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Existentialism in Charles Wright's Novel

The Messenger

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Section One - Introduction

1- Charles Wright Biography:

Charles Stevenson Wright, a novelist, columnist, short fiction writer, and black humorist (Andrews and Foster, 445). He was born on June 4th, 1932 in the small town of New Franklin, west of Columbia, Missouri, and raised by his grandparents in Sedalia after his mother's death in 1936. Wright was fond of reading from his teenage years, and he was a regular at the Sedalia Public Library and other libraries (Bell, 321) According to an article in *New York Times* by Bruce Weber, "Charles was an avid reader and knew he wished to be a writer; he dropped out of high school and spent his days in the library" (Weber/Online). Jan Hodenfield, Wright's editor and friend, commented on Wright's article on Motown as "the most perfect manuscript he had ever received"(Weber/Online). Wright was also a regular at Kansas City, St. Louis, to cinemas, and museums. Following the model of Hemingway, he began writing short pieces during high school, besides, he wrote for the newspaper: *Kansas City Call* (Bell, 321). He served in the army for two years, after his discharge in 1956; he lived in St. Louis and wrote his unpublished novel: *No Regrets* (Andrews and Foster, 445).

As a result of his racial wounds, his loss, and his desire to travel; he moved to New York in 1957 and settled in Bowery and Greenwich Village. There he worked as a messenger, dishwasher, waiter, and writer. In 1963, he wrote his autobiographical first novel *The Messenger*, and in 1966, he wrote *The Wig*, two blackly humorous novels depicting the surreal life of New Yorkers, particularly the African American life (Bell,

321). *The Messenger* was well received; however, *The Wig* was not (Andrews and Foster, 445). Wright also wrote two books of poetry and a collection of his journalistic pieces (Bell, 321). His works were collected and published in *Absolutely Nothing to Get Alarmed About* in 1973. Later in 1993, his novels were published again in a collection entitled: *Absolutely Nothing to Get Alarmed About: Complete Novels* (Andrews and Foster, 445).

Wright stated that he was influenced by Hemingway and Mailer. Though he dedicates *The Messenger* to Richard Wright, he often refers to other modern novelists and confesses that he was impressed by Katherine Ann Porter's style when he was young. Other influences are evident in his novels, such as the blues and jazz traditions (Bell, 321). Since he employs fantasy and realism in his novels, he declares that they are chosen according to one's own purpose (ibid).

His novels are fusion of satire and fantasy, reflecting the amoral life of their protagonists amid the surreal life of New Yorkers. He is living a loner's life, in low-rent apartments, working in low-level jobs, and spending his time with lowlife personalities (Weber/Online). He is a mulatto who finds himself in the middle of America's social, economic, and racial system where victory and defeat are equally accepted (Andrews and Foster, 445). *The Messenger's* protagonist is sensitive; aware of his loneliness and loss. Charles Wright is, as his protagonists, an outsider, beatnik, and alienated person (Bell, 322). His literary talent vanished into alcoholism and despair, and he died at the age of 76 in East Village in October 1, 2008 (Weber/Online).

2-Existentialism:

Existentialism is a “Literary and philosophical response to the experience of nothingness, anomie and absurdity which attempt to discover meaning in and through this experience” (Childs and Fowler, 78). The term was mainly adopted by Jean-Paul Sartre (Crowell/Online).

Existentialism questions the existence of God and the reason of the recurrent suffering of people with the general sensation that God is deaf to their cries or, worse, that he does not even exist (doc?). After WWII, existential thinkers and writers started to consider humans individually, through the individual’s own realization of her/his identity and how this individual would understand her/him-self, and not how society sees or understands him (“What is Existentialism”). Existentialism gained attention in Europe in the 1940s and 1950s and was identified as a cultural movement (Burnham and Papandreopoulos/Online). Of Existential philosophers and the most prominent ones are: Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), who is generally considered the father of Existentialism, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), the central figures of Existentialism whose work embody all Existential philosophy themes, Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), and Albert Camus (1913-1960) (Burnham and Papandreopoulos/Online).

Existentialism stresses on and investigates the existence of the individual, and how this individual acts at encounters in which s/he must choose a direction or a choice that is determinative, because these situations are constructed by the individual’s relationship with other human beings or things, and s/he is supposed to endure the consequences of this choice. That’s why humans exist or inhabit the world (Encyclopedia Britannica). The individual feels like there is no meaning or significance of his life,

and that he does not make any progress, but consistently living on (“What is Existentialism”). Steven Crowell approaches Existentialism in a categorical way and defines it as: “The philosophical theory, which holds a further set of categories governed by the norm of *authenticity*, is necessary to grasp human existence” (Crowell/Online). And accordingly, what makes this movement’s inquiry distinct is not its concern with “existence” in general, but its belief that human existence requires new categories not found in ancient or modern thought (Crowell/Online). Thus, it claims that human beings cannot be understood fully by science categories such as physics, biology, psychology, and other science, nor it can be understood by supporting these scientific categories with moral ones (Crowell/Online).

Existentialism is opposed to any doctrine that first: views humans as a manifestation of infinite substance, second: as a reality that can be broken down into its parts so as to be known, third: as a necessity, for existence is based on possibilities from which the individual can choose, and fourth: it is opposed to solipsism and epistemological idealism, because existence is always extending beyond itself and it is a transcendence (Encyclopedia Britannica). Existentialism may take various directions; it may insist on the transcendence of human being with regard to existence, or it may present human being’s existence as a problem, and that ‘being’ has absolute freedom and creates itself, thus, assuming the function of God. Therefore, Existentialism may take radical-atheist direction, and by insisting on the finitude of existence with regard to the limited choices, it may take humanist direction (Encyclopedia Britannica).

There were diverse interests adopted by Existentialism from 1940; the religious, the metaphysical (the nature of being), the moral, and the political. These diverse interests were rooted in the diversity of sources drawn by Existentialism (Encyclopedia Britannica). “One such source is

the subjectivism of the 4th–5th-century theologian St. Augustine, who exhorted others not to go outside themselves in the quest for truth, for it is within them that truth abides” (Encyclopedia Britannica).

One of the philosophical problems of existence that was considered by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, who developed it, is the “single individual”, while Kierkegaard considered it in his radical approach to Christian faith, Nietzsche in his thesis of the death of God. Yet, both showed interest in what Kierkegaard named as “the single individual.” To Kierkegaard: “The singularity of existence comes to light at the moment of conflict between ethics and religious faith” (Crowell/Online). Therefore, Existentialists’ focus is mainly on subjectivity as the core of understanding one’s identity. This idea paves the way for the concept of authenticity. Authenticity means self-making and also to be autonomous (Crowell/Online). It seems to relate to the idea of absurdity in that: “The absurdity of human existence then seems to lie in the fact that in becoming myself (a free existence) I must be what I am not (a thing)” (Burnham and Papandreopoulos/Online). Kierkegaard, in contrast to singularity, thinks that “the crowd is untruth” (qtd. in Crowell/Online). Individuals are described as the herd, because their values exist and are followed by everybody (Burnham and Papandreopoulos/Online). Wright models Charles Stevenson, the protagonist of *The Messenger* on both Kierkegaard and Sartre’s theories.

African American Existentialism asserts the experience of being “black” and sets the bases for questioning identity and personality within white society. Concerns of questioning one’s identity have existential significance only when experiencing states like dread, anguish, despair, nihilism, nothingness, freedom, alienation, and suffering. Against slavery, poverty, and more importantly, racism, African Americans exist in the midst of nothingness and meaninglessness in order to define their own

meaning and existence (Hill, x). Lewis R. Gordon points that: “The link between Africana philosophy of existence and the question of race is strengthened by the critical race theoretical problem of human designation” (12). Thus, the problem of human designation or racism, particularly of blacks, is the root that stimulates African Americans to question their identity and the purpose of their existence in life. African American Existentialism can be found in the works of its first proponents and writers such as David Walker, Hosea Easton, Martin R. Delany, Harriet Jacobs, Frederick Douglass, Phillis Wheatley, Anna Julia Cooper, Sutton E. Griggs, and W.E.B. DuBois, and others (Hill, xiii-xiv). That’s why Existential philosophers are concerned with African American existential situation:

European existentialists such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir were particularly interested in the existential situations of blacks in works such as Sartre’s *Nausea*, *Notebook for an Ethics*, “Return from the United States,” and “Black Orpheus,” among many others, as well as de Beauvoir’s reflections on Richard Wright and Frantz Fanon in her autobiographies. (Gordon, 13)

Charles Stevenson is a clear depiction of the African American male. Through his affiliation as a black intellectual, his estrangement and what results of both; he presents the essential theories and concepts of Existentialism, going to the core of the African American existential tradition.

Section Two

An Existential Reading in Charles Wright's *The Messenger*

Charles Stevenson lives in New York and works as a messenger. His mother died when he was a child and his father left him afterwards. He was raised by his grandparents in Missouri. From his early teenage years, he liked travelling and that what made him go to New York.

New York is the place in which he has spent most of his life where the cruel, corrupt, and indifferent society of New Yorkers makes him an outsider; this feeling is intensified by the fact that he is a mulatto. Charles lives in a low rented apartment, and his job is of low salary, it follows that society would not allow him to have a job of decent income simply because of his skin, so he is bound to the messenger's job which is exhausting.

Charles spends his time at work walking in the streets and avenues doing deliveries. Because of the repeated procedure of his daily life, he always tries to get refuge away from this procedure; he visits some friends who are of different manners and beliefs, but who share the element of loneliness with him. Those friends come regularly to his apartment relating their different problems and sufferings to him. Charles also studies the personalities of whomever he encounters during his job. He resorts to his memories of childhood, and teenage years, but even these memories are not completely pleasant to him. The fact that he is mulatto affects every single aspect of his life. Ruby tells Charles: "Maybe I was born black and lost my voice to teach me a lesson. Well, kid, I learned. I know damn well I learned something being born black that I could never have learned being born white...Being black taught me humility...Another thing I learned was the meaning of compassion" (*TM*, 89). Charles meditates about his life and his personality. He seeks

meaning, goal, and the means of achieving this goal, but there seems to be none. He keeps on living his life desperately and hopelessly without having the least clue about where he is going, or when he would have resolution to his desperate life.

Charles endeavors to find meaning to his life in the midst of a meaningless world. This endeavor is futile, because it is faced with limited and determinative choices, though most of these choices result in hardly the same consequences he expects. And that puts him constantly in the dilemma of seeking unanswerable questions. Throughout the novel, Charles feels anxious, bitter, lonely, uncertain, and empty. Lewis R. Gordon presents two recurring questions that occasion human condition: “What are we?” and “What shall we do?” These questions can be summarized into one word which is: purpose (7). These two questions are the essential and major questions Charles is asking in *The Messenger*. Moreover, Sartre’s famous phrase: “Existence precedes essence” means that: “the fact that when you’re born, you have no meaning, no purpose, no definition. Human beings exist first, and only later define themselves” (Panza and Gale/Online). Charles is born without meaning, purpose, or definition, and he seeks to attain them by aspiring to be a better human being.

According to W. Lawrence Hogue, Charles is an existential, Sartrean hero and he is: “thrust into the world with no meaning from an identifiable source. He finds himself alone in a godless, absurd universe in New York City” (123). In this sense, *The Messenger* unfolds its opening scene, depicting the life of New York with its low-mannered citizens like gypsy thieves, whores, gamblers, homosexuals, and others. Charles finds that he is alone and lost in the middle of the American society which does not seem to cooperate. He is wondering whether he is part of America or the American society:

Here in this semi-dark room, I become frightened. Am I in America? The objects, chairs, tables, sofa are not specifically American. They, this room, have no recognizable country. I have always liked to believe that I am not too far removed from the heart of America (I have a twenty-five dollar U.S. Saving Bond) and I am proud of almost everything American. Yet I am drowning in this green cornfield. (*TM*, 4-5)

Charles is not satisfied with his job at the Steven Rockefeller; he looks to gain more money but does not know how:

I grow old in the terrible heart of America. I am dying the American money deathWhy doesn't America let me die quietly? No. This Country smiles on; the smile is stationary sun. The sin is believing, hoping. But I am too tired, too afraid now to commit this sin. (*TM*, 47-48)

Charles feels that he is part of America, but he is not sure of it because his situation of inquiry puts him in a state of uncertainty and it makes him doubt everything around him. He received a sign from a little boy, but this sign does not serve as a refuge. Charles may interpret it the way he pleases. But what is obvious from this sign is that, it denies the fact that he is American. The child mistakes his nationality, he has not been described as or referred to as American: "One little boy, with space helmet and Davy Crockett tee-shirt, aimed his yellow plastic water pistol at me and shouted, 'Hey you! Chinese boy!'... this was the first time I had ever been mistaken for a Chinese" (*TM*, 135).The situation of inquiry makes him seek and dig deeply into everything in the hope of finding and understanding his existence and his identity. He states his inability to restore or reestablish his situation away from the dilemma he is suffering and that the country is the cause of this dilemma: "This country has split open my head with a golden eagle's beak. Regardless of how I try, the parts won't come together" (*TM*, 5).

Charles is extremely confined to his world's puzzling questions to the degree of forgetting his freedom; he overlooks his responsibility for everything he does, for if he knows his responsibilities, he will choose a route on which his life will progress. But, he does not have a route and,

consequently, does not have progression on the bases of which he can understand life. Man is: “Condemned, because he did not create himself, yet, in other respects is free; because, once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does” (Sartre, np). Charles does not know that he is free, and that he should take responsibility for his actions through his free will (Hogue, 123). But, if there is no commitment to religion, which is the case of Charles, then, morality will be only an element through which Charles can bear and hold the burden of carrying his own responsibility. Morality means following one’s own freedom and what Sartre says is: “What I affirm that freedom, under any concrete circumstance, can have no other aim than itself, and once a man realizes, in his state of abandonment, that it is he who imposes values, he can will but one thing: freedom as the foundation of all values” (Sartre, 48). So when Charles says: “You are alone now, buried in your own morality” (*TM*, 45), he condemned his freedom, by following his own morality.

Denouncing responsibility and falling into despair, Charles finds no solace but in the blues and jazz that echo Charles’ bitterness, absurdity, alienation, and other sufferings of life. And according to W. Lawrence Hogue: “the blues and jazz generate and reaffirm existentialism in *The Messenger*” (135). Ruby relates to Charles the aspects of blues, how there are white people who understand suffering and trouble, and how they can see their suffering in the others. So, they all share suffering.

Having experienced the lowliest in life, spiritual designation has its effects on Charles, for those whom he meets regularly are as lonely and desperate as himself, they are all outcasts, and this adds to his desire to know the answer of “What I am?” and “What shall I do?” He tries to find a clue through which he can gain an understanding of his being in this world. Charles also justifies his attitude and manners. Though, he does not have a full understanding of his identity, he justifies some of his

manners because he knows their benefit for him: “But I have always been alone and have developed what they see as arrogance for my protection” (*TM*, 15). Alone because he is alone and does not have people whom he can identify with or with whom he can reach a resolution to his dilemma of existence, and arrogant, because the world around him is cruel, merciless, and absurd, so he developed a self-defense mechanism, an illusion to further numb him. Charles is arrogant because of racism and racial wounds, which seem to be non-ending, he suffered during his early childhood and teenage years and still he is suffering. Furthermore, when he says: “I didn’t even bother to take off my wet clothes, and asked myself what I was doing in this city. I knew some answers” (*TM*, 36). He clearly states his knowledge of “some” answers, but these answers are shallow in comparison to the answers he is seeking. Knowing some answers might be a demerit rather than a merit. He questions even his career: “A writer needs solitude. I don’t look like a messenger. (What does a messenger look like?)” (*TM*, 24) He knows that he is a writer and he attributes his loneliness to his incapability of adjusting himself to one definite profession.

Charles' continued inquiry puts him constantly in the condition of questioning the things around him, even objects or inanimate things: "These dirty white walled rooms, the mixed cheap furniture.....what do they have to do with me?" (*TM*, 37). His inquiry of everything around him with no good answers puts him in a state of depression and bitterness. Besides, everything around him is white, and he defines himself within the content of the white world.

Inquiry is an outcome of grouping, massing, being part of a community; it is a reaction to the conventions community puts upon its individuals: “There must be boundaries and limits by which one can assert an existence, and those limits are the boundaries of community” (Bailly,

25). Charles is rebellious towards society, and especially towards authority: "I have very little respect for policemen, because I've walked the streets enough to know that if the cops really worked hard, the jails would overflow" (*TM*, 156). Social conventions and capitalism are yet other factors of Charles' feelings of bitterness, anxiousness, and alienation, and thus assuming the position of an outsider:

SOMETIMES I FEEL as if I'm being strangled by the sophisticated scum of New York, by those millions of feet making it toward Mr. Greenbacks and what it takes to be a 'smaht' New Yorker. And me, what does this sophisticated scum want from me? The understanding ear, the priests in blue jeans.
(*TM*, 27)

Charles searches for a meaning, and he sees that he is unable to do so. Nothingness is defined as: "the negation of every reality of fact" (Encyclopedia Britannica). And Heidegger says that: "Human existence cannot have a relationship with being unless it remains in the midst of nothingness" (Encyclopedia Britannica). Charles seeks the lowliest in life to sense his existence through the shared pains of others; to see himself in others; he cannot connect himself to respectable people, because they will give him motivation to be better, and he is afraid of having hope: "You recognize other solitary fellow travelers" (*TM*, 44), it is a shared experience of nothingness, and at the same time, Charles cannot neglect those other beings because: "[he] cannot discover any truth whatsoever about [himself] except through the meditation of another. The other is essential to [his] existence, as well as to the knowledge [he has] of [himself]" (Sartre, 41). Thus, according to Existentialists, nothingness leads to lack of meaning, and so it leads to the absurdity of existence (Encyclopedia Britannica). Charles assumes that he can discover truth through people like Maxine: "The deep sigh and the I-know-that-Charles expression Maxine gives me...adds another notch to the guilt scoreboard" (*TM*, 133).

Man's existence is defined either by a being that is superior, lower, or similar to his own existence, it is his choice to select his society. Charles misses, rather, ignores, the call of God. Existentialists: "choose to ignore God's commandments and all values thought to be eternal, all that remains is the strictly gratuitous; everyone can do whatever he pleases...." (Sartre, 18). In this idea only, Charles is following the concept of Sartre rather than that of Kierkegaard, because the latter believes in the existence of God and sees it as a factor through which one can attain full existence (Dastagir/ Online). By ignoring God's commandments, existentialists ignore religion and that is Charles' sole 'action', he lost his connection with a superior being 'God': "Shirley used to say I was saintly, I had missed my calling, I should become a preacher. *You've got the makings, boy. Why did you stray so far from home?*" (TM, 45).

Though raised in a religious family, Charles rejects it later on in his life. His grandmother has prayed for him so that he may return safely from war, she tried to make him pray but he couldn't. His lack of faith prevents him from praying. Dostoyevsky stated: "If God does not exist, everything is permissible" (qtd. in Sartre, 29), which might explain that what Charles wants is leading an irresponsible life based on rebellion against all establishments, old and new: "I bowed my head again and opened my mouth. The words would not come. I looked up at the porch ceiling. It seemed as if the ceiling was between me and God...If you *believe*, it will be all right" (TM, 169). If he believes, according to his faithful grandmother, it will be all right to him, but he does not, though he is grateful for his grandmother's praying for him.

Charles is trying to find other ways for meaning, away from religion. He is nagging and finding no other sources that will provide him with faith, or belief. For him, believing or hoping is a sin, and he is afraid of

committing this sin. Moreover, the fact that makes an individual hope is the American Dream, which is only another face of deception, and it fails to promote what people seek in the New World. And thus Charles feels frustrated because he can neither figure a way to gain money and change his life, nor hope for the future. Sartre says: "dreams, expectations, and hopes only serve to define a man as a broken dream, aborted hopes, and futile expectations; in other words, they define him negatively not positively" (Sartre, 38). Charles cannot hope because it will be of no use for him and it will define him negatively. He criticizes the age of elegance, stupidity and fakery that is of showing off which makes the upper, and middle class office workers struggle for gaining money and living in decent houses. Seeing these great tall skyscrapers and buildings intensifies his feelings of pettiness and insignificance. This is his frustration of the absurdity of the world. Absurdity is: "What human beings encounter when they come into contact with the world. Absurdity is brought about because the human instinct to seek order and meaning is frustrated by the refusal of the world to be orderly or meaningful" (Panz and Gale/ Online). And this is the case of Charles when criticizing the world around him: "This is an age of elegance, stupidity, and fakery. Fags giving off an aura of wealth are often nothing more than glorified office boys, struggling like hell for the privilege of living in a walkup on the eastside. And those Harvard tones give under three martinis" (*TM*, 63-64).

However, Charles is perfectly aware of his incapability to will and hope: "But I cannot connect the fragments of my life" (*TM*, 37). He is a coward, because he is unable to take action, also he does not take responsibility, since the reality of human beings is defined by their actions; Charles' reality is not yet defined because he is unable to take action. "cowardice is the act of giving up or giving in" (Sartre, 39). The

burden of responsibility, alienation, continuous search, and more importantly, of his own existence; adds more bitterness to his life, thus he says that anything is better for him than being aware of his own breathing (which is the burden of all these things). He sees himself distorted, because he has not yet understood his own personality. Everything around him and he himself is uncertain. He feels ashamed and he envies couples because they are not alone as he is because they have each other, he says: "I WALK THROUGH the early morning streets saddled with a numb, self-centered despair.....Slow, uncertain footsteps, your own distorted reflection in darkened store windows. The shameful, envious eyes-lowered glances at passing couples" (*TM*, 44).

At the time when Charles was fourteen years old, he began realizing one of the elements of suffering he is facing, and will be continually facing during his life, loneliness: "I began to be aware of something at this time, something perhaps I had been born with, and which was never to leave me, Loneliness....And this consciousness is here with me now, in this small dark room in New York" (*TM*, 43). Loneliness can be alienation which means: "The sense that you're a stranger in the world, or a stranger to yourself" (Panza and Gale/ Online); Charles is both; a stranger to the world and a stranger to himself. He understands nothing but loss and loneliness. Loneliness makes him more aware of his own existence, which stimulates him to try to search anywhere for the meaning of existence and identity, yet, Charles cannot understand the purpose of existence:

If I knew or understood nothing else, I knew and understood loss and loneliness. It's like having all your breath sucked up in a balloon or like when you are in a dark room alone and you are certain your heart is beating for the last time and it doesn't matter. Anything is better than being aware of your own breathing. (*TM*, 68)

Racial oppression is one of the major factors, which Charles Wright employs in *The Messenger* along with the cruel, indifferent environment surrounding the protagonist. Through racial oppression, Charles Wright expresses the African American tradition in the novel. Racial oppression is, as stated in the introduction, a supporting factor for the black intellectual to seek meaning and purpose for his life. It stimulates those individuals to try to understand the purpose of their existence under humiliation and exploitation, and maybe it can be considered the root which urges an individual to question his life and seek an understanding of his identity, and thus meditates through the concepts of Existential philosophy without realizing it. In the case of the protagonist Charles, he is mulatto, but the complexity and dilemma lie in how people see and conceive him. They cannot appreciate him for himself, they only judge him on colour basis, thus they instantly see him as black-skinned inferior individual, and that causes him to feel bitter and alienated from the world around him, and consequently questioning the purpose of being in this life: "The man met me at the back door again and bellowed, 'Boy, can't you get it through your thick skull, we don't hire niggers' It was like being slapped hard across the face or dashed with a bucket of ice water" (*TM*, 86). He compares the door when it was shut in his face as: "a giant mouse trap" (*TM*, 86), a trap that will confine him to minority the rest of his life, and he will not be accepted in the society, nevertheless, he continues to live on: "No one chooses to have been born under racial designations, but the choice to go on living, and especially choices that involve recognizing one's racial situations, has implications on the meaning of one's birth" (Gordon, 14). W.E.B. Du Bois, the American sociologist, historian, civil rights activist, and poet states that:

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strifle,-- this longing to attain self-conscious manhood...He would not bleach his Negro soul in the flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply

wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face. (Du Bois, 7)

What Charles wants is simply what Du Bois refers to. Charles is suffering the consequences of the shutting of the doors of opportunity in his face. Ruby's idea of living life as a black woman has turned over in Charles's mind. Her speech indicates her optimistic and hopeful view of life, regardless of people's abusing manners or behaviour towards her being a black-skinned woman, she is preaching him 'pride' in his own blackness. She does not want him to be bitter, because bitterness is destructive, because it leads to despair. Despair is when: "we shall confine ourselves to reckoning only with what depends upon our will, or on the ensemble of probabilities which make our action possible" (Sartre, np). So Charles is counting on probabilities which make his action possible, thus, everything for him is uncertain. What he has to do is to wait for another sunrise: "You pace the floor and finally try to sleep, comforted with nothing but the prospect of another sunrise" (*TM*, 45).

Section Three

Conclusion

Charles Stevenson is a creation of the modern life, and the product of a man of intellect. He sees the truth and he is aware of it, he tries to be something, but he does not take action or take responsibility for his own being. He always contradicts himself and would not allow himself to achieve what he wants. Through his experiences with others and with the surrounding society, he learned that he should not care for others, because his dilemma, which he tried to solve, was enough for him to consume his energy. His only consolation in life was jazz and drinking. In the end, he realizes that he had no other choice but to continue living on purposelessly.

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