Existential Development in Post-WWII:

France’s New *Zeitgeist*

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Dedication

I would first like to dedicate my research paper to my new friend, Maxime Mobayen. Your physical disability has no doubt caused you alienation at times as well as physical challenges. Yet your limitations have never stopped you from chasing after your goals and dreams whether it’s stock trading or traveling. I am inspired by your courage, wisdom, innocence, and passion, and pray that your future beams with peace.

I also wish to dedicate my work to my native country, Lebanon. There is not a shred of doubt that you are the bride of the East, inexhaustible in your beauty, and rich in your culture. Many have unjustly smitten your beautiful countenance, and this pains me tremendously. I dream of a day when you will truly be independent and prosperous. I shall love you till my last breath…

**“The whole of society ought to strive towards the amelioration of the moral and physical existence of the poorest class; society ought to organize itself in the way best adapted for attaining this end.”** Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825)

**“Anything above that which is needed for necessary expenditure should be given to others. I do not believe in this absurd and ugly consumer society; men who live within it will end up by consuming themselves.”** Kamal Jumblatt (1917-1977)

**“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”** Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968)

Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) [[1]](#footnote-1), one of the greatest thinkers of the modern world, once articulated what can be defined as the central premise of existence[[2]](#footnote-2):

The life of an individual is a constant struggle, and not merely a metaphorical one against want or boredom, but also an actual struggle against other people. He discovers adversaries everywhere, lives in continual conflict and dies with sword in hand.

*Hobbian[[3]](#footnote-3)* Sentiments such as these have been echoed like a mantra since the dawn of human history by a myriad of individuals burdened by the agonies of mundane affairs. Societies can be said to be a battleground between *Eros* and *Thanatos*[[4]](#footnote-4) hacking each other to pieces *ad infinitum*. Irrespective of this, many thinkers have insisted that this orgy of tragedies that befalls peoples and nations, is in essence, nothing but an opportunity to be seized. Historian Arnold J. Toynbee (1889-1975), for instance, remarked that growth emerges whenever a challenge arouses a successful response that in turn arouses a wholly different and further challenge[[5]](#footnote-5). It was ultimately Toynbee who affirmed that civilizations die from suicide and not murder. It is through those tumultuous times that societies are in desperate need of the “creative minority[[6]](#footnote-6)”- to borrow Toynbee’s term- a minority that would offer the fractured society catharsis and reorient the community back to normalcy.

One of the most prominent examples of a civilization that dealt with trauma was the nation-state of France. In the aftermath of the 2nd World War, French society was vulnerable and desperately needed healing. Much has been written by historians on the military and socio-political parameters that colored this postwar republic yet very few discussions were ever centered on the philosophical and spiritual dimensions that emerged in France after the war. It is in light of the aforementioned remarks that an examination of existential thought will be conducted. It was existentialism that marked its territory efficiently serving as a *tour de force* against the widespread angst that was suffocating the living breath out of the collective consciousness. The chief representative of this worldview was the intellectual, Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980)[[7]](#footnote-7) who was most famous for his association with the feminist thinker, Simon De Bouvoire (1908-1986)[[8]](#footnote-8). While some scholars have emphasized the role of the trauma of war in respect to the development of existentialism, others- in addition to the latter cause- turned their attention on the collapse of the old intellectual order as the primary factor.

Before discussing the development of existential thought in postwar France, there is a dire need to explain the premises that comprises such philosophy, and the most efficient way to begin is by probing into the individual. The individual, under existential thought, is the measure of all things to borrow Protagoras’ saying; Marx (1818-1833)[[9]](#footnote-9) spoke of *commodity fetishism*[[10]](#footnote-10) and existentialists might as well speak of human fetishism given the attention that the human agent receives under their philosophical system. The erudite thinker, Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) [[11]](#footnote-11)who is considered the father of existential thought, left no lingering doubt on the primacy of the self. In the words of one scholar[[12]](#footnote-12):

In Kierkegaard the authentic person is called "The Individual." Kierkegaard dedicated his works to "The Individual," wished "The Individual" to be inscribed on his tomb, declared that "The Individual" was the category through which man in the course of his history was destined to pass.

Aside from the attention given to the individual, there is also a strong emphasis on the meaning and purpose of the human agent and in particular the agent’s exercise of freedom- a value which even existential atheists treat as a quasi-religious ideal. As one thinker put it:

Existentialism is the doctrine that man is free and that what he makes of himself depends on himself, on his free choices.[[13]](#footnote-13)

While the aforementioned quote might be an initiation to self-liberation and positive transformation, the quote simultaneously highlights the burden of responsibility that existentialism holds on human beings. In other words, the self is radically free, and no amount of victimization and scapegoating will existentialism tolerate. The French philosopher, Jean Paul Sartre, remarked how humans are condemned to be free; such freedom to Sartre carries anguish given the ultimate unpredictability of freedom. More importantly, Sartre saw in many an example of *mauvaise foi* [[14]](#footnote-14)whereby people masked their freedom and responsibility in the name of their personality or as a result of the judgement of society[[15]](#footnote-15)[[16]](#footnote-16). Despite the agreeable nature of those ideas, existential philosophy did not exert much influence in English-speaking countries but found its center in the continental countries instead. Nevertheless, existentialists are by no means monolithic. While those thinkers share a myriad of themes in common, those particular stock of thinkers are not on the same page metaphysically. Soren Kierkegaard, for instance, was a Christian *philosophe* while Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)[[17]](#footnote-17), another existential thinker, was not shy in proclaiming the death of God via his fictional character, Zarathustra, nor did he display hesitance in attacking Christian morality. Nietzsche in staying true to existential thought advocated for the notion of “self-making” and applauded the individual who differentiated himself from the “herd” and the conformist impact of some peoples. Similarly, Jean Paul Sartre took an atheistic bent to his philosophy affirming that the individual is forlorn in the cosmos with absolutely no essence and that universe is barred from ultimate meaning and objective ethics.

Having briefly affirmed the cardinal tenets of existential thought, time beckons us to explore the historical context of France- a context that would lead French society to embrace existentialism in the post-war landscape. Indeed, historical memory unfolds to its listeners of a society during World War II torn vehemently by a tug of war, a house visibly divided against itself. Vichy France under Petain (19856-1951), on one side, stood in sharp opposition to the Free French forces under Charles de Gaulle (1890-1970) yet a house divided against itself cannot stand as Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) famously affirmed. From the middle of 1940 to 1944, there were manifestly intellectuals who had a cozy relationship with the collaborationists- a relationship so intimate that collaborationists- as Patrick Baert remarks- had freedom to speak and write freely. More fundamentally, perhaps, is that the collaborationists had a monopoly over the symbolic production that would theoretically shape the society. Major editorial positions, for instance, were relegated to them and the prototype of this privilege was Pierre Drieu La Rochelle (1893-1945) whom in 1940 became chief editor of *La Nouvelle Revue Francaise*[[18]](#footnote-18). Not only did those particular breeds of intellectuals have access to resources, they were prioritized at the expense of the intellectual opposition whose expressions were squashed. The regulation of intellectual production was carried out *par excellence* by the Germans during 1940 and the publications that went against the wishes of the Propaganda Staffel were not to be tolerated within society. This illiberal condition was captured most infamously by the *Liste Otto* that banned books that were not in tune with the Vichy regime[[19]](#footnote-19), a situation eerily familiar with the plot of the fictional dystopian novel *Fahrenheit 451* (1953)*.* The novel’s fictional character Guy Montag- for the sake of comparison- may be likened to the intellectual opposition disillusioned by the collaborationists- an opposition that had to operate underground while still engaging in resistance publications. Great efforts had to be actualized by those individuals in their writings in order to avoid the censorship[[20]](#footnote-20).

Despite the overburdening limitations that was shoved at the resistance intellectuals, the tide would soon change. More specifically, the tide would change as a result of the cultural void. The reasoning behind the latter remarks is quite logical; with the passing of the old guard, a vacuum naturally followed in that post-war landscape resulting in the emergence of a new order. This transition was deciphered by 1944 where the offense was aimed right at the collaborationists who either served very strenuous sentences or faced execution[[21]](#footnote-21). Novels such as *Le Silence De La Mer* (1941) highlighted the German onslaught on French national standing[[22]](#footnote-22). This onslaught on French national identity was to be ingrained in the minds of the resistance intellectuals who were all too willing to name and shame those that had a soft spot for the Germans. For the resistance intellectuals, the individuals they targeted were understood to be treasonous. *Les Léttres Française*, a Resistance literary journal, took the lead in this[[23]](#footnote-23) as well as the *Comité National Des écrivains*, an entity with a communist bent[[24]](#footnote-24). Even judicially, no one from the old guard was spared and this was articulated most strikingly by the then leader, Charles De Gaulle, who took great ease in prosecuting well-known fascist authors. Brasillach (1909-1945) is perhaps the best known from those authors who had to face trial[[25]](#footnote-25)- the trial of the *démodé* scholars whose time were up. As evident from those latter examples, there was visibly a collective work as well as dedication and efficiency in exterminating the reputation and some of the lives of literary and philosophical personalities[[26]](#footnote-26):

It was a socio-historical setting in which to put it bluntly there were plenty of intellectual vacancies.

This period of time also witnessed decrees that undermined certain periodicals and newspapers that were present during the occupation. Essentially, if those periodicals and newspapers displayed low level patriotism or implicit dependence on the enemy, the decrees- set in the postwar landscape- made no reservations about the removal of these excerpts. Interestingly, the collapse of those personalities meant the deterioration of their art and literary methods. Art for art’s sake and the notion of an autonomous art, for instance, was slashed away; they were not slashed willy-nilly for no apparent reason but had to be discarded because of their tainted association with the far right linked to figures such as Drieu and Gide (1869-1951)[[27]](#footnote-27). How writing ought to be carried out suddenly took on new importance; certain genres and intellectual positions were now crucified. One does not need to look far for examples, but the Catholic Church comes to mind. Its unholy connection with the Vichy, for instance, meant that the new conservative Catholics had to be squeezed out of the bench in the emergent cultural landscape whereas the progressive Catholics on the other hand- embodied via their magazine *Esprit-* found luck on their hand[[28]](#footnote-28). Furthermore, no longer can literature or philosophy be separated from the holy grail of politics for political responsibility came to be seen as the *raison d’etre* for social awareness. Being impartial and objective became unacceptable. As for responsibility, this deed became the catchword for the new intellectuals and the newspaper *Le Figaro* criticized one of the authors from the old guard for having played with ideas as if they were mere toys without realizing their consequence[[29]](#footnote-29)as well as failing to distinguish fiction properly from facts. Charles De Gaulle was likewise keen on emphasizing the role of responsibility in intellectual endeavors[[30]](#footnote-30):

All the more so since it was easy to see to what crimes and to what punishments their eloquent excitement had driven poor gullible people. (...) Because, in letters, as in everything, talent is a title of responsibility.

Essentially, De Gaulle in this passage was asserting that in literature like everywhere else, those with talent must not forget that consequences come with their works, and this is why De Gaulle never pardoned the fascist sympathizer, Brazillach. In addition to that, language in concert with literature were regarded as “ways of acting” and as “instruments”[[31]](#footnote-31). Nor was art to be divorced from political and social responsibility:

Within this new climate, three intellectual positions would flourish: existentialism, Marxism and finally progressive Catholicism (especially the doctrine of personalism[[32]](#footnote-32)).[[33]](#footnote-33)

New contenders entered the new scene rendering the old landscape null. Sartre- the celebrity thinker- was at the very forefront of this and his New York lecture in Paris in January 1945 captured this new chapter in French history as well as his blueprint:[[34]](#footnote-34)

We have now, I think, dealt with a certain number of the reproaches against existentialism. You have seen that it cannot be regarded as a philosophy of quietism since it defines man by his action; nor as a pessimistic description of man, for no doctrine is more optimistic, the destiny of man is placed within himself.

This lecture was all too significant and for one profound reason- it was in this context that Sartre introduced the absurdist and existentialist *philosophe*, Albert Camus, in a chess move that reminded the audience of the new players in town and of how those players married political significance to their intellectual and artistic works[[35]](#footnote-35). Jean-Paul Sartre, who was not finished with burying the old guard in their tomb, erected in his editorial to the first issue of *Les Temps Modernes* harsh criticisms against the philosophers associated with realism and the ‘art for art sake’ movement- Sartre affirmed that an individual is accountable in engaging in conscious decisions in order to commit socially beneficial acts given that art for art’s sake falls short from the margin[[36]](#footnote-36). *Les Temps Modernes* [[37]](#footnote-37)was essentially Sartre’s pride being established by him and by the feminist theoretician, Simone De Bouvoire.

Status is another logical implication worth considering when assessing the popularity that would eventually befall existentialism. Writing tracts against the intellectual oppressors have aided the resistance intellectuals in attaining a sense of glamour. The *epuration* in a sense has buried the old establishment and discredited them in the eyes of the public; many of the members of the old intellectual establishment killed themselves whereas others were killed and assassinated. Not everyone of course had such a dramatic outcome for some writers were merely shunned such as Ferdinand Celine (1894-1961), Henry de Montherlant (1895-1972) and Charles Murras (1868-1952). Even the thinkers who were not evidently on the right but who were ambiguous or not clear enough in their condemnation of the Nazis or the Vichy also were swept away[[38]](#footnote-38). The void that the aforementioned individuals left behind clearly gave opportunities for new thinkers to experience the spotlight. In addition to that, attaining this sense of glamour is indisputably tied to media, a popular medium which in a sense helped disseminate philosophies such as existentialism to the public. The popularity of the radio in the mid-1940s for instance spelled wonders for the existentialists who exploited this technology efficiently. Albert Camus [[39]](#footnote-39)is a striking example of this who found that the BBC worked beautifully in his favor similar to the French national radio that aided Sartre in spreading his philosophical system[[40]](#footnote-40):

The broadcasting of intellectual tracts on national radio…Writers associated with existentialism benefited from this state consecration, whether it came from the French or the British.

More fundamentally- as Baert noted- by the year 1947, the French government allowed Sartre alongside other thinkers to broadcast a number of pivotal sessions related to political matters.

Last but not least, a discussion on the development of existential thought would not be complete if we do not introduce the role of war trauma. As already alluded, French society during the occupation was divided and this division carried huge scars for the collective consciousness. Multiple scholars have discussed what is called ‘trauma process’ whereby a society is forced, in a sense, to deal with the disruptions in all of its dimensions[[41]](#footnote-41). One is reminded, for instance, of the infamous Lisbon earthquake of 1755 that left a 100,000 dead provoking the philosopher, Voltaire, to utilize this incident in his book *Candide (1759)[[42]](#footnote-42).* Albert Camus’ novel *The Myth of Sisyphus* is not too different from *Candide* offering the readers a window into the tarnished European soul. It is no surprise that this striking novel was carried out in 1940 in the heat of war when millions of refugees were fleeing away from the incoming German troops. As one scholar remarked[[43]](#footnote-43):

Camus’s sense of the absurd was more than a cosmic insight; it was also, Zaretsky shows, the product of historical experience. Camus was working on The Myth of Sisyphus during the fall of France… Though Camus barely alludes to these circumstances in his book, Zaretsky convincingly argues that the disaster reinforced his sense of the absurd as something just underneath the surface of ordinary life, waiting to burst forth in meaningless violence.

The preceding quote is of course crucial for a number of reasons. First, it displays the interplay of philosophy and historical conditions that no thinker is ever immune from. Secondly, it highlights how thinkers such as Camus (and Voltaire) are an example of what is called ‘carrier groups’- individuals who affirm the traumatic experiences and who help in the recovery. Existentialism in its development in the post-war landscape can only make sense when we understand the latter insights. Existentialists became popular because they served as ‘carrier groups’ and strove to unfold a unified picture of their society as well as seeking a remedy for the messiness that they had to confront during the conflict. Yet calling it ‘conflict’ does not give that historical period justice. In a more accurate way, World War II for the French was surreal; the normal categories of thought were all left naked to the military defeat and speed of the war. Moreover, the fact that many French people stood cowardly on the sidelines as other French fought for the amoral team no doubt impacted the Republic in the aftermath of the turmoil. Petain calling the German onslaught a just lesson for the sins of the French also added insult to injury[[44]](#footnote-44). Seen in this context, trauma was only natural. Jean Lacroix (1900-1986), the French philosopher, capitalized eloquently on the trauma that shredded French society to pieces by asserting that a surgical operation was needed to restore the social health of France[[45]](#footnote-45). The presence of trauma- according to Baert- was also manifested in the manner that the reporting was carried out. It was anything but objective and the newspapers took part in reporting the major court cases as well as the trials of the old guard in an emotive manner[[46]](#footnote-46). Yet while the new intellectual order acknowledged the trauma that ensued from the occupation, they likewise offered a way out of the circuit of suffering. The notion of responsibility- hitherto discussed- was viewed to be part of the remedy. Albert Camus, for instance, saw the need for a new morality of the press where the pursuit of truth and education came first instead of petty entertainment[[47]](#footnote-47). Yet not always was the remedy carried out sincerely. In rebuilding French national pride, for example, the collective memory- to use Maurice Halbwachs’ term- was reconfigured overplaying the extent of the new intellectual guard while relegating the deeds of the old intellectual guard as a mission of the few. Charles De Gaulle also engaged in reshuffling the collective memory displaying how France was united and strong against the German attack. Paris’ ‘own people”- as emphasized by De Gaulle- liberated itself from the Germans; De Gaulle spoke of ‘whole France’ and ‘eternal France’ as fighting the enemy[[48]](#footnote-48). The trauma was so painful that selective memory was exercised; Sartre and De Gaulle were either in denial or embarrassed by what befell France during the war.

In respect to the intellectual, Jean Paul Sartre, he not only filled the void upon the decline of the old guard, but he also sought to rebuild the fractured wings of the French collective in multiple excerpts. In his ‘La Republique Du Silence’ of 1944, one glimpses Sartre’s emotive tone as well as his lexicon of trauma. Furthermore, the repulsive conditions of the occupation are laid out as well as the monstrosity of the enemy. Tying these matters, Sartre affirmed that the repression which was existent in the occupation made people more conscious of their freedom as well as the burden of their actions. Sartre likewise linked the ideal of freedom- an existential tenet- alongside equality and solidarity[[49]](#footnote-49). Here, one glimpses of how existentialism developed into a practical matter and not solely an abstract and elitist system of thought. There are also additional reasons that reveals the extent that Jean-Paul Sartre grappled with the trauma that pervaded French society. Sartre’s later work, for instance, marked an intriguing departure from his pre-war writings. This shows the effect that the arena of war had on this intellectual and no longer was there a depiction of the bleak, amoral region marked by despair and repulsion. Instead, Sartre presented a philosophy that directly spoke to the masses promoting themes of human welfare and solidarity. In other words, the evolution of Sartre’s thought is linked tremendously with the war:

In his subsequent autobiographical reflections, Sartre himself would reinforce this view and make the discontinuity thesis a centerpiece of his own story about himself, arguing that the war had been a watershed moment for him which had altered his whole outlook.

Those utterances are not off when one examines the tracts of Sartre such as *Qu’est-ce que la littérature?*[[50]](#footnote-50) and *Réflexions sur la question juive[[51]](#footnote-51).* The aforementioned tracts unfold to the readers of an intellectual fully immersed in the public sphere guiding the French populace towards their recovery in the postwar landscape. Political consciousness and progressivism are the ethos that mark those writings. His *Réflexions sur la question juive* does not shy away from its tenet, but endorses with open arms the need for an engaged literature. More fundamentally- and perhaps with a dose of irony- those texts also show a transition for Sartre given his openness for Marxist thought. None of this is surprising for, as hitherto mentioned, Marxism and socialism swept away the new French arena alongside progressive Catholicism. Sartre himself was no doubt vulnerable to the Marxist aura absorbing its lexicon into his philosophy. Sartre’s 1957 essay *Search for a Method* attempted to reconcile Marxism and existentialism which is all too interesting considering the deterministic ethos that comprises Marxist philosophy[[52]](#footnote-52). In underscoring Sartre in the postwar landscape, one should keep in mind that this thinker was never suspended in some ivory tower but wrote one of his works while he was a prisoner of war. Sartre’s sympathy and deed with the resistance during the Nazi occupation lays to rest any claim that his deeds did not match with his philosophy. As authors Leslie Stevenson and David L. Haberman note:

Some of the atmosphere of that time can be found in his work. The choice that confronted all Frenchmen and women- collaboration with the Germans, resistance, or quiet self-preservation- was a very obvious instance of what existentialists see as the ever-present necessity for individual choice.

Sartre, active politically on the left, was furthermore a worldwide figure opposing the French war on Algeria and the US war against Vietnam. While those ideas and the biographical component (Sartre’s background as well as his analytical and creative skills) may have well been a factor in the popular development of existentialism, they are by no means a primary cause[[53]](#footnote-53):

Sartre’s network and his cultural advantages – go some way towards accounting for the positive reception of his work within specialist circles well before 1944, they do not explain why existentialist ideas suddenly engulfed the public intellectual domain in the mid-1940s.

To put it bluntly, while there is truth in the views of thinkers such as Boschetti and Collins who placed significance to the relative autonomy of intellectuals[[54]](#footnote-54), the socio-political parameters simply cannot be ignored when assessing the entirety of the emergent landscape.

In sum, we can safely assert that both Arthur Schopenhauer and Arnold Toynbee were right. The former was accurate in his description of the universe being an arena of senseless suffering, yet the latter was precise in his civilizational thesis. Indeed, growth does emerge whenever a challenge arouses a successful response. Toynbee’s reference to the creative minority was correct as well. After all, the creative minorities- existentialists, progressive catholics, and Marxists- did in fact offer the discolored French society salvation from the trauma that impregnated their conscience. More specifically, as the essay has revealed, those creative minorities by serving as ‘carrier groups’ guided powerfully the bruised public portraying a unified picture of France as well as introducing a new lexicon and new literary methods and genres. Furthermore, as it was displayed in this paper, the phenomenon of the cultural vacuum is no illusion. Similar to Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary who found a void in the wake of their transition towards liberal democracy[[55]](#footnote-55), France found the same fate as well when the Nazi and Vichy regime deteriorated birthing new players in its wake.

There is perhaps another point that this essay has implicitly pushed, and it concerns what scholars call ‘systems thinking’. Put simply, there can be no denial that philosophy and history are very much interrelated both influencing one another. More fundamentally, everything is in a sense connected- religious traditions, art, films, music, science, mathematics and philosophical systems. Whether we are students, academicians, or simple folks, we should strive to the best of our ability to adopt a holistic approach to things. Our lack of interconnectedness today as manifested in our universities’ departments is perhaps a reflection of the scientific worldview of the Enlightenment period whereby Western thinkers adhered to a more atomistic and analytical approach to philosophy and science. As a result, the world became viewed as individualized foundations or building blocks and ‘analysis’ instead of ‘integration’ became the new form of understanding. It is my hope that this essay has challenged- albeit implicitly- this fragmentated and disunited view of things unfolding to the readers instead a world of interdependencies.

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1. The German philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), saw the existence of man to be akin to a pendulum swinging from want to boredom. Nevertheless, he argued that this circuit of suffering may be thwarted by the arts and music, elements that provide a kind of salvation. He likewise exemplified the saintly life as a means to curb the Will, this inner unity of all things that manifests itself as a non-stop throbbing of desire that is undirected and irrational. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Italian philosopher, Giacomo Leopardi (1798-1837), who influenced Schopenhauer, argues in a similar vein in *Zibaldone* (1898) that “Everything is evil. I mean, everything that is, is wicked; every existing thing is an evil; everything exists for a wicked end. Existence is a wickedness and is ordained for wickedness. Evil is the end, the final purpose, of the universe...The only good is nonbeing; the only really good thing is the thing that is not, things that are not things; all things are bad.” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), argued that the state of nature of man is nasty, short, solitary and brutish. His solution was dramatic- transfer your liberty to a single person and resign yourself to him for security’s sake. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Thanatos* is essentially the death drive in Freudian psychoanalytic *parlance* aimed at destruction and death as opposed to *Eros* which is the principle of sex and survival. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World: Release 2.0*, New York: W.W. Norton, 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Christopher Quigley, “Civilizations Die by Suicide Not by Murder.” Financial Sense, December 15, 2015, https://www.financialsense.com/contributors/christopher-quigley/civilizations-die-by-suicide-not-by-murder. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The French philosopher, Jean Paul Sartre, who manufactured plays, novels, essays and autobiographical works, was no doubt shaped by thinkers such as Martin Heidegger, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel , and Edmund Husserl. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Simone De Bouvoire (1908- 1986) was a well-known feminist thinker and a companion of Sartre. In her book *The Second Sex*, Bouvoire affirmed that man, across history, has been relegated to a default position whereas woman was looked upon as the other: "Thus humanity is male and man defines woman not herself but as relative to him." [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Karl Marx (1818-1833), the German thinker, had a deterministic bent to his Marxist philosophy; according to him, capitalism akin to previous socioeconomic systems has internal contradictions which would lead to its own end which in this case result in socialism (classless and stateless). Marx saw human societies through class struggle. In respect to religion, Marx saw it as the opium of the masses which is essentially a form of escapism that the elites utilize to keep the workers in a passive state so that their capitalistic system continues. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Commodity fetishism pertains to how the subjective and abstract components within economics are transformed into objective, real things which the masses take to have intrinsic value. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), spoke about the two modes of life that are equally non satisfactory: the aesthetic and the ethical. The former is hedonistic in nature focusing merely on the present moment and instant gratification whereas the latter focus on obligation and duty. For Kierkegaard, the best that an agent can do is to make a leap of faith, a leap outside the domain of rationality. Religious faith, for this Danish thinker, offers true freedom and fulfillment. Kierkegaard likewise affirmed of how anxiety is tied to our realization of freedom, the inevitability to err, and the need of radical choice. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. J.B Coates, "Existentialism." Philosophy 28, no. 106 (1953): 229-38, http://www.jstor.org.lib-proxy.fullerton.edu/stable/3748098. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. F.C Coplestone, "Existentialism." Philosophy 23, no. 84 (1948): 19-37, http://www.jstor.org.lib-proxy.fullerton.edu/stable/3747384. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. *Mauvaise foi* basically refers to bad faith when we disavow our freedom and adopt roles; Sartre gives the example of a waiter whose mannerisms give the impression that him being waiter constitutes his essence: "his movement is quick and forward, a little too precise, a little too rapid". Sartre also gives the example of a girl on her first date whereby she treats her hand as merely a thing as the boy places his hand on her. "neither consenting nor resisting – a thing" [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. The theme of society interestingly features in the philosophy of the Genevan thinker, Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). Rousseau sees with the emergence of civilization the condition of *amour propre* whereby one’s opinion of himself is dependent on the gaze and thoughts of other.  [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. The subject of society has a pivotal role in Sartre’s philosophy. “Hell is other people” captures Sartre’s warning of how one should not trap himself by the judgement of others. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Through his “God is Dead” remark, Nietzsche (1844-1900), was affirming the retreat of the absolute within society. Yet the buck did not stop there with Nietzsche; the German philosopher argued that human beings as a result of God’s death must find value for themselves. Nietzsche was likewise critical of what he called “slave morality”, a characteristic that Christianity is guilty of. Traits such as timidity, weakness, suffering, loss, humility, sympathy, friendliness and patience disempowered the human agent according to Nietzsche. In contrast, Nietzsche advocated the return to master morality envisioned by the *ubermench*.Thomas Carlyle’s hero worship interestingly finds traces in the concept of Nietzsche’s *ubermench.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. William Tucker (1965), "Fascism and Individualism: The Political Thought of Pierre Drieu La Rochelle", Journal of Politics, The Journal of Politics, Vol. 27, No. 1. 27 (1): 153–177. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. « Liste Otto » [archive] [PDF], sur Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Bibliothek (consulté le 18 mai 2019) [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Robert Pickering (1985) *Writing under Vichy: ambiguity and literary imagination in the non-occupied zone. In Vichy France and the Resistance* , eds, Roderick Kedward and Roger Austin, London: Croom Helm, pp. 260– 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Diane Rubenstein (1993) Publish or perish: the épuration of French intellectuals, *Journal of European Studies* 3, 1: 71– 99. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. "Vercors.", *Le Silence De La Mer*, Place of publication not identified: Cideb, 2004. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Patrick Baert, "The Sudden Rise of French Existentialism: A Case-study in the Sociology of Intellectual Life." Theory and Society 40, no. 6 (2011): 619-44. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Francois Jacques, “Review Essay : The NRF: Behind the Scenes.” Journal of European Studies 32, no. 127 (December 2002): 389–99. doi:10.1177/004724410203212704. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Bertram Gordon, "The Collaborator: The Trial and Execution of Robert Brasillach." Holocaust and Genocide Studies 16, no. 1 (2002): 129-32. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Patrick Baert, *The Existentialist Moment: The Rise of Sartre as a Public Intellectual*. Cambridge: Polity, 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Patrick Baert, *The Existentialist Moment: The Rise of Sartre as a Public Intellectual*, page 69, Cambridge: Polity, 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Prospectus de présentation de la revue "Esprit" Archived 2007-09-29 at the Wayback Machine, presented by Alain-Gérard Slama, on-line course of Sciences-Po, 18 May 2007 (in French) [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. *Le Figaro*, January 20, 1945. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Charles De Gaulle, *The Complete War Memoirs of Charles De Gaulle*, New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 1998. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Philip Watts (1998), *Allegories of the Purge: How literature Responded to the Postwar Trials of Writers and Intellectuals in France*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Personalism is a philosophical position that underscores the primacy of the individual as the central focus of exploration for philosophical studies. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Patrick Baert, *The Existentialist Moment: The Rise of Sartre as a Public Intellectual*, page 139, Cambridge: Polity, 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Sartre, Jean-Paul. Existentialism and Humanism. York: Methuen, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Andy Martin, "Sartre and Camus in New York." The New York Times, July 14, 2012. https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/07/14/sartre-and-camus-in-new-york/. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. "Littérature engagée". Encyclopædia Britannica. 2010. Retrieved 26 July 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. This Journal was named after a Charlie Chaplin film. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Patrick Baert, *The Existentialist Moment: The Rise of Sartre as a Public Intellectual*, page 136, Cambridge: Polity, 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Albert Camus (1913-1960) made no qualms about the absurdity that infuses our existence. Camus highlights this sense of absurdity in the way that humans seek order and meaning only to find indifference, despair and irrationality. Camus’ absurd hero is Sisyphus who rolls up a rock uphill only to find the boulder roll back down yet endurance is still the option that Camus wishes his brethrens to seek. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Patrick Baert, The Existentialist Moment: The Rise of Sartre as a Public Intellectual, page 136, Cambridge: Polity, 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Gil Eval, Eleanor Townsley, and Evan Szelenyi, Making Capitalism without Capitalists: the New Ruling Elites in Eastern Europe, London: Verso, 2000. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Voltaire (1694-1778) does not shy away in attacking the premise- adopted by the likes of Leibniz- that ours is the best of all possible worlds. In the words of Theodor Adorno: "[t]he earthquake of Lisbon sufficed to cure Voltaire of the theodicy of Leibniz" (Negative Dialectics 361). [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Adam Kirsh (20 October 2013), "Why Albert Camus Remains Controversial", The Daily Beast. Retrieved 29 November 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. James Wilkinson (1981), *The Intellectual Resistance in Europe*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Jean Lacroix, “Charité Chrétienne Et Justice Politique.” *Esprit*, February 1945. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Patrick Baert, The Existentialist Moment: The Rise of Sartre as a Public Intellectual, page 136, Cambridge: Polity, 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. *Combat*, September 1, 1944.

    *Combat*, September 8, 1944. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. *Combat*, August 26, 1944. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Jean Paul Sartre, “La République Du Silence.” *Les Lettres Francaises*, September 9, 1944. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Jean Paul Sartre, *Qu Est-Ce Que La littérature?* Paris: Gallimard, 1997. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Jean Paul Sartre, *Réflexions Sur La Question Juive*, Paris: Gallimard, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Wilfrid Desan, *The Marxism of Jean-Paul Sartre*, Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1965. p.43 [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Jean Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, York: Methuen, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. The Hutchinson Encyclopedia, Millennium Edition, Helicon 1999. Boschetti, Anna (1985) Sartre et ‘Les Temps modernes’ . Paris: Minuit. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Andras Bozoki (1999) *Intellectuals and Politics in Central Europe,* Budapest: Central European University Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)