An Existentialist Theory of the Human Spirit (Volume 2)
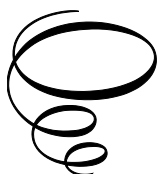
An Existentialist Theory of the Human Spirit (Volume 2):

To Create and Believe... or Not

By

Shlomo Giora Shoham

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CHAPTER 27: EXISTENTIALISM & AUTHENTICITY

Existential Morality

We claim that man's moral freedom stems from another source. Man is thrown into the world to serve ends unknown to him. He is able to suspect, without having any solid basis for his suspicion, that "the dice are loaded and die game is not his."[1] An *incommunicado* infinity, Godhead, programmer, has created man in his own image to mend His blemishes, fight the Archons, engage in a revelatory dialogue with Him, and supply Him with the truth of innovations and the ecstasy of creativity. This renders man normatively free. He owes no one moral allegiance except himself and anyone whose call for help he feels within his inner self. Thus man is the source of meaning, because he can determine his relationships with his objective and human surroundings and his attitude towards transcendence through the dual archetypes of Sisyphus and Tantalus.

The book of Genesis provides some mytho-empirical instances in which the primal man bestows meanings both on transcendence, as a projection of the universal *ani* consciousness, and on objects and life forms, as the incarnation of energy-matter, by calling them names, by labeling them with a Logos, and thus integrating them into the structure of meaning. With Enos, man began to call upon the name of the Lord.[2] In Hebrew, Enos literally means a human being. In our context, this means that with the appearance of the primal man, transcendence (our *ani* consciousness) was given a name, and thus a meaningful identity.

God brought His newly-formed creatures before Adam to receive their names. As a myth of creation, there is a dilemma: Why did the Creator who formed the creatures not give them names? It seems natural, logical, and appropriate that God who created the life forms should also name them. But according to the dynamics of mytho-empiricism, authentic myths (of which the Bible is a prime collection) are projections of developmental experience. Therefore, man is the source of meanings and values. God, in this true myth, brings the life forms to man to be given a meaningful identity. Man, the anthropic mediator, is the only one bestowing meaning upon God and beast.

Yet man is not rewarded by the universal *ani* consciousness and by energy-matter for his role. On the contrary, he is victimized by it, though paradoxically, this sacrificial coercion, depravation, and pain is the source of man's capacity to bestow morality.

In Volume 1 we mentioned the normative powers of the Isaac Syndrome.[3] Similarly, we hold that the moral vigor of Prometheus, as the archetypal authentic rebel, stems from his eternal sacrificial resurrection. As punishment, he was bound to a rock. His cyclic vicissitudes with that rock seem similar to those of Sisyphus.

Of special importance is the first fratricide and its effects on the normative significance of Cain's objective surroundings. "What hast thou done?" God asked Cain rhetorically. "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto Me from the ground. And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand."[4]

Thus, the bearer of the original Mark of Cain was not only damned by man as a result of the martyrdom of Abel, but the land that he cultivated was cursed: "When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and vagabond shalt thou be in the earth."[5] The pollution presumably stems from the identity of social and religious norms in ancient times. The offender acted against the Divine order, was therefore considered a representation of Evil, and became a source of moral pollution.

Svend Ranulf cites a 17th century English Puritan sermon:

"Sinne leaves a kind of blemish and stains upon the soule after the commission of it. ... The Scripture calls it the excrement of naughtiness, though the act of sinne is gone, yet there is a blemish on the soule. ... So a man after sinne shall find himself dull to any good, and prone to any evil ..."[6]

This is a perfect illustration of the symbolic value of the derogatory tag. Pollution was deemed to be contagious. The stigmatized offender was very often segregated and ostracized. Frazer cites instances of this stigmatized pollution.[7] In ancient Attica, murderers were ostracized and outlawed, and anyone could injure or kill them with impunity. If another trial was pending against a murderer he could return to defend himself, but he had to remain on board a boat, while the judges conducted the trial on the seashore. The murderer was not allowed to touch the shore lest he pollute the land and the people by contagion.

Thucydides tells the story of Alcmaeon who wandered the earth after the murder of his mother. He had been told by the Oracle of Apollo that he would never find peace until he discovered some place which had not been in existence nor seen by the sun at the time he slew his mother; only there would he be able to settle as the rest of the earth was accursed to him.[8] Thus historically, stigma and its social consequences preceded the formalization of sanction.

Sanction was originally an expiatory act that was supposed to cleanse and purge the pollution and stigma incurred by the violation. Philological support for this premise is found in the origin of these words: *peine* is French for penalty, *poena* is Latin for punishment, and πόνος is Greek for pain, all of which are derived from the PIE root *peue- meaning to cleanse and purify. The crime offends the Gods and pollutes the community. Formal punishment cleanses the community of its pollution and appeases the Gods.[9]

However, the most characteristic nature of human morality is its sacrificial coercion. We have envisioned human birth as a catastrophic expulsion, a Kabbalist breaking of the vessels, which signifies the exile into demiurgic temporality, after which one is again exposed to the Edenic grace of pantheistic early orality. However, this soon gives way to deprivational interaction with the mother-breast and with objects and the incarceration in the scar tissue of the ego-boundary.

In the 3rd social phase of development, the child, who had been basking in graceful forgiveness within the family, is inducted into the normative system of society by the harsh sacrificial rites of passage. This rape of the normative innocence of the young, and the elder's coercion to abide by the rules and morals of the group, are countered by the complementary normative aggression of the young against their elders. The rebellion manifested by the generation gap is Oedipal only in the normative sense because the proscription of incest is maternal, not paternal as Freud thought, and is ingrained into the oral infant by the mother or her surrogate.

We do not claim any diachronic sequences between paternal aggression and filial reaction. We rather assume a synchronic complementarity between paternal sacrificial normativity and the corresponding reaction of the young. The mytho-empirical manifestation of the normative sacrifice of the young is the sacrifice of Isaac, which we have denoted as the Isaac Syndrome. Its female counterpart is the sacrifice of Iphigenia by her father Agamemnon. Yet the sacrificial cycle returns to the parents because the life of an Abraham or an Agamemnon becomes unbearable due to guilt and pain

following the acts of sacrifice, even if Isaac and Iphigenia are willing victims.

On a socio-psychological level, the Isaac Syndrome may be related to the process of norm-sending and norm-reception. The socio-psychological systemization of the processes that result in conforming to social norms analyses the transmission and enforcing of norms by the group (norm-sending) and the degree to which norms are accepted and internalized by the individual.[10] The norm-sending process requires a statement by the group of the desired behavior and the consequences if individuals do not behave as requested. The group monitors individuals in order to determine the extent (if any) of compliance to the norm. Sanctions are then applied to non-complying individuals.

The degree of conformity by the individual ranges from mere compliance (when the individual is induced to conform by constant surveillance and the threat of negative, deprivational sanctions) through identification (when conforming behavior is induced by positive, rewarding sanctions) to complete conformity (when the norm is internalized by the individual). Surveillance and sanctions are not necessary for internalized norms because they become incorporated by the individual as a 'just', 'right' and 'true' personality element.

The complete internalization of the norms is presumably experienced by 'willing victims'. The effective transmission of norms within the family and by other socializing agencies depends on the maintenance of a system-in-balance between the Isaac Syndrome and the Oedipal pressures. When this system-in-balance is disrupted, there is a tendency to anomie, deviance and crime on both the individual and group levels.

We claim that the Oedipal resentments of children towards their parents for bringing them into this world are subconscious, ontological and existential, as well as psycho-sexual as Freud claims. More consciously, they rebel against the socialization induced by harsh rites of passage. In tandem with the parents' guilt and grief for having normatively sacrificed their offspring, children feel guilt for not having done everything to prevent their parents' suffering in old age and sickness, and grief for not being able to prevent their death. Man is thus forever vacillating and torn between his guilt as a parent and his guilt as a child. The Oedipal rejection of the parents also stems from the children's wish to experience life themselves. They resent counsel against performing certain acts given by parents who had unfortunate experiences when engaging in such acts.

Parents may blackmail their children emotionally for love and attention with the proverbial crudeness of a *yiddishe mama.* On a more sophisticated level, they may prod their children to achieve creative goals that the parents could not achieve or did not have the opportunity to accomplish. "I want to give *my* children the education I could never have" may translate into a fierce achievement orientation on the part of the children. We claim that the maternal Sisyphean socialization of children at orality is firmly linked to their achievement orientation, whereas the later paternal / normative indoctrination is supposed to mold the young into the accepted socio-transcendental cast, as conceived by the mediating authority of the father.

The good, forgiving father in the stage before the adolescent's rites of passage is described in the biblical book of Psalms as follows:

> Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases:
> Who redeemeth thy life from destruction;
> Who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies;
> Who satisfieth thine old age with good things;
> so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle. ...
> Like as a father hath compassion upon his children,
> so hath the Lord compassion upon them that fear Him.[11]

The unconditional forgiveness, indulgence, and mercy of the father at pre-puberty gives way to the stern judgment of the father of the Isaac Syndrome. At this stage the father is still omnipotent, and the son's compliance may stem from fear of sanction, or may indeed be based on a moral orientation to the paternal norms expressed by absolute submission to them. Later, however, the father and the mother lose their strength, become old, vulnerable, sick, and impotent. This is the stage at which the son or daughter feels betrayed by the father-God. The son-God feels dejected and crucified and laments with the cry of the dejected, *Eli, Eli, lama sabakhtani?* However, after a parent's death, most offspring are overly or covertly guilt-ridden because they feel they did not do enough to ease the suffering of their parent and ultimately did not prevent their parent's death.

The guilt inherent in the Isaac Syndrome ties man to space and time, to the fatherland, and to its history and tradition, whereas the guilt of children for not sufficiently caring for their parents and the inability to prevent their often painful death, ties the offspring to the *participant*, revelatory absolute paternal norms, and to the creative *separant* maternal values. The paternal norms of morals and faith are reinforced by guilt towards the father, whereas the guilt towards the dead mother kindles the *separant* values of creativity,

achievement, success, and cherished forgiveness and grace within the before rites-of-passage family fold.

The sacrificial Isaac Syndrome is countered by the Oedipal pressures to form a viable normative system-in-balance which is necessary for socialization both within the family and by other socializing agencies. Later, the disabled parents project a less-than-perfect Gnostic Kabbalist father-God and an existentialist silent / impotent God. Thus, man, the Son-God, takes over the leading role. He must fulfill the maternal mandates of creativity and the paternal revelatory norms of morals and faith. After their deaths, the parents are internalized without weaknesses by the offspring. The guilt towards them covers up their faults and lends them an aura of absolutism and transcendence. This is evidenced by their offspring's transmission and promulgation of norms, morals, and values to their objective and human surroundings.

Morals are promulgated primarily through the family. For the family to serve as an effective medium of norm transmission, it must effect a system-in-balance, a complementarity between the Oedipal pressures and the Isaac Syndrome. The rites of passage mark the transition from the complete pardon of a pre-pubescent child ("let him be, he is just a kid"), the absence of children's criminal responsibility, and the reduced responsibility of young adults to the expulsion into the stern normativity and competitive achievement orientation of the world outside the family.

Here too, we envisage a continuum between the Sisyphean and Tantalic cultures. In achievement anchored, activist Sisyphean cultures, the rites of passage are harsher and the young are pushed out of the family sooner to seek their fortune and prove their worth by attaining success. In *participant* societies, on the other hand, the young are more thoroughly indoctrinated in the traditional normative mesh. Although the normativity is more authoritarian, the young are not too harshly or readily pushed out of the family fold. Often the extended family creates a large cocoon of protectiveness around the young adults, although the norms existing within it are rigid and strict.

The normative role differentiation within the nuclear family also ranges along a continuum in most cultures. The *participant* pole is occupied by the paternal authority which sets curbing limits on action, devises systems of doctrines, and links them to divine authority. The maternal pole, on the other hand, supervises Sisyphean object relations: order, cleanliness 'which is next to Godliness', achievement, and success. These roles are archetypal and may be blurred or even interchangeable in some families. Yet in essence,

this normative role differentiation is related to the identification and complementarity of son and daughter with the paternal and maternal roles.

The identification of the son and the complementarity of the daughter with the norm-promulgating father is reinforced by the desire to gain his normative approval. The internalization of the 'father within me' leads to a complete moral orientation towards paternal norms and to feelings of automatic gratification from compliance with them, without the need for any further reward or sanction. The morally oriented 'willing victim' gains a self-image of righteousness by obeying the norms of the internalized father. After introjecting Abraham within his inner-self, Isaac could not but obey. The father thereby becomes, as Kierkegaard has stated, an immediate normative absolute. In introjecting the father, the son performs a Baron Munchausen feat: he can thenceforth lift himself by his own normative bootstraps. Even the mother, who provides the *separant* motivation for proficiency and pragmatic achievement, reinforced by maternal love, grace and acceptance, needs the father for normative- authority: "Wait till Daddy comes home and sees what a mess you have made."

Sometimes the skewed nature of *participant* paternal norms is not checked and balanced by *separant* maternal norms. If norms become monstrous in their extremity, compulsiveness, misery and horror may ensue. In an overachieving authoritarian family, a nonconformist Gregor Samsa saw himself as an over-sized cockroach, as reflected in the eyes of his Kafkaesque, bullying father. It was the stone of Tantalus, in the earlier version of the myth, threatening to crush those crouched beneath it in fear and trembling, not knowing when and how it might be hurled on their heads.

The death of Abel was a murder, not a sacrifice, and yet it provided an opportunity to proclaim the normative heinousness of murder and its contagious pollution of objects and life-forms.[12] Self-sacrifice, however, like the willing victimization of Isaac and Christ, makes for absolute normativity. The doctrinaire patriarch, Abraham, sacrificed his most cherished treasure, his son, to an absolute normative mandate without doubting or questioning it. The moment he was called upon to perform his sacrificial duty he reacted in a Prussian martial manner: "Here am I."[13]

Sacrificial normativity becomes rather elaborate in mysticism. The Kabbalist *Tikkunei haZohar* expounds the doctrine of "the King being imprisoned in the tresses of the mind." This is the willing self-confinement of God (the king) within the consciousness of man in order to enable (for the willing and worthy) a revelatory man-transcendence dialogue. This is a

projection of the sacrificial renunciation of a Kierkegaard or a Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, effecting a normative revelation. However, it also reflects the actual normative indoctrination into absolute religious mandates, as evident in the following testimony of a contemporary Talmudic scholar:

> When I wished to enter the Ponevezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak, they rejected me at first. Then they subjected me to strenuous rites of passage and painful trials. I was not lodged in the dorms of the yeshiva but hundreds of meters away ... a distance I had to cover 6 times a day. All day was devoted to the study of the Torah, except for the time necessary for sleep, meals and prayer. I slept 5 hours a night. I woke up at 5:30 a.m. in the summer and 6 a.m. in the winter. I studied an hour until Morning Prayer, then breakfast, and I resumed my studies at 8:30 a.m. and then, all day until late at night with short breaks for meals and prayer. When I started my studies at the Yeshiva I was hardly 16. The ... Yeshiva is an indoctrination for ascetic renunciation. The effort of studying the Torah is the only sublimation for the enormous biological drives at this age. I never masturbated and I never touched a woman until I married at the age of 32.[14]

Renunciation, sacrifice and abnegation provide the source of normativity. In order to reinforce the willingness to abstain, to normatively relinquish, it is necessary to sustain guilt and shame and what better means to instill culpability than through Catholic confession? The mandatory institution of confession by the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 was one of the most efficient tools of Catholic normative indoctrination and dominion. Sacrifice, guilt, and confession have provided the foundations of doctrinaire systems from time immemorial to the present day.

Sacrificial coercion not only creates norms, it also lends a metaphysical basis for man's capacity to ingrain his surroundings with meanings and values. This closes our cycle of complementarities. We started with the complementarity between God and his creation, carried on to the complementarities of dialogue, erotic mating, and *agapic* pairing (love that is spiritual and selfless in nature). We presented a model of complementarity between consciousness and energy-matter and related it to normativity. By starting with the unknown and returning to it, we vindicate our conception of nothingness as wholeness. Energy-matter evolves from the *ain* (nothingness) singularity to the Big Bang and back to the singularity after the Big Crunch. This cycle could indeed be complemented by the *ani* consciousness, the inner self, emanating from transcendence and ever longing to be reunited with it.

Kantian Ethics vs. Existential Morality

This work is not a tract on ethics. We will not deliberate on systems of morality. We will, however, contrast some basic premises of Kantian ethics with existentialist morality in order to provide a comparative anchor for the model of ethics we wish to present.

Kant postulates an absolute *a priori* morality in man:

> If I think of a Categorical Imperative, I know at once what it contains. For as the imperative contains, besides the Law, only the necessity of the maxim to be in accordance with this law, but the Law contains no condition by which it is limited, nothing remains over but the generality of a law in general, to which the maxim of the action is to be conformable, and which conforming alone presents the imperative as necessary. Therefore, the categorical imperative is a single one, and in fact this: Act only according to a maxim by which you can at the same time will that it shall become a general law. Or: Act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a general natural law.[15]

Kant's Categorical Imperative entails a judgment and a duty. It is objective and not experiential. It has nothing to do with social relationships and is therefore absolute. "Even if civil society should dissolve," says Kant, "the last murderer sitting in prison must first have been executed, so that each may receive a sanction for his deeds."[16] It looks as if the Kantian *a priori* moral principle is independent of human society and even of human beings. This is made clear from the following extracts:

> Judicial punishment ... can never serve merely as a means to further another good, whether for the offender himself or for society, but must always be inflicted on him for the sole reason that he has committed a crime. ... The law of punishment is a Categorical Imperative, and woe to him who crawls through the serpentine windings of the happiness theory seeking to discover something which, in virtue of the benefit it promises, will release him from the duty of punishment or even from a fraction of its full severity. Moreover, Marquis Beccaria has maintained the injustice of all death penalties out of sentimental sympathy while effecting a humanitarian outlook ... all of which is sophistry and a distortion of the law.[17]

Kant's morality has a life of its own, unrelated to the nature, emotions and suffering of those who are subject to it. The Categorical Imperative has an I-it relationship with the people under its yoke. It is authoritarian and oppressive. Kant's moral duty is uniform. *In extremo,* the Categorical Imperative considers all individuals to be Orwellian zombies, devoid of peculiarities, singularities and specifics.

Per contra, existentialist morality rejects impersonal pluralities. Masses are important only to the *Demiurgos*. For the existentialist, the individual is everything. An existentialist moral act is not only always *a posteriori,* but relates to the experience of the other, within his specific personal context. Existentialist morality is based on sympathy, suffering with the other, on his turf, and according to his terms. Suffering, as an experiential dynamic, is necessarily disregarded by Kantian, *a priori* morality. For the existentialist, the suffering of the other is the basic criterion and vehicle for the moral act. The Original Sin of Camus' protagonist in *The Fall* was his refusal to jump into the river and save a girl who cried for help. A person who shuts off the suffering of the other is existentially immoral, and one who is unable to empathize with the predicament of the other is an existential psychopath. Communication and the search for dialogue are of the essence of existentialist morality.

Karl Jaspers' *Kommunikation* between one *Existenz,* a free and authentic man, and another *Existenz* provides the setting for moral behavior, while the severance of communication, *der Abbruch,* is in itself an immoral act. Thus, Jaspers was willing to die rather than commit the cardinal immorality of terminating his lifelong dialogue with his Jewish wife during the Nazi regime.

Consequently, there can be no viable *a priori,* objective and rational morality. A moral attitude is a subjectively attuned empathetic feeling towards the other, and an attempt to ease the other's suffering. Although a moral act towards the other does not presuppose expectation of reciprocity, if the other is also a moral being, we may witness an ethical I-thou dialogue. Experiencing the other's suffering inside one's self serves as a communicative call for moral intervention, which, if denied, constitutes the primary existentialist malevolence. "One should not judge the other," says the Mishnah, "unless one experiences his very same predicaments."[18] This is an existentialist maxim, since one can never completely experience the suffering, consternation, and fear of the other. Hence, an existentialist, unlike Kant, never judges but tries to ease the other's suffering, as defined in the other's own terms. Good intentions and offering to help to the best of one's ability are what count, while objective results are *separant* demiurgic evaluations.

Existentialist morality anchors on subjective feelings, empathy and dialogue, so that efforts are essential, while results are secondary. "Existentialism's moral triumphs," states Camus' Dr. Rieux in *The Plague (La Peste),* "are meager."[19] One is surrounded by the plague, which represents

demiurgic arbitrariness and power-based coercion, and can never defeat it. One can but try to ease the suffering of those who are pestered by the plague through a moral dialogue, and by helping them on their own terms. In the context of their predicament, one may experience the grace of a moral dialogue within 'the eye' of the demiurgical storm.

If you do not respond to the other's call for help, as felt within yourself, if you try to help another on your own terms and not on the other's, you are not only immoral but, to use Sartre's metaphor, you become the other's hell. Existentialist morality, as a relational, unconditional and dialogic creed, demands an attempt to relieve suffering, irrespective of the costs. Raoul Wallenberg, Oscar Schindler and others who helped Jews during the Holocaust were existentially moral. Murderers are excluded from existentialist ethics because death is the horizon of being, as stated by Heidegger, and not part of life. Existentialism as an ethic of life is not equipped to deal morally with killers, who belong to the realm of law or transcendence. However, those who refused to be involved with the deportees to Auschwitz because "they could not bear the sight" were patently immoral.

To experience the suffering of the other exactly as he feels it is, of course, impossible. Camus wrote in *The Fall* that a friend may sleep on the floor like his imprisoned mate, but he cannot even remotely feel the pain of the prisoner. However, when one chooses to help the suffering other, one should do it maieutically by letting the other feel as if he were helping himself. Otherwise one might burden the other with one's own conception of his suffering, which can exacerbate his already existing pain. This is notable especially when one sees the suffering of the other as trivial, while regarding his pain as excruciating and affecting the core of his being.

Existentialist morality is the giving of grace without asking anything in return. This is Camus' Dr. Rieux easing the pains of the plague's victims with the sole intent of alleviating their agony. The author witnessed this inflowing of grace in the person of a blind old teacher who boarded a bus every day and was led by his dog to the Ramla maximum-security prison in Israel to teach illiterate prisoners to read and write. Mother Teresa has said that she treated the lepers of Calcutta for the sake of Jesus. The flow of grace radiates from the Godhead through His Son in history into the existentially moral healer and from him to those in pain.

This cycle becomes self-sustaining, because the moral act is a *tikkun* and creates energy which flows back to mend a blemished suffering God.

Opening up to the suffering other with an offer of helping or healing grace is, in itself, a metaphysical happening, quite apart from its moral connotation. One reveals to oneself and perchance to the other an act of fraternity in an absurd, paradoxical, and painful existence. This revelation is apparent in the moral dialogue of a healer who offers to ease another's pain, as perceived and felt by the other, as a goal in itself without expecting anything beyond it.

Existentialist morality at its best is portrayed in the following description of D's actions:

> Nobody knows the true D. I knew him. When I first met him, I was in deep trouble on the verge of bankruptcy. 'Good friends' severed their contacts with me. D felt that I needed help. He helped me. Without any calculations he did it simply because he saw a man in trouble. He did it secretly. He did not want any remuneration. Nobody knows about it even today. D is a man who lends a helping hand to everyone who is in trouble. D is a true friend, a real human being.[20]

The needy other becomes a self-contained universe and his cry for help is felt inside one as the shriek of God's Son on the cross. The other in pain becomes a Buberian Universal Thou, a suffering deity in need of mending. Thus the Talmud states that "He who destroys one soul (person) is regarded as having destroyed a whole world and he who saves one soul (person) is regarded as having saved a whole world."[21]

There is an existential holonic equation between the individual and the universe. Indeed, the existentialist cardinal sin of Camus' protagonist in *The Fall* is echoed in Judaism in the passage from Leviticus: "Neither shall thou stand against the blood of thy neighbor."[22] This was interpreted by the Talmud as an imperative to save the life of a drowning person or the victim of robbers.[23] The author witnessed existentialist morality in one of the Israeli wars when a Canadian doctor, visibly disabled and in pain, told the author: "I want to help the other wounded." That statement caused the author to feel a flow of grace and a glow of revelation radiating from the tired, sweaty face of the doctor.

Existentialist mortality is subjective in the sense that the pain of the other must be felt within oneself in order to initiate moral involvement. However, it becomes maieutically communicative as it flows out to meet the other's predicament. This dialogical flow of mending grace to the other is again echoed in Judaism by Rabbi Akiva's interpretation of the mandate in Leviticus: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."[24] He saw this as the

most basic rule of the Torah.[25] This loving of the other as oneself may be taken existentially as feeling the pain of the other within oneself, so that one does whatever one can to help the other. This signifies not an epistemic reaching out to the other but an ontological reaching out to the other within oneself, through the communicative vehicle of one's responsive message of healing grace.

This moral act is gratifying in itself and should not be performed in expectation of remuneration or reciprocity. Such an expectation would be existentially immoral as the needy other is usually in no position to reciprocate, except with thanks. However, as the moral act often entails a dialogical revelation, it fuels one's 'batteries of yearning' and hence of being, and thus endows one's existence with renewed meaning. Although an inter-subjective communication with the needy other is impossible, the maieutic (midwife-like) reaching out to the other's ego-boundary, the triggering of a feeling of inner grace in the other, the regeneration of ergative powers, and the sense of dialogical participation are central to the existentialist moral process.

The existentialist, such as Camus' Dr. Rieux, rejects the claim that children are born guilty. Yet he accepts, with Mother Theresa, that each abject sufferer is personified by the naked crucified Christ. By taking upon himself the sins of others and the pains of others, Christ, the Son of God, the maieutic mediator, effects the communication between the suffering other and us. By feeling the pains of Christ within us, we feel the suffering other's call for help. Through our moral involvement that is aimed at helping the other, we reach a revelatory dialogue with the other which redeems us by momentarily lending meaning to our existence. It also generates a *tikkun,* a mending energy directed at the transcendental mediator, and a healing of the other's agony. The suffering Christ, the Gnostic messenger, or the mending *tzadik* is a projection of the other as sufferer, and of ourselves as moral healers. Hence, we and the other converge in the mediator as the transcendental medium of communication between us. The Rabbi of Kotzk declared that one should dance with those who suffer. This is a forceful metaphor for existentialist dialogic involvement between the sufferer and the healer.

Existentialist morality is its own reward. Helpers and healers who have cured or reduced the suffering of the other have added purpose and meaning to their lives. However, once they ask, or even expect reciprocity, the moral I-thou dialogue is reduced to a mutual I-it petrification. However, if more and more people open up morally, dialogically, and maieutically to others,

much moral reciprocity will occur, even without a social contract or a categorical imperative.

A person may say or think: "This is too painful, I cannot bear it" and consequently not open up to the agony of the other. This is existentially immoral. Pink Floyd's anguished cry of "Is there anybody out there?" in *The Wall* can be answered positively only if one opens up to the call of the other at the right time. Camus' Judge-penitent's wish that the girl might throw herself into the water again so that he could jump in and save her this time is not tenable. Every act is unique and has its theurgical effect as grace or evil (stern judgment) in a manner that cannot be replicated. It cannot be repeated or blotted away. It dents transcendence and influences man, for better or for worse, in an irreversible way.

A psychopath cannot open up to the suffering of the other or, for that matter, of any other life form. A student of cinema at a Tel Aviv Academy hanged a kitten on a string in order to photograph its death throes and then killed it. His teachers saw the short movie and commented professionally on the photography.[26] The student was clearly a sadistic psychopath. However, the teachers also ranged from being callous existentialist scoundrels to morally insane psychopaths.

The Rabbi of Kotzk said that God enters wherever he is permitted to enter. God, the Universal Thou, enters the needy other through the dialogic I-Thou. This kind of existential grace flowed abundantly on the 20th of January 1982 when a jet crashed into the Potomac River and five survivors clung to the tail-end of the plane. When the rescue helicopter arrived, an unidentified, balding, middle-aged survivor kept passing the lifeline and flotation ring to the other survivors every time it was lowered. He repeated this act of existentialist moral gallantry 4 times but when the helicopter finally came to rescue him, he had already drowned. This man was an anonymous successor to other sacrificial figures: Isaac, Christ, Janusz Korczak, and the group of Jewish girls in a Ukrainian village during the Second World War who gave themselves to the S.S. guards in order to save their parents.

Authenticity as the Essence of Morality

In existentialism, authenticity is a moral principle and inauthenticity an immoral principle. Inauthenticity consists of hypocrisy, feigning, and deceiving oneself and others. Hypocrisy, having double or multiple moral standards, is from the Greek *υπόκρίσης* (hypokrisis), which originally meant

'play-acting' or 'role playing'. Another etymological influence is the Greek word *krinein,* to pass judgment. Righteous indignation is a source, etymologically at least, of hypocrisy. Hence, one of the characteristics of Camus' Judge-penitent's fall into authenticity was his refusal to continue judging others.

Inauthenticity is a basic attribute of demiurgical social structures which can function only through power manipulation and the deception of those normatively subject to them. These are the government officials and other wielders of power in social institutions, ranging from churches to the *arbiter elegantiae* of artistic cliques. They possess finely tuned social antennae, with which they can detect any change in the balance of power, or in the fads of the reigning elites, in order to manipulate them to their advantage. Camus describes the morality of bourgeois society as follows:

> Haven't you noticed that our society is organized for this kind of liquidation? You have heard of course, of those tiny fish in the rivers of Brazil that attack the unwary swimmer by the thousands and with swift little nibbles, clean him up in a few minutes, leaving an immaculate skeleton? Well, that's what their organization is. Do you want a clean life? You say, yes, of course. How can one say no? O.K., you'll be cleaned up. Here's a job, a family, and organized leisure activities. And the little teeth attack the flesh, right down to the bone. But I am unjust. I shouldn't say their organization; it is ours, after all; it's a question of which will clean up the other.[27]

The hypocrites excel in false sincerity. With hand on chest and piercing look of honesty, or eyes raised to heaven like Tartuffe, they immediately detect the Achilles heel of their victims. They are especially adept at exploiting idealistic and self-sacrificial revolutionaries. An old farmer once showed the author how the first rows of locusts throw themselves into man-made defensive water canals. After they drown, the *apparatchiks* walk safely over the dead heroes' floating bodies to devour the juicy green foliage on the other side of the canal. The authentic martyrs had Christ, Lenin, and Che Guevara to emulate, but the culture heroes of the *apparatchiks* are Machiavelli and Talleyrand. Salon communists and socialists pay lip service to the brotherhood of the proletariat from their spacious villas on the Côte d'Azur, so they can continue, with purged conscience, exploiting the workers in their factories.

Max Nordau, one of the keenest observers of human inauthenticity, recorded how the most illustrious artists and scientists were awestruck when presented to the bored and boring Hapsburg Emperor. The author witnessed a similar excitement amongst world-renowned Cambridge scholars when

they were presented to the late Princess Diana, who happened to have married the Prince of Wales. Institutional men of God, and some university professors, suffer from false modesty. An 18th century Hasidic sage, known for his disgust for this type of inauthenticity, used to reproach such people by saying "Don't be modest, you are not so great."

The politician must be inauthentic. If he stops double-talking, double-dealing, and double-crossing, he will soon be out of a job. The ultimate diagnosis in this context was made by the Madame of the brothel (Irma) in Genet's play, *The Balcony.* She sends the audience back home to a world in which judges are more pompously righteous, bishops more piously bigoted, and generals more stuffily medaled because others died for their glory. The crowds in most passion plays and dramas are demiurgical carnivores, ready to devour the savior out of bigotry, sheer evil, or just for fun.

This is a projection of the consciousness mythologizing in the image of Christ hunted down and preyed upon by the multi-headed Gorgonian crowd. The most expressive representation of this dynamic was executed by Hieronymus Bosch, who depicted a meek, victimized, yet grace-emanating Christ, surrounded by a stupid, jeering, vile, demiurgical crowd. This image recalls the psychopathic response of the archetypal murderous brother, "Am I my brother's keeper?"[28]

The demiurgical energy-matter *soma* [body], genetics, and evolution are dominated by coercing necessity – the amoral chance and statistics anchored *ananke.* The *separant* Aristotle places this coercive necessity above everything. He raises this *ananke* to the stature of a universal principle: "Cry halt before Necessity," he proclaims and then adds in a typical understatement: "Necessity does not allow itself to be persuaded."[29]

This valueless and non-normative demiurgical nature of energy-matter is reflected in Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems, which state that mathematical systems (by which physical systems are represented) must contain statements the truth-value of which cannot be proven. In addition, Turing's Halting Problem postulates that a computer (or any other artifact activated by an algorithm) cannot fully understand itself.[30] Therefore, any demiurgical system cannot depend on itself to provide meanings, values and norms. These have to stem from man as the meta-anthropic mediator provided he functions in an authentic manner.

This brings us to authenticity as the prime source of existentialist normativity. This may be achieved by 'falling into authenticity' along with

Camus' Judge-penitent by refusing to pass judgment on one's fellow humans. For the Camusian Sisyphus to reach Tantalic *participant* authenticity, he must discard the double-talk and double-think of Orwellian Newspeak and answer the 'call to authenticity' as postulated by Heidegger and Kierkegaard.

An authentic I-thou dialogue can only take place between free agents who engage in dialogue out of choice, or in a maieutic teacher-pupil encounter. Any coercion turns an I-thou dialogue into an I-it mutual petrification. Slaves in authoritarian societies are too busy flattering and serving those in power to be creatively authentic. In Rome, a slave whispered into the ears of a victorious Caesar returning from battle: "Ave Caesar, remember that death is approaching." This was a touch of intuitive existentialism. The slave calls on Caesar to infuse his jubilant triumph with recognition of his *Geworfenheit zum Tod* and thus imbue his festive power-gloating with some authenticity.

The demiurgical group is inauthentic by definition. Only individuals in a Sisyphean creative object-relationship can be authentic. Moreover, in dialogic relationships we relate to a person and not to his role or status within a group or an institution. Tantalic revelation is also a man-transcendence dynamic, not a group phenomenon. The same person involved in an I-thou dialogue is likely to find himself trapped into an I-it petrification in a demiurgical group situation. It is hard for us to accept that the same person can become an altogether different entity in a group context.

The inauthentic *separant* works through the institution. He relates to the social structure, to the establishment, to the status and power of the individuals in it. He does not relate to the individuals as human beings. If a role-player loses his position in the structure, the *separant* manipulator doesn't see him. The manipulator is already contemplating ways to flatter and win over the new person in that position.

Academic institutions are good to their mediocrities but mistreat their innovators. The innovators 'rock the boat' and demand grants from the administration for unusual projects. They are soon stigmatized as 'trouble makers' and 'impossible to work with', and their Sisyphean creativity is constantly accompanied by hardship. The Kropotkin Hypothesis says that the most important innovations are made outside university campuses, or within the campuses by the scientists and scholars who do not belong to the powerful elite.

Most social gatherings are inauthentic affairs. They are usually an ego trip for their organizers and for those who deliver papers to a small audience. Conventions are mostly organized impersonal transactions, accompanied by conferring honors on some *ad hoc* recipients. One authentic writer, Isaac Bashevis-Singer, who had a sense of humor, chose a proper place to hang his *Doctor Honoris Causa* ... on the inside of the toilet door.

The inauthentic poseur is ordained, sanctioned, and enforced by the generalized other. This generalized other is an epistemological mirage, constructed in our minds. Yet, it constitutes the most prevalent and forceful source of inauthenticity. It is one of the most forceful empirical anchors for W. I. Thomas' theorem that "if people define a situation as real, it becomes real in its consequences."

The generalized other is the main ingredient in socialization. Children soon lose their authenticity because of pressure to comply with the normative stereotypes promulgated by generalized others. These stereotypes permeate politics, institutionalized religion, and the Salvation Army. Orwell's Big Brother seems to embody this.

The mass media, especially television, nourishes the streamlined modes, the mediocre means, and median stereotypes that aim, and quite often succeed, to subjugate us. Our I-it relationship with the generalized other is expressed in questions such as, "What do they think about me?" "How do I look to them?" "What do they say about me?" They are the omnipotent generalized others in the lives of politicians, matinee idols, market researchers, and all those who conduct their lives according to the mandates of New York's man-about-town, the *Tout-Paris,* or those with the 'right accent' in London.

Sartre's Hell is created and dominated by the generalized other. Only when we experience the call for authenticity from concrete others can we extricate ourselves from the grip of the generalized other. An I-thou dialogue with a concrete, specific individual may save us from I-it inauthentic slavery to the generalized other. The generalized other, like the *Demiurgos*, does not communicate with us. It is precisely this silence that hurts our authenticity and makes us numb due to the impossibility of communication. According to Heidegger, the generalized other implants in us a 'they self'.[31] In addition, "The 'they' does not permit us the courage to feel anxiety in the face of death."[32] The only way to emerge from the inauthentic routines of *Alle Tage*, the daily drudgeries, is through authentic creativity and revelation.

Lurianic Kabbalah stresses indifference to external human surroundings: "One should not feel glee at honor nor shame at slander."[33] In our context this can be seen as a directive to develop indifference towards generalized others and their mandates. Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, the 18th century Hasidic sage whose teachings are based on Lurianic Kabbalah, goes even further and proclaims that the wish to comply with the outside is tantamount to magic, and therefore sacrilegious.[34]

This stands in stark contrast to institutionalized Judaism which preaches conformity to the mandates of the generalized other and gives priority to a good social image. In *Mishnah Avot,* for instance, Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa says, "Whoever is acceptable to people is acceptable to God, whoever is not acceptable to people is not acceptable to God."[35] Here Divinity gives legitimacy to the generalized other. *Derekh Eretz Zutta* says: "One should not be awake amongst the sleeping and not be asleep amongst the awake. One should not weep amongst the gleeful and not laugh amongst the weeping. One should not sit amongst students of the Mishnah and not study Mishnah amongst the readers of the Bible. In short one should not deviate from the customs of the people."[36] This is virtually a codebook for conformity to the mandates of the generalized other.

The author remembers that as a young child he was supposed to enjoy the circus. He actually suffered when he saw the treatment of animals and the cruel slapstick of the clowns. He hid his tears and forced himself to smile because one is expected to have fun at the circus. Many people travel primarily to show off to their neighbors and friends. Some go to concerts to be seen and politicians smile only when being photographed.

According to Anatole Broyard, authenticity "is being true to one's identity without seeking the appeasement that comes from playing up to the stereotype nor the self-justification that comes from playing it down."[37] In our context, extrication from the expectations of the generalized other is a rebellion that should lead us to energize our inner Tantalic quests. These are expressed in revelation and in fueling our sense of worth *vis-à-vis* others through authentic creativity, which may lead to an I-Thou maieutic dialogue. Performing an act of rebellion in order to punish generalized or specific others who have rejected us or wronged us is equally inauthentic.

Authentic creativity must be geared towards a maieutic dialogue with specific objects and others, or motivated by a search for such a dialogue, even with a large audience. Kitsch soap operas and public announcements are not authentic because they are geared towards the central measures and

common denominators that constitute the generalized other. Authentic creativity is the expression of one's inner self for the other. Any action that is motivated by spite, *ressentiment* towards the other, is a demiurgical I-it relationship because the hatred that is directed towards the other boomerangs back to oneself as a real or imaginary reprisal. Authentic creativity and revelation must stem from, or aim at, a system-in-balance between oneself and the object-other.

Obligation to be Authentic

A person immersed in the Gnostic *plane* [Greek πλάνε means 'wrong' or 'error'], living a life without recourse to one's Divinity, as Lurianic Kabbalah words it,[38] or in a state of Existentialist 'forgetfulness of being', as phrased by Heidegger,[39] may receive a call to become authentic. Man in the demiurgic world of creation may be enamored of his temporal chains. Thus the Gnostic Jesus, who came to save the world, stated, "If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you."[40] The maieutic teacher, therefore, urges man in his somnambulistic ignorance to:

> … end the sleep which weighs heavy upon you. Depart from the oblivion which fills you with darkness. ... Why do you pursue the darkness, though the light is available to you? ... Wisdom calls you, yet you desire foolishness. ... a foolish man ... goes the ways of the desire of every passion. He swims in the desires of life and has foundered. ... he is like a ship which the wind tosses to and fro, and like a loose horse which has no rider. For this (one) needs the rider, which is reason ... before everything else ... know yourself.[41]

In the Manichean *Hymn of the Pearl,* the Divine messenger enters into the ignorant man in his slumber and calls to him, from within, to wake up:

> Like a messenger was the letter which the King had sealed with his right hand ... He flew like an eagle and alighted beside me and became wholly speech. At the sound of his voice, I awoke and rose from my slumber ... and directed my steps that I might come to the light of our home. The letter which had awakened me, I found before me on the way, the letter who with his voice had awakened me from sleep …[42]

Likewise, the Turfan Fragment urges:

> Power and prosperity of the Living
> unto thee from thy home!
> Follow me, son of mildness,
> set upon thy head the crown of light.