

**Philosophical Approach to Literary Criticism:  
A Philosophical Reading of Jean-Paul Sartre's *No Exit***



**المنهج الفلسفي في النقد الادبي:  
قراءة فلسفية في مسرحية سارتر "لا مفر"**

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## Philosophical Approach to Literary Criticism: A Philosophical Reading of Jean-Paul Sartre's *No Exit*

### Philosophical Approach to Literary Criticism: A Philosophical Reading of Jean-Paul Sartre's *No Exit*

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#### Abstract

The study concerns contemporary criticism. In criticism, four philosophical approaches have prevailed: existentialism, Marxism, psychology and structuralism which are divided into three major directions: realism, idealism, and existentialism. Many of Sartre's philosophical arguments are synthesized with fiction. Sartre *No Exit* (1989) is a portrayal of life after death, in which three dead people are punished by being trapped together. It is the source of Sartre's well-

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known and misperceived quote "Hell is other people." (P.45). In *No Exit*, one's freedom is limited by the gaze of others. As Sartre believes existence precedes essence. The play's main themes revolve around freedom. However, in addition to this freedom of choice, there is also an absolute responsibility for man's actions. Accordingly, as a result of fear and anxiety related to this responsibility, people tend to disregard their freedom as well as their responsibility. The writer utilizes his play *No Exit* to discuss several of the existentialist themes explored in his philosophical study *Being and Nothingness*. *No Exit* focuses prominently on the ideas of the "look and others", "competitive subjectivity", "bad faith" (self-deception) and "objectification". Philosophies of criticism are methods for studying the philosophy of the critic's implicit and explicit impulses. Thus, existentialism is not a single philosophy but philosophies that make existence precede its essence. Man proves his existence when he could think, plan and be creative. The writer asserts his freedom through literature which is the realization of his own life plan. It is not only existentialism that presents the literary criticism in this way, but after World War II, other critics such as Gaetan Picon and Pierre-Henri Simon described and judged the ethics of the writer whom they were studying through various philosophies.

### المخلص

استعرضت الدراسة فلسفات النقد المعاصر، فقد سادت أربعة مناهج فلسفية هي: الوجودية والماركسية والنفسية والبنوية والتي تنقسم إلى ثلاثة اتجاهات رئيسية: الواقعية والمثالية والوجودية. دمج جون بول سارتر العديد من حججه الفلسفية مع الادب. وفي عمله المسرحي " لا مفر " قام سارتر برسم تصورا للحياة بعد الموت، حيث يتم عقاب ثلاثة اشخاص موتى بوضعهم في غرفة واحدة. إن هذه المسرحية هي مصدر الاقتباس الشهير لسارتر والمُفسَّر بشكل خاطئ "الجحيم هو الآخرون". يكشف العمل المسرحي هذا ان حرية المرء مقيدة بنظرة الآخرين. وبما



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أن سارتر يرى أن الوجود يسبق الجوهر، فإن الموضوعات الرئيسية للمسرحية تدور حول الحرية، لكن بالإضافة إلى حرية الاختيار هذه، هناك أيضًا المسؤولية المطلقة، حيث إن الإنسان مسؤول عن أفعاله بشكل تام، لكن يميل الأفراد إلى تجاهل هذه الحرية والمسؤولية بسبب الخوف والقلق من تلك المسؤولية الكبيرة. يناقش الكاتب من خلال عمله المسرحي "لا مفر" العديد من الموضوعات الوجودية التي تم تناولها في دراسته الفلسفية "الوجود والعدم" حيث ركز النص وبشكل واضح على فكرة "النظرة والآخرين"، و"الذاتية التنافسية"، و"سوء النية" (خداع الذات)، و"الموضوعية". إن فلسفات النقد هي دراسة فلسفة اندفاعات الناقد الضمنية والصريحة. وهكذا، فإن الوجودية ليست فلسفة واحدة، بل هي فلسفات تجعل الوجود يسبق جوهره حيث ترى إن الإنسان يثبت وجوده عندما يستطيع التفكير والتخطيط والإبداع، حيث يؤكد الكاتب حرته من خلال كتاباته والتي تعد بمثابة تحقيق لخطه حياته ذاتها. ليست الوجودية وحدها هي التي تتناول النقد الأدبي بهذه الطريقة، فقد وصف وحكم نقاد آخرون مثل جيتان بيكون وبيير هنري سيمون على أخلاقيات الكاتب الذي كانوا يدرسونه من خلال فلسفات مختلفة.

### Introduction

The critical approaches for studying literature such as sociology, history and linguistic approaches do not have a specific function that judges the literary work. On the contrary, they are utilized to express an opinion because they often start from a precise domain of their specialist sciences. Thus, there is no partial criticism, but there are choices in explaining, describing and analysing some moments of the sequence of events in a literary work.

A writer expresses a special experience and forms words in a way that evokes an experience similar to the original experience in the reader's reaction. So, these stages of the literary work and the reader's reaction have a specific approach to criticism. Criticism that studies the literary work by studying things related to the author and that studies the work itself and describes it in an objective way. Criticism of the reader's reaction studies what the reader receives from a literary work that is the relationship between the reader and the work, and not the relationship between the author and his work. Thus, critics who explain the precedents of a literary phenomenon follow historical, social and psychological approaches, and those who analyse the text itself follow the objective, formal, and stylistic approaches. However, Sartre in his book: *What is literature* (1949) considers:

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It is false to say that the author acts upon his readers; he merely makes an appeal to their freedom and in order for his works to have any effect, it is necessary for the public to adopt them on their own account by an unconditioned decision. (p.159).

The writer is a human who has flesh and bone, he is unique. When he begins to write, his whole being is strongly connected to things. He expresses through the circumstances in which he is destined to live, the conditions of his time, his country, his language and his social dependence.

Jean Paul Sartre French, playwright, literary critic and one of the key figures in the philosophy of existentialist sees that criticism is an understanding of how each writer chooses the way of his being, juggling between lowness and heroism. He/she takes a stand before his/her time, faces his contemporaries, takes responsibility and transcends the circumstances that surround him. "In short, literature is, in essence, the subjectivity of a society in permanent revolution". (Sartre,1949,p.159). The writer affirms his freedom through literature which is the realization of his own life plan.

Besides existentialism, other critics like Gaetan Picon and Pierre-Henri Simon also discussed and assessed the ethics of the writer they were studying through a variety of philosophical perspectives after the Second World War.

### 1-1 Methods of Criticism

Criticizing the criticism is one of the methods that study criticism. It is an attempt of establishing an independent level of all trends of criticism. Literature in our time has collected a large number of values





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that allow the convergence of the classics and make the modernists accept the widest and most diverse trends.

Reconstructing the history of criticism is another method to study criticism; it is a vast history that is not well appreciated by literature, and there is a call for dropping it. According to Plato, (427–347 B.C.E.) art is divine inspiration; it is not convenient for use in education since it is far from the truth, it also becomes a threat to traditions. Plato states that art's mimesis of reality decay men's ability for rationalistic thinking. In *The Republic* artists are illusionists; they always set forth corrupt images of the truth and imitate reality without apprehending its essence: "So, imitation is surely far removed from the truth. And the reason that it produces everything, it seems, is that it grasps only a small part of each thing—and that is an illusion."(Plato,2004,p.301). But Plato's *Ion* presents that the artist, and especially the poet, is a vessel for God to expose a truth. " God takes away the minds of poets, and uses them as his ministers, as he also uses diviners and holy prophets, .... but that God is the speaker, and that through them he is conversing with us" (Plato,1902, p.224).

For Aristotle, (384-322 B.C.E.) the pleasure that literature gives us comes from our natural ability to artistically imitate reality, human beings and situations that may be a tragedy or a comedy. Literature expresses spontaneous human experiences and it does not stop at just narrating what has happened, but it tells us what can/should be done. History tells particular events while poetry which is more philosophical expresses the general. The poet is not crazy or has no manners, and his simulations are not just copies of absolutist ideas. Thus we must judge him by his talents which are harmonious with the environment in which he is portrayed.





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And since the pleasure which the poet should afford is that which comes from pity and fear through imitation, it is evident that this quality must be impressed upon the incidents.....Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular..... Hence poetry implies either a happy gift of nature or a strain of madness. (Aristotle,1922,pp. 35,49,63).



So, Plato and Aristotle describe the theoretical and practical meaning of poetry, that description is recognized throughout the ancient world, such as Horace and Plotinus. Horace also believes that literature is an imitation, it does not imitate nature only, but it imitates literature itself as well. His book *The Art of Poetry* (1929) is based on knowledge of life and learning of art:

He has won every vote who has blended profit and pleasure, at once delighting and instructing the reader. That is the book to make money.... the one to cross the sea and extend to a distant day its author's fame. (p.479).

Those literary times can be judged objectively because they remain despite repeated studies, changing styles, and diversifying ages, cultures and languages. Great literature amazes us because it is the ultimate expression of the energies of individual souls thus, from that time on, criticism is born, grows, withers, it is resurrected with the birth, growth, withering, and resurrection of literature.

During the middle ages, there was hardly any criticism, it was theological criticism. Giovanni Boccaccio was interested in classical culture and the change of eras. He defended literature against vulgar and pedantic attacks, theologians and practical people short-sighted.

As for philosophy, while poetry and philosophy win towards one goal, the truth.....I am about to enter the arena, a manikin against these giant hulks— who have armed themselves with





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authority to say that poetry is either no art at all or a useless one. (Boccaccio, 1956, pp.xxxvi,36).

In the Renaissance, criticism was an independent literary activity; it had appeared theoretically and practically with Aristotle's poetry book and the editions of the classics. They discussed language, forms, grammar, and literary types, defended the popular language and attacked the prestige of the Latin language. Dante Alighieri, Francesco Petrarca and Boccaccio contributed to this defense, and the idea of modern words is more appropriate for new topics had helped them. Critics imitated classical and Roman literature. Generally, the critical idea was aristocratic; it respects the upper classes, despises the popular language, and eschews spontaneous expression. The practice of literary genres was also dependent on the social structure; each type is associated with a particular class of people. For example, tragedy, comedy and farce refer to the disparity between the classes of society.

In the seventeenth century, the weight of criticism moved from Italy to France. Nicolas Boileau was an example of neoclassical, as he proposed teaching poets logic because the mind finds out the natural truth which is beauty, "Learn then to think ere' you pretend to write." (Horace et al, 1892, p.167). The classic had used the good meaning, it is crucial for them, and requires a consideration of the law of the three theatrical units; unity of action, unity of time and unity of place.

That criticism has spread all over Europe, In England, Milton subjected literary creativity to the ideals of freedom, moral and political, and the influence of neoclassicism is evident in Dryden. Bob kept repeating the strict rules of common sense enacted by the French Boileau





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and one of the last critics of that time was Samuel Jenson, who remained decisive in rejecting time and space in theatre.

In the middle of the eighteenth century, the classical rules began to collapse. William Wordsworth (1770-1850) believes that the poet is a human being who talks to other people about the feelings that are caused by situations and ordinary things, without being subject to anything but the rules of his individual genius. In his *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth states that "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility." (Wordsworth, 1989, p.57). Coleridge (1772-1834) emphasizes the fact that the creative literary style attempts to achieve organic unity whether in the poet's conscience or among the elements of his poem.

In the nineteenth century, the Romantics declared war on consistent models and the romances sparked considerable debate in France, Romantic writers see that literature grows within society and it is absurd for the people of today to imitate the rules of yesterday and models because the historical character has changed and art must also change.

It is the free genius that must move this change. So the reaction came at once, they want to interpret literature. Augustin Sainte-Beuve makes criticism an inductive process based on an analysis of the author's character, his life, and his literary work. He presents the idea of the understanding of the writer as an individual within a social group before judging his work. Hence, his approach was based on understanding the biography of the creator. "Pope defined and marked out the splendid part of a true critic: A perfect judge will read each work of wit, with the same spirit that its author writ". (Sainte-Beuve, 1868, p.258).





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Arnold (1822-1888) was closer to the humanities than to science, but he interacted with the call to mix literature with scientific activities. Literature has been considered a natural phenomenon and applied the biological sciences to its study. The poem has regarded as a document of a human being who is governed by race, age and environment. Literature follows the historical movements of society; it is linked to the moment that is the spirit of the age.

Literature is not just Homer, Shakespeare or Goethe – it also includes 'Euclid's Elements and Newton's Principia'. In short, for Arnold in 1882, "literature refers to all knowledge that reaches us through books". (as cited in Nicholls, 2011, p.17).

Ferdinand Bruntiere (1849-1906) (also borrowed the concept of the literary genres from the biological species of the theory of evolution which are born, grow, and die in the struggle for survival. At the end of the nineteenth century, there were two categories of critics who were divided according to what they believed in. The first was art for art; it includes symbolists, aestheticians, and idealists, and the second was to which realists, socialists and scientists belong. Marx is not a literary critic, but his suggestions make critics move to search for the social deterministic factors behind the literary work and Tolstoy (1828-1910) sees art as a social activity.

Art is a human activity, consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that other people are infected by these feelings, and also experience them. (Tolstoy, 1904, p.50).

In the nineteenth century, criticism joined the history of ideas as science, while in the twentieth century, it has grown and increased. The



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critical movements of the twentieth century became more global than when a critical movement has appeared, it quickly becomes an international movement.

### 1-2 Philosophies of Criticism

A third method is a study of the philosophy of the critic's implicit and explicit impulses. Four philosophies have prevailed in criticism: existentialism, Marxism, psychological and structuralism. The interpretation of art fluctuates between two opposing methods objective and subjective. It is necessary to recognize the oscillation between realistic and idealistic interpretations of the art, the interpretations of those who say that this oscillation is a cultural game as well. The whole experience might be neither objective nor subjective, but rather existential. There are various trends that can be divided into three major directions: realism, idealism, and existentialism.

Realist philosophy is a result of confirming the existence of literature realistically within the realm of the real world. Realistic criticism aims to link the aesthetic value of a poem, novel, or play to something that is not literature because realism does not see literature as something independent, but rather as a result of non-literary reasons. To explain literature, critics struggle with sociology, ethnography, psychology, physics, and even metaphysics, they used to formulate rules when proving a necessary cause and effect relationship, but then, as the integral work does not attract them, they ended up cutting it into form and content. They dismiss the form and flip through the content searching for social, historical, linguistic, religious, political, and ideological materials and folklore.





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Ideal philosophy deals with literature as something that exists in the conscience of the writer or the reader. Readers are internally aware of literature, if literature records something outside the conscience, they cannot know it, they know it only as a psychological phenomenon, so, it is natural for critics to turn towards a purely aesthetic opinion. As the realists exaggerate the value of adaptation to the environment, the idealists also exaggerate the expressive and figurative value, throughout the text. Readers directly confront the aesthetic value of the literary work, which is a group of symbols by which the feelings of the writer and the reader are similar, that is called internal criticism, it deals with what is between the lines of the texts concerning literature, nature, society, history, and the writer's life on the outer side of literature.

Existentialist philosophy considers that it is false to practice realism on the one hand and idealism on the other. Literature is neither objective nor subjective. But, it is an expression which had been presented in historical life by certain human feelings. So, the meaning of literary phrase must be understood in light of its connections to the time in which the writer lived.

It is natural, with a concept that includes what is realistic and what is ideal in every historical existence that critics begin to move into the highly unique functional structure that the writer builds. The poet, novelist and playwright support aesthetic values formed in his conscience while he watches the possibilities of his historical horizon. So, aesthetic and historical values meet together in the existence of the writer himself. Hence, critics must clarify this historicity of art; historical criticism tries to grasp the aesthetic values within the scope of history, and historically

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in the aesthetic realm, In short, the unity of the essence is aesthetic and historical.

What seems 'simpler' than to characterize the 'connectedness of life' between birth and death? It consists of a sequence of Experiences 'in time'... that the question of historicity is an ontological question about the state of Being of historical entities. (Heidegger,1962, p.425,455).

According to Heidegger, existing is the act of being historical. It does not just imply that man finds himself at an exact historical time, seen as a succession of events. Instead, it denotes that man has a particular temporal construction; it is a descent of that history that is recounted thereafter in terms of a sequence of events. Therefore, existence between birth and death is to be part of the unity of history and not just be present in a separated succession of temporal points of time. In light of history, an original existence refers to the missions that give existence its form.

Criticism takes history seriously, because man does not make anything outside of history, but that does not mean it considers man or his work as a result of history, or just a chain of causes and effects in a sequence of influences. Rather, it considers the writer's view itself, and the construction of his work as a new beginning that occurred in his depths and reveals the basic construction of existence. Existential critics believe that the work generates in a person who chooses a literary activity and he is free and responsible for that choice which would be analyzed in the conscience of the writer.

### 2-1 Sartre's Philosophy

Existentialism is the existence of man and things around him. The idea of the difference between the existence of all things around him, which are just existing things and do not exceed that, has emerged. Human beings deal with their existence by their mind and hand, forms themselves, their being, and extract their essence. Man is born and lives for many years, he is steady and changing at the same time. He is stable because he has been known since the first day of his life as an existing human being, nothing more, but after several years, its essence would appear and he has an existential significance as a rich, poor, philosopher,





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ignorant, teacher, doctor, lawyer, etc... This is the essence or the essence after existence. Sartre regarding the otherworldliness ingrained in this view asserts: "Man simply is...Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself. That is the first principle of existentialism". (Sartre, 1948, p. 28).

Existential philosophy owes its various forms and types to the philosophy and ideas of Jean-Paul Sartre. He sees human existence as a hole in a wall in the universe. The wheel, for example, has a specific essence when it is made, which is essential prior to its existence, there are fixed requirements and specifications that the wheel must have before making it. These specifications and the essence of its use are the pre-existing nature of it. However, according to Sartre's philosophy man is completely different, there is no definite essence that has a precedent for his existence, but rather he who determines the essence, for the existence, is precedent the essence. This idea was firstly presented by Immanuel Kant before the existentialists. He believes that every essence, especially humanity, is a predetermined essence. Whereas, under the concept of freedom, existential philosophy objects to this definition and considers that man determines his essence freely. For Sartre (Flynn,2006,p.12) "the fundamental choice man makes and gives direction to his life, is made by reflecting his previous life up to present. In other words we've already made our choice implicitly".

Based on Sartre's philosophy, existence is a project for achieving essence. To exist is to be free, man lives in an existential situation, and he decides his position by a free choice. Sartre considers that there is a distance between man and self-realization that he will never reach until he reaches death. Nothingness is embedded in the fabric of existence. At every moment, human existence is threatened to fall into nothingness. Sartre declares, "It places the human being at the centre of its attention





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and the apex of its value hierarchy". He considers that man's freedom is of extreme importance. (Flynn, 2006, p.47).

Sartre's philosophy has given man the freedom to plan his life, choose his habits, and the cultural and social milieu in which he prefers to live. Thus, Sartre's philosophy contradicts with what Fyodor Dostoevsky once wrote "If God did not exist, everything would be permitted". (Dostoevsky, 1953, as cited in Kierkegaard & Kaufmann, 1956, pp.294-295). Sartre responded by saying, "Man is condemned to be free; because once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does. It is up to you to give (life) a meaning." (p.295).

Sartre's philosophy of existence highlights the revival of man existence, Sartre believes that human does not have a restricted essence, but he who formulates it, since it is not predestined. Thus, it becomes apparent that Sartre's philosophy and Nietzsche's existentialism are congruous. Sartre in his book *Being and Nothingness* emphasizes the most important concepts of his existential philosophy:

**1-The concept of existence in-itself:** it is the unconscious existence which is specific to things in the material world; it could be everything but the human being because man uniquely has that capacity of consciousness.

**2-The concept of existence for-itself:** it is the most prominent existential concept of Sartre, the feeling or awareness that is seen in itself, in a state of isolation, it is the absence of existence in itself, a feeling of lack of existence and the desire for existence. It is comparable to what the philosopher Martin Heidegger called the "Dasein" which is a term corresponding to the term existence, it means that man transcends the materialistic existence of things, it's the essence of human knowledge. ."





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To know is to realize in both senses of the term.... and realizing negation which reveals the in-itself while determining the being of the for-itself... "(Sartre,1956,p.249).

**3-Existence for others:** it is the feeling that arises as a result of the man's existence with other feelings that is, from the social point of view and being with others in society. It is related to Sartre's concept of relationship with others. Sartre considers it the third externalizing of existence for itself. It is a new view of existence; the self exists or the ego as an object in relation to others. According to Sartre's view, every existence of the other involves a constant conflict and struggle with the existence of the self, due to the fact that every self-existence seeks directly or indirectly to recover its own existence by making the other an object in relation to the self or the ego. "To deny concerning myself that I am the Other. Since the Other is the foundation of my being, he could not be dissolved in me without my being-for- Other disappearing". (Sartre,1956,p.476).

Thus, the original meaning of the word 'existence' is "exit from", a term that the Greek philosophers employed in their philosophies, it happens when what is for itself separates from the self, so the self becomes an independent entity and separate from what is for itself, this separation occurs in three successive exclusions, namely temporality, contemplation, and the existence of others.

### 2-2 Philosophical perspectives in Sartre's *No Exit*

Sartre discloses his superiority of drama in *No Exit*, a depiction of hell. In many ways, *No Exit* is a prominent philosophical contribution to the theatre. It is where Samuel Beckett's remarkable plays are



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substantially extracted. Therefore, *No exist* is seen as an expression of significant ideas and dramatic styles that founded prospects for drama.

The play depicts life after death, as three dead people are punished by being confined together. It is the source of Sartre's well-known and misconceived quote "Hell is other people". It is an interpretation of Sartre's views regarding the Look and the permanent ontological conflict that make man see himself as an object in another consciousness.

*No Exit* is a one-act play of four characters, the valet, appears only one scene. Joseph Garcin is a soldier, has been deserted from war and sentenced to death; he also has ruined his wife's life by his continuing relationships with women that eventually led to her suicide. Estelle Rigault, is a woman who has betrayed her husband and killed her daughter from her lover by drowning her in the river that consequently led to the lover's suicide. Inez Serrano is a lesbian woman, but she wasn't just guilty of being a lesbian, she also has been masterminded the death of the husband of her beloved. She is a cruel, heartless woman. Each character sits opposite and despises the other. They have their own disgusting and "human" goals. Estelle craves Garcin, Inez craves Estelle, Garcin wants Estelle, Inez prevents them, impossible relationships in one eternal room. As the play begins, a valet accompanies Garcin into a room that the audience quickly perceives as hell.

Garcin... I understand that I'm in hell .... They knew I'd stand at the fire-place stroking this thing of bronze, ... [...] What? Only two of you? I thought there were more; many more. [...] So this is hell. I'd never have believed it. You remember all we were told about the torture-chambers, the fire and brimstone, the "burning marl." Old wives' tales! There's no need for red-hot pokers. Hell is—other people! (Sartre,1989,p.45).





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The room is furnished in the style of Emperor Louis Philip II decorated with antiques and statues. The bronze statue is an art that brings us to Sartre's opinion of art and of the process of artistic creation itself which is an opinion that stems from his existential philosophy. According to Sartre, art is also a form of escape into nothingness, because the artistic product is not belonging to the realm of existence, no matter how much reality is taken as a subject of simulation. It does not belong to the realm of real existence. The bronze statue stands as a sign of nothingness before the eyes of the inmates of the Sartrean hell, reminding them of the loss of their ability as humans of escaping from existence into nothingness. Even when Garcin imagines that he can extinguish the lamp or break it with the bronze statue, he discovers how heavy it is and gives up on trying. The statue is a sign of nothingness, there is no exist to escape from existence into nothingness, the light will remain shining, the light will remain shining, preventing him from negligence, and the sign of nothingness will remain heavy before his eyes, he will sink in his presence, and he will not see an escape except that heavy statue that will be of no use to him. Hell is the responsibility of man for his actions and the consequences thereof, others who never look like us and they don't hesitate as soon as they have the opportunity to torment us.

Sartre, in his play *No Exit* discusses several of the existentialist themes explored in his philosophical study *Being and Nothingness*, *No Exit* concentrates prominently on the concepts of the "look and others", "competitive subjectivity", "bad faith" and "objectification".

We all, to varying degrees, try not to trample hell, Hell is here where you do not see bodies that enter the blazing fire or chains nor demons with red horns, the torment here is a different kind of torture." Hell is other people"(p.45) is the most popular, honest, sharp and hurtful phrase. It's true to the degree of pain, Sartre's hell, then, is not a blazing fire, in



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which the bodies of sinners are burn, it's much worse than that. They are three people, who don't know each other, but their fate is tied together to the end in spite of the impossibility of compatibility between them. They know the other's past and rebukes for what he/she did in his/her life of wrong decisions. The third person acts as inspector or witness. They can't live next to each other and there are those who spy on them. "I am indeed that object which the Other is looking at and judging". (Sartre,1956,p.350).

In the chamber, torture is everywhere, getting on everyone's nerves, there is a sofa, but it is uncomfortable. The colours of the decorations are disgusting. The toothbrush is the same for the three characters. The statue is horrific. Three persons, one room, and eternity are given. An existential philosophical play that presents Sartre's view of the Other, the others who live together and care about each other either out of love, fear, respect, or other reasons.

In this play, a man and two women whose sins are differed, find themselves in a room that brings them together in the other world. The tormentor is not there, they marvel because they know that they are in hell, but there are no torture machines of any kind and each becomes the other's executioner. There are no mirrors, no windows, and no way to escape from that hell. Hell of the other that people won't have peace of mind if we move away from it, and they won't get happiness in being close to it. Sartre could discuss his own logic and philosophy, the difference between the ego and the other and the concept of individual freedom and how it relates to the freedom of others.

This play is short, brief and it is the best start to getting to know even a small part of Sartre's philosophy and thought. It is not just about a famous yell "Hell is other people".(p.45), but also deals with the problem of human freedom and will, that shout directly expresses what Sartre wants to say, but with a relook at the play, many other ideas are figured out.

Hell is life itself, torment is already happening without the need to wait after death. Although the play takes place in hell but everything expresses that it talks about life. Hell that people talk about is here and everywhere, it is not the hell itself but hell is the others. In a state where identity takes from others, other people become hell, in which anguish becomes self-inflicted and inevitable. Sartre indicates "Relations with other people, encrustation, and freedom...are the three themes of the play. I should like you to remember this when you hear that hell is other people". (Burt,2007,p. 411).







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It seems that Garcin prefers to be isolated from others. He wants to be alone with his thoughts. He would rather keep quiet than talk to the others. In the play, it is observed that the characters have no feeling of shame or guilt towards their offences. However, they only feel disgraceful when they admit their faults to others. It's not a matter of what has been done, but it's a matter of whether the others have Known or not. and that's the main theme and the heart of the play. It deals with the issue of "hell is other people". Sartre believes that subjectivity is competitive. If one sits lonely in a room, he is the subject, and all the things around him are the object. If one looks at the door, for instance; he is the subject and the door is an object and if there's another person in the room, he will be as an object as well, the one doing the looking is the subject again. The issue is he knows that they looks at him and consider him as an object as well. The significant controversy is: who is the subject and who is the object? It is a source of conflict; there is a fight over it. One competes for the subjectivity. Thus, that's what "subjectivity is competitive" means.

Garcin: I'd rather be alone. I want to think things out, you know; to set my life in order, and one does that better by oneself." Not one word. That won't be difficult; each of us has plenty of material for self-communings. I think I could stay ten thousand years with only my thoughts for company. [...] that way we – we'll work out our salvation. Looking into ourselves, never raising our heads. (Sartre,1989,p.9,17).

Regarding judgment and these three individuals in hell, let's go back to the idea of judgment. When Estelle and Inez know Garcin's faults, they inevitably judge him as an object. Garcin feels guilt and shame, but it is not about treating his wife harshly. However, that's because Inez and Estelle look at him and consider him as an object. Inez, Estelle and Garcin, interact with competitive subjectivity and the anguish of being objectified. In short, no one wants to be another one's object. Differently, the three characters react to competitive subjectivity.

Garcin exemplifies a midpoint between Inez who accurately embodies Sartre's viewpoint and Estelle who symbolizes anti-existentialism. He is the closest to the audience or reader, they see hell out of his viewpoint, he's the only character who is seen alone by the audience. Garcin's character reveals continued inner conflict, he is stuck between two antithesis represented by Inez and Estelle, either he accepts where he is and acknowledges his deeds as Inez does, or he escapes into





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what Sartre terms "bad faith" as Estelle does. Sartre believes that people front this decision at every point of their lives, whether they recognized that or not. Garcin conveys this tenseness to the forefront.

Thence, what is "bad faith"? It is self-deception. Sartre's existentialism asserts that human is entirely free and responsible. When a man becomes aware of this freedom, he experiences "anguish," he is unsettled that he has that heavy responsibility. While driving, it is frightening to realize that, if one wants, he could steer right into an oncoming vehicle. In the face of such anguish, how do most people cope? They flee into bad faith. To put it differently, they trick themselves into believing that they aren't free. For Sartre, bad faith turns man apart from his freedom and responsibilities. Sartre defines a variety of feelings and behaviors such as religion, pride, sex, Freud's subconscious, and specific ethical systems as types of bad faith.

"Hell is other people,"(p.45) is the line which expresses the heart of the play and hellishness results from competitive subjectivity. Thus, Estelle becomes an object when other people look at her. She is in bad faith. She wants to become an object. Estelle and Garcin also, want to relinquish their responsibility and freedom; they want to become a thing in the eyes of other people. Instead of being-for-itself, she wants to exist as being-for-others. Therefore, she is obsessed with mirrors, appearance, and catching Garcin's attention. Even her nicknames that were on Earth, "my glancing stream," and "my crystal," are related to reflecting, looking and appearing. She isn't concerned with existing herself, but rather she concerns others.

ESTELLE: When I can't see myself I begin to wonder if I really and truly exist. I pat myself just to make sure, but it doesn't help much. [...] I've six big mirrors in my bedroom. There they are. I can see them. But they don't see me. They're reflecting the carpet, the settee, the window – but how empty it is, a glass in which I'm absent! When I talked to people I always made sure there was one near by in which I could see myself. I watched myself talking. And somehow it kept me alert, seeing myself as the others saw me. [...] No, I can't do without a looking-glass for ever and ever. I simply can't. (Sartre,1989,p.19).

Sartre also briefly presents the concept of "pools of nothingness". Garcin is prepared to leave the cell but he is unable to leave. Ines does





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not respect him, she misinterprets his character. The "pool of nothingness" makes him need her respect. It is impossible to avoid filling that void even if he leaves that room. Thus, by Garcin's efforts, the door is opened, but the three characters do not move. "Ines; So what? Which shall it be? Which of the three of us will leave? The barrier's down, why are we waiting? But what a situation! It's a scream! We are inseparables!" (Sartre, 1989, p.43).

According to Sartre (1956), unlike inanimate objects or a being-in-itself, man's consciousness or being-for-itself has the capability to determine and define his personal features or essence. At the same time, freedom of choice presents the definitive responsibility for man's actions. The anxiety and fear of this responsibility conduct humans to disregard their freedom and responsibility by permitting others to make their choices on their behalf, resulting in bad faith. For that reason, Garcin is capable to flee the chamber when the door opens, but he is unable to assume responsibility for facing his decision to leave. Subsequently, he lets it up to Ines to regard him and decide his essence. Correspondingly, Estelle does not think that she exists unless she looks in a mirror; When Ines acts to be her mirror and says that Estelle has a pustule on her face. Estelle's bad faith renders her to allow someone else to form her essence. Garcin and Estelle are condemned to be free, whereas they condemn themselves to avoid being free.

### **Conclusion**

Sartre's philosophy is based on his support of the idea that human beings are condemned to be free. For him, there is no essence for human existence. He considers that man is free because he is responsible for his actions and the desires do not lead man but man leads them. The Sartrean



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philosophy of existence asserts the renewal of man's existence. Sartre views that humans do not have a fixed essence. Nevertheless, they form their essence, as it is not preordained. In *No Exit*, the gaze of Others limits one's freedom. Sartre believes existence precedes essence. Thus, freedom is the main theme of the play. Along with this freedom of choice, man is also responsible for his actions. In order to escape the fear and anxiety associated with responsibilities, people tend to disregard their freedom as well as their responsibility. Accordingly, the play conveys the idea that human beings have no freedom. They are forced into this life, and everything around them is destined to make their lives hell. The play illustrates that humans have no ability to change or to determine their fate. The protagonist tries to lift a small extinguisher from the table but he couldn't, it is so heavy, that expresses his inability. Protagonists have a chance to get out, but they can't decide to go out because they believe that there is already no escape. They are in hell forever even if they try to change. The change is just a formality that ends up with another version of hell as life is an eternal hell.

As the study concerns philosophy, it is observable that the writer succeeds to present his philosophical ideas through literature. However, some believe that any method or thought that depends on symbolism is an incomplete ideology, which seeks to hide behind the disguise of grandeur. Others believe that is no barrier between philosophy and literature and it is not possible to separate the two. Hence, literature, in its different forms: story, poetry, or play... could be the best way to express philosophical thought.

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