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REMARQUE'S 'WELTANSCHAUUNG': A STUDY IN FICTIONAL DUALISM

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Slavic Languages

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to examine Remarque's Weltanschauung as expressed through his novels.

Remarque sees the world negatively when he regards it as a whole. This all-encompassing world, the macrocosm, is defined by two basic factors: the evil side of man's nature, and the existence of death. The world, as Remarque views it, is not ruled according to a divine plan but is a world of man's own making. Because man has been unable to keep in check his tendencies for committing evil, he has brought about the events which characterize the first half of the twentieth century: two world wars and their accompanying ramifications. Remarque delineated these events and pictured man's inhumanity to man, unfathomable in extent and depth. Whereas there is some ray of hope—however subliminal—that man may eventually overcome his inclination for evil, the second factor contributing to Remarque's pessimistic world view cannot be ameliorated, for death can never be conquered. For Remarque, death is an abstraction and it is a reality; in both cases it marks the mortality of man and the end of the self in its present form. Knowledge
of death colors the world of man with a sense of transitoriness and futility, and forces him to question the meaning and purpose of life.

In contrast, when Remarque regards the world in its detail and component parts, he views it positively. It is here, in man's private world, in the microcosm, where primitive impulses are satisfied, where a degree of genuine humanity exists, and where real love adds a new dimension to life. His heroes create their own "Insel des Glücks" from which they derive a sense of personal triumph over the chaotic world in which they must live. In spite of all they must witness and personally suffer and endure, they are imbued with an immense desire to live. Life itself is sweet despite its brevity and vicissitudes.

Remarque's heroes are members of the "lost generation." They are unable, even unwilling, to forget the events of the past which have inflicted such horrific damage to their world, and ultimately they put their life in the service of fighting against the evil they have witnessed. If there is hope for mankind, it can only come from the individual, for only the individual displays a sense of responsibility for his actions and gives evidence of a social conscience, qualities which are in danger of dissipating when he is absorbed by the
amorphous mass, as happens in times of war.

The background of this study examines sociological approaches to literature since all Remarque's novels are social novels depicting society and societal relationships, and it analyzes the historical and philosophical considerations which have contributed to the particular formation of Remarque's world view.
INTRODUCTION

It is the purpose of this dissertation to examine Remarque's Weltanschauung as it is expressed through his novels. More specifically, I will examine how Remarque regards and evaluates the world, what—if any—meaning he derives from it and how he views man's position in the world. It is my contention that Remarque does not consciously put forth a cosmology but that a comprehensive conception of the world becomes apparent when analyzing his work.

Remarque's novels are social novels. An examination of social and sociological approaches to literature will make clear the artistic purposes and goals which such novels presume. Social literature directs its attention to man's social world. It depicts society and societal relationships, raises questions about man's contemporary situation and interprets what it observes. It identifies the values and anxieties of man and relates them to the historical climate from which they derive.

Remarque's concern rests with mid-twentieth century man. His heroes have witnessed two world wars, a worldwide economic crisis and Hitler's efficient murder machine. To fully understand the emotional trauma which characterizes
his heroes and to understand the precarious situation in which they find themselves, I will examine those occurrences and factors which are responsible for them. To that end, I will delineate the historical events of that time and trace the philosophical currents which have shaped its mood. Man is a historical creature; whatever he proves to be is determined to a large degree by the particular events and the culture of his time. The literary and philosophical movement of existentialism which grew out of the catastrophes of the twentieth century presents a view of human existence and reflects man's threatened state; it operates in contemporary society under the pressures of contemporary events and moods.

Having established a frame of reference for Remarque's novels and for his evolving world-view, I shall determine those factors which cause Remarque to perceive the world in largely negative terms. These factors lie in the macrocosm. Two basic causes are recognizable to which all others may be correlated: man's evil nature and the recognition of death. As becomes apparent through Remarque's heroes, man has not yet been able to overcome his tendency to commit evil and continues to bring upon himself calamities such as he witnessed in this century. Since the evidence bears out that the quality of evil is an inherent part
of man's nature, the possibility for its eradication is subliminal at best. In the case of death, the outlook is even more grim. Since death can never be overcome, and since man must live with the recognition that death ends his existence unequivocally, he is imbued with a sense of transitoriness and futility that tinctures his actions, his behavior and his relationships.

However, Remarque is not a total pessimist. Positive qualities in man's private world, in the microcosm, counteract the negative forces of the outer world to some degree. Nature, epicurean delights, friendship, love, the fact of simply being alive are the positive factors which invest his heroes with an appreciation for life. A sense of social responsibility takes them beyond the state of mere bons vivants.

Once the macrocosm and the microcosm have been defined and the elements analyzed which identify and characterize them, I shall then examine to what extent and with what degree of success the heroes adjust to their environment and to the difficulties confronting them. How do they reconcile themselves with an insensitive cosmos, or do they even attempt to? How do they come to terms with their fate, or do they at all? Why do they not resort to suicide, since this is an
option open to them at all times but of which they make no use? By what code do they live that allows them to endure all they must endure? These are questions, which, when and if answered, will add a new dimension to Remarque's work.
"Literature is synonymous with 'great' books."

"Literature refers to everything in print." "Literature refers to writings having excellence of form, writings having universal or permanent interest, or writings exhibiting great emotional effect." "Literature makes reference to a world of fiction and of the imagination."¹

Such general formulations are not, of course, the only possible means of defining what literature is or what it perhaps may be, but the statements are symptomatic of the difficulty inherent in attempting to provide a satisfactory description of the nature of literature, what it is, what it does, or what it is supposed to do—if anything.

No single definition will suffice, for a literary work is, as Wellek said, a "highly complex organization of a stratified character with multiple meanings and relationships"² that does not lend itself to singular classification or narrow categorization. Literature's manner of verbal usage determines that complexity; in contrast to the clear


²Ibid., p. 22.
and universally understandable signs and symbols of the language of science, literature employs a language which, according to Wellek, "will appear in some ways deficient. It abounds in ambiguities; it is ... full of homonyms, arbitrary or irrational categories ...; it is permeated with historical accidents, memories, and associations. In a word, it is highly 'connotative'. ... It has its expressive side; it conveys the tone and attitude of the ... writer. And it does not merely state and express what it says; it also wants to influence the attitude of the reader, persuade him, and ultimately change him."³

To determine those principles by which a writer might be guided when in the process of writing, we turn to literary criticism which has taken up the challenge of finding a frame of reference whereby these principles—perhaps only subconsciously active in the mind of the writer—may be elucidated. It recognizes four major points of reference: (1) the literary product itself, (2) the creator of that product, (3) the subject matter or content, and (4) the reader. According to Abrams, they are elements in "almost all theories which aim to be comprehensive."⁴

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³Ibid., p. 23.

For purposes of interpretation, analysis, and appraisal, the critic may focus on any one or a combination of these factors.

Given these potential bases for interpretation, a literary work can, first of all, be regarded from the point of view of "what it is," as a door is first of all a door. When its primary function has lapsed, it may acquire a secondary use, which, in the case of the door, may be a tabletop. Initially, however, every object can stand on its own; in principle, it can be regarded as an autonomous whole, a self-sufficient entity existing in isolation from all external points of reference and being judged solely by its parts in their internal relations. Secondly, literary works can be explained in relation to the particular creative powers of their author, as owing their existence to "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," as Wordsworth has stated. According to this theory, the writer's thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and desires give rise to impulses which in turn seek expression. The third major orientation expounds the idea that art is essentially an imitation of life, an imitation not of essences but of the world of appearances. This concept remained prominent through the eighteenth century and was expressed succinctly by Lessing, who said: "'Nachahmung' is still for the poet
the attribute which constitutes the essence of his art."^5

The fourth and last perspective puts primary emphasis on
the audience. Its specific purpose is to achieve a certain
effect, a requisite response, in the reader. Based on this
theory, a literary work is chiefly a means to an end, and
its value depends on how successfully its goal of getting
something done is being realized.

Lit erary works bring these four elements into close
relationship but with various degrees of emphasis and,
as Abrams observes, with "a discernible orientation
toward one only."^6 Since writers do not deliberately and
consistently adhere to critically defined categories, much
depends on the writer's own perception of the role of the
artist and on his sense of responsibility or indifference
to the needs or expectations vis-à-vis his audience.

The task lies with the reader and the critic to extract
from particular works that which the writer—more or less
consciously—expressed in them. And just as the writer had
available to him a number of options from which to evolve
his personal approach to writing—be it, as we have seen,

^5 Gotthold E. Lessing, Laokoon, ed. W. G. Howard,
pp. 99-102, cited by M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp:
Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition (London: Oxford

^6 Abrams, op. cit., p. 6.
l'art pour l'art, the mimetic, the didactic, or the expressive orientation—so the reader and critic likewise may choose one of several approaches, keeping in mind, however, that any extrinsic study must be augmented by an intrinsic one: verification in all cases must come from the works themselves. Among the available options, the reader or critic may, for example, employ a biographical approach whereby a literary work is explained in terms of the personality and life of the writer; or he may pursue a psychological direction developing either a psychological study of the writer, of the creative process, or of the psychological effects upon the reader. An extrinsic study might also be conceived of philosophically, treating the literary work from a specifically economic or political point of view, or from a metaphysical or theoretical, aesthetic perspective. Finally, a work of literature might be shown to manifest a sociological approach examining society, social institutions and social relationships. To a large extent, the particular method of analysis to be selected depends on the interest of the reader or critic, but to a certain degree also on the work as such. Not every work lends itself with equal advantage

7 These are the extrinsic approaches to the study of literature as cited by Wellek and Warren, op. cit., pp. 73-135.
to every kind of study: a poem which is seemingly created to exist as an independent aesthetic object may provide little additional insight if analyzed from a sociological point of view, while, similarly, a work with strong sociological or political implications might yield better results if analyzed with the aid of other than aesthetic considerations. A logical, persuasive connection must be made between a literary work and the method of investigation.

For our purposes, the bulk of the discussion must necessarily come from the sociological direction since all the works to be considered in this treatise are governed by ideological factors emanating from society and societal relationships. This analysis gives particular emphasis to those aspects which relate to man and his various settings. Literature does not operate in a vacuum; it occurs in a precise social context and as part of the culture; its creations are a social act as well as a social product; they are rooted in and grow out of the parent social body. Indubitably, the influences which bring them into existence are there, but they are difficult to identify for we are not dealing, as in the sciences, with isolated physical phenomena which can be fitted precisely within some cause-and-effect pattern; in literature this relationship is much more subtle. If the critic succeeds, however, in determining the influences upon a given work and in recognizing the
relationship between that work and the world in which it is rooted, then a picture of social reality and a social document of the time can be abstracted from it.

When used as a social document, literature can be made to yield the outlines of social history. Throughout history, writers have taken their cue from the times in which they lived: in Meier Helmbrecht we are presented with an account of the threatened feudal order reflecting a shift in society; Grimmelshausen, in Simplizissimus, depicts the chaos of the Thirty-Year War; Lessing, in his Minna von Barnhelm, reflects the ethical and political climate of the age of Frederick the Great and the Seven-Year War, while in Emilia Galotti he presents the moral corruption of the princely representatives of absolutism. The tragic plight of the middle class and its desperate struggle against aristocratic oppression are vividly portrayed in Schiller's Kabale und Liebe, while Theodor Fontane describes the social transformations which were taking place in his Prussian homeland in the late nineteenth century. A similar series of social pictures could be assembled from the literatures of other countries, for each one has its social history and its literary documents. Examples could be multiplied indefinitely. One

\[8^\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 103}\]
could assemble and posit the "world" of each writer, the
importance each gives to love and marriage, to business,
to war, to soldiers, to refugees, to illness, or to the
delineation of clergymen, and discover something both
important and true about one's social surroundings.
Since the time of Plato, literature, that is, art, has
been regarded as the mirror of life, a looking glass, a
reflection of nature holding up to the reader a "faithful
mirrour of manners and of life."9 Literature is an extant
and vital part of man's culture, an apparatus for viewing
the world and man's place in it. One of its great values
lies in the fact that a reading of the expressive symbols
of a culture can reveal important things about that culture
and its social environment. According to Wilson, "litera-
ture [like most facets of culture] is enmeshed in the
curiously circular pattern that underlies the stability
of social arrangements. It is at once a product of human
beings and an influence upon them."10 It is a primary
source of knowledge about man and society and has most
faithfully delineated humanity's central concerns since the

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9 Ibid., p. 32.
10 Robert N. Wilson, The Writer as Social Seer
(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979),
p. 9.
beginning of time. It communicates images, sensations or ideas from man to other men; it is the essence of human intercourse. Again and again man turns to it as a source of information and in a quest to discover how other men live or have lived.

Although the relationship between literature and society has a long history, the deliberate treatment of that connection dates only back to the nineteenth century. Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893) is generally regarded as the founder of the sociology of literature. Taine's theories are firmly connected with the positivistic philosophy of Auguste Comte who postulated that all knowledge is confined to that which can be observed, and that sociology, the last of the sciences to be developed, must and can adhere to the same principles as do the physical and natural sciences. Taine applied this theory to literature. He wanted to submit literary works to the same research methods as were employed by the other sciences. He believed that literature and art, like science, neither condemn nor pardon, but merely state and explain facts. He was convinced that a literature based on the positivistic approach could become a valid source of information and documentation, a necessary product of human activity, no less important and meaningful than any other human activity. He saw its great value in the fact that it could be used to reconstruct and understand present and past ages, for, as
Allen explains Taine's theory, literature was "like fossils imprinted by a once-living organism in sand before it had hardened into stone." In positivism, the standard of excellence is based on the fidelity with which the writer adheres to observable facts. Great artists are those who are dispassionate observers, recording without the admission of any subjective sentiment.

Taine was, however, not the first person to recognize the value of a sociological approach to literary analysis. Early attempts at a sort of proto-sociological interpretation of literature are evident in the writings of J. G. Herder and Madame de Staël, among others. Herder had argued that "each work of literature was rooted in a certain social and geographical environment where it performed specific functions and that there was no need for any judgement of value: everything is as it had to be." Madame de Staël took a further step in this direction by acknowledging the importance of such elements as climate, geography and national spirit, and by recognizing the important influence of religion, customs, and law upon

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literature. But Herder and Madame de Staël developed no systematic theories incorporating their views; in fact, they did not go much beyond the vague generalities of even earlier writers who had espoused—if somewhat haphazardly—a correlation between literature and social structure. The first systematic development of a social interpretation of literature was left to Taine. Through his efforts, the field of literary analysis was significantly expanded to deal with the social aspects of life and man in a coherent fashion. Its major limitation at that point was that it restricted its investigation to externals.

But this limitation has been overcome. Just as literature is, or can be, more than a social document, so literary criticism is, or can be, more than an interpretation based strictly on external factors. If all that could have been expected from literature were a documentary report, both sociology and history, whose prerogative is also the study of man and his surroundings, would better be able to document man's situation—present and past—by pursuing an even more scientific and systematic approach: sociology would provide us with a scientific, objective study of man in society, while history would give us the record of the actions of mankind. And although these three fields of investigation deal in
much the same economic, social, and political textures, literature proceeds to capture—or at least attempts to capture—the essence of man and life once the externals of social documentation and social history have been laid bare. Ultimately, literary analysis does the same: it penetrates the surfaces of social life and puts its stress on internals as much as on externals.

Among the social theorists today, it is, in particular, Alan Swingewood who argues for a revival of a social analysis of literature—somewhat along the line expressed by Taine's thought, but ultimately stepping beyond the limitations imposed by his theory. Swingewood contends that just as there is a sociology of religion, or a sociology of education, or of politics, or social change, so there is a need for a sociology of literature. As the term sociology of literature itself indicates, we are dealing here with a combination of two separate—and what many critics consider to be incongruous—fields of investigation. Swingewood maintains, however, that sociology and literature are not two wholly distinct disciplines, but that, at their most basic level, they share a similar

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We could also identify them as literary social analysts or sociologists of literature. For our purposes, the terms may be used interchangeably.
perspective: both are pre-eminently concerned with man's social world and with his adaptation to it, and they complement each other in their attempt to understand society. Swingewood's point is well taken. All too frequently, we have fostered narrowness of vision whereas we should have directed our efforts toward widening our scope and incorporating the knowledge of other domains—of at least those which are similarly oriented—into our investigations.

Swingewood is in agreement with those theorists who contend that literature should be subject to the same kinds of inquiry as are the traditional social sciences, and that the depiction of a particular historical setting or background not only is a desirable and interesting by-product in a literary work, but is, in fact, a crucial ingredient. These propositions do not, of course, constitute a departure from past efforts to explain man and his position. The newness of his proposal and that of other similarly-minded theorists lies in the attempt to overcome the external limitations of the past.

Today's social theorists believe that when the actions of man are described against a particular historical background, man can then be portrayed in depth. They do not restrict themselves to a description or explanation of man's

14 Ibid., p. 13.
surroundings, his actions and behavior. Although these factors are essential elements in their effort to arrive at a "total" interpretation and analysis of a literary work, they do not confine themselves to them, but, in addition, enter the inner world of man. They identify the values, the aspirations, anxieties, and hopes of man, and relate them to the historical climate from which they derive. Their main purpose is to discover the "core of meaning" in literary works and to reveal the central problem with which man has been concerned at various times. To that end, externals are to be delineated and explicated because it is the externals which are ultimately responsible for shaping man's inner life; they are the fertile ground on which the sentiments and attitudes which man exhibits—and the writer expresses—develop. On the basis of the writer's observations, his work may become, in the words of Swingewood, "one of the most effective sociological barometers of the human response to social forces," but it is on the level of values, as Swingewood contends, that literature reinforces and illuminates purely sociological material.

The appeal and applicability of the sociological

\[15\] Ibid., p. 17.
approach to the present study on Remarque derives from the focus of that approach. Social literature not only asks the question "what happened," but also "what was the effect of it happening." Lowenthal, one of the distinguished writers in the field of social interpretation of literature, maintains that it is in the area of attitude and feeling that social literature excels. He states that "man is born, strives, loves, suffers, and dies in any society, but it is the portrayal of how he reacts to these common human experiences that matters. . . ."\textsuperscript{16} Nothing can show better than literature the ways in which men and women subjectively experience society. And since the feeling which man has about his society is a sound indicator of what that society is, no one concerned with human society can afford to ignore the literary consciousness and the "literary witness," as Richard Hoggart phrased it. Hoggart points out that "without the full literary witness . . . the student of society will be blind to the fullness of society."\textsuperscript{17}


\textsuperscript{17}Laurenson and Swingewood, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 13.
The social critic concerns himself with the writer's vision of man within the universe. Seldom is man's relationship to society, the interplay of man with his fellow man and of man with his environment simple and secure. Man's private situation is ambivalent, to say the least. And although it is a cliché to say that "man is a social animal," this axiom clarifies and identifies man's position instantaneously and lucidly. Man is, in fact, both individual and social in nature. He is an individual through and through: he is born alone; he lives and decides alone; he dies alone, and much of his "labor is spent in a never completely successful effort to close down the gap"\(^{18}\) of his separation. Each person must find his own means of reconciling his separation with his social instincts. Generally, society aids him in this effort and provides him with the opportunities to satisfy his need for social interaction, for social organization and community of thought. For man is also social through and through: "the conception that gives [him] existence, and the childbirth that brings [him] into the world"\(^{19}\) are social acts; the food that becomes his


\(^{19}\) Ibid., p. 776.
physical substance, the language with which he thinks, decides, and perhaps rebels are given to him by his society. No man can wholly reject his society; he may accept it genuinely and unequivocally, or he may lament and criticize; but in every case, he is affected by it. Literature depicts this dichotomy of man's being and man's effort to reconcile his diverging tendencies. It raises questions, attempts answers; it contemplates man's fate and life in its totality; it interprets what it observes; it envisages the situation of man and of the writer separately and in solidarity.

Literature has dealt with the theme of human experience in the past— in fact, that is its private domain— but it lacked in urgency, or as Robert Lovett says in his essay Literature and Animal Faith, literature was "usually of minor forms and subsidiary to so-called higher interests." 20 Today it is eminently needed to fill a void. Because theology and science, in which man has put his faith in the past, have failed to sustain man "in his sense of unique significance in the scheme of things," 21 human experience is invested with a new and


21 Ibid., p. 10.
compelling importance. Man is thrown back on his own experience and on his own resources from which to elicit values of living. Literature can aid him in this effort. To come to terms with this situation, and to find a value system that ensures survival and a degree of contentment in an age of crisis and catastrophe is an intimation of what literature can be. True, it may be deficient in relaying ultimate truths, as philosophy can do; it may be deficient in relaying historical accuracy, as history can do; it may lack a systematic study for individual or collective behavior which sociology has; but it more than compensates for these deficiencies. Literature has its own reason for being. And in those areas which are its prerogative, it excels.

We have seen that writers may differ in their orientation. Depending on their individual view of the artist and his craft, they may also differ in their commitment to their art. Those writers with whom we are primarily concerned—those who exhibit a strong social inclination— are committed to truth and humanity; they bear the full burden of social responsibility, taking sides, as Sartre urged, "against all injustices wherever
they may come from, launching their own crusade in behalf of exploited mankind. And, significantly, they work within their particular historical occurrences.

The situation of the writer today is as precarious as is that of man. His position at an earlier time when he took his seat on Mt. Olympus, so to speak, from where he could oversee the whole and control his figures like marionettes, has been relinquished. The modern writer no longer enjoys such a secure vantage point. As is man about whom he writes, the modern writer feels equally alienated and equally cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots; he is equally aware of the all-pervasive sense of uncertainty evident on all levels. The political events of the twentieth century have beset him with doubts as to the physical survival of his world, while psychoanalytical findings have shown him that man is not a totally rational being but is swayed and motivated by forces of which he is not aware and which he cannot control. The writer is particularly vulnerable to the cumulative loss of confidence and increased sense of frustration evident today, for his attunement and sensitivity to his environment and to the mood and atmosphere of his time cause him to perceive them more acutely and

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intently. A writer is not a recluse residing alone in an aesthetic dwelling or ivory tower; on the contrary, he is part of the age in which he lives—more or less integrated within his society—but totally embedded in it. With the aid of his creative powers, he formulates his personal values in an effort to master a hostile environment and endure in a capricious social universe; he must, first of all, satisfy private demands and create what is of urgent importance to him; he must find an alternate lifestyle in a world devoid of meaning. He must grapple with the ever-changing problems of his personal adaptation to society. He has become increasingly preoccupied with his own integrity, and increasingly aware of the forces which threaten it. The writer is, above all else, a questioner; he wants to find out how man should live and how he can live, what he owes to others, and what he owes to himself. He does not take for granted a fixed model or a traditional set of values in a society that is characterized by flux and fluidity, but recognizes that it is up to the individual to determine his value system and procure his sense of identity. Wilson expresses these sentiments quite clearly when he states that "with the passing of traditional static societies . . . the individual has been thrown much more nearly on his own to make or define himself and is much less able to rely on the definitions earlier attached to a
fixed community position." In today's society, shot through as it is with "confused values, rapid change, restlessness, and the rootlessness entailed by the loss of community," the individual must forge for himself a way of coping. He must construct a self. Constantly he is alerted to his "frightening freedom to choose" how to conduct himself. The possibilities of self-realization exist, but they carry with it the burden of responsibility. It is his existential dilemma.

23 Wilson, op. cit., p. 147.
24 Ibid., p. 146.
CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The situation of mankind in the twentieth century has been growing ever more urgent. Metaphysical certainties have been lost, and all that exists has become relative and doubtful. Technology, which man regarded initially as his ticket to utopia, may prove to be his nemesis instead. As the threat of nuclear war looms dangerously on the horizon, and as the events of the twentieth century continue to erode his faith in a rational world, man, who at one time felt himself to be the master of nature, has increasingly sensed his servility. He has become enslaved by the machine age; as a member of mass society he has been reduced to an object, a thing to be manipulated. He stands at the zenith of his technological successes and industrial achievements, looking down into an abyss, not sure if there is any hope for his survival.

In the medieval period, man had felt secure. It was a time of peaceful cooperation among all classes, an age of organic growth of culture, a harmonious society. It was the Age of Faith. Final truths had already been written. Man was ruled by religion; he was like a child, playing under the watchful eyes of a benevolent God. A
traveler on this earth, he used the present life to prepare for the next. He was guided by a Divine Will which directed his destiny according to a cosmic purpose. The world was fixed. Each person had his proper place, aim, and function within the established hierarchy. Knowledge was finite. Man was free to discover and create, as long as what he discovered and created conformed to the Holy Writ. Reason stood in the shadow of religion.

With the advent of the Enlightenment came the decline of the Age of Faith. A new awareness of the human potential for knowing emerged, and as man became conscious of an existence outside of the framework of religion, he increasingly disregarded medieval philosophical postulates. Rationalism and humanitarianism became the characteristics of the age. Convinced that there was no higher authority than his own ability to understand, man put his faith in reason and in his own rationality. He believed that reason, based on scientific laws and discoveries could solve all human problems; he was convinced of the perfectability of human nature, and thought that perfection could be realized through universal application of reason; he was sure that no problem was beyond solution and no goal beyond his reach. He believed that the universe could function independently and lawfully according to purely physical causes and that man could know
the world without the help of God. Knowledge was infinite, and man recognized that the extent of his achievements was limited only by his own vision. Once he had the vision, he progressively mastered the exigencies of his life. He, in fact, had become his own master, and master of the world—or so he thought.

The immediate roots of twentieth century man lay deep in the nineteenth century, a most complex and diverse era. This was Europe's golden age, but it was a time of ambivalent accomplishments. Francis Bacon's (1561-1626) slogan "Knowledge is Power" provided the cue for the unprecedented and unparalleled development of industry, technology, and science which characterizes the civilization of the "machine age." That era succeeded in fulfilling man's expectations to create more favorable living conditions for all and in placing within the reach of everyone a multitude of material goods and hitherto unheard-of satisfactions: an improved transportation and communication system, the reduction of illiteracy, eradication of disease, and the extraordinary rise in the standard of living. The auspicious rise of science and technology shaped man's fundamental attitude of life during this time. The benefits to be derived from scientific and technological knowledge were believed to be limitless, and the spectacular successes achieved by such men of science
as Alexander von Humboldt, Heinrich Hertz, and Robert Koch, and of Max Planck, Paul Ehrlich, and Albert Einstein somewhat later elevated science to a cult. Many men and women became skeptical and uneasy about whatever could not be proved in the laboratory.

But the scientific and technological achievements did not yield the nirvana man had hoped for. Science, being amoral, has the dubious distinction of effecting both that which is good and that which is evil, that which is desirable and that which is undesirable equally. It was primarily by virtue of one extraordinary discovery in science in the second half of the nineteenth century that man was forced to revert to a more modest conception of his stature within the universe. As the result of the discoveries made by Charles Darwin (1809-1882), man had to abandon his self-propelled ascent toward unlimited heights and acknowledge his real position among all living things—a position less than sublime. In his first major work, *The Origin of Species*, Darwin put forth the thesis—arrived at by means of the scientific method so characteristic of the age—that all organic life was engaged in a struggle for existence and that survival of any species depended on its adaptability. Nature is not the benevolent and wise guide, but is instead a blind force leading to a struggle between life and death, between the survival and
extinction of each and every species. Darwin's theory of evolution destroyed the very sense of self-confidence and self-assurance which man had developed so laboriously, and successfully, over the past 300 years. How was he to cope with the realization that he was not the epitome of living organisms, and not the ultimate creation in the universe, but that he was merely one stage in the overall evolutionary process of life? With one dramatic blow, he was reduced to a position of equality among all living things, where the only criterion for his continued existence was "survival of the fittest." His ego was shattered.

Additional factors play a major role in defining the mood of the nineteenth century. Notwithstanding the remarkable innovations in industry and science in which that century abounded, some critical—even prophetic—voices were heard which dampened the spirit of that age—even imbuing it with a sense of doom. Not even all the positive achievements could hide the fact that vast and perhaps insurmountable difficulties remained.

There are active within man innumerable factors to cloud his sense of reasoning, to cause emotional disturbances, and to raise havoc in his soul. Because man is torn by passions and primitive instincts on one hand, and a desire to adhere to his rational faculties on the other, he
finds himself in a state of perplexity emanating from the incongruity of basically incompatible forces. By attempting to remain true to the rational element within him, he suppresses the irrational aspect of his being—creating stress and tension. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) analyzed such disorders clinically and established that neurosis is, in fact, the "rejection by the conscious mind of factors which persist as dynamic repressions in the unconscious mind." ¹ These repressions cause conflict. By employing psychoanalysis as a new form of therapy for treating various emotional disturbances, Freud threw new light upon some of the most important problems of human personality and behaviour. But more importantly, his work left no doubt as to the existence of an irrational side to man's nature. Whereas man was compelled to realize as a result of Darwin's discoveries that he was not the ultimate goal in the process of creation, Freud's discoveries disconcerted him even further because they forced upon him the recognition that he is not the totally rational animal Aristotle perceived him to be. Man has no choice but to live with this dual affliction.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) is one of the two nineteenth century philosophers whose theories are felt strongly in the twentieth. His views are frequently self-contradictory and dissonant, but he was able to analyze his age and give to his contemporaries an indication of things to come. Though some may still regard him as a systematic philosopher, his primary achievement lies in his ability to give a perceptive analysis of the culture of his age. He was among the first to unmask what Robert M. Hutchins has called the "twin myths of progress and utility."² Nietzsche can be viewed as a "cultural critic of outstanding vision, integrity, and ruthlessness," and he may be said "to have foreseen with accuracy many of the developments of the twentieth century."³ He recognized the emptiness of man's achievements, and lamented the "unspeakable impoverishment and exhaustion of our existence"⁴ in the midst of a delusive prosperity and exuberant nationalism. He believed that the humanistic culture had failed to live

⁴Reinhardt, p. 678, quoting Nietzsche.
up to its promises and that Christianity, democracy, and socialism all shared in this failure by protecting the weak and hindering the strong. He regarded it as the tragedy of modern civilization that the scientific age which had been heralded with promises of peace, security, and liberation from all illusion and superstition was producing growing instability instead. Nietzsche believed that the civilization of his time had lost its vitality. He recognized the undercurrents of the destructive forces at work in the Germany of his day, remarking: "We are living in an atomic age, an atomistic chaos. Today everything is determined by the coarsest and most evil forces, by the egotism of an acquisitive society and by military potentates." He was aware of the cultural crisis which manifested itself by a lack of confidence in established cultural values and standards. Since—as Nietzsche declared—God was dead, man was drifting through an infinite void without bearing or anchor. Nietzsche indicted the moral and spiritual bankruptcy of the time and raised an isolated voice of gloom about the future. The preface of his principal work Der Wille zur Macht contains the following prophetic passage:

Was ich erzähle, ist die Geschichte der nächsten zwei Jahrhunderte. Ich beschreihe, was kommt, was

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5 Ibid.
nicht mehr anders kommen kann: die Heraufkunft des
Nihilismus. Diese Geschichte kann jetzt schon
erzählt werden: denn die Notwendigkeit selbst ist
hier am Werke. Diese Zukunft redet schon in hundert
Zeichen, dieses Schicksal kündigt überall sich
an. . . . Unsre [sic] ganze europäische Kultur
bewegt sich seit langem schon mit einer Tortur der
Spannung, die von Jahrzehnt zu Jahrzehnt wächst, wie
auf eine Katastrophe los: unruhig, gewaltsam,
Überstürzt: einem Strom ähnlich, der ans Ende will,
der sich nicht mehr besinnt . . .

But despite such pessimistic predictions, Nietzsche saw
some hope for man: by means of vitalization of unused
recuperative resources, through "Umwertung aller Werte,"
man could advance to a new level of being. The cultural

crisis which he witnessed and of which he was part was
merely a stage of transition to that higher level.

The second strong influence to come out of the
nineteenth century and seriously affect the twentieth was
that of the pessimistic philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer
(1788-1860). Schopenhauer, a misanthropist like Nietzsche,
did not put much faith in man's intellect. He regarded
the world as evil, and happiness as an illusion. He
derided the optimism of Leibnitz and his tenet that this
was "the best of all possible worlds." Weighing the
actual amount of good and evil in the world against each
other, he arrived at the conclusion that life was "a

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6Friedrich Nietzsche, Der Wille zur Macht:
Versuch einer Umwertung aller Werte (Leipzig: Alfred
business whose profits do not nearly cover its expenses"\(^7\) and that, therefore, this world was "the worst of all possible worlds." But unlike Buddhism, which takes evil for granted, Schopenhauer was not satisfied with the recognition of its existence, but consciously sought an explanation. He found it in life itself. He arrived at this conclusion based on the hypothesis that man is ruled by his will and that this will is irrational: it makes man a "slave to his nature, his emotions, and sexual drives";\(^8\) it makes the intellect subservient to the subconscious mind; it makes will the master, and the intellect the servant.

Yet the will is not the only causative factor for evil. Life is also evil because life is war. In the words of Schopenhauer, "\ldots sehen wir in der Natur überall Streit, Kampf und Wechsel des Sieges. \ldots Jede Stufe der Objektivation des Willens macht der anderen die Materie, den Raum, die Zeit streitig. \ldots,"\(^9\) making the total picture of life almost too painful to contemplate. More than one hundred years ago, Schopenhauer put into words that which could have come from the pen of

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\(^7\) Reinhardt, p. 505, quoting Schopenhauer.

\(^8\) Garland, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 777.

a writer of the present age. He wrote:

Wenn man nun jedem die entsetzlichen Schmerzen und Qualen, denen sein Leben beständig offensteht, vor die Augen bringen wollte, so würde ihn Grausen ergreifen: Und wenn man den verstocktesten Optimisten durch die Krankenhospitäler, Lazarette und chirurgische Marterkammern, durch die Gefängnisse, Folterkammern und Sklavenställe, über Schlachtfelder und Gerichtsstätten führen, dann alle die finsteren Behausungen des Elends . . . ihm öffnen und zum Schluß ihn in den Hungerturm des Ugolino blicken lassen wollte, so würde sicherlich auch er zuletzt einsehen, welcherart dieser meilleur des mondes possibles ist. Woher denn anders hat Dante den Stoff zu seiner Hölle genommen als aus dieser unserer wirklichen Welt? Und doch ist es eine recht ordentliche Hölle geworden.10

The world is against man. And as if his immersion into a cruel environment were still not enough to plunge him into despair, he is also his own worst enemy.

Schopenhauer's tenet "man is a wolf to man" is a third element in explaining evil. It cogently expresses his conviction that man is cruel to his own species, an idea on which he elaborated thusly:

Durch die gesamte Natur läßt sich dieser Streit verfolgen. . . . Ist doch dieser Streit selbst nur die Offenbarung der dem Willen wesentlichen Entzweiung mit sich selbst. Die deutlichste Sichtbarkeit erreicht dieser allgemeine Kampf in der Tierwelt, welche die Pflanzenwelt zu ihrer Nahrung hat, und in welcher selbst wieder jedes Tier die Beute und Nahrung eines andern wird, das heißt die Materie . . . jedes Tier kann sein Dasein nur durch die beständige Aufhebung eines fremden erhalten . . . , so daß der Wille zum Leben durchgängig an sich selber zehrt und in verschiedenen Gestalten seine eigene Nahrung ist, bis zuletzt das Menschengeschlecht, weil es alle

10 Ibid., p. 363.
Man stands alone in an inhospitable and hostile universe and must rely on his own resources. As Durant explained: "What one human being can be to another is not a very great deal; in the end everyone stands alone."12 For Schopenhauer, life is a struggle, and man, because of his intellect—limited though it may be—is aware of the struggle and of his own suffering. Life depends on his not knowing it too well.

To understand the situation of man at a specific point in time, one must understand the historical occurrences operative at that time. And since we are primarily concerned with man's situation and outlook in the first half of this century, those events must be considered which set the mood and shaped his views. For man does not live in a vacuum. He is a historical creature and partakes in the vast historical process of the world. He is embedded in a particular culture, which, in turn, is part of the totality of civilization. Having entered into

11 Ibid., p. 178.

this totality, man is affected by the events of the age
and they, in turn, are reflected in his spirit.

As Germany entered the twentieth century, things
looked serene on the surface. She retained her formidable
appearance to outsiders and to most Germans; she extended
her empire geographically, and her economic and industrial
progress continued on a grand scale. But under this
veneer of success, the forces of destruction were already
at work. It was not only Germany which was ultimately
responsible for the events leading to World War I. Other
nations—France, Great Britain, Russia, Italy, Austria-
Hungary—were equally guilty of embarking on a course of
action characterized, as Dill notes, by "militarism,
commercial rivalry, imperialism, national chauvinism."¹³

It was the spirit of the time. The elements for war
were present. All that was needed was one spark to ignite
the smoldering embers seething under the surface. The
spark came with the murder of Archduke Francis Ferdinand,
heir to the Austrian-Hungarian throne, by a Serbian
nationalist. That murder launched Germany, and eventually
the world, on one of the most catastrophic periods in the
history of mankind. On August 3, 1914 the world was at
war. It was the day when, in Sir Edward Grey's famous

¹³ Marshall Dill, Jr., Germany: A Modern History
phrase, "the lights had gone out all over Europe."\textsuperscript{14}

Thus the forward march of western civilization which had shown such promise was halted. For the next four years, science, industry, wealth, and power were put into the services of destruction. It was the first war of truly global proportions; twenty-seven powers became involved, fighting on land, and at sea, and, for the first time, fighting in the air and below the water. The Great War was a total war; it was fought not only on battlefronts but also on homefronts far from the scene of military conflict. During the first two years, optimism remained high in Germany that the country would emerge victorious. But as the war dragged on, as supplies and equipment were exhausted, as the number of civilian and military casualties increased, as food became scarce, and as the likelihood of victory became ever more dim, Germany was ready to end the conflict. In the autumn of 1918, the armistice was signed.

For all its horror and tragedy, World War I generated ambitious ideals for a better world. During a brief period following "the war to end all wars," hopes were raised that out of the chaos a new world might emerge—a better world, a world of lasting peace. In the arts this vision was reflected in the Expressionists' promulgation of "der

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., p. 216.
neue Mensch," one who would encompass such ideals as "humanozentrische(s) Bewusstsein; Brüdergefühl; Gemeinschaftsidee; ... Erdballgesinnung." Attempts were made to fulfill an honest longing to build a better world. A new era of international cooperation began under the auspices of the League of Nations. In Germany monarchial rule was displaced by the democratic Weimar Republic, whose task it became to restore a defeated Germany. Some progress was achieved. The new constitution revived the spirit of the people and implanted a sense of optimism toward the future; a degree of political stability was restored, and prosperity was once again attained.

However, it soon became apparent that the Republic did not stand on solid foundations. The injustices of Versailles—built around the concept that Germany was responsible for the war—festered deep wounds while political inexperience and heavy economic burdens assessed to Germany as war reparation combined to discredit the new government among many dispirited and humiliated Germans. From the very beginning democracy experienced strong opposition from the Left and from the Right, and the government expended most of its effort in defending itself against these enemies who were united only in their__

denial of democratic values.

In retrospect the frenzied and agitated decadence of the twenties looks like a danse macabre, as Dill describes it. Literature and the arts reflect the ambivalence, the diversity and conflict, and the sense of despondency which were evident at the political and social level. Some creative minds of the period, "with the sixth sense of the artist,"\(^1^6\) saw where Germany was heading, but the great mass saw only a time of prosperity and gaiety.

Yet progress and success were merely a facade. As had been the case at the turn of the century, Germany appeared strong and powerful. And again, as had been the case prior to the first World War, Germany seethed with unrest under this veneer of prosperity. Again it would take an international catastrophe to lay bare the inner decay.

This time the international incident that precipitated a string of irreversible events leading to the ultimate catastrophe came in the form of a world depression. Spreading from the United States, the depression flung Germany into a state approaching civil war and eventually brought about the total collapse of the Weimar Republic--assisted to a large extent by the exploits of the rapidly growing and intensifying nationalist movement which

\(^1^6\)Ibid., p. 326.
fervently, and successfully, fanned the flames of discontent. When the Weimar Republic came to an end, it was by dint of a blow from the Right. The ideological legacy of World War I, expressed as "making the world safe for democracy," was about to be challenged, and nowhere was it challenged more than in Germany, where, under the messianic leadership of Adolf Hitler, one of the most antidemocratic reactions in all of history began.

Hitler's program was one of national regeneration, German revival and expansion, coupled with virulent anti-Semitism. Upon establishing himself firmly as party leader, Hitler set in motion the myth of the "Fuhrer" and assumed as Dill phrases it, a sort of magico-religious position. Hitler made the Nazi Party his instrument of rule, wielding an ever tightening grip on individuals and institutions. Political, economic, and social organizations were nationalized, business became the servant of the state, and all opposition was ruthlessly eliminated. Dill, in delineating Hitler's increasingly despotic and merciless reign, relates the fate of Jews, Communists, Social Democrats, and other undesirables who under Hitler, had to endure "an existence

17 Ibid., p. 352.
of sadistic ferocity such as the world has rarely witnessed."\textsuperscript{18} The brown terror of arrests, beatings, imprisonment, and shootings was on full rampage. Every class of society, labor, civil servants, teachers, students, farmers, or doctors was watched and guided at every step of the way. Germany's youth, "the reservoir of the future party," was indoctrinated. Education had to serve the State; according to Dill, it had to be technically competent, nationally German, and ideologically Nazi. That learning was muzzled in Nazi Germany was evident from the infamous book burning ceremony at the University of Berlin in 1933; here "students danced around the pyre waving swastika flags and singing Nazi songs, [while] hundreds of banned books from the university library were consumed by flames."\textsuperscript{19} It was a public display of censorship, and a step back into the medieval past.

But more was still to come, as Dill explains: to totally ensure "public enlightenment" of Nazi ideology, strict censorship was instituted and the printing of material not completely in accord with Nazi doctrines was forbidden; to listen to broadcasts from foreign

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., p. 346.
\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., p. 363.
countries became a serious and punishable offense; newspapers, radio, and motion pictures gave the public only what was officially prescribed; "to read one newspaper was to read them all." The Nazis were thorough and efficient in pursuit of their aims. They left nothing to chance and to random development. As a result, states Dill, "Germans lived in a sealed cocoon to the extent that a powerful government was able to enforce its will."

The Germans had deluded themselves into believing that Hitler was the saviour they had been waiting for. They had staked all their hopes on him, but by the time they realized that they had been deceived and recognized the extent of their deception, it was too late to do anything about it. True, Hitler changed the national psychology from one of despair to one of confidence in his Third Reich; and true, he changed a situation of extremely high unemployment to one approaching full employment; he created the "Arbeitsdienst," providing such work as reclamation of land, prevention of erosion; and he gave a new impetus to rearmament, road building, and public works. But the price for economic security was extremely high: freedom was lost, for Germany had

\[20\] Ibid., p. 372.

\[21\] Ibid.
become a police state.

World War II began with Hitler's march into Poland. There was nothing of the enthusiasm, the bands and parades that accompanied the German armies marching off during World War I. Too many people were still alive who remembered all the horrors and privations twenty years before. Far more than World War I, World War II represented a global conflict. It was enormous in scope; all the major powers of the world had joined in the war, and all of the lesser states had enlisted with them on one side or the other, or, if they remained neutral, had felt the war's violent impact. The entire globe became a battlefield. World War II was again a total war in the sense that the civilian population had become deeply involved as targets of air raids, rockets, and, finally, the atom bomb. World War II was a new kind of war. Developments in technology had made possible "mass bombing raids, air-borne invasions, amphibious assaults, operations from carrier-based planes, and mass murders in Nazi concentration camps." 22

The war lasted six years. When it was over, the world lay prostrate. The damage it had done was too enormous to comprehend; the mere statistics were unfathomable: 15 million military deaths, and 30 million

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22 Wallbank, op. cit., p. 711.
civilian deaths; 100 million military personnel had been mobilized; economic and financial costs totaled $1.6 billion. "In total deaths and in economic and financial costs World War II was about five times as expensive as World War I." Yet this presentation of data, though it alone staggers the imagination, is only one, however awesome, facet in the total horrorpicture. World War II was a return to barbarism but using twentieth century technology. Eleven million innocent victims--six million of them Jews--were exterminated. The word genocide had to be created to be able to describe the deliberate and systematic destruction of whole racial, political, and cultural groups. Hitler could have been proud of his efficient murder machine.

This then is the historical background against which mid-twentieth century man must be viewed. The first half of the twentieth century was certainly one of the most tumultuous periods in all of history. In less than half a century, two world wars and a worldwide financial crisis racked mankind, and during this time humanity experienced the most poignant suffering. Small wonder that the spiritual and psychic nature of twentieth-century man, specifically of mid-twentieth century man,

should be one inclined toward pessimism.

Prewar and postwar Germany are a study in contrast. At the turn of the century and just prior to "the war to end all wars," the overall mood was one of utmost exuberance and boisterous optimism, brought about by the spectacular advances in science and technology. As we saw earlier, man put his faith and his trust in them and expected that the technological progress of mankind would be accompanied by an equally rapid and unqualified moral ascent. Stefan Zweig (1882-1942) relates the Zeitgeist of this period in his autobiography, Die Welt von Gestern, describing the era as "das goldene Zeitalter der Sicherheit." Zweig maintains that in those days man lived his life in uniformity: a life from beginning to end, seemingly without disturbance or danger, a life of, perhaps, slight anxieties but of hardly any noticeable transitions, a life lived "in gleichen Rhythmen, gemächlich und still... von der Wiege bis zum Grabe..." It was a life seemingly based on permanency where everything had its norm and everything stood firmly and immovable in its appointed place. It was an age in which man believed in

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25 Ibid., p. 10.
the binding power of tolerance and conciliation: "[er meinte], die Grenzen von Divergenzen zwischen den Nationen und Konfessionen würden allmählich zerfließen ins gemeinsame Humane und damit Friede und Sicherheit, diese höchsten Güter, der ganzen Menschheit zugeteilt sein." According to Zweig, no one thought of wars, of revolution, or revolts; all that was radical, all violence seemed impossible; the world was headed on a straight and unfailing path toward being the best of all possible worlds; it would be merely a matter of decades until the last vestige of evil and violence would finally be conquered.

In Zweig's words, it was this unswerving belief in progress which so eloquently characterizes that age:

... dieser Glaube an den ununterbrochenen, unaufhalt- samen 'Fortschritt' hatte für jenes Zeitalter wahrhaftig die Kraft einer Religion; man glaubte an diesen 'Fortschritt' schon mehr als an die Bibel, und sein Evangelium schien unumstößlich bewiesen durch die täglich neuen Wunder der Wissenschaft und Technik. 27

As time went on, progress became ever more marked, more rapid, and more varied. Jubilation knew no bounds at the ever more wondrous inventions and events: the first telephone, the first "Kodak," the first radio, the first flight of the Zeppelin. Alvin Toffler was to explain the accelerative thrust of technological progress a generation later.

26 Ibid., p. 16.
27 Ibid., p. 15.
later suggesting that technology feeds on itself, that technology makes more technology possible.\textsuperscript{28} At the turn of the century, the limits burst, propelling the feelings of optimism and faith in the future to ever greater height. Everyone seemed to gain strength from the upswing of the times.

But as man was to discover all too soon, his optimism and exuberance were short-lived. With one swoop, the catastrophe that was World War I hurled him back a thousand years, destroying his world of security and shattering his hopes and dreams for a better and more humane future, instilling in him a sense of impotence as to the ways of the world—a feeling compounded and intensified a thousand-fold by the events of World War II.

In retrospect, man's optimism during the pre-World War I era seems banal. But hindsight is always notoriously superior to contemporary judgment. Looking backward, one can readily perceive the nemesis lurking at that time. Apprehension and caution were expressed even then by those—primarily intellectuals—who sensed the superficiality of that optimism running rampant among the general population, and who recognized that forces were already at work to undermine that—apparent—world of security.

Among those observers and analysts of the time who expressed opposition to the all-pervasive optimism, the historian-philosopher Oswald Spengler (1880-1936) gives a particularly pessimistic assessment of that age and of the future of the Western world in general, even prophesying its decline. Spengler had "affinity to the attitudes associated with fin de siècle," the feeling of melancholy, of Weltschmerz, the awareness of decadent man, society and civilization. He regarded technology as one of the prime forces in the destruction of culture. Chiefly known for his work Der Untergang des Abendlandes in which he "sings the swan song of Western civilization and preaches a funeral oration over its allegedly decomposing corpse," as Reinhardt notes, Spengler adopted the principle of cyclical progression to Western civilization, concluding that Western civilization was in the winter cycle of its development, and that its end and death were, therefore, predictable and inevitable; for, according to Spengler, all cultures follow the laws of evolution, that is, they pass through the successive stages, or "seasons," of spring, summer, autumn, and winter; in other words, through stages of "Kindheit ... 

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30 Reinhardt, op. cit., p. 679.
Every age conceives its own world view relative to its heritage, its encounters with observable facts and events, its perception of reality, and its present state of knowledge. Man does not exist in a void. He carries within him the sum total of all previous events, attitudes, processes, and trends. Whatever he proves to be will be conditioned largely by his history and culture. The situation of man in the twentieth century is one characterized by ambivalence. We have seen man at his worst, and we have seen him at his best; we are aware of his potential for committing evil and committing good; we have been repelled by his irrational behaviour and been astounded by his intellectual accomplishments. We have seen man's phenomenal progress in the fields of science and technology in the nineteenth century; but what he has achieved in the twentieth century is nothing short of miraculous.

At present, man's technology is moving ahead at

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32 A concept akin to the "collective unconscious" on which the artist draws when in the process of creating—a view propagated by Carl Jung.
supersonic speed, and each day sees it further accelerated. Meanwhile, however, there has been no corresponding increase in man's own mental capacity. He probably has no more native intelligence than his Stone Age ancestors. Even the usually optimistic Goethe was alarmed at man's inability to change for the better, and visualized a mankind which would become more shrewd and more intelligent, but hardly better or happier. All man's technological and scientific know-how could not save him from the trauma of the twentieth century.

Again we turn to Stefan Zweig to give us the sense of life of his generation, this time as a witness to the political-historical events of the first half of the century. It is a world of man's own making, a world which, in Hamlet's phrase, seems "out of joint":

Alle die fahlen Rosse der Apokalypse sind durch mein Leben gestürmt, Revolution und Hungersnot, Geldentwertung und Terror, Epidemien und Emigration; ich habe die großen Massenideologien unter meinen Augen wachsen und sich ausbreiten sehen, den Faschismus in Italien, den Nationalsozialismus in Deutschland, den Bolschewismus in Rußland und vor allem jene Erzpest, den Nationalismus, der die Blüte unserer europäischen Kultur vergiftet hat. Ich mußte wehrloser, machtloser Zeuge sein des unvorstellbaren Rückfalls der Menschheit in längst vergessen gemeinte Barbarei mit ihrem bewußten und programmatischen Dogma der Antihumanität. Uns war es vorbehalten, wieder seit Jahrhunderten Kriege ohne Kriegserklärungen, Konzentrationslager, Folterungen, Massenberaubungen und Bombenangriffe auf wehrlose Städte zu sehen,
Bestialitäten all dies, welche die letzten fünfzig Generationen nicht mehr gekannt haben und künftige hoffentlich nicht mehr erdulden werden. 33

The twentieth century is an age of acute crisis for man. It is the crisis of the individual who no longer has a frame of reference and who finds himself adrift in the secular world he has created. In a world where the urban population doubles every eleven years, as Toffler says, man finds himself alone; in a world where, according to Toffler, the total output of goods doubles every fifteen years, he is homeless; and in the midst of a gigantic social apparatus that fulfills his material wants, he finds himself alienated; he is an outsider even within his own human society. He is fragmented, because his world lacks cohesion; he is lost, because he senses neither purpose nor unity nor harmony in his universe; he finds himself in a state of impermanence, a state of transience, that penetrates and tinctures his consciousness; he is alienated, rootless, and estranged from God, nature, and his fellow man; he is the "homo faber" of our mechanized and technological age. He lives in the Age of Relativity. The certainties of the past have been lost, and everything has become relative and therefore doubtful. His spirit yearns for

33 Zweig, op. cit., p. 11.
an answer that will allay the turmoil of doubt and uncertainty. But the world denies him an answer. Modern man knows the world better than did his forebears through knowledge derived from the scientific process. And he knows himself better and knows of the devil within him; he knows that the menace lurks from within. He knows that science and technology may have given him the knowledge to master his physical environment, but that he has not, as yet, learned to master himself.

Twentieth century man is learning to live by the new rules. As Wheelis writes, man must accept the fact that he "does not now--and will not ever--live by the bread of scientific method alone," and must make conjectures about things like "life and death, love and cruelty and despair" which do not lend themselves to experimentation. Wheelis believes that modern man has already come to the realization that he, as an individual, has only limited powers of intervention, that the actual results of his activity depend largely on general environmental conditions rather than upon the aims he is trying to fulfill. He has come to recognize the small

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35 Ibid.
extent of his sphere of influence as compared with the vast possibilities of which he is abstractly aware. He senses his powerlessness to change the course of the world and sees himself as being dragged along in the wake of events which he, at one time, had hoped to guide.

We come to a fundamental question. How is modern man to cope with the ever widening disparity between what he has and what he is? How can he accommodate himself to this sense of powerlessness, frustration, and impotence, and rise above it? Definitive answers to these questions are not forthcoming, for there are none. Each person must find his own way of resolving the conflict. That is his responsibility and his challenge. It is the dilemma of modern man. Cognizant of the fact that there is no indoctrination with moral regulations, he must meet the challenge and search for new ways to anchor himself. He must rely on his own resources, shape his own destiny, and construct his own morality. However, he must also accept responsibility for that which he has created.

The predicament of modern man is reflected in the literary and philosophical movement of existentialism. It epitomizes the mood of our time, but it is as old as human self-concern. Philosophically it was first proclaimed when Socrates embraced the Delphic oracle "Know thyself" as man's foremost duty.
Existentialism is chiefly a twentieth century European phenomenon that arose in the wake of the European collapse. It centers upon an analysis of the individual human being in the present age, and bases its investigation on man as a being-within-the-world, rather than an object isolated from the external world or as abstraction itself. Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, and Jean-Paul Sartre are the main exponents of existential philosophy, greatly indebted to Soeren Kierkegaard whose rediscovery after World War I provided momentum to the existential movement. Though they do not espouse a common philosophy or set of principles (in fact, they differ greatly in their assessment of man's plight), they share a common starting-point: that man is a responding being and is expressive of his age.

Existentialism is not easily definable, for there is no single entity or essence to which the word corresponds. It does not concern itself with abstractions, symbols, the transcendental realm, search for eternal truths, aesthetics, or epistemology—the traditional strains of philosophy, and does not pursue a delineated method of

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investigation. Rather, existentialism points to a certain state of mind, a specific approach or attitude; it has to do with man as he exists in his lifetime. Existentialism attempts to give an expression of the whole man, not merely of his intellect. It express the Zeitgeist. It is not a matter of chance that this philosophy arose at the time it did—as a response to national catastrophes. As Heinemann explains, existentialism expresses human problems which arise immediately from our human condition and concern us directly as persons. We are not looking out for problems. The problems choose us. We have to express them. We have to meet their challenge. . . . Because the very existence of man on this earth is menaced, because the annihilation of man, his dehumanization and the destruction of his humanity and of all moral values is in real danger, therefore the meaning of human existence becomes our problem. We have to reinterpret man, his position in the Universe, his relation to his fellow-men and to God.

Kierkegaard is considered to be the founding father of existentialism. He espoused several concepts which were to become primary characteristics of existentialism. Indubitably, his most important contribution is his virtual declaration of war on traditional philosophy. Kierkegaard believed that the purpose of philosophy was not to engage in speculative thought, in abstractions

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37 Ibid., p. 178.
and transcendental phenomena, but that philosophy should be put in the service of man. Kierkegaard postulated that man is a real person, a concrete human personality, existing in this world, and that his existence is not open to speculation, but is, in fact, a reality.

Kierkegaard is also credited with formulating the concept of the individual within mass society. As early as 1846, in his essay The Present Age, Kierkegaard protested against the ascendancy of the mass, and he warned against the precariousness of the position of the individual within such a society. His sympathies clearly rested with the individual whose existence was threatened by the encroachment of mass society.

"Angst," despair, dread--these are key terms in existentialism, and Kierkegaard originated their use in relation to the situation of man of his time. However, application as to its usage has shifted from a strictly Christian emphasis during the time of Kierkegaard to a more secular one. Kierkegaard suggests that man's estrangement from his own being, evident even at that time, was the result of man's loss and negation of God, leaving a void that eventually would be filled with despair. What Kierkegaard tried to accomplish was to save man from this gathering religious lethargy; for,
in the words of Heinemann, without God, man has no Self, and whoever has no Self is in despair.\textsuperscript{38}

Heidegger's interpretation of "Angst" and anxiety added a new dimension to existentialism. True to the concept of this philosophical movement, Heidegger further explored man's existence within this, our real world, and determined that man's fears are not attributable to anything specific and definite, but are the result of a general feeling of "dread" permeating everything, something that cannot be pinpointed. It is a mood or an attitude, arising out of the fateful recognition that man's existence is temporal, that he is finite, that death is absolute yet unpredictable, and that everyone must endure it alone. Everything that makes up human existence must be understood in light of man's temporality.

Jaspers' notion of despair is derived from yet another source. Although Jaspers was a staunch champion of science, and acknowledged the technological achievements of the age, he also recognized that man was threatened by it, most clearly so because of the advent of mass society with its inherent tendency to obliterate the individual by absorbing him into its own amorphous mass, a mass

\textsuperscript{38}Ibid., p. 37.
which is, as Barrett notes, "unconscious of itself, uniform and quantitative, devoid of specific character and cultural heritage, without foundation and empty." Mass-man, dominated by external forces, by society, the state, impulses, natural desires, has lost his individuality—his authenticity. To escape the danger of becoming a mere cog within the enormous machine, he must create his own authentic existence, for only by accepting the challenge of self-destiny and increased self-consciousness, can he prevent his total absorption, perhaps even obliteration, by the mass. Such situations arise when man has no roots and when he is made dispensable and exchangeable by such conditions as are generated by the technological age. A feeling of despair accompanies man's attempt to make himself authentic, to create himself, for in the process of achieving authenticity, he must make choices—receiving, however, no external guidance or support. He must choose according to his own conscience; if his conscience is in error, then so is the decision or choice based upon it, prompting feelings of anxiety. Modern man is free. But he is also

burdened with the responsibility for choosing, and for having to live with his choice. In his essay *The European Spirit*, Jaspers postulates what is the desired goal of existentialism and of existential man. He wrote:

The philosophically serious European is faced to-day with the choice between opposed philosophical possibilities. Will he enter the limited field of fixed truth which in the end has only to be obeyed; or will he go into the limitless open truth? That is, will he submit to a dogmatic form of total knowledge; or will he hold in balance, as the means of his existence, all possibilities of thinking and knowing? Will he solidify his independence till it petrifies . . . or will he win this inner independence in perilous openness, as in existential philosophy, the philosophy of communication, in which the individual becomes himself on condition that others become themselves . . . We trust our direction when we hold to three claims: (1) Limitless communication between man and man . . . (2) To become master of our thoughts . . . (3) To acknowledge love as the final guide . . . If it should be said the existential philosophy is a dream and mere fanaticism, then I dare to reply that if it is a dream it is perhaps one of the dreams out of which what is human has always been born, and the reason for life being worth living.

Sartre continued the line of reasoning introduced by Jaspers as it relates to man and his responsibility to transform himself into a whole and new human being. Unlike Jaspers, though, who regarded mass society and the technological age as the source for man's demise, Sartre saw it in the Universe itself. From his atheistic

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vantage point, Sartre regarded man's position in the
Universe as alien, unjustified and unjustifiable, even
absurd, and lacking sufficient reason to explain why
either he or the Universe existed. Sartre's point of
contention was not so much to prove that there is no
God, but that man needs to discover himself even in the
absence of God. According to Sartre, man is nothing in
the beginning; he simply exists; and only if, and when,
he makes something of himself, is he something. As
Sartre said: "man is nothing else but what he purposes,
he exists only in so far as he realizes himself, he is
therefore nothing else but the sum of his actions,
nothing else but what his life is." Man makes his own
essence. He alone is responsible for what he is.

Existentialism is a view of human existence. It
has its being and operation in current society, and operates
under the pressure of contemporary events and moods. It
has as its thesis the existing individual who strives for
identity and meaning solely in and through his own terms.
Be it through Kierkegaard's "Grenzsituationen," in which
the "eternal mystery of being" is ultimately made clear in

41 Morton White (ed.), The Age of Analysis: Twentieth
Century Philosophers (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1955),
p. 134, quoting Jean-Paul Sartre, Existentialism and
Humanism, trans. Philip Mairet (London: Methuen and Company,
Ltd., n.d), pp. 25-42.
face of existent nothingness, or be it in Jaspers' concept of self-authentication, or be it Sartre's ambitious goal of self-creation, they all share a desire for self-recognition, self-realization, and self-consciousness in view of a mute, indifferent world, of a life permeated by a sense of agony, despair, alienation, and isolation.

Existentialism does not have ethics. The principles of conduct, of moral principles and values must be determined by the individual. Modern man lives at a time when the moral law has lost its Divine sanction and when, as Heinemann states, "the individual, unable to fall back on any accepted standard of values, has to make his own solitary decision." Living in a world where there is no God, he cannot take recourse in religion and cannot make excuses for his failures by appealing to external forces. He alone decides his being, and nothing, and no one can show him what to do. Only he can make himself significant and particular by choosing himself in particular ways.

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42 Heinemann, op. cit., p. 177.
CHAPTER III
THE MACROCOSM AS NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE

Erich Maria Remarque is a man of the modern age. His lifetime spanned a period of seventy-two years. He witnessed all the political, social and economic upheavals which the twentieth century unleashed upon the world. Two world wars, inflation, depression, totalitarianism, genocide and emigration are the hallmarks of this century, and within this framework man must now live. His traditional values, his heritage of a classical-romantic idealism, and his former sense of security, however tenuous it may have been, are now lost, and man has been thrust into a world characterized by alienation, disillusionment, relativity, and nihilism.

Remarque's novels are rooted in the history of the time. They are an emotional and intellectual response to those phenomena which have shaped our age: they show man as a victim of gigantic impersonal forces; they show how the individual struggles to survive and how he struggles to preserve his sense of self in a world that wages global warfare, exploits human beings on a mass scale, uses power politics as an instrument of domination and systematically kills off millions in death factories.
Remarque exposed these shocking evils and pictured their grim realities. He was an acute observer of contemporary political and sociological events; he captured the mood of the time and eloquently expressed its Zeitgeist. He tried to heighten man's sense of responsibility to the cataclysmic violence of war and to the barbarism of the age. He gave us a commentary on this, our twentieth century, and became its chronicler par excellence. As the poet Conrad Aiken put it, the artist is the only true contemporary.

In the following treatise, Remarque's philosophy of life, his conception of the Universe and of life will be examined and discussed, based upon his novels, with particular emphasis given to six: *Im Westen nichts Neues*, *Der Funke Leben*, *Zeit zu leben und Zeit zu sterben*, *Der schwarze Obelisk*, *Die Nacht von Lissabon*, and *Schatten im Paradies*. These works may be viewed as fictional embodiments of Remarque's basic themes: that man is doomed to suffer catastrophe because of the world in which he lives and is unable to escape such disasters of "civilization" as war, inflation, intolerance, fanaticism; that "life is a relentless, irreversible process which inevitably culminates in the oblivion of death, that each individual
is essentially alone and that nothing endures";¹ and that, despite personal knowledge and experience of these factors, he has the courage and desire to survive, drawing upon inexhaustible resources of the spirit, preserving his composure during crises, displaying stoical bearing in the face of grave danger. In selecting these novels, consideration was also given to the chronology of historical events which they depict, and his first and his last novels were included for the purpose of comparing Remarque's adherence to or departure from major themes during his writing career.

Im Westen nichts Neues (1929), Remarque's first novel, describes the horrifying experiences of death and destruction of World War I as related by Bäumer. The novel is an indictment of war in general. It introduces the theme of the "lost generation" telling the story of those who escaped the war in the flesh but not in the spirit; as Remarque said in a prefatory statement:

"Dieses Buch ... soll ... den Versuch machen, über eine Generation zu berichten, die vom Kriege zerstört wurde—auch wenn sie seinen Granaten entkam."²


²Erich Maria Remarque, Im Westen nichts Neues (Frankfurt: Ullstein, 1976), p. 5. (Future quotations from Im Westen nichts Neues will be taken from this edition, and the novel will hereafter be referenced as IWNNe.)
Der schwarze Obelisk (1957) treats the inflation-ridden Weimar period, observing the struggle of ordinary people, such as Bodmer, during the period between the two world wars. The novel contains philosophical discussions on religion, love, death and on the meaning of life.

Zeit zu leben und Zeit zu sterben (1954) is a World War II novel and portrays the impact of war on men and women on the homefront. The story encompasses the perversion of war and raises questions of personal guilt and corruption. It describes Graeber's relationship with Elisabeth which is based on a true sense of abiding human satisfactions and values.

Der Funke Leben (1952) has as its setting one of the most infamous structures of the modern age: the concentration camp. The novel depicts with terrible intensity human anguish and unimaginable suffering. It is a saga of life triumphant, a tribute to the human spirit as exemplified by 509. It is a protest against inhumanity and any type of doctrinary tyranny.

In Die Nacht von Lissabon (1964), Remarque treats the plight of the emigrant, a theme closely associated with the Germany of World War II—internment, escape, flight, the individual as faceless statistic. The novel relates Schwarz' moving story of personal courage and of love.
Schatten im Paradies (1972), Remarque's last novel and published posthumously, is concerned with the experiences of World War II refugees in the United States. Guilt, despair, failure to establish a real relationship, inability to forget the past, criticism of the Teutonic personality and soul--these are some of the themes of the work as manifested in Ross. The novel reiterates virtually all of Remarque's concerns, and because they are now described retrospectively, based upon a lifetime of observation and experience, the work is invested with great importance--although, admittedly, aesthetic considerations alone do not warrant preoccupation with the novel.

To a great extent, Remarque's work is rooted in personal experience. Remarque had been part of the tumultuous events of the time and was permanently scarred by them. First-hand knowledge of the war, personal experience with Nazi tactics--harassment, forced emigration, book burnings, the murder of his sister "im Namen des Volkes"--combined with what he observed and intuited, and heightened his sensibility for the situation of man. Remarque depicts that segment of society which is--like him--spiritually wounded, and the misfortunes of his individual characters become representative of the misery and suffering endured by thousands of others. Surrounded by
danger, tyranny and fanaticism and by an indefinable and amorphous fear, they find themselves at the edge of society and at the edge of existence. Remarque does not give us a positive hero to be emulated, and there is in his novels no intimation of a progressive society confidently facing the future. Instead, we find that his hero has become the unheroic hero, detaching himself from society, a society that is mad with the rage to kill and destroy. Marcel Reich-Ranicki describes Remarque's heroes in this way:

Seine Helden sind sehr menschliche Menschen, sehr männliche Männer, sehr frauenhafte Frauen. Sie haben viele Schwächen, aber gerade diese Schwächen machen sie so liebenswert. Sie haben allerlei Tugenden, die sich indes in erträglichen Grenzen halten. Bisweilen müssen sie rauh und hart sein, aber sie werden nie vulgär, und sie bleiben immer zärtlich. Sie neigen zur Schwermut, mitunter zur Resignation--und sind doch ganze Kerle. Sie fürchten den Tod und lieben das Leben und möchten es--trotz allem--noch einmal genießen. Sie reden viel über das, was ist und nicht sein sollte, über Gott und die Menschen, über die Welt und die Ungerechtigkeit.

In his writings, Remarque does not lose himself in idealistic dreams or phantasmal pursuits, nor does he provide easy solutions to the perplexity of man's situation--or any solution, for that matter. He presents the questioning self as it encounters the external world

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in situational dilemmas. He wrote as he had to, listening to his intuition and to his sense of life, as Richard Katz explains:

Im Heere der Schriftsteller gibt es Einzelgänger, die nicht nach rechts noch links blicken, sondern nur der Wahrheit ins Auge sehen. Ihr Los ist hart. Sie stoßen mit anderen zusammen, sie stolpern über Steine, die auf dem Wege liegen oder ihnen vor die Füße geschoben werden. Es ist das Los Zolas und Tolstois, Victor Hugos und Gerhart Hauptmanns. Es ist das Los derer, die keine Kompromisse schließen. Es wurde auch das Los Remarques.

And in the process of recording what he saw, Remarque made a statement that contributed significantly to the present human condition.

Remarque regards the macrocosm with pessimism. Ultimately, his pessimism derives from two basic causes to which all others are correlated: first, that man—although possessing both the seed for good and for evil—has a strong inclination toward evil. His emotional and mental faculties have not evolved at the same rate as has his intellect—resulting in a great disparity between rational know-how and irrational application and behavior. Secondly, that death is the only absolute value for man—coloring all his actions and achievements and enveloping them with a cloak of impermanence.

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Modern man lives in a world out of which grows hope, for the first time in history, of a society where there will be freedom from want. For the most part—and due to man's rational faculty—he has been able to eradicate the immediate concerns of man in past ages: hunger, cold, and disease—the direct threats to his survival. But despite all his vaunted progress and his great wealth, and despite all that he has achieved in the fields of science and technology, the panacea he expected would be its natural consequence has not materialized: Submission to his irrational powers and the ensuing intensification of man's inhumanity to man have—so far—prevented its occurrence. Man's Faustian nature—to which Remarque makes frequent reference—is his adversary and his own worst enemy. When Faust is appraised on the basis of his personal and individual nature (in contrast to Faust as a representative of human endeavor and activity where his nature is characterized by his "striving"), he exhibits this same division and the same internal conflict between good and evil. He is torn by two opposing forces: the dictates of his irrational nature and the demands of reason. All too often, his irrational side exerts the greater force resulting in the exposure of such negative human qualities as egotism,
ruthlessness, and scrupulousness. In *Drei Kameraden*, Remarque writes: "Einer gönnt dem anderen nischt. . . . Daran liegt's aber seit ein paar tausend Jahren."\(^5\)

Even the Remarque hero himself, who most generally displays the good qualities of man, is not immune to actions such as he normally condemns. As Schwarz explains, "Man war gezwungen zu lügen und zu betrügen, um sich zu verteidigen und am Leben zu bleiben."\(^6\) Ross recognizes that he cannot extricate himself from the human race, but is an integral part of it—though he may wish it to be otherwise:

Ich gehöre zu ihnen, dachte ich, ich gehöre zu dieser Horde von Mör dern . . . es war töricht, wenn ich mir vormachen wollte, daß ein treues, ehrliches, unwissendes Volk durch Legionen vom Mars überfallen und hypnotisiert worden sei. . . . es war der alte, von Oberlehrern angebetete furor teutonicus gewesen, der zwischen Gehorsamsknechtern, Uniformvergötzern und viehischem Atavismus aufgeblüht war; mit der einzigen Einschränkung freilich, daß das Vieh niemals so viehisch war. Es war keine Einzeler- 

\(^5\)Erich Maria Remarque, *Drei Kameraden* (Frankfurt: Ullstein, 1977), p. 289. (Future quotations from *Drei Kameraden* will be taken from this edition, and the novel will hereafter be referenced as DK.)

\(^6\)Erich Maria Remarque, *Die Nacht von Lissabon* (Munich: Knaur Taschenbuch, 1977), p. 160. (Future quotations from *Die Nacht von Lissabon* will be taken from this edition, and the novel will hereafter be referenced as DNvL.)

\(^7\)Erich Maria Remarque, *Schatten im Paradies* (Munich: Knaur Taschenbuch, 1977), p. 227. (Future quotations from *Schatten im Paradies* will be taken from this edition, and the novel will hereafter be referenced as SiP.)
Thus man is still threatened in his fight for survival after all. However, the immediate danger lies no longer in a primitive and unsophisticated physical environment, but rather it emanates from man's unevolved mental state. And even if in some distant future man should succeed and conquer his dichotomous condition, he has one further obstacle—insurmountable—that will prevent him from ever achieving that perfect state: for no matter how well he may build his world—banish even his negative nature—he cannot banish death itself; he must live with the knowledge that he must die and that, therefore, nothing is permanent.

It should not surprise us that a questing writer like Remarque should exhibit a basically pessimistic outlook. His exquisite and sensitive attunement to the times, to the titanic and sinister forces at work during our century left no uncertainty as to the propensity of man's inhumanity to man. The overwhelming impulse of human beings to dominate one another, the systematized mass murder and mass slavery on a scale never known before, and the horror we have come to call the Holocaust tax our belief and make us wonder if they really happened. But even more onerous than the nightmare itself, and more onerous than the actual outbursts of monumental violence—massacres that have all too frequently punctuated human
history—is the cognition of the new potentialities in the human ability to dominate, enslave, and exterminate with the aid of ever new and ever improved technological innovations.

The wars themselves, with their inherent capacity to annihilate everything in their path, are a major contributing factor in the evolution of an overall sense of an essentially evil reality. When the "great" war, the "war to end all wars," proved to be a delusion, when destruction, death, economic privation, loneliness and fear, the intrinsic accomplices of war, were increased multitudinously with the Second World War, the accompanying sense of impending doom likewise was increased drastically. As soldiers lay dying by the millions on the battlefields and as the civilian population experienced a similar fate on the homefront, the insidious side of man's nature was being exposed; for war is the ultimate embodiment of man's inhumanity to man: it is a testimony to the cruelty which one man is capable of inflicting upon another. War lays bare the whole gamut of human perniciousness and gives evidence of the wickedness of man's character. As Bäumer said, "der Mensch ist an und für sich zunächst einmal ein Biest, und dann erst ist vielleicht noch, wie bei einer Schmalzstulle, etwas Anständigkeit draufgeschmiert." (IWNN, p. 36) Most of the time, however, the beast in him
commands the dominant status; it is the beast's evil nature, his individual and overriding self-interest which becomes the actual motive for all conscious action, including war. War brings out the worst in man, while, conversely, war is caused by what is worst in man. In his book, The Cunning of History, Richard Rubenstein declares that the ineradicable dark side of human personality is an intrinsic part of man's make-up. Rubenstein states that the world of the death camps and the society which causes it to exist reveals the progressively intensifying nightside of Judeo-Christian civilization. According to his analysis, what we have seen of man in the twentieth century is nothing less than a reaffirmation, on a more drastic scale, of the dark side of man's nature. As Rubenstein says in an important passage:

Civilization means slavery, wars, exploitation, and death camps. It also means medical hygiene, elevated religious ideals, beautiful art, and exquisite music. It is an error to imagine that civilization and savage cruelty are antitheses. On the contrary, in every organic process, the antitheses always reflect a unified totality, and civilization is an organic process. Mankind never emerged out of savagery into civilization. Mankind moved from one type of civilization involving its distinctive modes of both sanctity and inhumanity to another. In our times the cruelties, like most other aspects of our world, have become far more effectively administered than ever before. They have not and they will not cease to exist. Both creation and destruction are
inseparable aspects of what we call civilization.

The affinity to Remarque is evident: negative and positive elements are part of man's nature, closely intertwined. Whether we agree with Rubenstein and see them not as antithetical elements but as two aspects of the totality of man's constitution, or whether we see them as two diametrically opposed elements vying for supremacy is, in our case, just a matter of emphasis. As is evident from Remarque's novels, Remarque believes that the good and evil of the Faustian nature are indeed inherent in human nature but are not active in equal proportion in all men and at all times. Different times, differing personalities, and different environmental factors play an important part in the ascendancy of the one element over the other; but eradication of man's evil nature, or better, its reduction to a subliminal state is at least possible—if perhaps unlikely. In our century, however, evil forces have held the upper hand.

All of Remarque's heroes—all are male—are in one form or another, directly or indirectly, affected by the experiences of war and its manifold ramifications. But whereas the war experiences of the hero of the World

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War I novels are limited strictly to those connected with front-line duty or a front-line hospital stay, the range of war-experiences of the hero of the World War II novels is vastly expanded to include all those related areas which have become characteristic of that period: war on the homefront, emigration, concentration camp, torture. No matter where or at what stage of the conflict, or at what intermediate stage between conflicts the heroes find themselves, they are sure to be confronted with many of those aspects that characterize their time, for the effects of war are far-reaching and long-lasting, and the consequences inescapable.

To a Remarque hero, war means air raids, and sirens and bunkers; it means, as Graeber experienced, coming home on furlough to find that your home has been destroyed during a bombing raid, not knowing whether your parents are still alive, and if they are, where. War means, as Bäumer was to realize, watching your classmates and your comrades die, one by one, while carrying out assigned duties to kill; it means watching your friend, nineteen years old, lying on his bed with an amputated leg, telling him that he is lucky, he could have lost both legs or his right arm, knowing all the while that your friend will not survive and that you cannot help him; you want to lead the whole world by his bedside to let the whole world see that your friend,
crying because his young life is leaving him, does not want to die. War means becoming aware of the full range of possible injury to life as Bäumer was to find out when he was wounded and sent to the military hospital:


War means becoming a witness to the horror and pain of life, and to the enormity and intensity of human suffering:

Und dabei ist dies nur ein einziges Lazarett, nur eine einzige Station—es gibt Hunderttausende in Deutschland, Hunderttausende in Frankreich, Hunderttausende in Rußland. Wie sinnlos ist alles, was je geschrieben, getan, gedacht wurde, wenn so etwas möglich ist! Es muß alles gelogen und belanglos sein, wenn die Kultur von Jahrtausenden nicht einmal verhindern konnte, daß diese Ströme von Blut vergossen wurden, daß diese Kerker der Qualen zu Hunderttausenden existieren. Erst das Lazarett zeigt, was Krieg ist. (IWnN, p. 184)

And war means becoming an emigrant; it means persecution, a life lived in secrecy and under assumed names, negation of one's humanity; it means being homeless, being shuffled from country to country like cattle—"das Freiwild aller":

[Ein Mensch] mußte verbluten im Gestrüpp der verweigerten Ein- und Ausreisevisen, der unerreichbaren Arbeits- und Aufenthaltsbewilligungen, der Internierungslager, der Bürokratie, der
Einsamkeit, der Fremde und der entsetzlichen allgemeinen Gleichgültigkeit gegen das Schicksal des Einzelnen, die stets die Folge von Krieg, Angst und Not ist. Der Mensch war um diese Zeit nichts mehr. (DNvL, p. 5)

And ultimately war means having to confront man's cruel nature directly. It means beatings and hangings, medical experimentations and burnings, and tortures totally unimaginable to the mind. Josef Schwarz has the dubious distinction of having known different methods of torture, different reasons for meting them out, and differing degrees of intensity when put into execution. The Nazis may have encouraged conformity in most areas, but they coveted originality where torture was concerned according to the motto: the worse, the better. Schwarz distinguishes between two types of Nazis: between Lächler and his own Nazi brother-in-law, Georg, both of whom have given Schwarz samples of their "work" previously:


The power that has been given to them has corrupted them. War corrupts. It needs no justification for the misuse of power; on the contrary, war affords protection and abjures
responsibility for actions committed for the "cause."
And just as war corrupts, so power corrupts; during war, power is in the wrong hands—too much power altogether in anyone's hands.

Much of the load for the execution of war-related atrocities of World War II is borne by Lächler, Georg, and their counterparts, by the so-called "normal" people, the average man. To call them normal and average may at first glance strike us as perhaps totally inappropriate and may stretch our imagination to the utmost, while, in fact, it epitomizes Remarque's view of man. The difference between a Lächler and a Georg and a typical Remarque hero is that the hero holds the evil that is in him, as it is in all men, at abeyance, whereas in Lächler and Georg it has come to the surface. It is not the place here to delve into the many and interesting variations of man which play a role in Remarque's novels, except to say that the degree of evil man may manifest varies from type to type, and from person to person. Generally speaking, however, Lächler and Georg represent the incarnation of evil. Their over-zealous sense of duty, of order, of

9 He may also be referred to as "Zweckmensch" (Der Weg zurück, p. 120) and incorporates positive and negative qualities. In civilian life he is the "Kleinburger" unconcerned with the nature of life or the world, the "Gehorsamsknecht," "Uniformvergötzer," a cog in the
obedience coupled with a sense of new-found power, their lack of a questioning attitude as to what is good and evil, and right and wrong allow them to commit crimes and barbaric deeds which few would commit outside the framework of war. But since war knows no moral responsibility and since the burden of guilt for committing evil is not heavy in times of war, war becomes open season on man. Lächler and Georg are representatives of that particular type of man who reverts back to the beastly side of his being--most generally hidden under a veneer of respectability--when the restraints of convention and societal retribution are lifted. Lächler and Georg, and modified variations of them, are what constitute the mass of society: people who carry out orders, any orders, willingly and well. Ross describes this type of man:

Das wirkliche Grauen—der Kleinbürger, pflichtbewusst und schlau und mit gutem Gewissen bei der blutigen Arbeit, nicht anders als beim Holzsägen oder beim Fabrizieren von Kinderspielzeug—, das konnte ich ihm nicht begreiflich machen... Er wollte mir nicht glauben, daß dies ganz normale machine with no moral will and with no sense of personal responsibility for evil committed in times of war. To a large extent, Graeber displayed some of these traits before he discovered a moral will within himself. Ethics lose their remoteness for him when he realizes, by observing the actions and attitudes of Binding and other like-minded "good" Nazi soldiers, that to be passive about evil means becoming part of evil itself. The "Zweckmensch" has not come to that recognition.
Leute waren, die eifrig Juden töteten, so wie sie auch als Buchhalter eifrig gewesen wären; die, wenn das einmal alles vorbei wäre, wieder Krankenpfleger, Gastwirte und Ministerialbeamte werden würden, ohne eine Spur von Reue oder das Bewußtsein von Unrecht, und daß sie sich auch da wieder bemühen würden, gute Krankenpfleger und Gastwirte zu sein, so, als wäre das andere vorher nie dagewesen und völlig überdeckt worden von den Zauberworten Pflicht und Befehl. Es waren die ersten Automaten eines automatischen Zeitalters... Hier mordete man ohne Schuld, ohne schlechtes Gewissen, ohne Verantwortlichkeit, und die Mörderswaren brave Staatsbürger, sie bekamen Extraschnaps, Extrawürste und Extra-Verdienstkreuze, nicht weil sie Möder waren, sondern weil sie einen etwas anstrengenderen Beruf hatten als einfache Soldaten. (SiP, p. 274)

Again and again, Remarque reiterates that the seed for evil is there and that certain circumstances or events draw it to the fore. Wartime does so most effectively. In the case of the normal and average man, the "braver Zweckmensch," it is the uniform and what it symbolizes that brings out what is most evil in him. Yielding power where there was none before and abnegating personal responsibility by providing an apparent veil of security, the uniform becomes his excuse for committing evil. And paradoxically, the less his sphere of influence was in civilian life, the more he exerts his power once he has it. In an exchange between Kat and Bäumer, the cruel behavior of the tyrant Himmelstoß, a former mailman, is explained in these words:

Das macht die Uniform... Sieh mal, wenn du einen Hund zum Kartoffelfressen abrichtest und du legst
ihm dann nachher ein Stück Fleisch hin, so wird er trotzdem danach schnappen, weil das in seiner Natur liegt. Und wenn du einem Menschen ein Stückchen Macht gibst, dann geht es ihm ebenso; er schnappt danach . . . Und es steigt ihm um so mehr zu Kopf, je weniger er als Zivilist zu sagen hatte. (IWN, p. 37)

Take the uniform away, and the sense of protection and forcefulness evaporates, an experience that Neubauer, commander of Mellern concentration camp, had when he exchanged his uniform for a civilian suit: "Sonderbar, wie die Entschlossenheit sich aus einem Gesicht verlor, wenn die Uniform fehlte! Man wurde wablig, weich. Fühlte sich auch so." With the external support thus gone, Neubauer would have to rely on his own resources—small wonder that he should be leery.

To have seen to what depth of evil man may sink, or conversely to what height of evil he may rise and has risen in our century, and to have become cognizant of the fact that the life and welfare of a person count for absolutely nothing in our time is only part of the problem confronting the Remarque hero. He must also live with the knowledge that the events that took place in Germany, World War I and World War II, and the exploitative and inhumane acts perpetrated by the Nazis prior and during World War II are not isolated phenomena in the annals of

10 Erich Maria Remarque, Der Funke Leben, (Frankfurt: Ullstein, 1976), p. 228. (Future quotations from Der Funke Leben will be taken from this edition, and the novel will hereafter be referenced as DFL.)
history, nor are the actions restricted to a particular nationality; rather, they are symptomatic of a more universal condition and are an indication of how deeply the germs of destruction lie within man.

The extent of man's inhumanity can be viewed from a horizontal as well as from a vertical dimension. Seen horizontally, we can state that what Remarque's heroes witness in the course of their lifetime—keeping in mind that Remarque provides us in his novels with a quite accurate account of our age—may find its expression in other countries, among other peoples, and at another time as well, and it may do so for the very reason that the root cause lies not so much in the mentality of a particular group of people, but is to be found in the very nature of man in general. Schwarz, for example, tells Helen about his difficult life as an emigrant in France although, to be sure, it was significantly less traumatic than his life under the Nazis. Schwarz states, drawing upon personal experience, that "Macht ist Macht, und ein Polizist ist ein Polizist in jedem Lande der Welt," (DNvL, p. 116) while 509—in a discussion with Werner, an avowed communist—argues that a totalitarian system is as bad in one country as it would be in another because the characteristics that identify such a system are bad. He
contends that the methods employed in order to achieve
desired goals—killing, internment, torture, subordina-
tion of the individual to the state—are inherent in that
system no matter where it surfaces.

Bäumer, who has just been forced to kill a French-
man in the course of self-preservation and who has had
to watch his enemy's losing battle with death, expounds
on the universality of another aspect of human encounter--
that of universal human suffering and similarity of fate:

Ich habe gedacht an deine Handgranaten, an dein
Bajonett und deine Waffen;--jetzt sehe ich deine
Frau und dein Gesicht und das Gemeinsame. Vergib
mir, Kamerad! Wir sehen es immer zu spät. Warum
sagt man uns nicht immer wieder, daß ihr ebenso arme
Hunde seid wie wir, daß eure Mütter sich ebenso
ängstigen wie unsere und daß wir die gleiche Furcht
vor dem Tode haben und das gleiche Sterben und den
gleichen Schmerz. (IWnN, p. 158)

The evidence thus bears out Remarque's recognition
of the universality of the human condition. His emphasis
is not restricted to an examination of the fate of "der
Deutsche unter den schwersten Belastungen," "der Deutsche,
der litt,"--even though that is a major theme--but he
goes beyond such narrow confines to embrace the whole
situation of man and to incorporate "die geknechtete
Kreatur," "die Menschen dieses Jahrhunderts, die Fragen
der Humanität in his work. Remarque's sympathies rest with that particular type of man—anywhere—who finds himself at the mercy of others and who is emotionally crippled by the drama to which he must bear witness.

To say that Remarque's work has a vertical dimension regarding the nature of man (and it does) is to say also that he has a sense of historical awareness. Schopenhauer's basic precept, "eadem, sed aliter"—the more things change, the more they are the same—can aptly be applied to Remarque. Remarque recognizes the linkage from the past to the present and into the future of man's inhumanity. He sees it as part of a continuum that has been engrafted for centuries onto the very body of western civilization. That we have to admit to our inability to rise above the evil forces that are within us, that we allow them again and again to gain mastery over us, and that we have not been able, in the course of several thousand years, to significantly alter our destiny does not speak well for us.

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Remarque's hero is extremely conscious of the perpetual recurrence of all that we associate with what is negative in man. Through personal experience he has become aware that the evil observable in man may be more than a superficial and temporary state. Evidence from the past proves it to him. Everything repeats itself: Bodmer, in his personal study of history, has learned that the world of today is not much better off than it was during much earlier periods, contrary to what Vicar Bodendiek implies:


As Remarque notes, if it were not for the technological and scientific advances, mankind could not report much progress since even pre-Christian times, and those successes we have attained, we employ, for the most part, in the pursuit of committing more evil. Remarque reminds us of the eras of Attila and Genghis Khan whose barbarism we have surpassed in our century. He reminds us of the Thirty-Year war with its horrendous loss of life and

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13 Erich Maria Remarque, Der schwarze Obelisk (Frankfurt: Ullstein, 1976), p. 155. (Future quotations from Der schwarze Obelisk will be taken from this edition, and the novel will hereafter be referenced as DsO.)
destruction of property, of the Crusades, the Inquisition and the witch hunts, and he tells us about the dichotomous eighteenth century with its minuet, its grace, its rococo atmosphere—and its guillotine. Ravic explains:

Alles war dutzendmal dagewesen. Die Lügen, die Treubrüche, die Morde, die Barholomäusnächte, die Korruption durch den Willen zur Macht, die unablässige Kette der Kriege—die Geschichte der Menschheit war mit Blut und Tränen geschrieben. . . . Die Demagogen, die Betrüger, die Vater- und Freundesmörder, die nachttrunkenen Egoisten, die fanatischen Propheten, die Liebe mit dem Schwerte predigten; es war immer dasselbe . . . es hatte kein Ende.14

But as if what the Remarque hero knows of the events of the present age and what he has ascertained about the past were not sufficient cause to plunge him deeply into despair, he must still consider the last element in order to complete the circle: the future. All indications are that he can expect more of the same. Be it intuition, a study in probability, prediction, or simply lack of faith in man's ability to change, the fact remains that another of Schopenhauer's tenets, "man is a wolf to man," will most likely prove to be true in the future as well. Indicative of the suspiciousness and apprehension with which the Remarque hero regards the

14 Erich Maria Remarque, Arc de Triomphe (Munich: Goldmann, n. d.), p. 225. (Future quotations from Arc de Triomphe will be taken from this edition, and the novel will hereafter be referenced as AdT.)
future, Graeber, in full knowledge of the events of the immediate past, cannot fathom any improvement. He is less than elated at the prospect of putting a child into the world as Elisabeth suggests: "Ein Kind! Es würde für einen neuen Krieg geradeso zurechtkommen wie wir für diesen." Selma, Neubauer's wife, echoes Graeber's gloomy prediction. She recognizes that all those who are directly or indirectly responsible for the fate of the inmates at the concentration camp and for the causes that brought them there initially, even she, will suffer a like fate; the wheel of fortune will be turned—she senses the imminence of that occurrence— and all those who have been subjugated will rise in order to even the score. Selma tells Neubauer: "Uns kann passieren, was anderen passiert ist, als ihr an die Macht kamt ... genauso werden sie euch erwischen." (DFL, p. 191) Yet there is not so much a hint of revenge in her statement as there is an acknowledgement of the way of the world. A painting of the Spanish Inquisitor elucidates this point further. Ross, standing before the painting, is overwhelmed by the vividness and intensity it suddenly seems to display; it is as if the painting were coming alive.

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15 Erich Maria Remarque, Zeit zu leben und Zeit zu sterben (Cologne: Kiepenheuer and Witsch, n.d.), p. 313. (Future quotations from Zeit zu leben und Zeit zu sterben will be taken from this edition, and the novel will hereafter be referenced as Zz1.)
to communicate what it has seen and learned in the centuries since its creation: that the sinisterness, the bloodshed, the cruelty, the dehumanization which it represents were not dead. "Es war nicht tot. Es würde nie sterben. Die Folter war ewig. Die Angst blieb. Niemand war gerettet." (SiP, p. 121) The future looks dim. The Germans can perhaps be defeated, but never the Nazis, said Gräfenheim. The future is "Kain und Abel, immer wieder!" (DsO, p. 141) It is George Orwell's characterization of our time and his vision of our future: a boot stamping into a human face.

Thus the situation of man has not changed dramatically since the beginning of time. Almost every age has its nightmares. What differentiates our age from previous ones is not that such nightmares could and did occur in our time, but that the sheer scale of these chaotic conditions, unfathomable at one time, staggers the imagination. We thought that absolute power and barbarism were things of the past, that they died out with the dark ages, yet they became the landmark of our century. The true child of the twentieth century is the little boy whom Helen and Schwarz take with them to Portugal to save him from Nazi persecution and extermination. He was three years old when his grandfather was beaten to death, he was seven when his father was hanged,
and he was nine years old when his mother was gassed.

Remarque writes:

Ein Weltfrevel war verübt worden und fast geglückt; die Gebote der Menschlichkeit waren umgestoßen und fast zertampelt worden; das Gesetz des Lebens war bespuckt, zerpeitscht und zerschossen worden; Raub war legal, Mord verdienstvoll, Terror Gesetz geworden. (DFL, p. 102)

What does it say about the world of the Remarque hero, and what does it say about man when we have to admit that we could not prevent these monstrous and horrendous events from happening? And what does it say about man's limitations, and what about the strength of the forces of evil to know that we still cannot prevent their repetition? Quite eloquently and succinctly, Remarque airs these sentiments in the following paragraph written as an introduction to Der schwarze Obelisk:

Die Welt liegt wieder im fahlen Licht der Apokalypse, der Geruch des Blutes und der Staub der letzten Zerstörung sind noch nicht verflogen, und schon arbeiten Laboratorien und Fabriken aufs neue mit Hochdruck daran, den Frieden zu erhalten durch die Erfindung von Waffen, mit denen man den ganzen Erdball sprengen kann.—Den Frieden der Welt! Nie ist mehr darüber geredet und nie weniger dafür getan worden als in unserer Zeit; nie hat es mehr falsche Propheten gegeben, nie mehr Lügen, nie mehr Tod, nie mehr Zerstörung und nie mehr Tränen als in unserem Jahrhundert, dem zwanzigsten, dem des Fortschritts, der Technik, der Zivilisation, der Massenkultur und des Massenmordens. (DsO, p. 5)

In Remarque's novels the cataclysmic events of the world of his hero reverberate extensively and exhaustively. Through Remarque's eyes we have become witness to them and
to man's abominations, and through his eyes and alongside his hero we shall learn of the accompanying emotional and spiritual trauma. Every part of his being is permeated with firsthand knowledge of man's inhumanity to man, with the feeling of lack of security and stability in the present, and with a sense of uncertainty about the future. The Remarque hero is not left unscathed. He cannot divorce himself from what he has seen and from what he knows but must live with full knowledge thereof. In a world populated by "braven Zweckmenschen und Schiebern,"16 in a world filled with violence and cruelty, a world in which man's life counts for nothing, he cannot function "normally." He has no choice but to create an alternate lifestyle; he constructs a life for himself as best he can under given circumstances and lives it at the periphery of society.

Basically the Remarque hero is representative of the "lost generation," a characterization offered by Gertrude Stein and repeated by a number of writers following World War I to describe that segment of the postwar generation which was unable to rid itself of the images and memories of war, return to its earlier "carefree" existence, and

16 Erich Maria Remarque, Der Weg zurück (Frankfurt: Ullstein, 1975), p. 120. (Future quotations from Der Weg zurück will be taken from this edition, and the novel will hereafter be referenced as DWz.)
become integrated, once again, in the maelstrom of society. Bäumer, 509, Graeber, Bodmer, Schwarz, and Ross are all representative of the maladjusted, the spiritually, mentally and emotionally wounded generation which was brought face to face with the nightmares of the twentieth century. And although only Bäumer and Bodmer count as true representatives of the "lost generation" in the strict interpretation of the term (being victims of World War I) the symptoms they evince are not unique but are equally evident in a particular group of individuals after World War II. Similar times bring about similar themes. We can identify them all as members of the "lost generation." All Remarque heroes are thus part of the "lost generation," for all suffer equally from the symptoms understood under that rubric.

The young generation which saw military action during World War I--Bäumer and Bodmer are Remarque's representatives--was not yet out of school when the war began. Its members were torn from a relatively stable environment and cast into direct and continual confrontations with death where instruments of destruction became their daily companions, where they learned to identify the sounds of imminent danger and differentiate between the sounds of explosions, rockets, tanks, machine gun fire, mortar
fire, shell fire and hand grenades. They lived by the motto: kill or get killed. Bäumer expresses clearly the destruction, the pain and the absurdity of what he witnessed at the age of twenty:

Ich bin jung, ich bin zwanzig Jahre alt; aber ich kenne vom Leben nichts anderes als die Verzweiflung, den Tod, die Angst und die Verkettung sinnlosester Oberflächlichkeit mit einem Abgrund des Leidens. Ich sehe, daß Völker gegeneinandergetrieben werden und sich schweigend, unwissend, töricht, gehorsam, unschuldig töten. Ich sehe, daß die klügsten Gehirne der Welt Waffen und Worte erfinden, um das alles noch raffinierter und längerdauernd zu machen. Und mit mir sehen das alle Menschen meines Alters hier und drüben, in der ganzen Welt, mit mir erlebt das meine Generation. (IWN, p. 184)

The "lost generation" is unable to bridge the gap between war and peacetime. What knowledge its members had acquired in the trenches was utterly useless in civilian life, while the reverse was also true: that knowledge attained in school became utterly useless at the front. Bäumer notes the incongruity between past and present: "Zwischen heute und damals liegt eine Kluft . . . Ich finde mich nicht mehr zurecht, es ist eine fremde Welt." (IWN, p. 121)

When the war is over, when he and others of his generation return home, they are as emotionally unprepared for peacetime living as they had been for wartime duty, and they reenter civilian life as they had entered war: with no firm emotional foundation in either.
Again Bäumer speaks for the "lost generation" when he presents his personal reaction to the horrible routine of death and human suffering during war, explaining their psychological effect on his state of mind:

Wir sind verbrannt von Tatsachen ... Wir sind nicht mehr unbekümmert—wir sind fürchterlich gleichgültig. Wir sind verlassen wie Kinder und erfahren wie alte Leute, wir sind roh und traurig und oberflächlich—ich glaube, wir sind verloren. (IwnN, p. 91)

The members of the "lost generation" of World War I feel they have been misused, exploited, entrapped to fight for what turn out to be the self-serving interests of others: "Okkupationspläne einer habgierigen Industrie ... Ruhmsucht ... Machtwillen ... verlogene Romantik ... Dummheit ... Geschäftsgier." (DWz, p. 121) Their sense of indifference is strictly a protecting device to save them from even greater emotional harm than what they already suffer in view of their experiences.

509, Graeber, Schwarz and Ross are the Remarque heroes who witnessed the full horror of Naziism and the horrible destruction during World War II, becoming thereby representatives of the "lost generation" of a later period. Graeber, on leave in his hometown from active duty at the front, happens to come upon his old school building. He reminisces about his school days not so long ago,
realizing—as did Bäumer—that what was taught here has no relationship to the life he was forced to lead as a soldier and is frequently even contradictory to the actualities of real life:

Graeber fühlte nichts als Leere. Alles, was er nach der Schulzeit an Erfahrung gesammelt hatte, war gegen das gewesen, was er hier gelernt hatte. Nichts war beblieben. Es war ein Bankrott. (Zzl, p. 137)

Such examples could be multiplied indefinitely. Every Remarque hero has his own story to tell, the emigrant no less than the soldier or the inmate of a concentration camp. Peculiar to them all is the intense awareness of human cruelty, sensitivity to human suffering, recognition that there is not much they can do to alter that state, inability to readjust to peace time conditions and the all-pervasive sense of estrangement and alienation from life and man. These elements are easily and readily attributable to the events of the time and they are what identify the hero as part of the typical "lost generation."

One might be tempted to argue that such categorization does not differentiate the Remarque hero from the average man since no one is, or was, left untouched by the destructive powers of war. However, this is not the case. As was shown earlier, there is a large number of people, average men, good citizens, who feel no compunction in abnegating either personal or collective
responsibility toward the events of the time and who are immune to a recollection of these events. This type is not endangered. For him nothing changed. War was merely an interlude, an interruption in the course of his life, an opportunity perhaps to gain a measure of recognition and authority, if only for a moment.

The Remarque hero, in contrast, suffers as a result of his experiences and the shadows of these experiences remain with him. "Die Reise mit schwerem Gepäck" becomes a motif in the novels and is a reminder of his inability to shake off the memories of the past. Although the idealism of youth dissipated when the realities of life set in, he does not deceive himself by thinking that it makes any difference what he says, thinks, or does, but recognizes that he has no impact on the course of events. Bäumer says: "Wir sind keine Jugend mehr. Wir wollen die Welt nicht mehr stürmen. Wir sind Flüchtende. ... Die erste Granate, die einschlug, traf in unser Herz. Wir sind abgeschlossen vom Tätigen, vom Streben, vom Fortschritt." (IWnN, p. 67) It is the recognition of such realities which sever the Remarque hero from the mainstream of life.

His background, however, had marked him as "normal." In his early life he embraced the values, aspirations and
attitudes of the social middle class. This changed when, as a result of the war, he realized that these values, aspirations and attitudes had been instrumental, had aided and advanced the course of action which led to the catastrophic events of the time. The hero is tempted to ask what would have been the course of history had "der Mensch mit den Händen an den Hosennähten," (DsO, p. 141) who exemplifies bourgeois mentality and whose major flaw is a disinclination to think, not existed in such numbers? On the other hand, the hero asks himself if this type of person is not advantaged because he can disassociate himself from the past and can return to his former life after his war-time duty has ended?

The Remarque hero displays an ambivalent attitude toward this average man and toward the bourgeoisie of which he is a member. He alternates between contempt and envy for the values they embody. He rejects their philistinism, their bourgeois concern for respectability, the tedious sameness of their life, the banality of their thoughts and actions centering around materialistic and egoistical interests, the ease with which they relinquish their individuality and personality to averageness and mediocrity. But he is envious of the facility and naturalness with which they accept their lot, envious of their serenity, their apparent sense of security, their clearly
defined patterns of existence. He longs for their conventional life where there is some semblance of regularity and surety, and longs for their simple pleasures: a wife, a garden, grilling steaks, taking a stroll, evenings of leisure, small things that remind him of the old times, times of peace, of dreams, of innocent youth, of the times before the twentieth century embarked on its path of destruction. Most of all he is envious of their ability to turn their back on the chaos in which they live and of their ability to accept life as it is without asking what lies beyond. Bodmer, after another serious discussion with Isabelle about the nature of life, about fears and forces of persecution and about "Nothingness," allows his thoughts to drift, for a brief moment, in the direction of that other way of life:

Ein einfaches Leben, ohne Probleme, mit einem braven Beruf, einer braven Frau, braven Kindern, einem braven Abdienen der Existenz und einem braven Tod—alles als selbstverständlich hingenommen, Tag, Feierabend und Nacht, ohne Frage, was dahinter sei. Eine scharfe Sehnsucht danach packt mich einen Augenblick und etwas wie Neid. (Dso, p. 227)

Already Bäumer was aware of this dichotomy and was concurrently attracted and repelled by the obvious display of indifference on the part of the "normal" population toward the horrors of war—which may, in fact, be nothing more than their personal method of coping with the realities at hand. Bäumer said:
Wenn ich sie so sehe, in ihren Zimmern, in ihren Büros, in ihren Berufen, dann zieht das mich unwiderstehlich an, ich möchte auch darin sein und den Krieg vergessen; aber es stößt mich auch gleich wieder ab, es ist so eng. Wie kann das ein Leben ausfüllen, man sollte es zerschlagen, wie kann das alles so sein, während draußen jetzt die Splitter über die Trichter sausen und die Leuchtkugeln hochgehen, die Verwundeten auf Zeltbahnen zurückgeschleift werden und die Kameraden sich in die Gräben drücken!—Es sind andere Menschen hier, Menschen, die ich nicht richtig begreife, die ich beneide und verachte. (IWN, p. 122)

Ross, the hero of Remarque's last novel, still exhibits this same sense of ambivalence for the general population, describing its members as


The whole mental make-up of the Remarque hero is such that it becomes well-nigh impossible for him to step out of himself in order to liberate himself from the thoughts, memories and fears which restrain him. He never becomes an integrated part of the general population but always remains on the fringes of society. As Bernhard wrote in
his analysis of Remarque's post-World War II novels:


He cannot help but be what he is: a branded individual. That is his affliction, and that is what makes him a member of the "lost generation." Unlike a "braver Zweckmensch," he cannot accept his lot unquestioningly but must probe into the realms of the "Why" and "Wherefore." He must carry the memory of the events of his time and consider their causes in order that, by understanding them, he may do his part to prevent a recurrence of human suffering such as he witnessed. He must accept responsibility for the events of his time simply because he is a member, and thereby unwitting contributor, to the furor teutonicus which inflicted such horrific damage.

Our age has been described as the Age of Anxiety. But whereas the fears of man during war have loci—fear of being wounded, fear of death, of torture, of hanging, fear of bombings, fear of imprisonment—anxiety does not. Anxiety is not so much fear of a personal, immediate,

active sense of impending disaster, of personal terror
directed against the self as it is the vague feeling that
the future is unmanageable. Anxiety harbors a sense of
unease that something unspecified and indeterminable may
happen. It is suggestive of the state of "Geworfensein,"
a term coined by Karl Jaspers, to describe man's modern
condition: being flung helplessly into a largely hostile
world.

Remarque's heroes have many names for their state
of "Geworfensein" and for the kind of indefinable fear
which permeates their being and is diffused throughout
their consciousness. Whether they call it "Schwermut des
Lebens," "Weltschmerz," "anonyme Angst," "das Namenlose,"
"das dunkle Gefühl," "das Unsichtbare," "das große
Dunkel," "die Angst der Ohnmacht," "das anonyme Dasein,"
"die unpersönliche Furcht," these terms all refer to an
abstract fear which cannot be pinpointed but whose roots
are solidly anchored in the two world wars. It is an all-
encompassing apprehension, a conglomeration of various
fears and is expressive of what happened, what is
happening and what may happen.

Without exception, the Remarque hero gives evidence
of that fear and its multifarious components. Bäumer, for
example, senses the acute emotional distress of war
suffered by soldiers everywhere, observing, "den Schmerz der Kreatur, die furchtbare Schwermut des Lebens und die Erbarmungslosigkeit der Menschen." (IWN, p. 138)

Graeber alludes to the injustice, to the lies and deception of war, to the killing which is more nearly like murder, to the senselessness of dying: "Es war das Dunkle gewesen, das er im Feld so oft gespürt hatte, die jähre, pressende Verzweiflung." (ZzI, p. 158)

And to Graeber we can attribute the fear of the lurid and sinister aspects of life at the front which are now spreading and smothering hitherto uninfested areas. In modern times of war, no place was safe anymore:

Das Ungreifbare, Gespenstische war wieder da, das schon so lange herumschwirrte, das nie ganz zu fassen war, das auswich und wieder kam und einen anstarrte und hundert undeutliche Gesichter hatte und keines. Er blickte auf die Schienen. Sie führten in die Heimat, in das Feste, Warme, Wartende, in den Frieden, das einzige, was noch geblieben war. Und nun schien das von draußen mitgeschlichen zu sein, es atmete unheimlich neben ihm und war nicht zu verscheuchen. (ZzI, p. 63)

And it is Graeber who offers a superb delineation of a great many aspects which combine to create the "black fear" of the times:

Er spürte die Angst wieder, stickiger, schwerer und klebriger als vorher. Er kannte viele Ängste, scharfe und dunkle, atemlose und lähmende, und auch die letzte, große, die der Kreatur vor dem Tode-- aber dieses war eine andere, es war eine kriechende, würgende Angst, unbestimmt und drohend, eine Angst, die zu beschmutzen schien, schleimig und zersetzend die nicht zu fassen war, und der man sich nicht
stellen konnte, eine Angst der Ohnmacht und des zerfressenden Zweifels, es war die korrumpierende Angst um den andern, um die schuldlose Geisel, den rechtlos Verfolgten, die Angst vor der Willkür, der Macht und der automatischen Unmenschlichkeit—es war die schwarze Angst der Zeit. (Zzl, p. 215)

The fear of the emigrant is voiced by Schwarz, who knows first-hand "die Angst vor der anonymen Angst, die irgendwo draußen durch die Straßen schleicht, an die ich nicht denken und von der ich nicht reden will," (DNvL, p. 56) the fear of capture, of imprisonment, of concentration camps, of possible torture by fanatical or vainglorious Nazis and of possible death.

Finally, a fear is depicted which notes man's loss of direction, his difficulty in focusing, and his sense of being defenselessly cast into a hostile environment from which it will be insuperably difficult to exit (a theme quite reminiscent of contemporary writings outside of the framework of war):

Die Front grollte. Alles war plötzlich sehr fremd, und alle Verbindungen schienen gelöst zu sein. Graeber kannte das Gefühl; er hatte es oft gehabt, wenn er nachts aufgewacht war und nicht gewußt hatte, wo er sich befand. Es war so, als wäre man aus der Welt herausgefallen und schwebte völlig einsam in der Dunkelheit. Es dauerte nie lange. Man fand immer bald zurück; aber jedesmal blieb ein leises, sonderbares Gefühl, einmal nicht mehr zurückzufinden. ... man schrumpfte ... ein, als wäre man winzig wie ein Kind, ausgesetzt in einer riesigen Steppe, aus der jeder Weg hinaus hundertmal zu weit war. (Zzl, p. 336)
The foregoing evidence allows us then to draw up a composite picture of that particular, all-embracing twentieth century fear which could only come about at a time "wo ein Mensch weniger ist als eine Ameise unter dem Stiefel," (DjvL, p. 127) a fear which, for the Remarque hero, incorporates "Verlust," "Leere," "Willkür des Menschen," "zwecklosen Tod," "Schmerz der Kreatur," "Leben ohne Sicherheit," "Unmenschlichkeit," "und eine leere Zukunft."

Undoubtedly, the best and most comprehensive and penetrating summary—description of the world of the Remarque hero as he experiences it, is to be obtained by directing the attention to Isabelle, the "crazy one," "the mental patient," suffering from a "psychotic disorder characterized by loss of contact with the environment." Isabelle: "Schizophren," "Seher und Heilige," or "vom Teufel Besessene." Bodmer does not believe that she is ill, for she has too much insight into the phenomena of our world. Or, as Bodmer implies, is that the reason for her illness?

One of the underlying motifs in Isabelle's story is the division of her personality. Her "illness" brings about the continual interplay between reality and unreality making it difficult to distinguish between who is sane and who is insane. Isabelle observes and recognizes the dangers to and of our world, yet becomes herself
a victim. She lives in a "dreamworld" which at closer scrutiny becomes our reality, that is, our nightmare. She speaks most nearly for the "lost generation" although outside of the context of war.

Isabelle knows about people. She deduces from their behavior that they do not admit to their real nature but hide and even negate it. She points to their hypocritical side and to one of the ironies of life (a theme of notable importance in Remarque's work) observing that it is the "good" people who do most of the damage since they can work under cover of their "goodness" whereas a "bad" person poses less danger since everyone is beware of him:

"Es sind unzählige. Sie sagen, sie wären gut. Aber sie richten viel Böses an. Wer einfach böse ist, kann wenig tun. Man sieht es und nimmt sich vor ihm in acht. Aber die Guten—was die alles tun! Ach, sie sind blutig! (DsQ, p. 231)

This observation comes from the confused mind of a mental patient? Small wonder that Bodmer does not question the rightness or relevance of Isabelle's comments.

Isabelle also knows about the fear, thoroughly diffused throughout the world, forever present. Even if there were nothing specific to fear, the fear would remain and become fear of the future. It has become a permanent structure in the life of the hero.
And Isabelle knows about the forces of persecution. They are closing in on her, constricting her, ready to smother her. She feels the vampire bats hovering about her, waiting for blood. She hears the "voices" pursuing her like furies, growing ever more stronger and intense until they hold her in their grip, and once they have mastery over her, consign her to a life of slow and methodical torture—by sawing:

Das Sagen. Sie konnten doch schneiden, das ginge schneller. Aber dieses stumpfe, langsame Sagen! Alles wächst immer schon wieder zusammen, wenn sie so langsam sind! Dann fangen sie wieder von vorn an, und so hört es nie auf. Sie sägen durch das Fleisch, und das Fleisch wächst dahinter zusammen, und es hört nie auf. (DsO, p. 251)

Isabelle incorporates in her being "die Frage nach dem Warum, [den] Schrei, die Angst und das Verstummen." (DsO, p. 41) She was sent to the mental hospital because she could not function "normally": she "misinterpreted" actualities; she made "insinuations" about the less than ideal individual and his tactics of oppression; she "hallucinated" about fears that transform life into nightmares; and she "imagined" the threats to her life. Bodmer senses the agony that rages within her:

Ich spüre wieder, in welcher Einsamkeit sie lebt . . . allein mit ihren Gesichten, bedroht von ihnen und ihnen hingegben, ohne Dach, unter das sie flüchten könnte, ohne Entspannung und ohne Ablenkung, ausgesetzt allen Winden des Herzens, ohne Hilfe von irgend jemand. (DsO, p. 160)
He recognizes that Isabelle is more sane than all the so-called sane people who are able to shrug off the undesirable elements of their environment—at the cost of their individuality, whereas Isabelle sees and admits to the inadequacies and flaws of her world, suffering as a result of them.

Interestingly, or rather, ironically, when Isabelle is "cured" and released from the mental hospital, she becomes again a "Zweckmensch," going to church regularly and fulfilling the expectations imposed by her family and by her society.

The twentieth century world of the Remarque hero is, as we have seen, one of utter turmoil. Compared to the present, all previous ages seem paradisiacal. Nostalgically, he recalls the times of his youth before the wars when life was still pleasant and secure, or seemingly so, and in retrospect: "Früher hatte man vieles--Sicherheit, Hintergrund, Glauben, Ziele--alles freundliche Geländer, an denen man sich halten konnte." (AdT, p. 295) That stable framework is now gone. Day by day, the Remarque hero must live with the knowledge and awareness of man's past actions while the fear of future conflicts, of conflicts of even greater magnitude, greater horror, and greater terror is suspended above him. Knowing what he knows about man, he is justified in his fear.
To have been a witness to man's inhumanity is a heavy burden, to be sure; but it is not man's sole burden. He must, in addition, carry the heaviest load of all: the knowledge of death and of the finitude of man. All through the ages, man has contemplated his particular situation in relation to the Universe, attempting to understand death, attempting to extract meaning for his existence. But there is no definitive answer to these questions, nor can there ever be. Due to man's limited capacity for knowledge, many of the questions he has asked, must remain unanswered. Nevertheless, the Remarque hero probes into that mysterious realm and contemplates his own individual death. Much of what can be ascertained about Remarque's idea of death is derived from Bodmer's quest for answers. Bodmer rejects the postulate of the church to accept its explanations, based on faith, to believe that God has an overall plan in mind in which everything that happens does so for a reason. However, Bodmer has seen too much suffering, too much cruelty, and too much dying in his time, too many things happening to the wrong people, to accept naive explanations of heaven and hell, of justice, of reward for the good and punishment for the bad. He believes that man has been given his power of reasoning, his critical faculty and his yearning for proof in order
that he shall use them. And Bodmer does. He employs his rational faculties in the attempt to elucidate his particular situation in his particular time and to endeavor to understand the nature of death—ultimately without success.

For the Remarque hero, death is something to be avoided at all cost. In no case is there ever any intimation that it should be regarded as a means of liberation, a means to free him from servitude to the petty cares of his daily life or to free him from the horrors of existence. Death is a two-pronged phenomenon: it is a reality, and it is an abstraction. It is a fact that men die. This happens every day in the world. But as long as death remains a fact outside ourselves, we have not yet passed from the proposition "men die" to the proposition "I am to die." Death is a reality when we are directly faced with it; it is an abstraction when imminent danger does not exist although we are conscious of its eventual occurrence. In either case, however, death is final and signifies the end of life and the end of man. Bodmer explains the difference thusly: "... der Tod, der einen nicht erreicht hat, ist das geworden, was er fast immer im Leben ist: etwas Abstraktes, aber nicht mehr Wirklichkeit. Wirklichkeit ist er nur, wenn er nahe einschlägt oder nach einem greift." (DsO, p. 103)
Real death is the natural ally of war. Its statistical probability is high. It is the soldier's everyday companion and is the most elemental yet most resolute threat to his existence. It is a physical death only and has no metaphysical implication. It is a fact of life that strikes the old and the strong with equal force as the young and the weak and is equally traumatic for all. Death during war is "eine vernünftige Angst," as Isabelle said, and survival is strictly a matter of luck.

Again and again, Remarque's hero finds himself in precarious situations from which he may or may not exit victoriously. When he does evade death, temporarily, he reflects realistically and unemotionally about his good fortune: "Kinder, Kinder! . . . Das hätte schiefgehen können . . . Leicht hätte es sein können, daß wir heute nicht auf unsern Kästen säßen, es war verdammt nahe daran."

(\textit{IWNN}, p. 18) "Heute du, morgen ich." (\textit{IWNN}, p. 160)


Fear of death is the paramount reason for a Remarque character to fight so vehemently against dying.
Even with the full knowledge that death would deliver him from his hell on earth, he rejects it as a solution. With the full knowledge that death is final, he is horrorstricken when faced with its reality as is evident in the Frenchman, trapped behind enemy lines, aware that his hour of doom has come, consigned to a slow and painful death at the hands of Bäumer; and as is evident in the inmates of Mellern concentration camp who are forced to run round and round the roll-call ground as part of a vicious power play by their Nazi squad leader, and who know that they are running not only to satisfy their leader's ravenous desire for a show of power, but that, above all, they are running for their life since those unable to run will almost certainly be killed. In both cases, the realization that death is at hand evinces a silent outcry of elemental horror and reveals man's desperate fear of death: "[die Angst war da]: die Angst der Ängste, die große Angst vor dem Tode." (DFL, p. 126) "... die Augen schreien, brüllen, in ihnen ist alles Leben versammelt zu einer unfaßbaren Anstrengung, zu entfliehen, zu einem schrecklichen Grauen vor dem Tode." (IWN, p. 155) The Remarque hero will endure more than seems humanly possible that one human being can endure if it means prolonging life and thwarting death.

Since death is synonymous with end of life, the
Remarque hero must evade it for as long as possible. Ultimate avoidance is, of course, not possible, and all one can hope for is an extension of the inevitable. "Jeder kommt dran. . . . Jeder . . . selbst wenn er einmal entwischt. Er kommt eben das nächstemal dran." (DNvL, p. 96) It is the memento mori motif of the Baroque period, one of three themes characteristic of both the seventeenth and twentieth century and germane in their applicability to Remarque (vanitas and carpe diem being the other two). But until that final day of death arrives, a day over which he has absolutely no control, he wages his own war of resistance. And only when the threat to life is immediate and direct, can he do anything at all, however insignificant and however limited its impact, to try to save himself, that is, to postpone his extinction.

And this seems to be the very crux of the rejection of death: extinction. Specifically, extinction of the self in its present form. Whether there is anything beyond death, the hero cannot be sure. If there is, it would most likely be another self, "ein neues Ich," (Dso, p. 58) but one that would have no awareness, no relation and no connection to the present self. All that he really knows, or can know, is that he, as a human being, as a self, and as an entity onto himself, will end with death. That alone is reason enough for him to defer as long as
possible what is ultimately his fate. In a discussion with Isabelle, Bodmer gives an explanation of what might be expected after death: "Was Tod ist, weiß niemand, Isabelle. Man kann ihn deshalb mit nichts vergleichen. Aber wir würden uns sicher nicht mehr als Selbst fühlen. Wir würden nur wieder ein anderes einsames Ich werden."

(DsQ, p. 158) And Fresenburg explains it in these words: "Ein Stück Leben kann manchmal verdammt kurz sein, was? Und dann kommt ein anderes, von dem man absolut nichts kennt." (Zzl, p. 335) The most comprehensive analysis comes from Graeber. Catching his reflection in the mirror, he envisions himself as he disintegrates and dissolves into Nothingness: "Zurückgezogen aus dem Begrenzten und der zufälligen Form, die für kurze Zeit Ernst Graeber hieß, zurück in das Grenzenlose, das nicht nur Tod war, sondern entsetzlich viel mehr, Auslöschung, Auflösung, Ende des Ichs, Wirbel sinnloser Atome, Nichts." (Zzl, p. 197) And so it is fear of the unknown as much as it is nullification of his being that makes him crave the present and maintain his present status. For no matter how much misery, suffering and unhappiness is levelled against him, if death means total obliteration of his self, then he will cling to the life he now has. For that is all that he will have.

In essence, real death and abstract death are two
aspects of the same phenomenon: obliteration of the self. What differentiates them, basically, is that real death, the immediate and direct threat to life, arouses man's intense and powerful survival instinct, a physical response, negating any mental activity as part of its survival program, whereas abstract death, affording no immediate threat to life, makes mental activity its main point of interest; by that is meant that recognition of abstract death effects an emotional and intellectual response rather than a physical one. Knowledge of ultimate death colors man's consciousness and charges it with a sense of despondency. To know about death is one of the "advantages" we have over other living organisms: "Erst seit wir wissen, daß wir sterben müssen, und weil wir es wissen, wurde Idyll zu Drama, Kreis zu Lanze, Werden zu Vergehen, und Schrei zu Furcht und Flucht zu Urteil."
(DsO, p. 252) In the end, however, the fine distinction between real death and abstract death is of no substantial consequence. Abstract death becomes real sooner or later and brings about the end of a particular being with equal force. Every kind of death is thus an enemy of man.

The emotional and intellectual response of a Remarque hero to the realization that death is absolute and that it signifies his personal extinction is expressed by the attitude that nothing is permanent and, conversely,
that everything is transitory. It is the *Vanitas* motif of the Baroque age, expressed most succinctly by Andreas Gryphius, the most representative writer of the Baroque period. His poem entitled *Menschliches Elende* clarifies the situation of man in the seventeenth century when the Thirty-Year War ravaged the land, almost halved the population of Germany and brought about the prevailing mood of the "Flüchtigkeit and Nichtigkeit des menschlichen Lebens." Gryphius' poem is superbly expressive of the feeling of human suffering and vulnerability, of the brevity of life and temporariness of existence which the typical Remarque hero experiences so intently:


Judging man's present condition based on information provided by the Remarque hero, the contention is that man

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must accept the fact that he is transient, that he resides on this planet for a short time only, and that he plays an insignificant role in the Universe. Man deceives himself if he considers himself to be the epitome of creation as he is tempted to do. It is an illusion to think that he is important, that he is an integral part of the whole, that life is eternal, and that he will become part of the continuum after death—in a transformed state. Ross states his observation in these words: "[Es ist die] Illusion der Welt: Daß Leben ewig ist und daß wir ewig leben, wenn es nur gelingt, die Schlangenhaut des Ichs abzuwerfen und zu wissen, daß der Tod eine Verwandlung ist." (SIP, p. 120) At most, man may compare his existence to a snowflake drifting briefly and aimlessly above the surface before becoming totally submerged in, and absorbed by Nothingness. The world is in perpetual motion and engaged in perpetual change and will continue to turn with or without man. Only when things no longer exist, do they no longer change.

Just as there is no permanence in our existence, so there is no permanence in human relationships. All are reduced to temporariness, following the same law as rules man's existence: perpetual motion and perpetual change. Schwarz asks a theoretical question on this topic, knowing that it is at the same time his answer: "Verliert man
nicht immerfort, was man zu halten glaubt, weil es sich bewegt? Und steht es nicht still, erst wenn es nicht mehr da ist und sich nicht mehr ändern kann?" (DNvL, p. 19) Even meaningful relationships are accompanied by the fear of loss and are all doomed to failure in the end. Such is the case between Pat and Robby, between Joan and Ravic, Elisabeth and Graeber, Isabelle and Bodmer, and between Helen and Schwarz, to name only the most obvious alliances. In all instances there comes a separation, spatial separation or death, which can never be bridged. Ross laments: "Nichts im Leben [ist] von Dauer," (SiP, p. 324) while Bodmer mourns eventual loss thusly: "Unglück ist, daß man sich immerfort verlassen muß, jeden Tag und jede Stunde. Man weiß es und kann es nicht aufhalten, es rinnt einem durch die Hände und ist das Kostbarste, was es gibt, und man kann es doch nicht halten. Immer stirbt einer zuerst. Immer bleibt einer zurück." (DsO, p. 159) In the end then everyone is alone. Whatever a relationship can provide in terms of emotional support and meaningfulness to life is of short duration, and man is cast out again, alone, into a hostile environment. Nothing that is of importance to him, his life, the life of a particular person and the bond between that person and himself, remains. Everything evaporates into Nothingness, as Graeber was to find out. He laments the involuntary
separation from his wife, knowing that it will ultimately translate into permanent loss:


Graeber contemplates with great sorrow the realization that nothing will remain of him after death, that even the remembrance of his existence will fade, rather quickly, and that there will be no cogency of evidence that he ever existed. Solicitously, he implores fate to provide an anchor to ensure that he will not sink into oblivion:


But in the world of Remarque there is no anchor. In essence, man lives alone and he certainly dies alone, as Pascal said. Man's life is temporary, as are his relationships. Death severs him from the only world he will ever know. All probings into the nature of being, of death, of the meaning of life by the Remarque hero must
by necessity remain acts of futility, for the macrocosm
does not yield answers. That does not, however, prevent
Bodmer from doing so. Vicar Bodendieck asks him if he
thought that no one before him had mused over such
questions as Bodmer was contemplating, to which Bodmer
responds: "Ja, unzählige. Und klügere als ich. . . . Das
ändert nichts daran, daß ich es nicht auch tue." (DsO,
p. 81) And so he continues to ponder and question:

Ich kann nicht richtig spielen, weder auf dem
Klavier noch auf dem Leben, nie, nie habe ich es
gekonnt, immer war ich zu hastig, immer zu un-
geduldig, immer kam etwas dazwischen, immer brach
es ab—aber wer kann schon richtig spielen, und wenn
er es kann, was nützt es ihm dann? Ist das große
Dunkel darum weniger dunkel, sind die Fragen ohne
Antwort darum weniger aussichtslos, trennt die
Verzweiflung über die ewige Unzulänglichkeit darum
weniger schmerzhaft, und ist das Leben dadurch
jemals zu erklären und zu fassen und zu reiten wie
ein zahmes Pferd, oder ist es immer wie ein mäch-
tiges Segel im Sturm, das uns trägt und uns, wenn
wir es greifen wollen, ins Wasser fegt? Da ist
manchmal ein Loch vor mir, das scheint bis in den
Mittelpunkt der Erde zu reichen. Was füllt es
aus? Die Sehnsucht? Die Verzweiflung? Ein Glück?
Und welches? Die Müdigkeit? Die Resignation?
Der Tod? Wozu lebe ich? Ja, wozu lebe ich? (DsO,
p. 29)

The effort is, of course, useless. The only
specific results to be derived from pondering the world
of the impenetrable is to come to the realization that
there are no answers. That recognition, in conjunction
with what he observes in the external world, its strife,
conflict and evil, provides more than sufficient cause to
explain the Remarque hero's essentially negative per-
ception of the world.
CHAPTER IV

THE MICROCOSM AS POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

Every Remarque hero finds himself in an "extreme situation," to use an expression by Karl Jaspers; he finds himself on the other side of what is normal, routine, accepted, safeguarded—according to traditional interpretation. As we have seen, the historical events of the time were not merely incidental and did not have merely cursory impact upon the age, but they, in fact, have characterized that age to the marrow; they have shown how flimsy our world really is. After disasters man is always brought face to face with his condition and is compelled to confront his own situation. What he discovers has always been there, lying concealed beneath the surface of even the best-functioning societies, but as long as he does not have to confront certain truth, he will not do so. For the Remarque hero, the sensitive and cogitative individual that he is, acknowledging the de facto existence of the evil in man and the actuality of death and all their ramifications means becoming imbued with a sense of alienation and estrangement from society, a sense of separation from the world which has proved to be different from the world as he imagined it would be. It means becoming cognizant of the existence of fear, anxiety
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and nothingness, of the fragility and contingency of human life, of man's solitary and unsheltered condition, of the impotence of reason, and of the radical sense of human finitude. He has come to realize that his world is unsafe and cruel, that his social condition is hopelessly disordered and that it is not blind but irrational forces that disturb and destroy his humanity.

The world of the Remarque hero is one of contrast. Man's learning has been proved to be of dubious worth, and there is great disparity between his external life where he wields enormous power and his inner life of poverty. He is a creature full of holes and gaps, riddled with doubts and fears, starkly mortal, lagging far behind his works. He has not shown himself to be the rational animal the Greeks purported him to be; rather, he is more inclined to verify Nietzsche's concept of man: that he is the most dangerous of the animals.

Always mindful of what he has witnessed and what he himself has endured, and aware of the negative elements in man and in life, the Remarque hero does not, however, succumb to the Schopenhauer tenet of total pessimism but is able to affirm life despite everything. As became clear in the previous chapter, forces operate in the macrocosm which antagonize him, causing hostility and conflict. It is these forces lying outside his sphere of influence,
over which he has no, or little, control, that are responsible for his overall pessimistic outlook. Within that macrocosm he occupies his space. And it is here, in his own niche, where he can exert some control and have some measure of freedom over his life—although perhaps only enough to be able to utter a resounding "No."

Only in his personal and private world, in the microcosm, can the hero's humanity be validated, upheld by living according to his own laws as they are reflected in his thoughts, his actions or even inaction. How he lives in his own space is his decision alone, and only here is he totally in charge.

The Remarque hero does not search for nirvana. He is not encumbered by impossible dreams; he does not expect "the sun to light his cigars"—as Durant claims that Schopenhauer did. He is pragmatic and realistic, and does the best with what he has available. He subscribes to Epicureanism and to the Carpe Diem motif of the Baroque age. It is "im Kleinen," in the simple pleasures and delights, and in the personal and private relationships of people to people that he sees positive aspects of life. And it is, above all, the mere fact of living, of simply being alive, that obviates total pessimism.

To a certain extent, the great desire to hang on to life can be traced back to the hero's recognition that
everything ends with death and that if extinction is to be deferred he must grasp at all straws to prolong life and postpone the inevitable. Yet this attitude, although it is extremely prominent, does not explain the total picture. For the Remarque hero, there is a definite, distinct, and absolutely tenacious attraction to life that goes so far as to hint that everything is better than being dead. And it is the nearness of death that makes life so much sweeter. Enthusiastically, he hurls himself into life, every fiber of his being giving evidence of his love of life. In the phraseology of psychoanalyst Erich Fromm, this marks the Remarque hero as a "biophilous" person, one who loves life. Fromm contends that biophilia "is not constituted by a single trait, but represents a total orientation, an entire way of being."¹ He explains that the will to live, to preserve its existence, is an inherent quality of all living organisms; as Spinoza expressed it: "Each thing, in so far as it is in itself, endeavors to persevere in its being."² This tendency to live is observable in the plants that break through the ground to get light, and thereby life, in the animal that will fight to the last

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in order to escape death, and in man who will do almost anything to preserve his life. According to Fromm, this life instinct constitutes the primary and most fundamental potentiality in man; most living beings "fight for life with an extraordinary tenacity, and only exceptionally do they tend to destroy themselves."3 There is one further aspect to love of life, as Fromm suggests: to integrate, to unite, to fuse with different and opposite entities—a characteristic of all life processes. It is "the male-female polarity [which] constitutes the core of that need for fusion," and "for this very reason nature has provided man with the most intense pleasure in the fusion of the two poles."4

A person characterized by biophilia is one who loves life, loves the adventure of living more than he does certainty and who enjoys life and all its manifestations. Such a person has his own ethics, his own principle of good and evil: good is all that which serves life, all that which enhances life and growth. Fromm maintains that love of life underlies the various versions of humanistic philosophy and is expressive of the principles that the sane man loves life, that sadness is sin and joy a virtue, and that man's aim in life should be to become attracted to

3Fromm, op. cit., p. 49.
4Ibid., p. 46.
all that which is alive, and to separate himself from all that which is dead and mechanical.

As early as *Im Westen nichts Neues*, the Remarque hero expresses an intense hunger and desire for life. Bäumer, whose friend has just died as a result of his war-wounds, feels the irrepressible urge to live, stimulated by the memories of pleasures as he has known them in his short life:


And as late as Remarque's last novel, *Schatten im Paradies*, the desire to live and the acknowledgment of the joy of being alive is evident. Robert Ross, reminiscing about the time of long ago when he again had eluded the Nazis, leaves no doubt as to his feeling about being alive: "von allem [war] nur das Gefühl übriggeblieben, daß ich noch lebte und da war." (SiP, p. 166) Between the first and the last Remarque hero, innumerable statements and exclamations attest to the "Lebensgier" which becomes a salient element in all of Remarque's writing: "Leben, Leben, Leben" (IWnN, p. 198); "Wir wollen leben um jeden Preis" (IWnN, p. 102); "Solange wir leben ist alles ein Trost"
That tiny spark of life is a concept of principal importance to Remarque's work. It exemplifies that tenacious desire of every Remarque hero to hang onto life no matter what the cost. The concept consists basically of two elements: in its simplest form, the spark of life is to be equated with being a person, being human, with "Mensch-sein," as becomes clear when Bäumer refers to himself and to his friend Kat as "zwei Menschen, zwei winzige Funken Leben," (IWnN, p. 72) or as is evident when Ross laments man's ultimate state of loneliness and alienation, a state "in der man der letzte und erste und verlassenste Funke Leben ist." (SiP, p. 175). As regards its second referent, spark of life refers to that particular drive, that impelling concern and dynamic force which imbues some men with an animating and vital feeling, aiding them in preserving their life. Bodmer and Ross both sense within themselves that spark of life "der nicht erlöschen [will]." (SiP, p. 151)

The life instinct is one of the most memorable and impressive qualities in the Remarque hero. In every novel
there is at least one episode where the everlasting miracle of life is celebrated, and in no novel is it more manifest than in *Der Funke Leben*. The novel is a drama in which every scene is a crisis, and the resolution is always a matter of life or death. The manuscript of the first German draft of this novel, deposited in the Library of Congress in Washington, D. C., contains an explanation by Remarque in which he states that the novel is "eine Geschichte über das Leben selbst; über die unglaubliche Fähigkeit des Menschen zu überleben . . . eine Geschichte über die Würde des Menschen, die nicht durch seinen Mißbrauch von außen zerstört werden kann, nur durch ihn selbst."[^5] 509 exhibits man's primary and fundamental life preserving tendency, as Fromm analyzed it, to the utmost. He is a model of endurance and determination against impossible odds. He has been in the Mellern concentration camp for ten years. When we meet him, he is in a special section of the camp reserved for those no longer fit for labor and expected to die within weeks. Here he has already survived for four months supported by the "Veterans," that group of similarly fated prisoners, all still alive by pooling their spiritual and material resources, and all stubbornly refusing to allow the tiny

spark of life within them to be extinguished. In this novel, Remarque gives evidence of the survival of the human spirit under unimaginable stress. 509 embodies that spark of life "[der] trotz allem nicht erstorben war." (DFL, p. 235) This spark must be kept burning, even under conditions of utter despair and humiliation, for it is those who are able to draw upon it, who are able to draw upon the inexhaustible resources of the spirit, who stay alive the longest. Ravic, the hero of Arc de Triomphe points to the Nike of Samothrace, the goddess of victory, to serve as a symbol to all those who do not give up—even under the most dire circumstances.

Once the hero's "aliveness" has been assured, perhaps only until the next battle or the next air-raid or capture or torture, in every case temporarily, he can direct his efforts toward enjoying his lease on life. And in this area the Remarque hero excels although frequently an aura of doom accompanies his efforts. Finding himself outside of the immediate threat of danger, he relishes life's simple pleasures, which, besides bringing enjoyment, are deemed to have a saving power: nature, food, drink, friendship, and love are positive factors to counteract much of what is negative in life. In every case, the positive factors display both a primary and secondary quality: initially they serve strictly as a
means to ensure survival. Once survival has been assured, they take on the function of facilitating life and making it more enjoyable and of allowing one to forget the surrounding dangers or allowing one to become oblivious to them.

In nature, it is specifically the earth which, in times of war, becomes the soldier's foremost ally in his fight for survival:

Für niemand ist die Erde so viel wie für den Soldaten. Wenn er sich an sie preßt, lange, heftig . . . in der Todesangst des Feuers, dann ist sie sein einziger Freund, sein Bruder, seine Mutter . . . Erde--Erde--Erde--! (IWN, pp. 44-45)

And it is the earth which rekindles his spirits: "Aus der Erde, aus der Luft . . . strömen uns Abwehrkräfte zu--am meisten von der Erde." (IWN, p. 45) It is the medicinal power of nature, as Schwarz observes, which entrusts her to man; despite her seeming indifference to his plight, nature becomes a blessing in disguise, affecting man's well-being and alleviating his pain: "Sie war . . . das, was uns nie zurückwies. . . . Sie gab und nahm, aber sie war unpersönlich, und das war wie eine Medizin." (DNvL, p. 142) She becomes man's mentor and guide, giving him lessons in survival. A tree, uprooted during the last bombing, its trunk split, its branches ripped off, continues to bloom lavishly; it does not give in or give up, but continues along its destined path, remaining true to its intrinsic function, refusing
to yield to the external onslaught:


The tree stands as a symbol of perseverance against the odds and as a symbol of life amidst chaos. Graeber acknowledges it as such and applies the lesson to his life, except that—as is typical for a Remarque hero—death always ends it all too soon. And, finally, nature provides man with hope at a time when his condition seems hopeless; time and again it is "Knospen," "Blüten," and "Frühling" which rejuvenate his soul and remind him of his option in dealing with destruction and death: "Frühling ... Wachsen. ... Das kam wieder, jedes Jahr, mit Schwalben und Blüten, gleichgültig gegen Krieg und Tod und Trauer und Hoffnung. Es kam. Es war da. Das war genug." (DFL, p. 191)

It is all things gustatory, "belegte Butterbrote und selbstgemachter Kartoffelsalat," (Dso, p. 101) "Spanferkel und Kartoffelpuffer," (IWN, p. 164) the aroma of "gebratener Leber mit Zwiebeln" (Dso, p. 94) which initially ensure; later enhance life. Whether it is the front-line soldier who kills a goose with gusto, prepares it, and shares it with his comrades, or whether
it is a gourmet like Clerfayt in Der Himmel kennt keine Günstlinge who is as knowledgeable about these matters as a Cordon-Bleu chef, food is one of the delectable diversions. To catalogue the almost incredible variety of food in Remarque's novels would prove a formidable task.

Alcohol has the same dual function of aiding in survival and, subsequently, of facilitating life. It dulls the senses to despair and to the pain of living, and becomes an anaesthetic in times of distress. It provides an aura of warmth and gives enjoyment to life, and heightens the quality of living. Whether it is vodka, calvados, cognac or lesser known drinks, alcohol is a necessary and a pleasurable ingredient in the life of the Remarque hero. Robby, the hero of Drei Kameraden, describes its effects:


Remarque himself was quite favorably disposed toward a glass of wine, or two or more. As Baumer relates,
Zuckmayer, in his autobiography *Als wär's ein Stück von mir*, refers to some evenings he spent with Remarque in Austria, Switzerland, and America where alcohol flowed freely: "Was dabei an alkoholischen Getränken aller Art konsumiert wurde, dürfte dem Kellereibestand eines großen internationalen Hotels mit Bar- und Restaurationsbetrieb entsprechen." The Remarque hero consumes alcohol with the same fervor as did the author himself.

It is signs of genuinely human concern and behavior and of human intercourse which serve as an aid in survival and keep alive the hope for a better tomorrow. Comradeship between those experiencing a like fate during times of war in their fight with immediate death makes this evident as does the comradeship of the post-war adjustment period. It is evident in the special bond of kinship, of mutual support and encouragement among inmates of the concentration camp in their common struggle to survive against formidable odds; in the unselfish, compassionate and sympathetic efforts of ordinary citizens aiding emigrants in securing a hide-away or providing a rallying place, risking their life to save another. All

are a testimony that the "good" side in man is not extinct. Robert Ross acknowledges just such a symbol of good will, one, as he recalls, in a long line of others:


And, finally, it is love, with its many ramifications, which proves to have a life-saving quality and which intensifies living in a positive way. Early in his career, Remarque ascribed positive qualities to love and praised its potentiality to counteract all that is negative in the world; his poem Abendlied, appearing in the Osnabrücker Tageblatt in 1920, gives evidence of this notion:

Und ob der Tag auch wild und qualvoll war, von Ironie und Hohn und Leid zerfressen, ein Kuß von Dir--der Duft von Deinem Haar, ließ mich am Abend alle Qual vergessen.

Wenn auch des Tags erbarmungsloser Brand mir allen Glauben an das Leben raubte, es brauchte nur das Streicheln Deiner Hand, daß ich am Abend dennoch wieder glaubte.

Und wenn auch alles, was ich je gelebt, nutzloser Kampf von Anfang war zum Ende, es war doch gut und schön 'denn silbern schwebt darauf der Segen Deiner milden Hände.'

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7 Ibid., p. 58.
In every case, love is more than a casual sexual encounter. To be sure, sex is an important element in every male-female relationship, except between Bodmer and Isabelle, but it is never only that. Even in the case of Bäumer's first sexual experience, which was construed to be a purely sexual one, it is evident that the rewards were greater than anticipated, for surrounding it is an aura of enchantment, of extreme tenderness to the extent that even the objects in the room are transformed as if by magic; furthermore, it proved to be a means to shut out the war and its terror and to evoke an earlier time of a carefree and happy existence. The love affairs represent a flight from an inhospitable environment toward something pleasureable, perhaps even something sustaining. Initially, relationships are built on a mutual understanding of "no strings attached" association. What the Remarque hero looks for, and finds, is relief from loneliness and isolation, respite from fear—that abstract fear that has no locus—a sense of protection against that feeling of envelopment into Nothingness. But he remains without emotional ties. Michael O'Malley, in his review of Shadows in Paradise, refers to it as "cool city sex: sex between equals; without vows, without loyalties, but also without
deceptions on either side." O'Malley's statement about Ross and Natascha is equally applicable to other relationships in their early stages. At this point, they are rational, cynical and often tired affairs, and love is, as O'Malley says, a small light "lit in their bodies, put out when bodies part." Robert Ross describes his sentiments at a time when he finds himself in the early stage of an evolving relationship; at this point his feelings for Natascha are:

To a Remarque hero, love means "Nichtalleinsein gegen Alleinsein," (SiP, p. 236) as Isabelle tells Bodmer:

Es war schön mit dir, auch wenn du mich nicht verstanden hast. Du warst doch wenigstens da. Sonst wäre ich ganz allein gewesen. (DsO, p. 268)

Bodmer, expressing the same sentiment, says: "Vielleicht gibt es wirklich nichts anderes . . . als das bisschen

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8 Michael O'Malley, review of Schatten im Paradies, by Erich Maria Remarque, Critic, XXX (May, 1972), p. 81.
9 Ibid., p. 81
Beieinandesein." (DsO, p. 77) Love means traveling the road of life together if only for a stretch; it is an agreement to support each other against the haunting memories of the past: "Daß wir zusammen sind, um uns gegenseitig zu helfen, von alten Geschichten loszukommen! . . . um die Wunden zu heilen, die andere uns geschlagen haben!" (SiP, p. 201) Love serves as a buoy that keeps afloat appreciative feelings for the present life: it provides resilience and vivacity, and adds a feeling of human warmth. Bodmer senses it while walking with Isabelle:

"ich höre ihre Schritte durch den Regen und spüre ihre Bewegungen und ihre Wärme, und es scheint die einzige Wärme zu sein, die in der Welt übriggeblieben ist." (DsO, p. 157)

Yet, at this stage, love has restrictions. All love relationships in Remarque's novels—to which, in every case, only that between Bodmer and Isabelle is an exception due to Isabelle's unusual "illness"—stand under the augury of a so-called contract. Natascha makes specific reference to it in a discussion with Ross: "Du mit Deinem berühmten Pakt" (SiP, p. 201) The concept incorporates all that which identifies a love relationship of a Remarque hero in its beginning stages and as it is deemed desirable initially. According to the unwritten pact, each partner's independence shall remain intact; his actions and behavior need not be explained; responsibility to each other is
obviated; sentimentality and serious emotional involvement shall not be acknowledged in order that an eventual break-up of the relationship does not produce any hurt. Each partner shall remain an entity unto himself.

Put into so many words, the contract--remembering that it is an unwritten contract--has a sound of insensitivity, even callousness about it. Its intention is, however, quite otherwise. The purpose is to minimize the psychological effects which a deep and meaningful relationship might have on the partners involved (the tenets of the contract are equally applicable to the female counterparts of the Remarque hero) if it were allowed to take its course indiscriminately. What would prevent it from inflicting emotional pain and injury in the partners when, not if, the relationship ends? The question must be "when," not "if," because the air of transitoriness hangs as heavily over love affairs as it does over life itself. As members of the "lost generation," these characters have had to endure their share of traumatic experiences; they wish to evade them in love. Thus the contract becomes a source of protection that shields against emotional harm. Even if all relationships were to remain fixed by the conditions set forth in the contract and would not evolve further, they would, nevertheless, be considered extremely successful and meaningful,
for they fulfill the expectations of the Remarque hero: to facilitate survival and to add an air of sweetness to life. As Georg explains it to Ross, it is "irdische Liebe"; (SiP, p. 92) it yields moments of pleasure and joy, and insulates the characters from the world.

Gerda, in Der schwarze Obelisk, is its supreme representative. She is pragmatic in her approach to love and realistic in her expectations. She takes love where, when, and with whom she can find it after the motto: "Freue dich einfach deines Lebens, fertig." (DsO, p. 176) Love is neither poetry, nor sentimentality, nor a romantic vision of eternal union, and it is not faithfulness. It is enjoying sleep, food, drink, sex with another person—and then having more of the same. Gerda is glad to be alive and takes life as it is; she is honest and self-assured, makes no scenes, is without affectation, and derives much satisfaction out of her version of love. She does not philosophize about life, nor about her function in the Universe. Life is only that which is happening at the moment. It is having fun, and making the best of a given situation.

Bodmer regards Gerda with a touch of envy, for Gerda has become reconciled with her life and has discovered a way of living that provides her with a fair share of satisfaction without encountering emotional turmoil. Bodmer recognizes its simplicity and validity, and there is in him
an intimation that he too would like to subscribe to her way of life. He senses its appropriateness acutely just prior to spending some time with her before she moves on with the entertainment troupe with whom she appears:

Vor mir steht das Glück einer Woche, klar, fest, ein Glück, das nicht schmerzt—das einfache Glück der Sinne und der gemäßigt Phantasie, das kurze Glück eines Nachtklub-Engagements . . . eine Fata Morgana, die nicht schmerzt und die keine Wünsche weckt, die unerfüllbar sind. (Dso, p. 117)

What Gerda exemplifies, and Bodmer yearns for, is characteristic of every Remarque hero. At the beginning, all desire human companionship and love without too much emotional attachment. It is the kind of relationship which Ross enjoys with Natascha at the moment:


Although precautions are taken, by way of the contract, to maintain an aloofness from intense, personal and potentially hazardous involvement, and be content with a relationship that is loving, yes, but somewhat superficial, these restraints do not "save" the hero from emotional harm in the end. Invariably, the male-female relationships take on the form of a full-fledged and deeply passionate romance that is characterized by
extremes: an extreme sense of happiness, and an extreme sense of despair due to the loss of the partner. In all of Remarque's novels, loss is a necessary by-product of love. There is a direct correlation between the degree of love invested, and the degree of loss suffered: the more intense the love, the more intense the loss. But while it lasts, love is the ultimate positive experience. And no matter at what stage of development the relationship is, love—in combination with life's other positive forces—negates that other world where death and destruction reign. It makes life worthwhile. Graeber senses it acutely and analyzes it in this manner:

Es war das Unerwartete, das Leichtigkeit und Aufschwung brachte, fühlte er plötzlich, das, was über das Notwendige hinwegging, das Unnötige, scheinbar Nutzlose, und es war so, weil es zur anderen Seite des Daseins gehörte, zur glänzenderen, zu der des Überflusses, des spielerischen und der Träume. Nach den Jahren hart am Tode war der Wein nicht nur Wein, das Silber nicht nur Silber, die Musik, die von irgendwoher in den Raum sickerte, nicht nur Musik und Elisabeth nicht nur Elisabeth—sie alle waren Symbole jenes anderen Lebens, des Lebens ohne Töten und Zerstören, des Lebens um des Lebens willen, das schon fast zu einer Mythe und zu einem hoffnungslosen Traum geworden war. (Zz1, pp. 144-145)

Once a man-woman relationship has been established, it evolves and enters into a secondary stage. Here the hero still seeks to achieve the same goals as he did initially, but the relationship is no longer bound to the tenets of the imaginary contract. With the restrictions
lifted, the accompanying support vanishes and the relationship is laid bare precisely to that emotional injury from which the contract was to protect it. Ross finds himself in that transitional state, moving from a situation where he is in total control of his actions and emotions toward one where control may no longer be his prerogative:


As long as the hero observed certain limitations in his love relationship, he was safe although the affair may have been lacking in emotional involvement. By ignoring the stipulations of the contract, deep emotional involvement is assured—but at a price, following the Remarque motto: "man bekommt nichts im Leben geschenkt."
In every case, it is a risk worth taking. Graeber takes it, as do Schwarz, Ross and Bodmer. And if we were to include in the discussion the situation of those heroes with whom we are not preeminently concerned, Robby in Drei Kameraden, Ravic in Arc de Triomphe, Clerfayt in Der Himmel kennt keine Günstlinge, the evidence would point unanimously to a clearcut breach with the contract state, or rather, with a development beyond it. In every case, it is not a conscious decision to renege on the contract, but rather, the new emotional commitment is a natural outgrowth of the relationship.

In Graeber's case, the relationship with Elizabeth was initially based on "Nichtalleinsein gegen Alleinsein." One by one, other factors enter into the relationship, subconsciously, making it develop ever greater complexity until the boundaries become blurred and the individual needs on which the relationship originally was based can no longer be clearly identified. The relationship has now become a synthesis of the various contributing elements. As it continues to grow, a point is reached where life without one's particular partner seems undesirable and meaningless. At this juncture, it can be said

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10 With the exception of Im Westen nichts Neues and Der Funke Leben in which love plays little or no part in the life of the hero at that particular time when we encounter him.
that a new dimension has been added to love. Whereas before, it mattered little with whom time was spent as long as certain expectations were fulfilled, now only a specific person can satisfy the hero's emotional needs. Only in relation to that other person does life seem to hold meaning. The life-saving qualities formerly ascribed rather abstractly to love and its correlative elements are now much more closely interconnected with a specific person. They thus gain in concreteness. Graeber takes this line of reasoning to its maximum and suggests marriage to Elisabeth: "Weil ich mir das Leben ohne dich nicht mehr vorstellen kann." (Zzl, p. 205) When Elisabeth asks him if he could have had the same feelings for another person as he now feels for her, Graeber does not reject that supposition:


Even though he admits to that possibility, he is too much interested in his relationship with Elisabeth to concern himself with what could be or could have been.

The concepts applicable to Graeber are valid for other heroes as well. Only the specific circumstances under which a relationship comes into being, under which it flourishes and under which it ends, differ.
general concepts pertaining to it are, in all cases, the same.

Ross is acutely aware, that his supposedly "no-strings" attachment to Natascha is taking on an altogether different form, causing him to respond in a poetic and passionate manner. Ross cannot, as yet, define the feeling that seems to be taking hold of him except to note that it is definitely something to rejoice about:


Sometime later, Ross is still not sure as to the nature of that particular feeling which gives him such contentment when he is with Natascha:

Alles ist anders, Natascha. Ich kann es nicht erklären. Etwas, das wichtig ist und das man so nicht erwartet hat, kann man nicht sofort erklären. Ich bin glücklich, daß wir zusammen sind. (SiP, p. 290)

As he finally closes in on his discovery of what binds him to Natascha, he expresses apprehension and is fearful of allowing Natascha to recognize his feelings for what they really are. The implication is that Natascha might be disappointed if she were to discover that Ross did not live up to the tenets of the contract but invested more into the
relationship than had been agreed upon:

Im Augenblick, als ich sie wiedergesehen hatte, war alles zurückgekommen. Jetzt scheute ich mich fast, sie anzusehen, aus Furcht, mich zu verraten. Dabei wüßte ich nicht einmal, was zu verraten war. Ich hatte nur das Gefühl, daß ich für immer unterlegen sein würde, wenn sie es herausfände. (SiP, p. 290)

In the end, however, Ross admits to his feelings for Natascha, and at the same time he indicates the effort he expended in avoiding such a state of total involvement:

Ich habe das entsetzliche Gefühl, Natascha, daß ich dich liebe. Und wir haben uns soviel Mühe gegeben, es nicht zu tun! (SiP, p. 302)

And after the relationship has ended—because Ross returns to Germany to see for himself that justice is done—the recognition overwhelmed him suddenly that the relationship with Natascha had been the most important event of his life:

Je weiter die Zeit zurückwich, um so bestürzender wurde die Erkenntnis, daß Natascha das wichtigste Erlebnis meines Lebens gewesen war, ohne daß ich es gewußt hatte. (SiP, p. 348)

Only after it was all over did he recognize the total significance of it.

The step by step development of the relationship between Natascha and Ross is not an isolated phenomenon in Remarque's novels. It is symptomatic of others, but because the various intermediary steps are so clearly outlined here, it serves to illustrate all those relationships where the general concept is there, but where
the details are not as obvious.

That love is the all-powerful positive element in life becomes most abundantly clear in Die Nacht von Lissabon. In this novel, we encounter "die Geschichte einer Liebe." (DNvL, p. 163) The evidence points conclusively in the direction of love as a salvation for man. Twice Schwarz endangers himself voluntarily in order that he may be reunited with his wife. Danger in his case is a matter of degree. Schwarz tells the story of the crabs who were thrown into a pot of cold water to be boiled. When the temperature had risen to 120 degrees, they screamed that it was unbearable, and moaned for the time when it was only 100; when it went up to 140, they moaned for the time when it was only 120, when it was 160, for the time when it was only 140, and so on. The analogy illustrates Schwarz' situation. He trades the not so grave dangers peculiar to his status as an emigrant in France for those of a man on the wanted-list of the Gestapo secretly reentering Germany, and on another occasion exchanges the dangers of being a prisoner in a detention camp for those of being an escapee from that camp. The motive in both cases of trading lesser danger for an imminently greater one is Helen. What drives Schwarz back to be united again with her is a quiet, stark sense of desperation. His reserves were used up in his fight for survival and his instinct
for self-preservation is no longer strong enough to endure the chill of loneliness. The affairs he had had in France, born, as they were, of misery, loneliness and fear, had accomplished their goal, and had given him a certain degree of warmth; as he said, one was always thankful "einen anderen Atem neben sich zu hören." (DNvL, p. 17) But they were not enough. They were sufficient if one's concern was survival, but they were not sufficient if one wanted more out of life. And Schwarz did. He had led an anonymous existence for the past five years which now seems utterly empty. There had to be more to life. He began to reproach himself for having led a commonplace marriage with Helen, before he fled the country--involuntarily--and he began to suffer from the realization that he had bungled the greatest chance he had ever had in life: to create something meaningful. He began to think a great deal about Helen and had recurring dreams in which she appeared, either as a person who is ill or as one calling for help. He was overcome by the "Emigranten-Koller" (DNvL, p. 15) in its purest form: that tightening of the stomach and of the throat because all the things he had been trying to bury for the past five years in order to survive were coming to life again. Schwarz had to go back; he had to appease his fears about Helen's actual situation, and he
had to see if he could make emendations for the past.

Once he is reunited with Helen, life takes on new meaning and a new dimension:

plotzlich [war] ein Lebensgefühl da, das ich früher nicht gekannt hatte... es war so neu und erregend, als wäre es eine große, leuchtende, tropische Blüte, hingezaubert auf einen durchschnittlichen Strauch, von dem man höchstens ein paar bescheidene, durchschnittliche Knospen erwartet hätte. (DNvL, p. 45)

His fears have been allayed. Within him arises a sense of thankfulness for "ein zweites, vom Himmel gefallenes Leben mit Helen" (DNvL, p. 126) and for the newly acquired feeling of being alive: "Das Dasein war wieder so gut, wie es nur in unseren Wünschen ist." (DNvL, p. 109)

He treasures their new togetherness, "das unfaßbare Gefühl, nicht allein zu sein," (DNvL, p. 126) fully aware that Helen "war alles, was [er] hatte." (DNvL, p. 97)

He cherishes the new intimacy of almost forgotten things:

ihren Atem, den Geruch des Haares, am meistens aber den ihrer Haut, verloren gewesen für so lange Zeit und noch nicht voll wieder da, aber doch schon da... Der Trost der Haut eines geliebten Menschen! (DNvL, p. 59)

and the tranquility and affirmation that derives from their unity:

Langsam kam der Schlaf... über mich, die Träume blieben aus, die Stille und der Atem Helens füllten mich, und gegen Morgen erwachte ich, nichts war mehr zwischen uns, was uns trennte, ich nahm sie und sie kam willig, und wir fielen zurück in den Schlaf wie in eine Wolke, in der es schimmerte und nicht mehr dunkel war. (DNvL, p. 59)
His love for her knows no bounds—and most significantly, Helen reciprocates the feeling. With Helen by his side Schwarz "wurde ... zu einem Vogel, der keine Grenzen kannte" (DNvL, p. 92); he was like a caterpillar, emerging from the darkness, discovering "daß [er] Flügel hat." (DNvL, p. 95) Bodmer verbalizes what Schwarz intuits, and he reminds us of the transitoriness of love, of love even as powerful as that which Schwarz experiences:

ich glaube, ich habe endlich gefühlt, was Liebe ist! Es ist Leben, nichts als Leben, der höchste Griff der Welle . . . nach sich selbst—der Griff, der immer wieder vergeblich ist, der des Sterblichen nach dem Unsterblichen--, aber manchmal kommt der Himmel der Welle entgegen, und sie begegnen sich für einen Augenblick, und dann ist es nicht mehr Piraterie des einen und Versagen des andern, nicht mehr Mangel und Überfluß und Verfälschung durch Poeten . . . es ist noch so neu für mich, daß ich es nicht ausdrücken kann; ich wußte nicht, daß auch mein Atem lieben kann und meine Nägel lieben können und sogar mein Tod lieben kann, und zum Teufel damit, wie lange es dauert und ob ich es halten kann oder nicht. (DsO, p. 271)

Bodmer explains what love is: "Es ist Leben, nichts als Leben." (DsO, p. 271) It is the attempt to attain the impossible; it is something that cannot succeed nor satisfy if from it we expect to be transported to a state of permanent bliss. If we, however, accept love and life for what they are, if we accept the "moments" of love and the "moments" of life in their exquisiteness yet brevity, we have attained all that is possible to attain. Schwarz has reached that state, and he cherished his
life and his love in his newly created "Insel des Glücks."

Although we know that in the world of the Remarque hero, Schwarz' general state of happiness will be of brief duration (Helen dies of cancer), the relationship with Helen is nevertheless extremely satisfying and rewarding. Life is beautiful despite its tribulations. The positive forces that obviate life's negative qualities and that make it beautiful are not due to some extraordinary revelation but are simply due to the recognition that there are good and pleasant things in life and that they not only aid in survival but make life enjoyable, even give it an air of satisfaction. The rejuvenating powers of nature, the epicurean delights, a genuine human concern within a small and intimate circle of friends, and love in its various manifestations are what constitute life in the microcosm. It may not be much, but in view of the hostile forces operating in the macrocosm, it is all the Remarque hero can expect. Above all else, he is glad to be alive to enjoy life's pleasures to the extent he can.

11 But even this relationship contains moments of sadness—an indication that nothing is perfect. As becomes clear from the conversation between Graeber and Elisabeth, "nur die Kühe sind ganz glücklich." (Zzl, pp. 306-307)
CHAPTER V

EXISTENCE IN A DUALISTIC WORLD

The world is given and must be taken as is. The elements that are active in the macrocosm—death, impermanence, anxiety, inherent evil—cannot be explained and cannot be understood; there is no certainty, no coherence, no permanence. The mystery that is life lacks rationale. Just as the world evolved through blind chance, so all life is merely the struggle of blind chance and blind forces. And man is simply there—like an accidental expression of colliding atoms moving continuously at random.

Remarque portrays man's outer and inner experiences. As we have seen, danger is external to man and comes from two fronts. It comes from life itself, that is, from the world of man which is composed of those who have the potential to commit evil and who frequently do so. We have seen man's outer world: a modern inferno of unfathomable depths of hatred, violence and unrelieved anguish; a wretched world in which one desolate scene follows another, one trauma another; the world of modern Europe, the land of the dying, the broken and the dispossessed; the world of modern Germany with its infamous record of brutality, destruction and the worship of much
that is bad in man. But the danger comes also from death, the ultimate destroyer of life, destroying even what little gratification man may attain for himself, tainting his all too brief life with an acute sense of temporariness.

To counteract such enmity as confronts him, the Remarque hero opts to create his own world, an "Oase in der Wüste," "Insel des Friedens" or "Insel des Glücks" as he refers to it, a world built on values diametrically opposed to what he observes in the outer world: there it is negativeness and the undesirability of existence, here it is positiveness and desirability. It is a physical removal from that outer world as well, for however brief a period of time, so that epicurean desires may be gratified and sensual love experienced, so that a deeper love based on true emotional commitment and unselfish concern may be realized and man's humanity and belief in the goodness of the human race be restored. It is a "persönliches Glück," an "egoistisches Glück," to be sure; but because of how the hero views the external world, it is for him the only realizable option. It is thus a reaction totally in accord with his perception of the world. Hans Habe, a friend of Remarque, said that Remarque once told him that his view of life is contained in the Parabel written by Johann
Michael Friedrich Rücker (1788-1866). The parable reads as follows:

Es ging ein Mann im Syrerland,
Führt ein Kamel am Halfterband.
Das Tier mit grimmigen Gebärden
Urplötzlich anfing scheu zu werden,
Und tat so ganz entsetzlich schnaufen,
Der Führer vor ihm mußt entlaufen.
Er lief und einen Brunnen sah
Von ungefähr am Wege da.
Das Tier hört er im Rücken schnauben,
Das mußt ihm die Besinnung rauben.
Er in den Schacht des Brunnnens kroch,
Er stürzte nicht, er schwabte noch.
Gewachsen war ein Brombeerstrauch
Aus des gebröllten Brunnnens Bauch;
Daran der Mann sich fest tat klammern,
Und seinen Zustand drauf bejammern.
Er blickte in die Höh und sah
Dort das Kamelhaupt furchtbar nah,
Das ihn wollt oben fassen wieder.
Dann blickt er in den Brunnen nieder;
Da sah am Grund er einen Drachen
Aufgähnen mit entsperrtem Rachen,
Der drunten ihn verschlingen wollte,
Wenn er hinunterfallen sollte.
So schwebend in der beiden Mitte,
Da sah der Arme noch das Dritte.
Wo in die Mauerspalte ging
Des Strauchleins Wurzel, dran er hing,
Da sah er still ein Mäusepaar,
Schwarz eine, weiß die andre war.
Er sah die schwarze mit der weißen
Abwechselnd an der Wurzel beißen.
Sie nagten, zausten, gruben, wühlten,
Die Erd ab von der Wurzel spülen;
Und wie sie rieselnd niederrann,
Der Drach im Grund aufblickte dann,
Zu seh'n, wie bald mit seiner Bürde
Der Strauch entwurzelt fallen würde.
Der Mann in Angst und Furcht und Not,
Umstellt, umlagert und umdroht,
Im Stand des jammerhaften Schwebens,
Sah sich nach Rettung um vergebens.
Und da er also um sich blickte,
Sah er ein Zweiglein, welches nickte
Vom Brombeerstrauch mit reifen Beeren!
Da konnt er doch der Lust nicht wehren.
Er sah nicht des Kameles Wut,
Und nicht den Drachen in der Flut,
Und nicht der Mäuse Tückespiel,
Als ihm die Beer' ins Auge fiel.
Er ließ das Tier von oben rauschen,
Und unter sich den Drachen lauschen,
Und neben sich die Mäuse nagen,
Griff nach den Beerlein mit Behagen;
Sie dachten ihm zu essen gut,
Aß Beer' auf Beerlein wohlgemut
Und durch die Süßigkeit im Essen
War alle seine Furcht vergessen.

Du fragst: Wer ist der törich Man, 
Der so die Furcht vergessen kann?
So wiss', o Freund, der Mann bist du;
Vernimm die Deutung auch dazu:
Es ist der Drach im Brunnengrund
Des Todes aufgesperrter Schlund;
Und das Kamel, das oben droht,
Es ist des Lebens Angst und Not.
Du bists, der zwischen Tod und Leben
Am grünen Strauch der Welt muß schweben.
Die beiden, so die Wurzel nagen,
Dich samt den Zweigen, die dich tragen,
Zu liefern in des Todes Macht,
Die Mäuse heissen Tag und Nacht.
Es nagt die schwarze wohl verborgen
Vom Abend heimlich bis zum Morgen,
Es nagt vom Morgen bis zum Abend
Die weisse, wurzeluntergrabend.
Und zwischen diesem Graus und Wust
Lockt dich der Beere Sinnenslust,
Daß du Kamel, die Lebensnot,
Daß du im Grund den Drachen Tod,
Daß du die Mäuse Tag und Nacht
Vergisstest, und auf nichts hast acht,
Als daß du recht viel Beerlein hastest,
Aus Grabes Brunnenritzen naschest.1

The parable elucidates man's precarious position and that

1Johann M. F. Rückert, Gedichte und Sprüche
(Wiesbaden: Insel Verlag, [1952]), pp. 38-41.
of the Remarque hero in particular: danger from below
and danger from above, man suspended in between, his
existence undermined further by the passing of time;
escape into a world of sensual pleasure is his only
means of coping, but it is only a temporary solution.
The concepts expressed by Rückert and adopted by Remarque,
applicable to virtually any age and differing only in
particulars, determine how man, and the Remarque hero in
particular, looks at his world.

Remarque has been accused of living the life of a
bon vivant while engaged in writing about man's plight.
The implication is that the two realms shall not be
combined, and that Remarque--having done so--must
necessarily be an insincere writer, that he exploited
man's condition for personal materialistic gain and
that he is thus marked as a traitor to his profession.
Not true, of course. Remarque is no less the "Mann im
Syrerland" than is the hero of his mental creation. As
he said: "Ich habe mein Leben nach ihm modelliert.
Vergänglichkeit--dann sollte man wenigstens nach ihr
leben."² Remárque, simply stated, "lived" his life
philosophy and did so while enveloped in the crisis of

his particular age.

Remarque was a most sagacious observer of his time of crisis; he shared in the bewilderment and psychological pain of the individual human character trapped in a nightmarish existence. Knowledge thereof overshadowed the rest of his days; from his first novel to his last this concern has not abated. He created parables of existence set in the panorama of his time and sympathized with his hero who is pitted against the nihilism of a terrifying, desolate and chilling world. The specific themes are contemporary, to be sure, while on the other hand, they have always been there: love, lack of it, man's inhumanity, death and its successful temporary avoidance which we describe as life. His thematic range did not expand or change significantly over a writing career that spanned much of his life, an indication that he did not see any change to alter his opinion one way or another. He is a moralist at heart. In book after book, he waged war against all he has witnessed, and throughout his career he excoriated war's inhumanity and man's inhumanity to man. Even years of comfortable living did not wash from his consciousness the horrors of the century. Remarque was himself a member of the "lost generation."

I do not wish to further belabor the point that Remarque is a chronicler of our age. Sufficient evidence
to substantiate that claim has been given in other
chapters. What needs further elaboration, however, is
the expression of existentialist thought in Remarque's
fiction. Remarque does not consciously espouse or
follow a doctrine, any doctrine, in an effort to explain
his position or to suggest solutions such as might be
inherent in a particular doctrine. Certainly not every
aspect of existential philosophy is evident in his novels,
and it would be something of an exaggeration to call
Remarque an existentialist. But the similarities are
there and need to be pointed out—if only to help clarify
Remarque's position.

Existentialism and Remarque's ideas are products
of our age and speak for our age. As the following dis­
cussion of Remarque's use of existentialist notions will
show—a discussion based upon the characterization of
that philosophical movement as presented by Wesley Barnes—
the existential dilemma is at the same time the dilemma
of the Remarque hero. Existentialism, as its name already
implies, places its emphasis on existence, on living,
according to the motto "I am (I live, I exist) therefore
I perceive, I think, and I act." In like manner,

3 Wesley Barnes, The Philosophy and Literature of
Existentialism (Woodbury: Barron's Educational Series,

4 Ibid., p. 48.
Remarque begins with "I live," and everything else—how I live, where, with whom, for how long—is of secondary importance. In the true spirit of existentialism, Birkholz retorts to an admonition by his father that he consider getting a job and getting ahead in the world in these words: "Ich will es ja zu nichts bringen, Vater, ich will nur leben," (DWz, p. 144) while Ross responds to the rhetorical question of whether or not he wants to become an American citizen with the statement "Ich will gar nichts werden, ich möchte endlich einmal etwas sein." (SiP, p. 21)

The existentialist creates his own world of experience. He chooses from the self and not through external dictates. His choice makes him free from all other men, but it enslaves him to his own doubts, uncertainties and to the consequences of his choice. This is the predicament of the Remarque hero. He stands outside society, drawn toward it because life within it seems to be, from his perspective, a life without emotional turmoil and without mental anguish, yet rejecting it because he recognizes the narrow focus of that life; as a result, he is forced to live with these afflictions. In creating his own world, the existentialist has no other recourse but to rely on his own resources. Schwarz has a clear understanding of that: after he flees the camp where he is held prisoner,
to find, and hopefully free Helen from her camp—
subjecting himself to a definite life-death situation—
he indicates his awareness that the burden is on him
alone, stating: "Und wieder kam es nur auf mich an."
(DNVL, p. 127) Neither God nor justice can aid him.
And he does succeed in freeing Helen without outside
help or support. Ross is aware as well of the fact that
he must take the initiative if he does not wish to
succumb to the feeling of indifference and helplessness
which he observes all around him as an emigrant in the
United States. He decides to return to Germany to see
to it that justice will prevail and that the evil
committed in World War II is avenged: "Ich wollte nicht
selbst in diese ohnmächtige Schattenrebellion und
Resignation hineingeraten . . . ich wollte nicht eines
Tages nach den Jahren des Wartens aufstehen und fest-
stellen, daß ich vom Warten und nutzlosen Schattenboxen
mürbe und morsch geworden war, ich wollte selbst meine
Vergeltung und meine Rache suchen . . . mit meinen
eigenen Händen . . . " (SiP, p. 191)

The existentialist and the Remarque hero must
endure in an environment where violence, war, ideological
conflict and immediate death are their everyday companion.
Both know firsthand of man's suffering, of man living in
crisis, of man's threatened self, of his struggle against
any form of dehumanization; both are driven by the
urge to exist; both oppose authoritarianism. They
maintain an inherent and persistent feeling of individual­
ity but one for which they must pay a price if they
choose not to take refuge in a group form of social life;
they believe that the world is solely a matter of human
concern; they are filled with foreboding concerning the
predicament of man; they care only for specific flesh and
blood, not for abstracts; they must stand or fall on their
own means of support or nonsupport and shake off any idea
that man can be rational; they are concerned with two
crises: encounter with the physical environment, and
encounter with a world of communal "existence";\(^5\) they
discover that by merely living, man encounters life; they
are cognizant of the fact that the individual source of
security against the external world can come from no
other person or source except from the individual himself;
they recognize that they must face a life of dread and
anxiety, replete with lack of fulfillment, emptiness and
frustration, but fully aware of their freedom to escape
their agony through suicide; they live with the conscious­
ness that only uncertainty is certain and that death is a
fact.

Wesley Barnes states that in educational circles
"the existential movement is known as the Life Adjustment

\(^5\)Ibid., p. 65.
This means that the immediate concerns of everyday living are more important than references to traditional values; in specific terms, "this life principle consists of keeping well, understanding self, and adjusting to the natural environment." We have already seen evidence to the effect that the Remarque hero has found his personal adjustment principle: wherever possible, he creates and withdraws into his own little world where life is consciously reduced to its most elemental forms, and where, on a higher level, his sense of self is reaffirmed and his belief in the goodness of man and the world is restored. His adjustment principle allows him to "live" life, not merely exist, and to live it most intensely, and to rejuvenate the state of his individual soul in order that he may be able to persist regardless of his country's social, sociological, political and economic structure. He has found his modus operandi in the motto: "Freu dich deines Lebens, solange du nicht gefressen wirst"—although it is not an unqualified acceptance of that motto, as we have seen. He refutes the world of accepted values having recognized that the old concepts and old virtues embedded in Christianity and other ethical systems of the Western

6 Ibid., p. 48
7 Ibid.
world have not saved mankind from World War I and World War II but have in fact proved to be useless, and he replaces them with his own adjustment values; he gives a degree of meaning to life despite the meaningless that surrounds him; and despite everything, he persists in being human. His microcosmic world is his adjustment principle. It is a defense mechanism to the age-old problem of "man against the world" and is his answer to the question "how shall I survive in the midst of chaos?" It becomes, at the same time, his code for living. He proves to us that the preciousness of existence can be distilled out of its very precariousness. Whereas in the macrocosm, he is being acted upon, here in the microcosm, he acts. However dark his outer world is, in his inner world he finds reprieve from the "terrors of existence" and from the state of "Geworfensein," as Karl Jaspers phrased it. In the microcosm lies his reason for being.

The explanation of such ardent concern for the individual can be found in Remarque's work, viewed as a totality. Knowledge of the events of our century, knowledge of the finality of man, and, most important, knowledge of the sense of temporariness which enshrouds all actions and relationships makes an extension of private concerns toward more general ones seem gratuitous. They are realities to be reckoned with, realities over
which the individual has little, if any, control. In the case of the horrifying events of our time, one individual's effort to mitigate them, even if he were to exert a herculean effort, is minimal at best. In the case of death and temporariness, any effort is totally useless. Remarque is enough of a realist to recognize the limit of one man's scope of influence: his own life, and that life only to the extent that it is not adversely affected by external forces. The individual, threatened as he is from all sides, can gain a degree of satisfaction only from his own self.

He does so through immersion in the realm of the senses, but not exclusively so. He takes seriously a sense of personal responsibility for advancing the concerns of humaneness and tolerance and for overcoming evil. His success in this endeavor enhances his own humanity. We see clear evidence of a developing social conscience in 509. 509 becomes the leader, even the soul of the "veterans" by displaying growing courage and by adamantly refusing to bow to the demands of the Nazis--at any cost. He determines that he must outlive Weber, the representative of evil, as though the validity of everything he had always believed in and fought and suffered for depended on that ember of life within him smoldering longer than the ember of life within his enemy.
And by outlasting his enemy, 509 becomes victorious over evil incarnate.

Graeber takes an equally decisive stand against evil. He has been contemplating for some time the extent to which he, as a single person, is responsible for the war in which he is fighting and for the specific occurrences during war in which innocent people lose their life. In the last decision of his life, he openly opposes Steinbrenner, another representative of evil, who wants to kill Russian prisoners of war for what appears to Graeber to be unjustified cause. He prevents Steinbrenner from doing so by killing him first. As a result of this first conscious and deliberate action for the cause of humanity, he is overwhelmed by a sense of release:


But in an ironic twist characteristic of Remarque, the Russian prisoners of war turn out to be partisans as Steinbrenner had thought, and shoot Graeber.

Schwarz and Ross likewise decide to put their life in the service of humanity. Schwarz, distraught about the death of his wife, has good cause for committing suicide in order that he be spared a life of loneliness. Yet he does not succumb to that feeling of "Schwäche" but instead determines to fight actively against barbarism:

And Ross foregoes a safe and pleasurable life in America in order to return to Germany and fight against that which had, at one time, brought so much misery to his life:


In all cases, the heroes do not seek personal revenge "obwohl es ihr glich und aus denselben Wurzeln kam";

(SiP, p. 340) rather, it is an effort to combat evil itself. Hans-Joachim Bernhard's evaluation of Remarque's post-World War II novels is of particular use, despite its Marxist bias, in defining the degree of active involvement on the part of the hero. Bernhard concludes:

The dominant strain in Remarque's hero is pessimistic. But he is not a pessimist at heart; he never forgets "to smell the flowers." Life is sufficiently dear to keep that spark of life burning and to desire that its glow never be extinguished. Not one Remarque hero commits suicide although all are aware of that special "gift" which could terminate their hell on earth. As Schwarz explains, the mere knowledge of having the power to end one's life voluntarily if the pain of living should become intolerable, makes it, in some remote way, no longer wholly necessary to do so.

It is the outer world, the macrocosm, which has not been kind to him. It has trapped him; it has made him its victim; it has made him subject to extinction. The hero has been thrust into a world inhabited by "Hyänen, Schakalen und sehr wenigen Löwen." (SiP, p. 50) Awareness of its desolate condition makes him exclaim: "Am besten wäre es, ohne Kopf geboren zu werden." (DK, p. 143)

Occasionally, if he is fortunate, positive qualities relieve an otherwise depressing existence and remind him that "Mut, das große Mitleid, die Menschlichkeit, die Liebe und der tragische Regenbogen der Schönheit" (DsO, p. 226)

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8Bernhard, op. cit., p. 44.
are as much part of life as is the negative side of life, but in lesser measure. Robby states that "die Einzelheiten sind wunderbar, aber das Ganze hat keinen Sinn. Als wenn es von einem gemacht ist, dem auf die wunderbare Vielfalt des Lebens nichts anderes eingefallen ist, als es wieder zu vernichten." (DK, p. 341)

He revels in the little pleasures life offers but cannot fathom a grand overall design; it all seems so pointless, so totally lacking in meaning and purpose, so destructive, so incomprehensible. Ross, in exploring this line of investigation, concludes that if meaning could be derived out of the world of experience, it would already have been done. Books and more books have been written in the attempt to answer all those questions which haunt the hero, and if what he wishes to know were knowable and recognizable, one book, one answer, would have sufficed to illuminate and pacify his questing mind:

Es scheint mit der Wahrheit und dem Sinn des Lebens so zu sein wie mit den Haarwässern—jede Firma preist ihres als das alleinseligmachende an—, aber Georg Kroll, der sie alle probiert hat, hat trotzdem einen kahlen Kopf behalten, und er hätte es von Anfang an wissen sollen. Wenn es ein Haarwasser gäbe, das wirklich Haar wachsen ließe, gäbe es nur das eine, und die anderen wären längst pleite. (DsO, p. 95)

He will never obtain a satisfactory explanation, because there is none. What he may attain at best is a working defense that yields moments of pleasure and a functional accommodation to death, loneliness and historical realities.
Love yields the greatest consolation and delight; yet it also invites disaster. For a brief period, it isolates the hero from society and insulates him from the world, but he never doubts that the relationship will be prematurely ended; and in all cases it is, either through death or other circumstantial loss. There are no happy endings. There is only a practical guide to living as exemplified by Gerda in Der schwarze Obelisk and more crassly so by Carmen in Schatten im Paradies. Gerda spells out her principles to Bodmer: to accept life as is, to take pleasure in the present moment for that is all one can be assured of possessing, to avoid pondering the meaning of life, to forego explanations and to request none, and, above all, not to ignore "den süßen, anonymen Ruf des Lebens." (DsO, p. 229) Bodmer envies Gerda her ability to not only accept these tenets but to make them her guidelines for living. It simplifies life, as Bodmer acknowledges:

sie kennt ihr Dasein und hat sich damit abgefunden. Sie hat all das, was ich nicht habe, und ich wollte, ich liebte sie, und das Leben wäre klar und übersehbar, und man wüsste immer alles darüber, was man braucht, nicht allzuviel, aber das unanfechtbar. (DsO, p. 301)

But Bodmer cannot jump over his shadow; it follows him and fills him with Weltschmerz for his spiritual and emotional wounds have never fully healed. Despite his
longing for that easy life and despite his success of
snatching from life some moments of joy, some moments
"wo man dem Dasein sehr dicht in die grüngoldenen Augen
starrt," (DsO, p. 172) he never completely masters the
art of living. He remains in his state of Weltschmerz
and remains a member of the "lost generation."

"Erinnerungen" become his downfall. The theme
"Erinnerungen sind ein verdammt schweres Gepäck" (SiP,
p. 345) is a leitmotif that runs through all of Remarque's
novels. Because the hero is always mindful of them, he
cannot become part of the unmindful masses but must
remain relegated to the "lost generation," condemned to
live outside the mainstream of life, alienated and
isolated. He carries the memories of the past on his
shoulders, lest all the suffering of the past might have
been in vain. Occasionally, he may attempt to free
himself of this burden, but in the end his sense of
responsibility and accountability to the war-dead is
stronger than the desire to forget; he owes it to them
"nicht zu vergessen und auch nicht an der Erinnerung
zu Grunde zu gehen." (DFL, p. 253) Each man must do
his share to help rebuild and make restitution, as Birkholz
the hero of Der Weg zurück, recognizes. Birkholz is
also aware that he will not be able to accomplish
impressive feats, knowing his limitations, but that he
must, nevertheless, take positive action in order that the
death of those who lost their life in this upside-down
world will be avenged and that the memories of the past
can be laid to rest: "Dann werden die Toten schweigen,
und die Vergangenheit wird mich nicht mehr verfolgen,
sondern mir helfen." (DWz, p. 189)

Remarque sees hope for mankind only in the
individual, but the individual's vulnerability is all too
apparent. In times of crises he can be relied upon to
build, to help, to care, to risk his life for others.
But when he becomes absorbed into the immobile mass,
his sense of responsibility dissipates and his desirable
and admirable qualities vanish:

Die Geschichte der Walroßherde. Hunderte am Strand;
zwischen ihnen der Jäger, der eines nach dem andern
mit der Keule erschlug. Zusammen konnten sie ihn
leicht erdrücken—aber sie lagen da, sahen ihn kommen,
morden und rührten sich nicht; er erschlug ja nur
gerade den Nachbarn—einen Nachbarn nach dem andern.
Die Geschichte der europäischen Walrosse. (AdT, p. 88)

Ross was forced to draw the depressing conclusion upon
his return to Germany after the war, that almost as a
matter of general consensus its people abdicated
responsibility for the events of the past and erected a
wall of excuses to justify their deeds or to clear their
conscience: "Die schwerste Enttäuschung war die Rückkehr,
sie war eine Rückkehr in die Fremde, eine Rückkehr in
Gleichgültigkeit, versteckten Haß und Feigheit . . .
Keiner übernahm die Verantwortung für das, was er getan hatte." (SiP, p. 347)

The pessimist has thus received more food for thought, for if this populace is left to itself, it will fall further into apathy and all the sufferings, the horrors, the tortures and murders will have been in vain indeed. Through his novels, Remarque sought to obviate this trend and to raise public consciousness for the events of the past so as to prevent their recurrence. It is one of his motives for writing. As he said:
"Wirkung war für mich nie wichtig ... Ich habe versucht, das Gefühl für Verantwortung ein wenig zu schärfen. Am Ende kommt es darauf an, was nicht passiert."

Remarque was a sincere artist who gave a realistic portrayal of that stratum of society of which he had been part and with which he could identify best. In an interview, he once stated that he wanted to portray "den einzelnen Menschen in der Berührung und Auseinandersetzung mit den großen historischen Ereignissen und Erschütterungen des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts ..." And he did so. He was able to capture the spirit of the many who shared his plight. He once stated that he wanted to show "die Themen Menschlichkeit, Einsamkeit, Abschied, Mut und

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9 Baumer, op. cit., p. 10.
And he did so. Remarque was a spokesman philosopher for all the solitary, the wounded and the lost souls, and he illustrated their concerns and portrayed them, pitted as they were, against overwhelming external forces, living in the twilight of spiritual and physical catastrophe. Remarque gave us stories of human fortitude and of life affirmation, stories of love and death. He adhered to truth and reality and described life as it was without its illusions. He showed us people whose acts of kindness and sacrifice in the middle of the immense waste of bestiality and perversion give us a ray of hope for the future. Pohlmann, in Zeit zu leben und Zeit zu sterben, has suffered as much as most Remarque heroes, but despite his suffering, gives indication of that hope: "Eine Sonnenfinsternis ist möglich, aber nicht ein dauerndes Stück Nacht. Nicht auf diesem Planeten."

(Zzl, p. 270) Remarque focused on victims whose will to survive, whose humanity and decency are inextinguishable, and he showed us the indestructability of the human spirit. "Ja . . . Der Mensch kann viel aushalten," (AdT, p. 393) says Ravic. "Das Schicksal war nie stärker als der gelassene Mut, den man ihm entgegensetzte. Wenn es

11"Erich Maria Remarque" (An unsigned interview. Sheet no. 328 of the Remarque-Sammlung, compiled by Hans-Gerd Rabe, housed at the Niedersächsisches Staatsarchiv in Osnabrück).
unerträglich werden würde, konnte man sich töten. Es war gut, das zu wissen, aber es war auch gut zu wissen, daß nie etwas verloren war, solange man noch lebte." (AdT, p. 369)

Remarque has found a ready audience for his work. He has become, in the words of Kesten,


His reader senses a close kinship to the Remarque hero, for he recognizes that here is a man who speaks for him against the evils both had witnessed, who speaks for him in clarifying his own precarious condition, and who speaks for him in taking a stand for humanism and tolerance.

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VITA

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EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate: Ingrid Ehrmann Gross

Major Field: German Literature

Title of Thesis: Remarque's Weltanschauung: A Study in Fictional Dualism

Approved:

[Signatures]

Major Professor and Chairman
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures]

Date of Examination:

May 5, 1981