

The absurdity of existence: Analyzing human relationships in Sartre's No Exit

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the philosophical concepts of existentialism and absurdism, focusing on the works of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. It begins by examining Sartre's notion of "for-itself" and "in-itself," highlighting the inherent discomfort and isolation of human existence, which resonates with Martin Heidegger's idea of "Dasein." The study delves into the fundamental aims of absurdism, which seeks to reconcile the contradictions between human will and a hostile environment. By analyzing Sartre's play "No Exit," the article illustrates how absurdist theatre employs non-linear narratives to evoke feelings of disorientation and absurdity, ultimately reflecting on the quest for meaning in a seemingly meaningless world. The study also critiques the absence of Grice's Cooperative Principle, particularly the Maxim of Quantity, in the dialogues of "No Exit," emphasizing the complexities of communication in existential contexts. The findings underscore the interplay between existential themes and absurdist techniques, offering insights into the human condition and the perpetual struggle for purpose amidst existential despair. This article is relevant for readers interested in philosophy, theatre, and the exploration of human existence.

Keywords: Existentialism, human relationships, No Exit, Sartre, theatre of absurd

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INTRODUCTION

Finding existential themes in literature during times of hardship and intricate human relationships, as well as while facing the struggles of human life, is more important and urgent than at any other time in history (Nasution et al., 2024). This study mentions that there's a critical void exists in the literature and aims to address this by conducting a detailed analysis of Jean-Paul Sartre's important play, 'No Exit,' focusing especially on the entertaining principle, 'hell is other people.' This idea should be important, for it summarizes the core idea of Sartre's existentialist philosophy, and shows the remarkable effects that interpersonal connections can have on both identity and perception (Ainoa, 2023).

Around the planet, Jean-Paul Sartre is celebrated for his vital contributions to 20th century philosophy and literature, in addition to being famous for establishing concepts in both existentialism and absurdism (Simonova, 2023; Mehdiyeva & Rashidov, 2024). Through creating compositions that tackle standard interpretations of identity, freedom, and responsibility, he gives a strong and frequently disturbing take on human experience. "No Exit," from 1944 by Sartre, has three characters – Garcin, Inès, and Estelle – who are all together in a tightly confined space, discussing their histories and what they have done. As a sample of broader effects, this tightly bound atmosphere works as a brief model for the pain, isolation, and misconstrued understanding of self that Sartre links to relationships.

Studies in the past have examined a number of perspectives on Sartrean existentialism, which addressed the way interpersonal dynamics function, the philosophical premises of absurd theatre, and the consequences of Sartre's ideas for our understanding of the human condition (Song, 2024). Zuraikat and Mashreqi (2022) together with Basharat (2022) have studied how the play "No Exit" uncovers the complicated dynamics of human relationships and the existential challenges that surface in a culture that largely underlines conformity. Studies shows that the characters created by Sartre represent the lasting difficulties of identifying individual identity in a social framework as well as often challenging social experiences (Agwu et al., 2024; James & Stockman, 2020). Regardless of these precious insights, a

rigorous examination of the interactions among these themes within the framework of absurd theater, particularly in light of the principle 'hell is other people,' is still in demand. The purpose of this study is to fill that deficiency by giving a complex analysis of the play's themes and their meaning for our understanding of the human condition.

The philosophical basis for this study develops from existentialist thought, especially stressing self-determination, obligations, and the constant search for meaning in a world that does not clearly serve a function. In the view of this angle, personal qualities are secondary to what makes an individual unique - their individual decisions and actions (Mulyadi et al., 2024). The framework will control the examination of Sartre's writing, improving our ability to understand the elaborate psychological and social dynamics characterizing the people in 'No Exit'. This venture tries to bring to light the effect of Sartre's theories on contemporary society via qualitative research techniques, especially through content analysis and critical discourse analysis.

The relevance of this study is escalating because of the richness of existentialist themes in society right now, where individuals face separation, absence, and a pursuit of identity in a world that is both interconnected and can nonetheless feel isolating. Together with rapid technological innovations and social transformation, Sartre's existential questions are striking a greater resonance at the present time (Zala, 2023). The aim of this study is to join the extensive discourse on existentialism by investigating Sartre's 'No Exit' through this intellectual framework, encouraging readers to think about their personal relationships, the duties that go along with such relationships, and how those relationships influence identity and purpose.

This study intends to illuminate the philosophical basis of Sartre's "No Exit" and to stimulate significant interaction among readers about our being, the intricate qualities of our relationships, and the unending investigation for meaning in a world that seldom seems bothered by our suffering. This study aspires to enhance a richer understanding of the important lessons present in literature by assessing the features of Sartre's existentialism and its relevance to current life.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach to conduct an in-depth analysis of Jean-Paul Sartre's play "No Exit," with a particular focus on existentialist themes such as individual freedom and responsibility. The primary data source is the text of the play itself, which is complemented by secondary scholarly articles, books, and critical essays that provide additional context on existentialism and the Theatre of the Absurd. The data collection process begins with a close reading of "No Exit" to identify key themes, character interactions, and significant quotes that illustrate the concept that "hell is other people." Simultaneously, a literature review is conducted to gather relevant secondary sources that enrich the analysis. Following data collection, thematic coding is employed to categorize the information, highlighting recurring themes such as alienation, interpersonal relationships, and individual accountability.

The analysis process consists of several stages: content analysis to systematically examine the text and secondary sources for patterns, critical discourse analysis to explore the language and dialogue used in the play, and interpretative analysis to synthesize findings and draw connections between the identified themes and their relevance to contemporary society. This comprehensive methodology aims to deepen our understanding of Sartre's philosophical concepts and their implications for human relationships, ultimately contributing to the broader discourse surrounding existentialism and the essence of humanity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Jean-Paul Sartre's play 'No Exit' as analysed in this study has several key findings in existential themes and relationships. The play then shows how relationship has a great influence on how an individual thinks about themselves. It is a representation of their existential situation, for the characters are the three (Garcin, Inès and Estelle) trapped in a confined space. The mere interactions demonstrate that 'hell is other people' and how the individuals' suppositions of themselves rely critically on how people associate with them (Nasution et al., 2024; Zuraikat & Mashreqi, 2022).

Although these people are physically present, the study of the texts finds a recurring theme of alienation and isolation. According to Sartre's existentialist notion, isolated individuals often feel

effected in social contexts (Agwu et al., 2024; James & Stockman, 2020), and that is the feeling they have. Consistent with the more general existentialist discourse of human condition, the search for meaning is often riddled with human relations, and this finding corresponds to it (Mulyadi et al., 2024).

In addition, the analysis shows that in "No Exit", the dialogue does not follow Grice's Cooperative Principle, especially the Maxim of Quantity. This absence gives communication between the characters a difficulty, on top of the theme of existential confusion among people and the labor of clarity in relationships. The reflection of the dialogues creates the play's comedy of author's existential despair and the quest of meaning in an indifferent world (Mammadova, 2024).

It's found that characters fail in their attempt to assert their identities against one another, resulting in psychological punishment. That's precisely why according to Sartre, individuals become instruments of torment to other individuals, they project their insecurity and their failure on other people. The play's barren setting of no physical torment begins to highlight the psychological torment this supposedly 'other worldly' physical torture causes, and in doing so reinforces that the true hell is with the relationships we have with one another.

The study draws attention to the central theme of "No Exit" featuring the themes of personal responsibility and choice. The decisions and choices of the characters are at the cost to other people. The consequence of their past actions forces them to see where they're at present in after life. The play, on the one hand, is an echo of Sartre's existentialist philosophy that portrays that the only and responsible creator of us is ourselves, by ourselves and through our own decisions and actions (Mehdiyeva & Rashidov, 2024):

Discussion

Origins and Significance

Existentialism emphasizes personal freedom, responsibility, and the search of purpose in a world lacking supernatural guidance (Reynolds, 2019). Existentialism can be regarded a revolution. According to Mandel, normally revolutions start when the people become aware of their rights, refuse to be controlled anymore, and acknowledge the fault in their rulers (Mustafa and Najmaldin, 2019). The recognition of their rights also suggests an understanding of their personal worth as individuals, which is a key concept in existentialism.

A well-known existentialist figure, Jean-Paul Sartre, maintained that individuals have no inborn characteristics and should continuously redefine themselves. Sartre (1966) regarded existentialism as "an attempt to draw out the consequences of a coherent atheistic position" (p.19). The above quote captures the central principles of existentialism, highlighting the significance of individual freedom and the resulting responsibilities. Sartre's philosophy bases itself on three fundamental concepts: existence in itself, existence for itself, and existence for others (Onof, 2023). The concepts discussed provide insight into the complexity of human awareness, the unique challenges of existence, and the complex nature of social connections.

Sartre's existential philosophy emphasizes individual freedom and the responsibility that comes with it. He believed that humans have the right to choose their own habits and culture, but they are also accountable for their actions and must give meaning to their lives (Flynn, 2006). Sartre rejected the idea of predestination and believed that self-realization is only achieved after death (Reynolds and Renaudie, 2022). Despite the constant threat of disappearing, he considered freedom as a fundamental human right that is essential for acquiring essence through existence in existential situations.

Sartre's philosophy revolves around the concept that human beings do not have a predetermined essence and that their existence is constantly being renewed (Mamput, 2024). Sartre's book *Being and Nothingness* focuses on three important concepts in his existential philosophy. The first is the concept of existence in-itself, which refers to the idea that material objects possess an unconscious existence, while only humans are capable of consciousness (Sartre, 1978). People who possess this mode of consciousness act in a similar way to objects and entities.

The second concept is the existence for-itself, which is the experience or awareness held within itself (Sartre, 1978). It is a state of discomfort, isolation, and a desire to exist. This concept is related to philosopher Martin Heidegger's idea of "Dasein," which suggests that humans are more than just physical beings (Blackshaw, 2010). According to Sartre, knowledge is the act of realizing both the in-itself and the for-itself, as well as the realization of negation (Sartre, 1978).

The third idea concerns the concept of existing in relation to others within a society, known as

existence for others (Sartre, 1978). This notion is based on the belief that the self or ego exists as an object when in the company of others. Sartre argued that the presence of other individuals is constantly in conflict with the existence of the self because every act of self-existence aims to reinforce its own presence by evaluating the other (Seol, 2023; Dozzi, 2023). Nevertheless, Sartre acknowledged that the Other cannot be ignored without destroying his being-for-the-other, as the other serves as the foundation of his own existence (Sartre, 1978).

Essentially, Sartre's philosophical views on existence emphasize the importance of personal freedom, accountability, and the discovery of purpose in a world lacking divine direction or predetermined destiny. Sartre argued that individuals have the freedom to determine their own habits and culture, but they are also responsible for their choices and must enhance their existence with significance (Strohm, 2022). His philosophy centers around three fundamental principles: existence in itself, existence for oneself, and existence for others, which explore human consciousness, the challenges of being alive, and the discomfort of social existence. Sartre believed that freedom is an essential human right that enables individuals to achieve meaning through existence in existential situations (Pecorino, 2023). Sartre's philosophy highlights the importance of individual freedom and responsibility, as well as the importance of finding meaning in one's life.

A Context for "No Exit"

Absurdism is a philosophy that highlights the lack of inherent meaning in life, and it has influenced the development of a theatrical movement known as "Theatre of Absurd" (Munir, 2017). This genre emerged in the 1950s and 1960s in Western Europe and America, with playwrights like Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Jean Genet as its primary representatives (Esslin, 2004). Theatre of Absurd is not concerned with traditional elements of theatre like plots, characters, or actions, and the resulting works may appear illogical and humorous on the surface (Wegener, 1967). However, they explore the absurdity of life and death, uncertainty, alienation, and missed communication between characters, and often deal with harassment, violence, and injustice below the surface.

The plays of Theatre of Absurd convey a sense of disorientation to the audience, as the characters and settings are not realistic and have a weak sense of time and space. The characters are not named and represent everyone, appearing to have no real, logical reason for their actions. The genre is concerned with the absurdity of life and death, and the plays offer no investigation or solution to humanity's problems. Theatre of Absurd reveals man's precarious position in the world through a somber and violent rendering of his condition. Its roots can be traced back to ancient times and plays, and it is seen as a response to the decline of faith in an ordered universe following World War II, along with a declining interest in the existence of an afterlife (Hewitt, 2009).

The communication between characters in Theatre of Absurd is often portrayed as broken, and language is no longer instrumental in conveying meaning (Esslin, 2004). The genre is also seen as a form of satire that magnifies the current state of affairs, in which the era of mass communication has allowed language to run wild. Albert Camus is considered one of the most influential figures in absurdism (Boisvert, 2023). He believed that absurdism reflects the complex relationship between human beings and the world, expressing the tragic nature of man's destiny as a tragic paradox (Hall, 1960). Absurdism's fundamental aim is believed to be an instrument that can neutralize the contradictions between man's will and the hostile environment around him.

Absurdism shares similar purposes with existentialism, which highlights the individual's responsibility and freedom to find purpose in a world that is perceived as meaningless (Milne, 2008). Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus are two philosophers who have written several works in the philosophical tract of existentialism, but they express their ideas through traditional writing methods (Keshtan et al., 2022; Mammadova, 2024). In contrast, absurdists use non-linear plots to convey their message to the audience, causing disorientation and a sense of absurdity (Jaya, 2020).

The theatrical work *No Exit* offers a great example of Theatre of Absurd. Its storyline explores into the absurdity of existence and the complexities of the human condition. The entire play takes place within a single room located in hell, where three dead individuals find themselves trapped in there forever. Throughout their interactions, it becomes clear that they are experiencing continuous suffering from both each other and their personal inner demons. The play critically examines existential themes like the quest for purpose in a world that appears meaningless, the certainty of death, and the battle for

truth against societal expectations. Furthermore, the play's dark setting could also be interpreted as a symbol of the human condition, where humans are caught in their broken existence with no means of escape. All in all, *No Exit* exemplifies Theatre of Absurd's fundamental idea, leaving the audience in a state of confusion while exploring the absurdity of life and death.

According to Ahmad (2019a), Grice created the "Cooperative Principle," which says that effective communication requires both the speaker and listener to follow certain rules, called Gricean Maxims. One of the Cooperative Principles that is notably absent in *No Exit* is the Maxim of Quantity, which states that communicators should provide as much information as is needed for a conversation and no more (Ahmad, 2019a). The characters in the play frequently withhold information from one another and often lie, creating absurdity, confusion and misunderstandings. For example, Garcin fails to provide enough information about his past to Inez and Estelle, which creates confusion and misunderstandings among the characters. Inez often manipulates the truth and withholds information, leading to a breakdown in communication between the characters. This violation of the Cooperative Principle of effective communication leads to absurdity and confuse the audience.

As a whole, Theatre of Absurd is a theatrical trend that questions traditional aspects of drama and instead examines the absurd nature of life and death. By making use of ambiguous environments, anonymous characters, and problematic communication, absurdism highlights humanity's weak position in the world and highlights the absence of meaning and purpose in life. This movement emerged as a reaction to the loss of faith in an organized universe after World War II and the loss of interest with the concept of an afterlife (Panda, 2022; Adroit, 2024). Jean-Paul Sartre's *No Exit* is an iconic example of Theatre of Absurd, which explores the human condition and the concept of significance in a seemingly meaningless world. The play's confusion is reinforced by the violation of Grice's Cooperative Principle of effective communication, adding to the absurdity and leaving the audience with a thought-provoking experience.

Existential Encounters in Sartre's Play

Jean-Paul Sartre's play *No Exit* examines existential themes through the perspective of post-war society to capture its essence (Reynolds and Renaudie, 2022). There are various forms of existence shown in the play, such as enslavement, free will, and bad faith. There are three different modes of being demonstrated by the three characters in the play.

Since Garcin is equal in existence to non-living things, this makes him a representative of being-in-itself. The two women Estelle and Inez provide him with his existence since he lacks the ability to hold his decisions. He answered half-truth when requested to explain to others why he was in hell, he told them that "I ran a pacifist newspaper. Had I done anything wrong" (Sartre, 1955). It appears that he is not conscious of his sins and does not have the power to admit them. Because of this, he is stricken with bad faith. As a way of achieving this peace of mind, he prefers to remain passive, which demonstrates how he is equally existent as non-living things because he is content with remaining passive.

It is a source of torture for Garcin that he is unable to admit to his existence. Inez had accepted Estelle's request that she would act as her mirror, but it made her unsure since Garcin could see them. However, Inez's response is indicative of the failure nature of Garcin, as it is clear from her words that he is not considered when she says "Oh, he doesn't count" (Sartre, 1955, p.20). Estelle and Inez have dialogued with him in the hell, but he does not reply in order to avoid the reality of his existence (Sartre, 1955). He is mainly uncomfortable due to the regrets he feels about his former life. His goal is to redesign his existence by not depending on the choices he makes based on his personal opinions as he indicates that having a clear understanding of what's going on will help him put his life back in order (Sartre, 1955).

Being for-itself (conscious subjective self) is the second mode of being in Sartre's theory of being. Mental awareness of one's surroundings and circumstances are part of conscious state, and admitting to the truth of one's existence is part of it as well. Through her subjective self-consciousness, Inez appears to be the sole character that has the courage to admit all the faults and errors she has committed and has made. Unlike Garcin, who needed someone to define his existence, she is free to define her own. She states that the world around her is perfectly orderly, and everything has been neatly organized by itself: "My life's in perfect order. It tidied itself up nicely of its own accord" (Sartre, 1955, p.13). The character of Inez is portrayed as a tough individual, described by Sartre (1955) as a "hard headed woman" (p.44),

who inflicts torture on Estelle and Garcin to derive pleasure from their suffering. Among the characters in hell, she is the only one who is fully conscious in addition to criticizing others by telling them that the same brush is used to paint them all, and each of them is a criminal, thus there is no point in damning people for no reason (Sartre, 1955).

Throughout the play, Sartre has intentionally shown the strength of the role of Inez, representing the value of subjective self-consciousness (being for it-self) and the quality of an independent and free self in a strong way. In Sartre's view, freedom is the key to authenticity, so every decision should be based on the freedom of choice. Inez tortures other characters in hell due to her subjective self-consciousness. She states that the fact that they are there does not come as a surprise to her: "It is no surprise being here" (Sartre, 1955, p.26). It takes great courage for her to describe her life's story in such a detailed way. According to her, there was an affair between her and Florence that resulted in a story about a dead man, which ended with three corpses: the man, her, and Florence, and nobody left, so she is not concerned at all (Sartre, 1955). In her admission, she acknowledges all of them are sinners, who are thrown into hell as punishment. She states that their hour of pleasure has passed and that they have enjoyed themselves. It has happened that many have sacrificed themselves for their sake, and they laughed at them. As a result, they must now pay their dues: "We've had our hour of pleasure, haven't we? There have been people who burned their lives out for our sakes - and we chuckled over it. So now we have to pay the reckoning" (Sartre, 1955, p.17).

Estelle asserts that everything in hell is so absurd and nothing makes any sense at all as well as it is inconvenient (Sartre, 1955). As a result of the uncertainty resulting from the unpredictability of the circumstances, everyone tends to fool themselves into believing that they haven't committed anything unethical throughout their lifespan. The notion of the other's existence is greatly emphasized throughout the play, which shows the three condemned souls waiting for the punishment in hell to begin, however nothing comes until the very end, when no punishment occurs. There are primarily two characters in the play who are suffering with a lack of faith, and their names are Estelle and Garcin. Having poor faith is deceiving oneself. Those who suffer with the disease of ill faith are incapable of admitting and understanding their own subjective existence or independence. By doing so, it robs individuals of their freedom and conscious choice. According to Sartre, to describe oneself by his or her social position is bad faith, just as, to describe other people according to one's social position is also bad faith. A trio of characters appear to be being tortured by one another, as the characters are trying to drain the identities of one another. Based on the context of the play, it is obvious that the characters are expecting to receive a punishment that will be physical, but they have been subjected to psychological punishment due to the presence of one another.

According to Sartre (1978), the terms others and look are closely associated by stating that being looked-at enables a person to discover the presence of others and represents the third essential mode in human existence known by the term being-for-others. Both ladies are disturbed by Garcin's gaze, and the look on the two women makes Garcin unable to rest. Inez's gaze also gives Estelle a sense of subjective self-consciousness. Thus, Inez exploits Estelle in a manner that suits her own personal interests in order for her further interests and goals.

It is important to note that whenever Sartre spoke of this with the gaze or look of others, he meant with their eyes. A question from Inez demonstrates how disturbed Estelle is by Inez's look when she states that if her expression hurtful towards Estelle: "Do I look as if I wanted to hurt you?" (Sartre, 1955, p.20). Due to this reason, when looking at others, human beings feel threatened by them since they reflect every aspect of the capacities a person has to take action on his or her own, and therefore poses a threat to them. As Estelle sees her own reflection through Inez's eyes, she begins to feel scared, as if she has lost all control of herself, which it is clear when she says to Inez that she fears her the most, and that she never did so to the reflection on the mirror or glass (Sartre, 1955). Consequently, Estelle is permanently threatened by Inez's eyes. Estelle represents Sartre's concept when Sartre says that he feels embarrassed in front of other people (Sartre, 1978). A source of discomfort for Garcin is his encounter with Estelle and Inez, who both continue to refer to him as a coward despite his demands for them to do so (Sartre, 1955). With the gaze and eyes of others there comes a sense of shame and alienation among characters.

In the play *No Exit*, the characters' experiences of existing for others increase the existing gender inequality by supporting societal norms that require women to be obedient and physically attractive to men. This reinforces the belief that men have a greater influence on women, creating unequal power

dynamics. Estelle's value is linked to her physical appearance, while Inez is defined by her connections with men. According to Ahmad (2019b), the common issue of gender inequality is highlighted by these common themes, which showcase the advantaged status of males in society and the unfortunate reality of violence, sexual harassment, social exclusion, and limited educational opportunities that females commonly face.

In Sartre's play *No Exit*, the characters exhibit different modes of being, including enslavement, free will, and bad faith. Garcin represents being-in-itself and lacks the ability to admit to his existence, which causes him to experience bad faith. In contrast, Inez demonstrates being-for-itself, acknowledging her faults and errors and defining her own existence through her independent and free self. She also criticizes the others for their lack of consciousness and demonstrates the importance of freedom in decision-making. Estelle is uncertain and tends to fool herself into thinking she hasn't done anything unethical. The play emphasizes the importance of the other's existence and the consequences of ill faith, which robs individuals of their freedom and conscious choice. Overall, Sartre uses the characters to illustrate his existential philosophy and to capture the essence of post-war society.

Sartrean Philosophy in "No Exit"

Throughout Sartre's philosophy, freedom is closely related to responsibility. Choosing is a free act, but the consequences of those choices must also be taken into account. Being an author of one's own life means carrying the burden of responsibility. Sartre argues that individuals are defined by their own freedom, which creates human values (Sartre, 1966).

However, this view presents a challenge in the absence of God (Deodatus, 2023). Without an absolute measurement of value, human meanings and values are constantly being created and recreated by man's free choice. Nietzsche argues that the existence of God prevents individuals from overcoming themselves, as they are bound by the oversight and control of a higher power (Lackey, 1999). Thus, the death of God creates a void that must be filled by the individual's pursuit of rationality and their own rational nature.

This existentialist philosophy is reflected in the play *No Exit* by Jean-Paul Sartre. The characters, Estelle, Garcin, and Inez, are confined to a room where they are able to practice their free will, but also must confront the consequences of their actions. The absence of God allows them to watch, judge, and gain a comprehensive understanding of each other's freedoms and responsibilities (Zuraikat & Mashreqi, 2022). However, their dependent relationships and inability to satisfy each other's needs result in a lifelong cycle of suffering.

The play's themes revolve around the consuming view of others and the restriction it generates. The characters' constant observation of each other illustrates how the gaze of others can restrict one's freedom and limit their choices. The setting of the play, which resembles a hotel room, represents a piece of reality in which the characters are punished for their actions. Because hell here seems more of a state of mind than an actual place, the presence of hell does not necessarily imply that God is present. Humans are limited by the presence of free, conscious others who place limits on individuals in the borders of that imaginary room (Heim and Heim, 2015).

The quote "Hell is other people" from Jean-Paul Sartre's play *No Exit* has been widely analyzed to imply that humans are accountable for their own suffering without divine judgment (Sartre, 1955). According to this interpretation, personal hells are formed by the way individuals interact with others. The play's characters are confined together, which forces them to face their own and each other's faults, resulting in a feeling of hopelessness and failure. This concept of self-responsibility for anguish, independent of any higher authority, is a fundamental principle of existentialism.

In conclusion, Sartre's philosophy highlights the inherent burden of responsibility that comes with freedom, while Nietzsche's views on the death of God create a void that must be filled by the pursuit of rationality and individual choice. *No Exit* reflects these themes through the characters' confinement and constant observation of each other, illustrating the restrictive nature of the gaze of others and the consequences of actions.

The Isolation of Characters in "No Exit"

The concept of alienation, according to Jaggi, is defined as "a state where one cannot form a relationship with other people, things, social organizations and above all with oneself" (Mustafa, 2019). As stated by Mustafa, the individuals who experience alienation perceive the world as a nonsensical and

purposeless environment, where they experience discomfort and do not feel a sense of belonging. Additionally, these individuals feel powerless in the face of this world. Jean-Paul Sartre's play *No Exit* explores the concept of alienation and how it is a product of individual choices and actions. Sartre challenges traditional religious beliefs that humans have predetermined destinies controlled by divine forces (Zuraikat and Mashreqi, 2020), arguing that each character's fate in the play is a result of their own decisions.

In Sartre's *No Exit*, the characters find themselves trapped in a room free of mirrors, which causes them to face their faults and secrets while considering how others look at them. The absence of mirrors serves as a symbol of their alienation, and they depend on each other to reflect on their own identities.

Throughout the play, each character realizes that their destiny is a direct result of their own choices. Garcin, a central character, comes to understand that individuals are responsible for their actions and act based on their own free will. When Garcin questions the others, looking for an explanation for their situation, they initially reply with responses like Estelle's "I tell you I haven't a notion" (Sartre, 1955, p.24). As the characters remain isolated from the outside world, conflicts between them grow, and they become driven to prove their individuality, even if it requires causing pain on one another.

Inez, one of the characters, attempts to act as Estelle's reflective mirror, guiding her in her search for meaning when she describes her reflection as "something I had tamed... I'm going to smile, and my smile will sink down into your pupils, and heaven knows what it will become" (Sartre, 1955, p.21). Estelle, however, cannot truly be alienated because she needs Inez to reflect upon herself. While the characters can assess themselves from each other's mirrors, they cannot see their true reflections and can never truly be alienated as individuals.

The play's purpose is to force the characters to see themselves through the eyes of others and to challenge their sense of individuality. Each character is searching for an identity beyond sharing their experiences with others in the group and seeks alienation as a temporary solution for this problem. Inez desires to achieve the highest level of subjectivity possible, while Estelle tries to take control of Garcin.

Ultimately, Sartre's play highlights the importance of individual responsibility and the consequences of one's actions. It challenges traditional religious beliefs and emphasizes the power of individual choice. The characters' alienation is a result of their decisions, and they must confront themselves and their flaws to gain control over their fate.

Sartre's Notorious Line Explored

The play *No Exit* by Jean-Paul Sartre features an interesting line: "Hell is other people" (Sartre, 1955, p.45). This sentence has inspired a number of discussions and has established itself as a lasting concept in the field of existentialist philosophy. This section will investigate how *No Exit* digs into this concept and the insights it provides on human connections.

The play features three characters who are trapped in a room together and forced to face each other for eternity. Their interactions are filled with conflict, power struggles, and manipulation. Garcin, one of the characters, finds other people to be his personal hell because Inez refuses to confirm his identity and prefers to collaborate with Estelle. This experience shakes Garcin's faith in his beliefs, leading him to realize that his hell is other people. Through their conversations and actions, Sartre portrays the exhausting and unavoidable nature of human relationships, ultimately leading to isolation and depression.

A central concept explored in *No Exit* is the notion that interactions with others, rather than intrinsic characteristics, define individuals. Throughout the story, the characters mold each other's identities, resulting in a continuous state of self-redefinition. The famous line "Hell is other people" (Sartre, 1955, p.47) emphasizes the idea that each individual creates a living hell for the others. The concept being discussed here is that the self-image is not fixed or static, but instead dynamic and influenced by interactions with surroundings and other individuals.

In *No Exit*, Inez and Estelle's relationship seems to have strong sexual dynamics, related to their struggles for power and control over each other. This idea matches Abdulla and Hamafaraj (1955)'s view of eroticism in literature, where sexual content plays a significant role. In the play, Inez wants to dominate Estelle both physically and emotionally, while Estelle tries to maintain her own sense of identity. Garcin, who is also part of the story, makes things even more complicated. He has his own motives and desires that affect Inez and Estelle's relationship.

How does the statement "hell is other people" affect the ability to acknowledge responsibility for

actions and choices? (Sartre, 1955) Jean-Paul Sartre's play *No Exit* portrays characters who find themselves confined with each other, and must confront the consequences of their decisions and behaviors. This suggests that while connections with others shape individuals, there remains agency and the potential to control one's fate. Sartre personifies hell as a place without flames or torture devices to make the characters the main source of possible suffering for each other. Thody (1964) argues that "The idea of their spending eternity together is both quite unbearable and completely possible. This is exactly the effect Sartre wanted to give". Through this unbearable possibility, Sartre reveals his philosophical intentions.

In summary, *No Exit* offers a powerful portrayal of the human condition, exploring the ways in which relationships with others can both define and confine individuals. The phrase "Hell is other people" remains a key idea in existentialist philosophy and continues to resonate with audiences and scholars alike (Sartre, 1955). Upon scrutinizing Sartre's theatrical production comprehensively, acquiring a more profound comprehension of the intricacies involved in human connections is possible, and the difficulties associated with maneuvering through a society where individuals are perpetually intertwined with each other.

CONCLUSION

The analysis in this paper confirms that existentialist theory had an influence on Jean Paul Sartre's play *No Exit* since it shows how the concept of "others" is portrayed as hell. *No Exit* examines the complexities of interpersonal connections, the idea of alienation, as well as the central themes of self-importance and the human condition through the use of absurd theatre. The expression "hell is other people" is used throughout the play to show how powerful and unavoidable human relationships are, as well as how they have the ability to provide both joy and suffering.

This study achieves a clear understanding of the philosophical ideas presented in *No Exit* and their relevance to modern society by examining the sub-questions listed. It is known that Sartre's philosophy emphasizes the value of individual freedom and responsibility, along with the importance of discovering purpose in life. The drama highlights the importance of personal responsibility and choice while challenging traditional religious views that humans have preset destinies under the direction of divine forces.

The study has also emphasized the importance of Theatre of Absurd in the play and how it uses illogical and absurd surface appearances to give the audience a sense of confusion. The play presents broken communication between the characters, and language is no longer useful for conveying meaning. The play provides a strong picture of the human condition by examining the complexities of interpersonal relationships and the difficulties of surviving in a society where individuals are always, hopelessly connected to one another.

The play *No Exit* presents an interesting analysis of human existence and the influence of interactions with others. It causes individuals to reflect on the importance of personal responsibility, the pursuit of purpose in life, and the outcomes of decisions. By motivating individuals to face their own weaknesses, the play inspires them to take charge of their destiny and highlights the essential role of individual responsibility. Overall, *No Exit* evokes deep insight on the human condition and its complexities.

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