though it is a subjective way of life, it enables every human being to attain truth, power and glory.

Existentialism is closely associated with the 'theatre of the absurd' as far as its typical doctrines like novelty, agnosticism, atheism, optimism and pessimism are concerned. Above all, the traits like right thought, right choice, heroic action and responsibility, dread, ambiguity, atheism and a feeling of nothingness highlight the distinguishing marks of existentialist ethic.
The existentialist writers and thinkers are mainly realists. They write about man's struggle for existence in relation to his progressive enlightenment and transcendence. They devise various means and ways for the liberation of human existence from the fetters of the past. They also defy the authority and tradition for the attainment of truth and justice. It is on account of their radicalism and humanism that the Communists accused them as irrationalists neglecting the gracious and beautiful aspects of human existence. But in reality, it is not true that existentialism deals with the ugly aspects of life, as it advocates the ideal philosophy of life to live and let others live. Though outwardly it seems frightening, it is a philosophy of liberation from the shackles of materialism and religion-oriented traditional way of life. Indeed, existentialism enables every human being to perfect his self-hood.

The common themes of existentialism are freedom, choice, decision, action, responsibility, atheism, agnosticism and dread. It is because of these themes that many people accuse existentialism of radicalism, violence and non-conformity. Furthermore, many people associate existentialism with the merely atheistic and pessimistic literature of our time.

It is true that existentialist literature is mainly atheistic and tragic as it is mainly concerned with the practical problems of human existence, but it is not pessimistic. On the contrary, it is optimistic, humanistic
and evolutionary. It is certainly a philosophy with a purpose. Indeed, the philosophy of existence is an ethic and involvement for human progress, evolution and enlightenment.

Existentialism and Thomas Hardy

On a closer observation of Hardy's life and achievements, it is clear that Hardy's views are quite similar to those of the existentialist ethic. Indeed, his ethic and involvement is not much different from that of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, his contemporaries, and Jaspers, Heidegger, Sartre and Camus, his junior contemporaries -- who were all existentialist thinkers as well as writers.

Thomas Hardy was born and brought up in the 19th century England. Though many of his beliefs and ideas were formed in the Victorian times, his outlook was quite modern. He lived, thought and wrote not only as an observer but also as an active participant in the modern world of science and commerce. Though many ideas of existentialism were in the air and were not known to him in the present form, as a sensitive creative writer, he had caught some of its basic tenets. Although Hardy read no existentialist thinkers except Nietzsche, his wide observation and experience of life enabled him to know the characteristic features of the philosophy of existence. In this regard, he may be considered an existentialist thinker. It is true Hardy read only Nietzsche and was not directly influenced by
existentialism as we think of it to-day; he was conscious of existentialist ethic on account of his characteristic double vision of life and attitude. However, his awareness of the basic features of existentialism is from a literary point of view, and he is not an existentialist thinker in a wider sense, but he is certainly an existentialist writer like Camus, Kafka, Mailer and Dostoevsky. In this connection, Hardy was surely influenced by Nietzsche as his admiration for him is evident from his literary notes. Hardy read him, admired his way of life and had a high opinion of him. He expresses his admiration of Nietzsche as follows: "... it (Nietzsche's ph.) reaffirmed with emphasis and faith the worth of life and the splendour of human destiny", and records, "Nietzsche stands for the affirmation of life."36

As it is already known, the distinguishing marks of existentialism are right thought, right choice, heroic action, dedication, determination and responsibility. It insists on atheism, agnosticism, realism, humanism and optimism, and includes pessimism, absurdism, dread, angst, anxiety, nothingness and self-alienation. It is true these marks of existentialism are evident in the life and works of Hardy. Similarly, the so-called virtues which are necessary for man's self-realization, such as love, veneration, regard,
mutual understanding, help, co-operation and sacrifice are also clearly reflected in the poems of Hardy though written in various moods and circumstances. Nevertheless, Hardy did not formulate any philosophical system nor did he stick to any philosophical ideas, but his vision of life as expressed in his literary works is similar to that of the existentialist ethic. But many invidious critics described his view of life as pessimism and 'non-conformism' which often hurt him. As a reaction, he said, "But it is called pessimism nevertheless; under which word, expressed with condemnatory emphasis, it is regarded by many as some pernicious new thing; and the subject is charitably left to decent silence, as if further comment were needless." 37

In Hardy's theory of human reality, which he calls 'evolutionary meliorism', human existence is depicted in its bareness and frankness. Hardy who considered his poetry as 'Impressions of his life', has delineated man's struggle for selfhood in its various facets. His wide observation of human existence as he summed up is as follows.

The answer to the question whether Hardy agrees with the basic tenets of existentialism mainly such as atheism, disbelief in the benevolence of religion-oriented

37. Thomas Hardy, Apology to "Late Lyrics and Earlier" reprinted in The Complete Poems of Thomas Hardy, edited by James Gibson, op.cit., p. 557.
traditional way of life and man's supremacy on the earth, or not, is a little complicated as the majority of Hardy-critics have misunderstood him. It is true that according to Hardy's vast observation and experience of life as depicted in his work, particularly in his poetry, he seems to agree with the basic tenets of existentialist ethic.

Hardy was a firm atheist. He does not believe either in the benevolence of religion or in the existence and benevolence of God. As to the first question, the benevolence of religion, he quotes the words of John Morley: "Religion, whatever destinies may be in store for it, is at least for the present hardly any longer an organic power." 38 Similarly, about God, he writes on January 29, 1890, that "I have been looking for God for 50 years and I think that if he had existed I should have discovered him." 39

Hardy's atheism is clearly seen in his poems such as 'Hap', (WP-p. 9) 'The Impercipient' (WP - p. 67) 'The Bedridden Peasant' (PPP - p. 124) and many other poems. For instance, the Hardian protagonist's dislike of God is shown in the poem 'The Bedridden Peasant':

MUCH wonder I - here long low-laid-
That this dead wall should be
Betwixt the Maker and the made,
Between Thyself and me! 40

Hardy's answer to the question whether the traditional way of life is benevolent to the existence of human beings or not is two-fold. On the one hand he thinks that the existing way of man's life is defective and should be corrected by modifications and alterations according to the necessity of time and circumstance in which he exists. On the other hand, Hardy thinks that if the old way of life cannot make life fruitful according to the changing circumstances, even though man has reconciled himself to its differences, it should be changed. Accordingly, he exhorts man to create for himself a new and modest moral and social order of life.

Hardy answers in a similar spirit the question whether man is the supreme being in the universe. Like existentialist thinkers, he accepts the view that man is the supreme being in the modern world of science and commerce. Indeed, he affirms, "An object or mark raised or made by man on a scene is worth ten times any such formed by unconscious Nature. Hence clouds, mists, and mountains are unimportant

beside the wear on a threshold or the print of a hand. 41
But Hardy does not believe in the benevolence of the modern world of science and technology, which he feels, will never make human existence harmonious and endurable. This is shown in his poem 'In Tenebris' III:

.... vision could vex or that knowledge could numb. 42

Whatever may be the impact of science on human existence, man is the supreme being in the universe. This is mainly on account of man's will-power, action and responsibility.

Similarly, Hardy agrees with the view of existentialist thinkers that though man is a part of his biological environment, the material world and his own self, he cannot always live in perfect harmony with them.

However, man is an indivisible part of his biological environment, and though he cannot live without it, he cannot always live in perfect harmony with Nature. The main reason for this is, Nature lacks an adequate system of its own. Hardy supports this view: "She is blind and not a judge of her actions, or that she is an automaton, and unable

42. Thomas Hardy, Poems of the Past and the Present, op. cit., p 169.
to control them."43 Indeed, on account of either Nature's neutrality or indifference, man alienates himself from her altogether. This is evident in Hardy's poem 'In a Wood':

Since, then, no grace I find
Taught me of trees,
Turn I back to my kind
Worthy as these. 44

However, after separation from Nature, man tries to adjust himself with his community, but he fails to succeed in attaining self-realization. This is because of either social codes and restrictions, or because of his own individual limitations which contribute to his doom and destruction. Indeed, the 'encouraging disapproval' of society hinders man's path of progressive enlightenment, as a result of which, man withdraws from society. This aspect of human conflict between an individual and society is apparent in Hardy's poem 'Wessex Heights':

In the towns I am tracked by phantoms having weird detective ways -
Shadows of beings who fellowed with myself of earlier days:

43. Thomas Hardy, quoted by F.E. Hardy, The Later Years of Thomas Hardy (1892-1928) op. cit., p. 97.

They hang about at places, and they say harsh heavy things - Men with a wintry sneer, and women with tart disparagings. 45

Man after his alienation from society remains essentially alone. However, his solitude drags him into a world of futile doings where he is constantly haunted by dread, anxiety and confusion. Moreover, his 'internal conflicts' in which his feelings of loneliness and nothingness frustrate his designs, tear him to pieces until he is made a 'split-personality' (self-alienation). About the condition of man's self-alienation, Lakshmi Saxena says, "Such a one is enclosed within his private shell and fails to get any fresh air from the outside world." 46 This kind of man's bereaved existence is portrayed in Hardy's poem 'The Two Men' (WP-p.77).

It is in this state of inherent dread and loneliness, a self-alienated man realizes his wrong commitments. He involves himself in 'self-communion'. As a result, he realizes the importance of his biological and social environments. Similarly, he decides to be reconciled

with Nature and Society, but in a different way -- a way in which he retains his independence and succeeds in attaining happiness and fulfilment. In Kierkegaard's words: "By a second movement the person makes a return to the level of particularity and lives in an absolute relation to the absolute." Now, his life becomes more happy, enlightened and endurable. Indeed, this state of an individual's self-purification and self-realization is through his healthy and harmonious reconciliation both with Nature and Society. This aspect of human existence is reflected in Hardy's poems 'Great Things' and 'Conjecture'.

The first poem evidences the fact that 'Man-Nature' relationship leads to man and Society's harmonious co-existence:

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0 Cyder is a great thing,
A great thing to me !

0 dancing is a great thing,
A great thing to me !

0 love is, yes, a great thing,
A great thing to me !
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47. Soren Kierkegaard, quoted by Dr. Lakshmi Saxena, \textit{Encounter With Transcendence}, \textit{op. cit} P.7.

While, the second poem 'Conjecture' justifies the fact that man is a social being. In other words, man cannot live happily without the sunny atmosphere of his neighbours:

IF there were in my kalendar
No Emma, Florence, Mary,
What would be my existence now -
He thinks:
0 were it else than this,
I'd pass to pulseless sleep! 49

Just as Hardy shares many ideas with existentialism, he differs also in respect of some. It is true that he agrees with them that there is no God, but he thinks that there is an unknown power in the universe which always hinders man's path of progress. He calls this power by various names such as 'Fate', 'Destiny', 'Crass Casualty', 'Immanent Will', and so on. According to Hardy's firm belief, this power, whatever it may be, is an incomprehensive force that certainly remains indifferent to the existence of human beings.

Hardy, like G.B. Shaw, was an 'evolutionary meliorist' who strongly believed in the gradual evolution of human existence. His 'meliorism', which includes his new faith is evident in his poetry which is truly his interpretation of life in the light of atheism and humanism. In his poetry, Hardy tries for the redemption of human beings.

existence which has become 'a world of futile doings' on account of man's inhumanity to man, woman and other lower creatures.

Hardy, basically a staunch humanist, is deeply concerned with human existence in relation to man's biological environment, social world and self-consciousness. He also deals with human existence in relation to the governance of the 'world', the 'universe', and the 'Immanent Will'. He sees the world as patterned but with no meaning in it which is to be made worth-while by man, the master of the universe. Supporting Hardy's concern for fellow-beings, Earnest Brennecke Jr. says that Hardy's sympathy for man "... was always that of the fellow worker and fellow sufferer."50 Indeed, Hardy thought his aim was to touch the readers' heart but not to boast of his knowledge. His subject was human existence as he clearly stated in his preface to The Poems of the Past and the Present: "... The road to a true philosophy of life seems to lie in humbly recording diverse readings of its phenomena as they are forced upon us by chance and change."51 Similarly, Hardy thought his duty was "... to show the sorriness underlying the grandest

51. Thomas Hardy, Preface to Poems of the Past and the Present, op. cit., p. 84.
things, and the grandeur underlying the sorriest things." He also adds, "To find beauty in ugliness is the province of the poet."\(^{52}\) Hardy's humanism is affirmed by F.B. Pinion: "His subject was 'life' and not its 'garniture' .... yet he took no interest in manners, but in the substance of life only."\(^{53}\) Indeed Hardy can be summed up in the words of H.C. Duffin: "If Hardy's poetic soul had not greatness, it had beauty, tenderness, pity -- qualities almost as rare, and perhaps equally acceptable in the sight of the gods."\(^{54}\)

People regarded him as a pessimist, but in reality, Hardy is not a pessimist. He is a humanist, optimist and an evolutionary meliorist. For instance, in his 'double-vision' of life as pictured in his poetry, his protagonists are not life-deniers, they are simply rebels against the traditional way of life, superstition, religion and the dying Godhead. They do not wish to die even in the face of glaring misfortunes. They attempt to adjust with the existing situations; they reconcile their differences; and

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they try their best to create a new order of life which will make their life harmonious and endurable. As a result, they lead a simple, but noble and heroic life in order to achieve 'self-realization'.