ADORNO AND SARTRE:
A CONVERGENCE OF TWO METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

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In their introduction to the *Authoritarian Personality* and in answer to a question like: "How can one say with assurance that the numerous opinions, attitudes, and values expressed by an individual actually constitute a consistent pattern or organized totality," Adorno and his colleagues say that "there is no better way to proceed other than by actually measuring, in population, a wide variety of thoughts and determining by means of standard statistical methods which ones go together" (Adorno et al, p. 3). In their 'conclusions' to the *Authoritarian Personality*, the same authors insert the following footnote:

There is marked similarity between the syndrome we have labelled the authoritarian personality and "the portrait of the anti-Semite" by Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre's brilliant paper became available to us after all our data had been collected and analyzed. That his phenomenological "portrait" should resemble so closely, both in general structure and in numerous details, the syndrome which slowly emerged from our empirical observa-

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2 The name Adorno will be used to represent the collective viewpoint of the authors of *The Authoritarian Personality*. The labels 'authoritarian' and 'anti-Semite' will at times be used interchangeably.
The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that the reason behind this striking 'resemblance' is that both Adorno and Sartre have utilized a phenomenological analysis as a method for explicating the meaning of authoritarianism as a social phenomenon, but whereas the phenomenological approach of Sartre is more explicit, the influence of the phenomenological method on Adorno is implicit and more diffuse. In other words Adorno's psychological investigation is a latent phenomenological psychology.

In our endeavor to demonstrate the above thesis, we will follow this format: We will first try to explain what phenomenological psychology is. Secondly, we will attempt to illustrate how the works of Adorno and Sartre are, though in different ways, phenomenological. But before we try to achieve our second goal, we will 1. give a brief description of the authoritarian personality (Adorno) and the portrait of the anti-Semite (Sartre); 2. point out the similarities between the syndrome labelled the authoritarian personality and the portrait of the anti-Semite; 3. make explicit the two approaches Adorno and Sartre used which led them to the syndrome the Authoritarian Personality and the Portrait of the Anti-Semite.

Phenomenological psychology is a rigorous, systematic, and descriptive approach which aims at explicating the dialectical essence (or meaning) of the experiential facts (or data) which constitute a particular human phenomenon. But in more concrete terms, what does this mean? Let us say that we are interested in understanding the meaning of a particular social phenomenon. Guided by everyday experiential examples, we first proceed to collect lived facts about this very phenomenon. This we do in a rigorous and descriptive manner. It could be based upon our own experiencing or it could be based upon our perception of the experiences of others. Now, we should remember that there are no such things as 'pure' facts. Lived facts carry with them implicit meanings. It is these implicit, commonsensical and unreflected-upon meanings that need systematic

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3 Our explanation is based primarily upon Merleau-Ponty's article: "Phenomenology and the Sciences of Man" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964).