

SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY

**THE EXISTENTIALIST: PHILOSOPHER AND/OR ARTIST
A JUSTIFICATION OF LITERARY ART FORMS AS AN ALTERNATE
MEANS OF CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHIC EXPRESSION**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTERS OF PHILOSOPHY**

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

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SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY

Dissertation: The Existentialist: Philosopher and/or
Artist A Justification of Literary Art Forms as an
Alternate Means of Contemporary Philosophic Expression

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List of Abbreviations:

A&P	<i>Art and Philosophy: A Symposium</i>
BC	<i>Brief Chronicles</i>
B&N	<i>Being and Nothingness</i>
E&C	<i>Existentialism and Creativity</i>
E&H	<i>Existentialism and Humanism</i>
M&TA	<i>Meaning and Truth in the Arts</i>
PA	<i>Philosophy Looks at the Arts</i>
TA	<i>The Theatre of the Absurd</i>
WM	<i>World-Making: The Literary Truth-Claim and the Interpretation of Texts</i>

Abstract

The Existentialist: Philosopher and/or Artist A Justification of Literary Art Forms as an Alternate Means of Philosophic Expression

The crux of the thesis demonstrates two related points: first, that the existentialists are justified in using different means of expression; and consequently, that criticism directed at the existentialist's usage of different forms of expression is unfounded. It was noticed that the existentialist is frequently referred to as a neurotic, morbid novelist/artist. It was assumed that such criticism does not constitute a valid argument against the existential philosophies.

The first part of this thesis was organized to answer the following claim: if Existentialism, as a philosophy, is adequately different from what is normally perceived as traditional philosophy, then this difference supports the decision to use an alternate means of expression. This response focussed on the issues of content and purpose. If the content of the existential philosophies has concerns which are substantially different, then this also supports the crux of the thesis. Content was demonstrated by establishing the following: a working definition of existentialism; a first category of characteristics (the logical implications of what was deemed the main tenet: existence precedes essence); a second category of characteristics (how the individual addresses these

implications). The issue of purpose was handled in a similar fashion.

In the second part, the literary art forms were examined. The claim is: if art forms (such as the novel and the drama) can satisfy the requirements of traditional philosophy, and are also beneficial to the expression of the existential philosophies, then this also supports the crux of the thesis. For art forms to be an acceptable expression of philosophy, the following was demonstrated: the capacity for knowledge (truth from literature); a compatibility with the content and purpose of the existential philosophies; and also, any other beneficial qualities (such as practical concerns). These criteria had to be met without compromising what was acceptable for the particular art form being used. That is, if the nature of the art form was altered to incorporate the existential philosophies, then the union would not be successful. This section focussed on the novel and the drama, to determine which, if either or both, satisfies these criteria.

In the third part, a refutation of the chief concerns raised regarding the legitimacy of art forms as an alternate means of philosophic expression was presented. These concerns can be classified as the following: imagination (as distinct from cognitive & rational processes); metaphor (problems with ambiguity & obscurity); and also, the role of the artist in contrast with role of the philosopher (problems with stereotypical thinking).

If these concerns have been reasonably addressed, the these certain art forms have been justified as an alternate means of philosophic expression in regard to Existentialism, and consequently, the arguments against the existential philosophies which are directed at his choice of expression are invalid.

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Introduction

In this work, it will be determined to what extent, if at all, the existentialist is justified in employing various forms of the literary arts as an alternate means of expression. The existentialist mixes philosophy with art: this gives him the dubious position of an *artist philosopher*. The existentialist's combination is often employed as an argument to lower his position in the hierarchy of philosophic thought. If his philosophy is something which necessarily requires an alternate means of expression, then it seems that the existentialist was correct to do so. This would give the artist philosopher credence.

Due to the modern philosopher's emphasis on clarification, the existentialist's connection with the literary arts has been perceived as somewhat regressive. But, the existential philosophies have, from the beginning, closely associated themselves with the literary modes of expression; from short stories to novels, and more pointedly, for the focus of this work, with the dramatic performance of the theatre. He does this for a reason: he finds fault with the traditional forms employed by philosophers.

If the existentialist denounces the superiority of analytic methods, then to be consistent, he should choose and advocate a better vehicle of expression. This work proposes that this is what he has done with his decision to express his philosophy through the literary arts. In particular, the

theatre, seemingly, has given the existentialist his best vehicle of expression. The existentialist claims to dethrone the rationalist method as the sole means of philosophical thinking, and if this is his claim, then how can he rightly use this same analytic method to announce its inadequacies? Twentieth century philosophers have attempted to exclude the human element from logic, but the existentialist believes such an endeavor is a mistake. However, he expressed his reservations in an alternate means (e.g. a literary art form) which left the other philosophy scholars both frustrated and skeptical of the existentialist.

The existentialist's move away from traditional rational analysis to the use of the dramatic stage was, in the beginning, also poorly received by the dramatists. It seems that both disciplines, philosophy and drama, were in agreement: the existentialist's approach was misplaced. Philosophers do philosophy; dramatists do drama. If the existentialist is a philosopher, then let him do philosophy. His ideas do not belong on the stage. The proper format for the exegesis of the existentialist's philosophy was the traditional methods of rational analysis; any different method of exposition was simply not acceptable. Especially the theatre.

Why then, would the existentialist persist, as he did? His task would have been simpler if he had acquiesced and agreed to explicate his philosophic issues in some more acceptable form. Perhaps, if he had, his efforts would now

be regarded with serious attention, instead of being regarded with a dismissive attitude: "It's not logic, it's just existentialism." Although not the sole reason for this attitude, the existentialist's refusal to limit his writings to one of the more usual philosophic forms has greatly contributed to this denigration.

Despite this, the existentialist continued his deep association with the literary arts. What quality or qualities did or does the artistic medium possess that makes it so attractive to the existentialist? Presumably, the existentialist reviewed other exposition forms to express his philosophic concepts, yet he elected to use various literary forms, in lieu of, or as a supplement to, his technical expositions. From this, it is reasonable to conclude that he deemed the literary form advantageous. What then are the differences between the specific literary forms used by the existentialist and some of the more analytic methods of current philosophy? If these differences allow the literary arts to better serve the existentialist than philosophic modes of exposition, then the literary arts have been justified as a means for expressing philosophic concepts, at least as far as the existential philosophies are concerned.

This unorthodox use of the theatre (i.e. as a means of philosophic expression), as well as the then perceived radical ideas of existentialism, contributed initially to the poor reception of the first existential plays in the

twentieth century. The established *bourgeois* theatre (as Jean-Paul Sartre would say) had developed a misunderstanding regarding the nature of existentialism, and unfortunately, there was also an unwillingness to change the shape and form of the paradigm play. However, these factors, as potent as they might have been, did not stop the existentialist's invasion of the theatre and the effect has been substantial.

The existentialist's contribution is more than a mere chapter in the history of theatre; these philosophies have left an indelible mark on contemporary theatre. Not only did the existential philosophies spawn '*the Theatre of the Absurd*' movement, but they also established a new vocabulary, and a new set of theatrical terms and techniques for the stage. More noticeably, the existential element still thrives within the modern theatre, in content, form and attitude, as well as techniques. As far as the dramatists are concerned, the existentialist's decision to express and incorporate philosophy within a play, was good, albeit in the long run.

If the theatre can be demonstrated as a compatible and complimentary means for the expression of existentialism, then the existentialist must have made a correct decision. If this alternate means of expression does nothing other than enhance his philosophy, then to criticize him for doing so does not make sense. Twentieth century philosophy tends to emphasize the value of clarity; existentialist philosophy also seeks clarity, but a clarity which includes human

psychology and/or lived experience. The existentialist claims that it is a mistake to remove the human element from logic; after all, we can only understand in human terms, since we are, in fact, human. By experimenting with literary forms, the existentialist concluded that the dramatic performance was one of the best, if not the best vehicle for his purpose. He wished to demonstrate and examine the historicity and the self-constituting nature of man, and the characters within a dramatic performance provide concrete exemplifications. This work, then, proposes to show the existentialist's decision to employ the several thousand year old medium of theatre, which is often perceived as a living and dynamic expression of human culture that both encompasses and transcends ethical and character paradigms, was correctly adduced.

In Part One, the dominant characteristics and purposes of the existential philosophies which differentiate it from other philosophies will be discussed. As the existential philosophies have an exceptionally broad range, no one particular existential philosophy will be used, but rather, a generic form of existentialism will be established. However, Jean-Paul Sartre will be frequently used as a reference, since he is closely associated with the union of existentialism and theatre.

In Part Two, it will be determined if the literary artistic form can satisfy the requirements of existential philosophic expression. That is, if the literary artistic

form is both adequate and advantageous for the expression of the existential philosophies, then any criticism rooted in such an argument is unjustified. If the literary artistic form (drama, in this instance) can satisfy the basic standards of philosophy, then, again, the decision to use it is valid. In this part, extensive use of the work of Martin Esslin (emeritus Professor of Drama at Stanford University, California) will be used to present an accurate description of the theatre, and also, of the existentialist's influence on theatre.

In Part Three, the main arguments against accepting the literary artistic form as a legitimate means of expression for the philosopher will be refuted. That is, the major concerns will be singled out, explained, and then, a counter argument will be presented. Finally, if all of this can be done adequately, then it will be established that the pejorative labelling of the existentialist as an artist/philosopher is unwarranted.

Part 1: Existentialism

If the existentialist is justified in selecting one or more of the literary arts as his vehicle of expression (without hindering its philosophic significance), then the following claims must be justified: first, that the existential philosophies, in general, have a content which is better expressed by literary artistic forms rather than the direct philosophical analytic forms; second, that the general goals or purposes of the existential philosophies are better achieved with these artistic forms than with their philosophical analysis counterparts.

If either of these claims cannot be demonstrated, then the existentialist's employment of artistic forms as a vehicle for philosophic expression has not been justified. That is, if the existential philosophies can be adequately expressed in analytic forms, then the decision to employ artistic forms is unnecessary and unfounded. If, however, there are some aspects of the existential philosophies that render artistic forms more suitable than analytic forms, then the existentialist's decision has been warranted.

There are at least two aspects which could warrant such a decision. One aspect is the issue of general content (within the existential philosophies); that is, if the topics of the existential philosophies cannot be adequately expressed in the philosophical analytic forms, then it is logical to seek an alternate form. This alternate form must

also be shown to have the capacity for the adequate expression which was lacking in the traditional analytic forms. The other aspect concerns the overall goals and/or purposes of the existential philosophies; that is, if what the existentialists are trying to accomplish is more adequately satisfied within the more flexible boundaries of the artistic forms, then it seems that their decision has been warranted.

Before these arguments are developed, there are two points which need some clarification: first, a definition of the terms "artistic forms" and "analytic forms" is required and second, a brief note of the wide-spread usage of existential themes and/or concepts within society will be helpful (this will be especially useful to us later on).

Firstly, the term, "artistic forms", will be referring to the various types within the literary arts: novels, short stories, etc., or more pointedly, the focus of this thesis: drama/plays. The term, "philosophical analytic forms", or more simply, "analytic forms", will be referring to the various techniques of rational analysis: essays, texts, etc. Traditionally, philosophy has chosen the latter for its vehicle of expression, yet, existentialism has made extensive use of the former.

Secondly, existentialism has become part of everyday language. Existentialism is to philosophy what Freud was to psychology: a sudden explosion of radical thought, highly regarded, hotly disputed, then dismissed, and finally,

integrated into mainstream culture. Every imaginable topic has been examined from an existential angle; people have even been treated with existential psychoanalysis. Existentialism is in our novels, our comedies, our movie reviews, and it has also changed the direction of the theatre.¹ It is tempting to claim that no other philosophy has enjoyed such familiarity, and later it will be claimed that this familiarity is, indeed, part of the purpose of the existential philosophies.

A. The First Claim: Content

In this section, the content of the existential philosophies will be examined and then, some sort of common ground will be established. This will establish a *generalized* working definition. Once this task is accomplished, its expression in the artistic forms will be examined, and then jointly considered with the philosophical analytic forms, to determine if one form is preferable.

A class in existentialism will rarely attempt to define existentialism. But as Wittgenstein might have phrased it, each existential philosophy will have a *family resemblance* to another. This loose generalization will have to suffice. Sometimes, certain thinkers have been branded "existentialists" contrary to their own opinion.² If this has been done, then there must be some sort of method for classification. However, if this ordinary language usage of the term *existentialist* is acceptable, then this entails that existentialism covers a wide basis, as the variation between the branded thinkers is diverse.

All existential philosophies will not share precisely the same mixture of characteristics; the most notable difference is the contrast between theistic existentialism, such as the philosophy associated with Martin Buber, and the atheistic existentialism, notably identified with the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre. Again, another distinction has been drawn between *critical* existentialism which

emphasizes an anti-traditional and/or anti-rationalistic approach to philosophy (associated with the works of Soren Kierkegaard), and *social* existentialism which emphasizes a contact with being and otherness (associated with the theistic works of Martin Buber).³

Such a broad range of application for the term *existentialism* makes it challenging to establish a working definition (or rather, a set of classifying characteristics). Robert M. Martin (as extracted from *The Philosopher's Dictionary*) offers the following definition.

Existentialism - A school of philosophy developed largely in twentieth-century France and Germany, closely associated with SARTRE and HEIDEGGER. Although existentialists have had things to say about many areas of philosophy, they are best known for their views on FREEDOM 1. and RESPONSIBILITY. They tend to believe that we are totally free - that we are never caused to act by environment, heredity, or personality; and thus that we individually create all our decisions and values (the only source for ethical obligation) and are responsible for all our actions.⁴

This definition leaves much to be desired. There are two problematic areas: first, there is a factual problem (i.e. concerning some of the historical facts about the existential philosophies); second, the definition is somewhat lacking concerning the major tenets of the existential philosophies.

First, with regard to the facts, there is a problem concerning the origin of existentialism. Although the movement was not popularized until the twentieth century (with the works of Jean-Paul Sartre), it is generally regarded that existentialism began in the nineteenth century,

with the works of Soren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche. It may be claimed that these two thinkers are forerunners of the existential movement. If Martin wishes to disclaim their contribution, then an argument should be offered. Since this is a definition and not an argument, this is not required; however, it seems only just that Kierkegaard should be mentioned since he has been dubbed the *father of existentialism*.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, the definition ignores the focal point of the existential philosophies which is the human individual and his existence. That is, this philosophy explores the nature of the person himself. There is no reference made to this feature which is one of the crucial points within existentialism, and this same point also aids in distinguishing it from other philosophies. The definition does, however, capture what might be regarded as the popular ingredients of the existential movement: the concepts of freedom and responsibility. Mostly, then, this definition demonstrates the difficulty of establishing a definition.

If this term is examined from a purely logical perspective (i.e. semantically speaking), then existentialism is the *philosophy of existence*. That is, it is a philosophy which contemplates the issues and/or nature of being (the existent) and consequently, it is a branch of metaphysics. (When it was first introduced in North America, it was rather sarcastically referred to as *metaphysical*

pornography.⁵) The major tenet of existentialism may be expressed in these terms: *existence precedes essence*.⁶ This tenet will be used as the basis from which a set of common characteristics of existential philosophies will be derived, and also, consequently, in the second claim, a general purpose of existentialism can be extracted largely from these characteristics.

Assuming this tenet as an acceptable starting point, the common characteristics of the existential philosophies can now be separated into two main categories; the logical implications of the individual's existence and, second, the way in which the individual addresses or handles these logical implications. (The second category represents the interest of this thesis.)

In the first category, the existentialist is making his logical and metaphysical claims; that is, he is making assertions about the nature of being. One of the most frequently cited claims is: the individual defines himself.⁷ That is, he creates his own *essence* (or we may want to use the term "personality"). The argument is as follows. First, it presupposes a sort of *tabula rasa*; that is, human beings enter the world void of a preconceived personality. Second, human beings are self-determining. That is, they are in a continual state of *becoming*. With each situation individuals face, they make decisions (with awareness or otherwise) and thus, form an *essence*. At this point, it would be tempting to conclude that a human being is the sum of his acts. However,

it will be demonstrated that this is not the case. It may be claimed that the essence represents the sum of his acts, but not that the individual is the sum of his acts. (The reason why will be clarified in the examination of existential freedom.)

Consequently, this claim leads to the popularized ideals within existentialism as previously cited by Robert M. Martin (of *The Philosopher's Dictionary*): freedom and responsibility. That is, the individual comes into existence (via an *absurd* accident if you subscribe to atheistic existentialism; via god if you prefer the theistic kind) and then is free to create himself; how he develops from that moment onward is his responsibility. As Sartre frequently states, *men are condemned to be free*: "Condemned, because he did not create himself, yet he is nevertheless, at liberty, and from the moment that he is thrown into this world he is responsible for everything he does."⁸ If the first claim is acceptable (that persons create their own essence), then this entails the concepts of individual freedom and responsibility. First, consider freedom. Sartre states, "The technical and philosophical concept of freedom, the only one which we are considering here, means only the autonomy of choice."⁹ That is, freedom is not the ability to obtain one's wishes but rather, it is the ability to determine one's wishes. For example, I may wish to have a room in residence but this does not affect the reality of the situation; however, I can still wish this to be the case. Therefore, the

success or failure of an action is not a consideration within the concept of freedom, as explained by Sartre.

The point that Sartre is establishing is one of free will. That is, he is claiming that despite a traumatic childhood, the war, the depression, etc, when there is a situation of choice, the individual can always choose otherwise. Sartre poses these questions to clarify this point: "Shall I act by volition or by passion? Who can decide except me?"¹⁰ For example, a childhood trauma is not necessarily a causal explanation for an action: if Billy has been physically abused as a child, he is apt to use this as an excuse for his present abusive behavior. However, Sartre would argue that this is not a causal relation. That is, when the moment arrives and Billy must decide whether or not to beat his own children, he has the capacity to restrain his actions. Although deciding to do differently may be a difficult choice due to learned behavior and conditioning, nevertheless, Sartre claims it is possible: this possibility is all he needs to substantiate the notion of free will.

If human beings have unlimited free will, then Sartre is correct, and Billy cannot claim his traumatic experience as a causal agent for his present actions. That is, it is possible to imagine a man who was raised under similar circumstances, and yet as an adult he did not beat his children. Therefore, the connection, seemingly, is not necessarily causal. If, however, human beings are genetically unique (i.e. each human being is affected differently by

circumstances), then it may be possible that certain life situations can condition the human brain so that a certain behavior becomes inevitable. If this is the case, then the connection may be necessarily causal. If this is the case, then human beings do not possess *unlimited* free will.

However, the concept of a *limited* free will was not a logical possibility for someone like Sartre. According to Sartre, freedom is, by definition, free. If freedom has limits, then it is no longer free but restrained. Likewise, the concept of a free will, consistent with the concept of freedom, can also have no limits. Therefore, the concept of a *limited* free will seemed to be a logical contradiction. This seems to be a case of what we will call *deception by language*. That is, due to certain linguistic implications, the concept of a limited free will appears to be a contradiction; however, in actuality, it is not a logical impossibility. Sartre over-estimated the capabilities of the human will: that is, freedom is a concept which can have degrees. The same follows for free will. Moreover, the concept of a limited free will has many practical and understandable aspects within society.

It seems more likely that some human beings are somewhat shaped, and therefore controlled, by their experiences. That is, their cognitive capacity for choice becomes limited.¹¹ Sartre makes note of this as well,

Much more than he appears 'to make himself', man seems 'to be made', by climate and the earth, race and class, language, the history of the collectivity of which he a

part, heredity, the individual circumstances of his childhood, acquired habits, the great and small events of his life.¹²

Even though he acknowledges this human tendency, Sartre persists that it is a tendency, not a limiting condition on the human cognitive capacity. Therefore, the person, despite all these factors, can still choose otherwise.¹³

This unlimited capacity for freedom, according to the existentialist, entails responsibility. This concept of responsibility has two senses: first, for the self, and second, for others. In the first sense, the concept of responsibility is referring to the individual's freedom to act and choose; that is, he is solely responsible for all that he does. Ultimately, he is the agent who made the decision; he cannot in good faith place responsibility elsewhere. Therefore, it is his responsibility. This sense of existential responsibility is clear-cut, but the second sense seems problematic.

Within the second sense, there is an attempt to establish ethical obligations. Sartre claims that the actions of the individual necessarily affect others, and this somehow binds us into including them in contemplating our decisions. This is due to what Sartre perceives a conformity phenomenon. That is, there a tendency amongst human beings to imitate behavior, at least to a degree which justifies generalizations. For example, a person opting to study business (which upon immediate reflection may only seem to

affect the person making that decision) may influence others to follow suit. Therefore, Sartre claims the individual ought to act as an exemplar.¹⁴

In conclusion then, the first category of existential characteristics has two features, one direct, and the other, indirect: first, the existential characteristics stem from the tenet that existence precedes essence, and second, the existential philosophies revolve around the existence of the individual. This second point is of the utmost importance to us: it reveals to us a distinguishing mark of the existential philosophies as compared with the other philosophies. That is, no other philosophy concentrates solely on the individual.

Within the existential philosophies, the individual has become the object of study; it can be claimed that the existentialist metaphorically pushes the concept of the human being as far as it can go. That is, what exactly is the capacity of the human mind? How much can a person think before he becomes mad? What is the limit? This indirectly discussed aspect of the existential philosophies will become more apparent within the second category of characteristics and also, within the second claim, concerning the goals or purposes. In Part 2 of this paper, it will be argued that these are the qualities which make the existential philosophies a perfect candidate for the artistic form.

Meanwhile, the summary continues. It was claimed that the (directly mentioned) major components of the first

category of existential characteristics consist of freedom and responsibility; the former concept has some problematic areas which would also affect the role of responsibility. That is, if freedom has limits, then responsibility will also have limits. Nonetheless, this first category consists of the realization of what being is: a self-determining object as opposed to a pre-determined object. This realization will be entitled the *existential revelation*.

This introduces the second category of existential characteristics: how the individual handles the logical implications of his being. This resembles a practical examination, or an educated observation, of how the individual handles the first category or the *existential revelation*. According to the existentialist, the individual typically addresses this revelation in the following manner: with dread and/or anguish, and with avoidance.

Before these aspects are examined, the problem of negativity or pessimism will be addressed. That is, the existentialist is accused of being a "negative" thinker wallowing in a pit of despair. Such an accusation undermines the philosophy; the use of the word "negative", in this instance, is pejorative. Therefore, the evaluation of the philosophy of the is affected by such comments, which do not accurately describe the state of affairs as presented by the existentialists.

The problem is a misinterpretation of what the existentialist reports regarding this second category of

characteristics. That is, the existential revelation produces a stereotypical negative state of affair: persons filled with dread and anxiety and/or persons who live in a state of denial. The existentialist does not, however, claim that this should be the case or that it must continue to be the case.

In *Existentialism and Humanism*, Sartre claims that existentialism cannot properly be considered "negative" in this instance. In defense of existentialism, he provides the following argument. The existential philosophies claim that the individual possesses unlimited freedom. Basically, this means that the individual is *endowed* with the cognitive capacity to create his own meaning of life. The individual is in control of his own life, and all he must do is decide. If this is the case, then the existential philosophies serve as an empowering force for the individual; that is, he is the master of his own fate.¹⁵ Therefore, the existential philosophies are not negative *per se* (i.e. in and of themselves); rather, it is the individuals who, due to the previously mentioned affects, either refuse to accept or cannot handle the impact of the existential revelation.¹⁶

Consequently, most individuals lead lives which are *inauthentic*. First, the anguish and/or dread response to the existential revelation will be discussed. These terms may be considered separately or jointly; they refer to separate ideas, but together, they explain the overwhelming effect of the existential revelation. Sartre offers the following

definition of anguish:

Anguish is natural to man. It means this: the man who involves himself and who realizes that he is not only the person he chooses to be, but also a lawgiver who is, at the same time, making a choice for all mankind as well as for himself, cannot therefore escape the feeling of his deep and total responsibility.¹⁶

This definition gives an insight into the magnitude of the existential revelation; that is, as an individual fully realizes his responsibility for making decisions and/or the effects of these actions, trivial or significant, he enters a state of anguish. Sometimes, this state of anguish can be heightened to the point of a psychological disorder, and as such, a method of existential therapy was established to address these occurrences. Mitchell Bedford describes the problem in this way: "An existential neurosis may be classified as the individual's inability to see meaning in life as he abides in the inauthentic existential modality."¹⁷ Therefore, the existential revelation has the capacity to overwhelm an individual.

The second way of addressing with the existential revelation is with avoidance. This can result in two ways: first, if the existential revelation is too overwhelming for the individual, and second, if an individual already exists in a state of avoidance. In either scenario, the individual develops an attitude of *bad faith*; that is, the individual attempts to escape the responsibility of freedom via a method which places this onus elsewhere (e.g. religion often implies

that God has a plan for persons and therefore persons can claim certain things are beyond their control).

According to the existentialist, most individuals devise these methods of self-deception to compensate for the overwhelming responsibility of possessing freedom, or more pointedly, to make living possible. That is, if the existential revelation is accepted, then decision-making becomes a crucially important activity. Persons may become choice-constipated; that is, unable to make decisions. This results in an overall lack of actualization of personal potential. (This will be connected as part of the second claim: the goals or purposes of existentialism.) According to the existentialist, a person realizes his freedom, gains the insight of responsibility for this freedom, and then, inevitably shies away from it.

For example, let us consider Sartre's *The Flies*. In this play, two characters, Orestes and Electra, are confronted with the responsibility of freedom: they have willfully murdered their parents, and now, they must cope with their action. How do they respond? Orestes accepts the action as his own; he deliberated upon the situation, he made his decision and then he acted upon it. He is authentic whereas Electra cannot accept her decision which resulted in the murder of her parents. Instead of accepting her action, she opts to return to a state of denial; that is, she believes it was her fate to commit murder and therefore, it was not truly her decision, but the plan of the gods. Orestes

represents the existential ideal whereas Electra represents the norm. By presenting these themes in a dramatic mode, Sartre creates a situation that may be understood by any audience member who can relate to the emotions of either character.

At this point, the term, which seems to be an oxymoron, can be introduced: the *existential hero*. If existentialism is perceived as a negative school of thought, then this term will not make sense. That is, this term will signify a person who exemplifies despair and anguish and this conflicts with the idea of a hero. However, if the empowering force concept is accepted as the content of existentialism, then the term has meaning. That is, the term then refers to a person who has accepted his responsibility of freedom and has therefore, actualized his potential.

In conclusion then, the content of existentialism can be summarized as follows: an emphasis on the person and/or his development; an emphasis on the concepts of freedom and responsibility; and an examination of how persons do and should handle the previous two points. Now that the content has been established, is it better suited for the artistic form or the analytic form?

In Part 2, it will be claimed that the tenets of the existential philosophies can be more accurately expressed in the artistic form. That is, the existentialists stress the individual in situation: how will the individual act? What will he decide to do? What can he decide to do? To what can

he appeal as a source of knowledge? If there is no objective source of meaning to which the individual can refer, then he has only himself to answer these questions. This profoundly relates to the literary artistic forms, in particular, to the drama.

B. The Second Claim: Purpose

The second claim concerns the goals or purposes of the existential philosophies. That is, this is a matter of what the existentialists were hoping to accomplish with their philosophies. Roughly, this is the claim: the purpose of the existential philosophies is substantially different from traditional philosophies and this difference contributes to the overall decision to choose an alternate means of expression. The purpose of the existential philosophies must be shown to satisfy the following: first, that it is significantly different from traditional philosophies, and second, that this difference warrants the use of an alternate vehicle of expression.

As mentioned in the discussion of the first claim (regarding content), this issue can largely be derived from what we entitled the second category of characteristics. It could be stated that existentialism poses a revelation regarding the nature of human existence, then adds a commentary claiming most individuals are not psychologically capable of fully accepting such a revelation. From this, a conclusion can be drawn about what the existentialist aimed to accomplish with this information. That is, did he want to actively rectify the situation? What is the existentialist concerned with? Mitchell Bedford claims, "The existential concern is to drive man back to his more basic inner problems- what it means to be a self, how man ought to use

his freedom, how man can find and keep the courage to face death."¹⁸ Therefore, the purpose of existentialism is to enlighten the individual regarding his own being, and then, to aid him in achieving a greater sense of freedom and responsibility.

The purpose, then, of the existential philosophies can be divided into two aspects: first, to solve the issues surrounding the existential revelation, and second, to apply this solution *in concreto*. That is, the existential philosophies represent a form of applied philosophy; they do not merely pose a theoretical problem and solution, but rather, they pose a question and also a solution in practice. Moreover, understanding existentialism also largely comes from examining one's life as it is lived. The "*in concreto*" aspect of existentialism is a necessary part of communicating the philosophy.

This purpose differentiates the existential philosophies from other traditional philosophies. That is, other philosophies tend to remain in what may be deemed academia. Philosophy is intended for other philosophers or scholars as a form of theoretical knowledge; its range of application is somewhat limited.

Regarding the first aspect, the existential goal is for persons to discover their primordial and/or inner problems; what it means to be a self, and then, to properly use this knowledge to better themselves and their life conditions. If a person possesses the freedom of

responsibility, then he can use this to his benefit; he can manipulate his socio-environment as he sees fit. Therefore, persons have the ability to actively determine the infrastructure of human society. As Sartre claims, existentialism can be an empowering force.

With regard to the second aspect, Sartre notes the connection between practice and theory: "But if existence really does precede essence, man is responsible for what he is. Thus, existentialism's first move is to make every man aware of what he is and to make the full responsibility of his existence on him."¹⁹ (Later, this purpose will be connected with the selection of an alternate vehicle of expression.) The existentialist, then, is concerned with the conveyance of his message. Therefore, the onus placed on the existentialist differs from the one placed on other philosophers.

If he is to be consistent with his theory, then he must apply it. His vehicle of expression should be equipped to handle this decision. That is, the vehicle of expression must be one that appeals to a great range of persons. The existentialist must then ask himself: which vehicle of expression has the greatest audience?

C. Conclusion

Of these two categories - the logical implications of being, and the consequences of these logical implications - it is the latter which is presented in the literary arts. The latter category has practical value inasmuch as it speculates about possible motivation (or lack of) for human behavior. The first category claims that we are free while the second category asks, what will we do about this?

The distinction between these two categories is also significant: it serves as a determining agent with regard to the vehicle of expression. That is, if the existentialist is exploring an issue in the first category, then he is apt to employ an analytic form, whereas if he is exploring an issue within the second category, he is apt to employ an artistic form. The distinction can be viewed as one between practice and theory, whereby the first category represents *theory* and the second category represents *practice*.

Thus, the existentialist presents his case and then embarks on a process of actualization. To highlight this point, we can refer to Sartre: he believed philosophy was only useful if it resulted in practice. Therefore, he applied his philosophy. His original expectation for a person's capacity to accept responsibility was high; he had been convinced that most individuals could, in fact, attain a high degree of freedom, or *lead authentic lives*. It was only later in his writings that he decided his expectations had been too

high, and the number who attain and accept their freedom is small; he even postulated that the individual who does manage to break the chains of his inauthenticity only does so for a fleeting moment. It seems that authenticity requires continual maintenance and effort, it is not something to be taken for granted.

It can be argued that the duty of the existentialist is to elaborate upon these ideals and also, to increase and to better the degree of freedom and responsibility (of that freedom) attained by individuals. An economical way of achieving this is through the arts.

Notes:

1. Martin Esslin, *BC*. (Bristol, Great Britain: Western Printing Services Ltd., 1970): 221. Esslin claims that the Theatre of the Absurd (i.e. the dramatic counterpart of Existentialism) has been absorbed into mainstream theatre.

2. Jean Wahl, *A Short History of Existentialism*. (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1949): 1. Wahl himself denies that he is an, "Existentialist." On page 11, he notes that Martin Heidegger did the same. Again, on page 33, he notes Karl Jaspers, also, did not consider himself to be an existentialist. Also see Ronald Hayman, *Writing Against*. (London: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1986): 224. Sartre also denied any association with existentialism. And also, Gabriel Marcel rejected any association with the existential movement as cited in Mitchell Bedford, *E&C*. (New York: Philosophical Library, 1972): 7.

3. Mitchell Bedford, *E&C*. (New York: Philosophical Library Inc., 1972): 43. The distinction is made by Helmut Kuhn.

4. Robert M. Martin, *The Philosopher's Dictionary*. (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview press, 1991): 82.

5. The term, "metaphysical pornography", was first used by a critic of existentialism, Guido de Ruggiero in his text, *Existentialism: Disintegration of Man's Soul*. This is cited by Mitchell Bedford, op. cit. 40. De Ruggiero's text is not acknowledged by the Novanet system.

6. Jean-Paul Sartre, *E&H*. (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1990): 25-6. Sartre claims that this tenet, "existence precedes essence", can serve as a definition of existential philosophies.

7. This idea is predominantly claimed in the whole of the existential philosophies; a variation occurs between the atheists and the theists. The predominant theist idea: god has created everything and then abandoned his creation. Therefore, similar to the atheistic notion, persons are still "alone" in the scheme of things. This idea also affects the person's quest for actualization. See Paul Tillich, "The Courage to Be." *A Casebook on Existentialism*. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1966).

8. Jean-Paul Sartre, *E&H*. op. cit., 34.

9. Jean-Paul Sartre, *B&N*. (New York: Philosophical Library Inc., 1956): 483. 10. *ibid.* 444.

11. Thomas Gilovich, *How We Know What Isn't So: The Fallibility of Human Reason in Everyday Life*. (Toronto: Maxwell MacMillan Canada, 1991): *passim*. The author claims that the human cognitive capacity is limited. That is, the human ability to know and to understand is not as great as persons believe it is; moreover, persons are prone to overestimate their cognitive capabilities.

12. Jean-Paul Sartre, *B&N*. op. cit., 482.

13. C.R. Bukala, "Sartre's Dramatic Philosophical Quest" *Thought* (Spring 1973): 83. In his earlier works, Sartre had anticipated that persons could attain a high

degree of freedom, but later, he lessens these expectations. Also, Sartre reflects this change of opinion in *E&H*.

14. Jean-Paul Sartre, *E&H*. op. cit., 28-34.

15. *Ibid.* 18-27.

16. The definition is quoted from Ralph B. Winn, *A Concise Dictionary of Existentialism*. (New York: Philosophical Library Inc., 1960): 4. The definition is extracted from Sartre's essay, "Existentialism", which can be located in, *A Casebook on Existentialism*, op. cit.

17. Mitchell Bedford, *E&C*. op. cit., 59. The author also gives an account of existential therapy.

18. *Ibid.* 56.

19. Jean-Paul Sartre, "Existentialism", *A Casebook on Existentialism*. op. cit., 279.

Part 2: The Artistic Forms

Now that the general content and purpose of the existential philosophies have been established, it can be determined if this is compatible with one or more artistic forms. That is, can an artistic form accurately satisfy these aspects? If the use of an artistic form is acceptable as a means of philosophic expression (without altering its own nature), then the following arguments must be demonstrated: first, that the features of the particular artistic form are not only suitable for expressing existential features but also, are not neglected because of the union (i.e. of literature and existentialism); second, that the artistic form must have the capacity to properly articulate knowledge, and third, the artistic form must also satisfy the existential philosophies in some way that the expository philosophical analytic form cannot. Therefore, if the artistic form cannot be shown to have these capacities, then it cannot be considered a proper means of philosophic expression for the existential philosophies.

Consider the first argument: the issue of mutual compatibility. The union of a particular artistic form and existentialism must be compatible on both sides; that is, the union must not be an impediment to either form. If, in order for the artistic form to express existential features, it is necessary that certain features of its own are neglected, then the union has been not successful. If the union is not

successful and results in the neglect of certain features of the artistic form, then it will be argued that the artistic form is not appropriate for existentialists. For example, if the end product is a bad novel, then existentialism has not made proper use of that artistic form. Therefore, the standard for judging existentialism and the standard for judging artistic form must both be satisfied for the union to be deemed successful. This does not entail that the existentialists cannot, to any degree, modify the artistic form, but only that this modification must ultimately satisfy both sets of standards. (It is important to note that there are many styles of a particular genre [e.g. a novel can be naturalistic, romantic, etc.] but each type will still adhere to a general, basic standard.)

Consider the second argument: the capacity for knowledge. This is an important aspect within philosophy as an academic pursuit. That is, philosophy is concerned with the advancement and/or improvement of knowledge. If the artistic form can not properly articulate knowledge (of some kind), then it cannot be a useful means for the existential philosophies.

Consider the third argument: the capacity to give a better presentation, or to offer some feature that the analytic form cannot. If the artistic form does not enhance the presentation of the existential philosophies, then its usage is pointless. That is, if the artistic form can offer nothing but what the analytic form offers, then there is no

legitimate reason to change from one form to another, and, consequently, the existentialist would not be justified.

These three arguments will be examined in accordance with the form of drama. It will be argued that the drama is one of the better forms for the existentialist, and, as a point of demonstration, this will be compared to another frequently used form, the novel.

A. Novel and/or Drama

The supreme forbearance of the Catholic may irritate us, because it is an acquired thing. If he is a novelist, it is a great advantage.¹

Jean-Paul Sartre, *Lit. and Phil. Essays*

The claim is that the drama is a better means of expression for the existentialist than is the novel. It should be noted that this does not mean that the novel is inadequate for the existentialist, only that for a variety of reasons, the drama is better suited to the existentialist. This argument will be presented within the context of compatibility: it will be argued that the nature of the drama, as opposed to the nature of the novel, gives the drama an edge that the novel simply cannot duplicate.

To support our argument, then, the novel, as a artistic form, must demonstrate the following two aspects: first, that its general features are mutually compatible with those of the existentialist; and second, that this compatibility is of a lesser degree when compared to the form of the drama.

To determine if this is the case, a working definition of the term *novel* and/or a general standard for its judgment must be established. In order to determine the degree of compatibility that each form has with the existential features, what defines that form must be clearly known. This will also aid in determining if either of these forms is sacrificing its standard to accommodate the

existential features.

First, what is a novel? The *Funk & Wagnalls Standard Desk Dictionary* offers the following definition: "A fictional prose narrative of considerable length, usu. having an overall pattern or plot."² Although this definition may serve to identify a novel *in general*, it is not satisfactory for our purposes; first, it is too vague; and second, it lacks any details which may provide a standard for judgment.

According to John Hospers, literature is the least aesthetic of the creative art forms. He bases this on four factors: first, it has less potential for structural complexities; second, these potentialities are limited; third, it has no auditory or visual sensualities; and fourth, despite these poverties, it must attempt to present them or it will be deemed as lacking.³ At this point, the general definition can be combined with the specifics provided by Hospers. In layman's terms then, the novel has four, albeit malleable, characteristics: setting, character, plot and theme, all of which take place *in print*. For example, the *smell of roses* may be referred to in print, but the sensation is not actually present, whereas, in contrast, it could be present in a dramatic production.

In regard to the first argument, is the novel compatible with the existential features? That is, to what extent can the definition of a novel incorporate the existential features: first, the logical implications of the "*existence precedes essence*" tenet, and second, how the

individual addresses these implications, or what was loosely termed the *existential revelation*. The novel can incorporate these features only inasmuch as the printed word will allow; however, the drama can offer a physical illustration. The drama is not necessarily dependent on language to convey its purpose (it has a variety of means for communicating ideas) whereas the novel remains solely dependent on language. As the existentialists find fault with language, the novel's dependence on it may be an impediment to some of the existential philosophies, or at least, some of their arguments.

In regard to the second argument, how does this compare to the drama? The drama has a greater range of abilities concerning all of its characteristics. That is, the drama has the same qualities that the novel has, but it also has an additional quality: it is three-dimensional, it has spatio-temporal qualities. The novel must present itself in written word alone, whereas the drama has physical activity. In the drama, the audience member is left to interpret the stage activity by himself (sans written direction), whereas in a novel, this type of interpretation is greatly decreased; the words describe the intended interpretation. In drama, as in existentialism, the onus is on the individual. This additive quality is best illustrated in the argument of compatibility.

B. Compatibility

The artist makes art not to save humankind but to save himself.

Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae*

In this section, it will be demonstrated that the drama, as a form, has these two characteristics: first, that its general features are mutually compatible with those of the existentialist's; second, that the degree of compatibility is greater than that of the novel. To do this, a general definition of drama must first be established.

Unlike other art forms, drama synthesizes several artistic styles enabling it to affect all human senses simultaneously. Whereas literature is said to be the *least aesthetic* of art forms, drama is considered the *most aesthetic*.⁴ Although this diversity impedes the search for an adequate definition, ultimately it will prove to be advantageous for the existentialist. (The diverse nature of this form implies that the incorporation of a new idea may be easier.) Because drama is so diversely encompassing, listing specific, defining features is difficult; seemingly, there will always be one type of drama that will remain anomalous.

Therefore, in determining an adequate definition and/or general standard for drama, two clarifying points will be made: first, the focus will be on the classical drama and/or its mainstream counterpart (this type of drama represents the *bourgeois* drama [that Sartre despised] that the existentialist eventually challenged); and second, a simpler

definition, or perhaps, the *skeleton* of drama, will be posited.

It should be noted that the word *mainstream* is being used to refer to popular and/or commercial drama (from a practical perspective: the shows that will generate profit). Vera Gottlieb notes how the theatre is in a desperate situation regarding financial concerns; that is, money often figures prominently (more than, perhaps it should) in determining which shows are produced.⁵ However, the mainstream drama does not represent any specific genre rather, it only refers to the *formulaic* manner of production (e.g. a director may add a certain level of song and dance to create additional appeal, he may add a political flavor, or he may alter an ending/resolution to make it more presentable to his particular audience). For example, *Cats*, *Death of a Salesman*, or any Gilbert and Sullivan production: mainstream drama is largely the manner of production, and as the list of examples reveal, there is a fairly wide range of genre (*Cats* is a musical/dance largely drawn from the works of T.S. Eliot, *Death of a Salesman* is an Arthur Miller play, while the works of Gilbert and Sullivan are usually spectacles). These plays are usually performed with lavish sets and costumes with special effects to awe and amaze the audience. This kind of dramatic presentation is also what Sartre labelled: *bourgeois*.

If this distinction between mainstream drama and existential drama is acceptable, then another problem raised

by the existentialist's decision to employ an alternate form of expression can be noted. The existentialist was perceived as damaging the norm of drama: first, the existentialist content was not immediately acceptable; and second, the style that permeated existential drama was also not immediately acceptable. Existential drama was, after all, highly experimental. However, both of these concerns will be dismissed on the basis of the following: firstly, they are pragmatic (and therefore, not affecting our philosophic pursuit), and secondly, they reflect a spontaneous judgment (which was ultimately shown to be erroneous).

Firstly then, the classical drama will be examined; its origin can be directly traced to the Ancient Greek culture, in particular, to the writings of Aristotle. He identified six features which he claimed were necessarily part of a good drama: *lexis* (language), *opsis* (spectacle), *melos* (music), *mythos* (plot), *ethe* (character), and *dianoia* (thought and/or intellect).⁶ Although these six features are still part of the drama today, they are not necessarily portrayed in the same manner as Aristotle recommended.

According to Aristotle, the *good* drama will possess a sense of unity in each of these features. Since he placed a great emphasis on plot (he refers to it as the "*soul*" of the drama), we will select this feature as a representative of Aristotle's unity. He claims,

Now, a whole is that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end. A beginning is that which does not necessarily follow something else, but after which

something else naturally is or follows. An end is the opposite; it naturally follows something else, either necessarily or for the most part, and has nothing after it. A middle both follows something else and has something else following it. Well-composed plots, therefore should not start or end just anywhere, but should exhibit the features just mentioned.⁷

With this in mind, Aristotle allowed for a drama that was based on a person's life to have omissions; that is, he did not object to an aspect of a person's life being omitted if it could not fit coherently into the plot. This unified plot has two important consequences: first, the conflict within the drama must be adequately resolved by its end; and second, the artist is now charged with presenting the ethically correct life.

Firstly, the conflict which is presented must have an adequate resolution. Each aspect of the Aristotelian play was to be unified; each had to ultimately reflect a sense of order or purpose. For example, at the "end" of his plot, Aristotle recommended a *catharsis* or purging; that is, an edifying removal of the trauma, or in a more spiritual sense, a cleansing of the soul. This type of ending and plot then served as an ethical agent: by the play's end, the problem was solved and goodness was restored. First, the artist is responsible to display what *could be* the case, as opposed to what is the case. Therefore, the artist is presenting the type of life that persons should strive to attain: one of order and resolution.⁸ Also, from a practical perspective, the catharsis served as an outlet for emotional release which helped maintain a sense of temperance, a virtue highly valued

by Aristotle.

Aristotle even furthered his demands on the drama by giving it an ethical duty; the play has certain structural requirements which present life as it should be: filled with resolution. (According to Aristotle, the artist is presenting how life *ought* to be.) However, the mainstream counterpart has somewhat modified these features. Like the classical drama, it exhibits an organized manner of life and living. From its framework to its very content, it displays an orderly system aimed at helping the audience achieve an understanding. It was claimed that the proper purpose of a drama was the ability to leave the audience with a pleasant feeling, a full understanding and a deeper appreciation.⁹

The content of the drama must follow a gradual climb in plot which eventually culminates in a climax and is then resolved in a conclusion or denouement. Likewise, the framework also represents order. That is, each element mentioned in the *content*, has a recommended positional place within the overall framework. The emphasis is on a structure which offers and maintains *understanding*: it (the play) must be understood.

To exemplify this emphasis, the use of *language* within the mainstream drama will be examined. The dramatic script is unique: it has a two-fold nature, primary and secondary text.¹⁰ Primary text refers to the dialogue or that part of the drama that the audience will hear. Secondary text refers to that part of the script that the audience will not

hear, such as stage directions (e.g. *Exit stage left*). If a person is reading a drama, he will be reading both levels of text, and often the effect is lost. A drama is meant to be performed, not read. Martin Esslin claims, "Theatre is more than mere language. Language alone can be read, but true theatre can become manifest only in performance."¹¹ A drama refers to the thing done.

Mainstream theatre emphasizes primary text, and also this primary text must provide any necessary details that will aid the audience in its overall understanding of the drama.

Often, within mainstream drama, the secondary text may be ignored or modified. For example, if the author includes a description of the set, then the director may or may not follow these instructions. Language, as used within mainstream theatre, must accomplish the following: it must furtively reveal exposition (without stilting the dialogue); it must provide information regarding the accumulating plot; and lastly, this must be accomplished intelligibly and coherently placed within the structure of the drama. Therefore, language is a tool for communicating the story effectively.

Since all of these qualifications place many limitations upon the drama, the author must now present only those ideas and situations that he can skillfully reveal within this framework, and also, that can be adequately resolved by the drama's end. If art mirrors reality, then

reality, according to this method of drama, is organized and can be understood.

Following from this, the existential features are not compatible. That is, the existentialist does not support the idea that reality can necessarily be understood. Since the existentialist claims that existence precedes essence, then he cannot place persons in a situation that will resolve itself by the drama's end, if he wants to remain logically consistent. That is, for the existentialist, the individual creates his own essence and establishes his own meaning in life. Therefore, to comply with such an organized perspective of reality, the existentialist would be contradicting his own movement.

Seemingly then, the existentialist features are not mutually compatible with the general features of the drama. However, as claimed earlier, this is largely a superficial incompatibility; that is, the difference lies with the interpretation of a drama. As we noted earlier, there is a skeleton of drama necessarily underlying all drama, and this can be fleshed out in a variety of acceptable ways. We will now demonstrate two things: first, that the existentialist features comply with this skeleton; and, second, that the existentialist's features comply with an important aspect of Aristotle's explication (language and plot).

In his explications regarding the structure and form of the drama, Martin Esslin claims that a definition for

the modern drama is not normative in any strict sense, but has fluid boundaries.¹² This is reflected in its application: as a term, "drama" is employed to describe street mimes, stage productions, and professional ballets. Basically, the modern drama will satisfy the following criteria: first, action and/or movement; second, an audience; third, spatial and time dimensions; and fourth, a written text (this is considered optional).¹³

If the existential drama satisfies these criteria, then the union is mutually compatible. The existentialist drama has movement and/or action; that is, there are characters presented who do move. Hopefully, there will be an audience, at least, it has the capability of having an audience. Since it is live theatre, it does possess spatial and temporal qualities. Lastly, it has a written script (which also complies with the optional factor).

First, the use of language within the existentialist drama will be examined (offered as a comparison with the use of language within mainstream drama), and consequently, this will introduce us to the issue of compatibility with Aristotle's explication of the essential features of the drama. Language will be employed as an example to indicate the differences and then, ultimately, these differences will be revealed as superficial.

It should be noted that a distinction was made originally between existential drama and the Theatre of the Absurd. Although these two are now considered to be within

the same category, originally, there had been a distinction. As a starting point, the difference is a simple clarification: *Existential* plays were written by philosophers whereas the *Absurd* plays were written by playwrights. However, the distinction did have a basis: initially, the existentialists followed the examples set by the mainstream theatre, and second, the absurdists did not.

Martin Esslin claims that, "In some senses the theatre of Sartre and Camus is less adequate as an expression of the *philosophy* of Sartre and Camus - in an artistic, as distinct from philosophic, terms - than the Theatre of the Absurd."¹⁴ That is, the structure of the existentialist plays was too well-organized to give an accurate portrayal of the "*existential*" human condition. For example, consider a comparison of bare plots. First, we will present Sartre's play, "*Dirty Hands*": the play is about war; the plot focuses around the character Hugo who has been contracted to assassinate the leader of an opposing party.¹⁵ Now, consider Eugene Ionesco's play, "*Rhinoceros*": a township of people are transforming into rhinoceroses, until the main character, Berenger is left alone.¹⁶ Esslin is claiming that the existentialists portray characters, themes, and even plots that are too coherently laid out and intricate to signify the actual absurdity (i.e. lack of meaning) that these philosophers are claiming.

To continue then, the analysis will now be expanded, through examples of language usage in the contemporary

theatre scene. If a drama is intended for performance, rather than for a reading, a script may be an afterthought. Consider Canadian playwright, Daniel McIvor. In his play *House* (a man in group therapy), he explored the emotional development of a middle-aged man accepting his past mistakes and now, the present condition of his life. With regard to writing the actual play, McIvor states,

When *House* won a Chalmers Canadian Play award earlier this year I was surprised because *House*, I felt, was a performance, the only 'script' for the piece was a transcript I had taken from the last performance; it did not exist for me on paper at that time.¹⁷

Despite the fact that the script was secondary, the drama was still able to communicate its meaning. Primary text is not necessarily used as an expositional device for the existential drama.

Language, within the existential drama, is a tool unto itself. That is, the emphasis is on *how* language is used, as opposed to what is said. To demonstrate with an extreme example, Samuel Beckett's play, "*Act Without Words I*" has no language.¹⁸ This simply could not be done in mainstream drama: it requires language as a means to communicate its story. Therefore, for this type of drama, language does not possess the onus of communication that it does in mainstream drama.

With regard to the second point, although the existential features are not compatible with the mainstream drama, they are, however, compatible with an important

feature of Aristotle's explication. Consider the following passage from Aristotle's *Poetics*:

It must be things as they actually were or are, things as people say and think that they are, or things as they ought to be. These things are all expressed either by familiar diction or with the addition of metaphors; there are many modifications of ordinary diction that we allow to the poets.¹⁹

Firstly, then, Aristotle acknowledges that the artist may transgress from the standard use of language to achieve his purpose. To further reiterate the liberty an artist may take to achieve his means, Aristotle also claims,

If what has been written is impossible, then an error has been committed. But it is all right if the art achieves its own end (we have already seen what the end is) and if in this way that part itself is made more striking.²⁰

This is compatible with the existentialist's features; that is, the existentialist has in mind a "goal" and is employing unusual yet appropriate means to achieve it. Therefore, it seems that Aristotle's passage would have to grant that the existentialist is at liberty to experiment with language in order to "achieve his end".

C. Capacity for Knowledge

A good story is like a bitter pill with the sugar coating inside of it.

O'Henry

Now then, it is time for the second argument. If one or more of the artistic forms is acceptable for philosophic purposes, then it must have the capacity to properly present knowledge. That is, we are presuming that philosophy is a knowledge-based discipline. Therefore, the artistic form must be a proper vehicle reflecting this interest.

Mario J. Valdes claims that truth-claims are possible within literary artistic forms due to the following factors: first, an appeal to external references; second, a resemblance to life-likeness; third, the possibility of historical understanding; fourth, textual authority or the author's background; and fifth, the possibility of shared experiences.²¹ Valdes claims that these factors substantiate the truth-claims within literary artistic forms as legitimate; that is, they can be verified, falsified, or considered inconclusive if there is not enough evidence to reach a conclusion.

The first two factors, he claims, are verifiable in a sort of "empirical" sense. He states,

A textual statement with empirical referents becomes an empirical truth-claim when it is part of a purported empirical relationship inside the text and this relationship is accepted by the reader as not being in conflict with any of his or her unyielding precepts of reality.²²

That is, the referents within the confines of the text must behave in a similar manner to their real counterparts, and this behavior must be constant throughout the text. For example, the characters must obey the law of gravity just as their real counterparts do. The second factor can be "tested" in a similar manner; that is, the behavior of characters and their situations must be recognizable. This claim also refers to semantic coherence. That is, the language used within the text must be used according to regular standards. His claim is: if language is not being employed according to standard usage, then it cannot be readily understood. Consequently, Valdes claims the text must obey the regular standards of language. (As a side note, he claims this does not affect the use of metaphors as they are also a part of standard language use.)

The other three factors do not have an immediate sense of verifiability in the sense that the first two claims do. The textual authority claim is somewhat related to these claims; that is, it refers to the author's ability to create a sense of reliability within the text: the author must avoid discrepancies. For example, if an author states that a character has acute arthritis in his hands in chapter two, but in chapter eight, this character is a professional pianist, then his reliability factor is diminished. That is, he has failed to provide an accurate description within the context of the piece of fiction.

An historical understanding reveals an insight to a

particular era; this can refer to the perspectives of the author himself (if the author is from another era), the narrative voice or story (if there is a reconstruction of past events) or if the piece is a documentary. Overall, this claim is: a literary piece reflects the feeling and attitude of the era in which it was written. This is viewed as a fact regardless of whether or not it was the artist's intention, or its rating by any standard. For example, some critics claim that Henrik Ibsen was not an intentional feminist; they contend that these are modern interpretations, and not a reflection of his own beliefs, yet a number of his plays, such as *Hedda Gabler* and *A Doll's House*, advocate themes of feminism or rather, the need for feminism.

Ultimately, Valdes describes a truth-claim as an agreement. He claims, ". . . a relationship between the text and the reader. . . The truth-claim exists when the reader is confronted with a statement that he or she is asked to accept in order to go on reading."²³ Therefore, the reader is an active participant in determining the truth-claims; that is, he is called upon to make a judgment.

Therefore, it has been established that the artistic form has the capacity to properly present knowledge; it conveys a conceptual form of knowledge. It can provide insights and ideas. It may have been noticed that some of the claims are not immediately applicable to existential fiction. That is, Valdes more accurately describes fiction of the realism genre; that is, he is subscribing to the idea of

representational art: fiction must accurately depict reality. Seemingly, this does not readily apply to a number of existential pieces. However, this is a groundwork: it has been shown that fiction has the capacity to yield knowledge.

Now then, how does this relate to existential fiction? The claims that seem contradictory with existential fiction will be refuted. Chiefly then, these claims are the representational requirement and also the requirement for semantic coherence. Both of these claims can be refuted with the same argument: existential fiction *does* satisfy these requirements, and two examples will be employed to illustrate this point.

To demonstrate the problem with representationalism, Eugene Ionesco's play, *"How to Get Rid of It."*²⁴ will be used. Firstly, this play appears to contradict these claims; seemingly, it has little connection to everyday reality as we know it. For example, this is the bare plot: for years, a middle-aged couple have existed entirely in their apartment (she is some sort of telemarketer while he is "allegedly" writing a play), and inside their bedroom, there is a growing corpse. As the drama progresses, the corpse grows until finally it bursts forth into the living room with the couple. However, this contradicts our sense of empirical laws: corpses do not grow.

It seems that this particular play does not satisfy the representation requirement. However, the representation requirement demands the following: that the artistic creation

resemble some aspect of reality. This connection between art and reality may be interpreted as *symbolic*: the word "*resemble*" does not demand a literal connection: for example, the metaphor has been given status as an acceptable part of language. (A metaphor can be described as a variation of standard word usage to convey sort of connection between two ideas. This will be discussed in greater detail in Part 3.) If metaphors are acceptable, then there is no longer any contradiction: in "*How To Get Rid Of It*", the connection between art (the growing corpse) and reality (no empirical counterpart) is metaphorical. Therefore, the seemingly unrealistic aspect of the existential fiction is symbolic of an aspect of life, as opposed to graphically imitating that aspect.

Secondly, Valdes claims that language must be used according to the standards of regular usage. This does not seem to be the case with many pieces of existential fiction. The work of two popularized existential playwrights (which indicate that this is not the case for two separate reasons) will be examined. First, consider the use of language within Samuel Beckett's play "*Waiting for Godot*" (Lucky's speech):

LUCKY: Given the existence as uttered forth in the public works of Puncher and Wattmann of a personal God quaquaquagua with white beard quaquaquagua outside time without extension who from the heights of divine apathia divine athambia divine aphasia loves us dearly with some exceptions for reasons unknown but time will tell and suffers like the divine Miranda with those who for reasons unknown but time will tell are plunged in fire whose fire flames if that continues and who can doubt it will fire the firmament that is to say blast hell to

heaven so blue still and calm with a calm which even though intermittent is better than nothing but not so fast considering what is more that as a result of the labors left unfinished crowned by the Acacacademy of. . .²⁵

From this passage, it should be evident that normal syntax and a standard lexicon is not used. That is, the rules of grammar are not followed (i.e. there is no punctuation): much of a word's meaning is derived from its context. However, this is one of the points that the existentialists are highlighting: the use of language is not as infallible as we suspect. By *misusing* language, they are using it metaphorically to signify its inadequacies: their misuse of language is a deliberate and stylized method used to illustrate a point. Therefore, the existential plays are not truly in contradiction with this requirement.

Related to this explanation is the claim that this nonsensical use of language actually depicts reality. It is claimed that in the ordinary world, the average conversation is bizarre. Harold Pinter's plays have been referred to as a "*tape recording*" of conversation.²⁶ Consider his play, "*The Caretaker*":

DAVIES: Who was that feller?
 ASTON : He's my brother.
 DAVIES: Is he? He's a bit of a joker, en'he?
 ASTON : Uh.
 DAVIES: Yes. . . he's a real joker.
 ASTON : He's got a sense of humour.
 DAVIES: Yes, I noticed.
 [Pause.]
 He's a real joker, that lad, you can see that.
 [Pause.]
 ASTON : Yes, he tends. . . he tends to see the funny side of things.
 DAVIES: Well, he's got a sense of humour, en'he?

ASTON : Yes.

DAVIES: Yes, you could tell that.?'

Pinter demonstrates that persons not only misuse language, but they also use it in a trivial manner: conversations do not necessarily progress in the neat orderly manner as depicted by the *mainstream drama* (as we labelled it earlier). That is, conversations are often aimless. Therefore, it is claimed that some of these dramas may depict a more accurate use of language. That is, real people do not conform to the standard usage of language. From one perspective, the existential dramatists employ language in such a manner so as to alert us to the inadequacies of language, and also, they may use language as it used in the everyday world and consequently, reveal the *actual* inadequacies and shatter our illusion of proper language usage.

Therefore, the existential fiction has the capacity to present knowledge and knowledge claims. Any claim that it does not present an accurate picture of reality is a misunderstanding of the material. It may be the case that a person does not agree with the perspective being presented by the existentialists but this does not entail that their work is not valid.

D. Other Considerations

Like great works, deep feelings always mean more than they are conscious of saying.²⁶

Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*

In this section it will be determined if there any other features of drama which render it a *beneficial* means of expression for existentialists. It has already been noted that drama is an *adequate* means of expression for the existentialist: there is a mutual compatibility, and the dramatic form (as a play/fiction) also has the capacity to present knowledge. But, is there another quality which makes it a preferable choice? That is, if the decision to employ drama as a means of expression is justifiable, then it must not only be adequate, it must also be preferable. If it is not preferable, why decide to use it in the first place? That is, if the analytic form has everything there is to offer, then there is no reason to seek an alternate form.

It will be claimed that there are some additional features of drama that deem it a preferable means of expression for the existentialist. These features can be categorized as follows: practical, philosophical, and personal.

From a practical perspective, the history surrounding the theatre has contributed to its present status. If this present status of the theatre affects how drama is perceived, then this will factor into the existentialist's decision to employ drama.

Firstly then, the history of drama is extensive. Where there has been humanity, there has been theatre or rather, drama, or so sociologists claim. The widely accepted claim is that theatre has its origin in religious rituals. These early dramatic performances would not be similar to the ones we experience today; frequently, there was not even an area designated as a stage, but it is important to recognize the history of drama: it has been an integral part of human culture from the beginning, whether it has been employed to express and/or explain ideas (as the Morality plays of the medieval era) or used for the sole (controversial) purpose of aesthetic gratification.²⁹ Therefore, the theatre is a significant part of culture.

Practical considerations are relevant since it has been claimed that existentialism is an applied philosophy. If it is the task of the existentialist to somehow assist persons in discovering and/or maintaining their awareness, then the existentialist must access a method which has this capability. Sartre claims, "If a play is a success, the author reaches a wider public, for the time being at least."³⁰ It is also in this category that Sartre notes a difference which renders the drama superior to the novel; he claims,

A book gains its public gradually. A work in the theatre has necessarily to be "theatrical", because the author knows that he will be applauded or hissed at once. A book can speak in a murmur, drama has to shout, like an assault on the public.³¹

From a practical perspective, the drama has a greater capacity to gain immediate attention than the novel. It should be noted though, that this same difference also grants a certain *lasting* quality to a well-written novel. However, if impact is the immediate goal, then the theatre is the route to take.

As an aside, it is interesting to note that Sartre was eager to work as a screenwriter and use film as a medium (which he eventually did). However, he noticed that film, as a medium, can direct the individual audience member more forcefully than the stage. That is, there is a direct focus in the film (which naturally accompanies a camera) whereas the stage still gives the individual audience member a degree of freedom to scan the whole set at random. Stage also has a live presence which activates problems with "the gaze"; this, according to Sartre, added to the overall "meaning" or the capacity to communicate of drama as a medium. Despite these considerations, Sartre still expressed a strong desire to use film in lieu of theatre.

From a philosophical perspective, the drama serves two functions: first, it is a physical illustration of an philosophical idea; and more importantly, this physical illustration is necessary to the existentialist ideas. "The problem of existence can have no significance if viewed impartially or in abstraction; it can only be seen in terms of the impact that experiences make on a particular existent."³ This is due to two reasons: the *existential*

revelation has a highly personal (and/or subjective) nature, and also, the existentialists emphasize the act of being. That is, the existential revelation is not something which can necessarily be expressed in words. Therefore, a physical illustration is not merely desirable, but also a necessary means of indicating the phenomena.

Also, the personal perspective has been included in this argument. This may be interpreted as irrelevant, but if the existentialist is true to his philosophy then, it is relevant. That is, the existentialist makes his own choices and there is a notion that he must be true to his self. From a personal perspective, theatre is exciting, for the existential dramatist or any other for that matter. For example, Sartre states, "This may be what attracts me about the theatre: the assault and the heightened tone and the risk of losing everything in a single night. It forces me to speak in another way; it makes a change."³³ With this statement, Sartre is referring to the limited run a show is given to prove itself worthy of a production; it either succeeds or it is dropped: guaranteed to get the adrenaline flowing.

E. Conclusion

In conclusion then, the decision to employ an alternate means of expression is warranted. Moreover, the decision to employ drama has shown itself to be mutually beneficial. That is, the drama is better equipped than other forms to satisfy the needs of the existentialists: their philosophical points are well observed. Also, their contribution to the theatre has resulted in more "theatrical" techniques: the stress on meaninglessness (or arbitrary meaning) has led to heightened and more ingenious uses of the technical side.

Notes

1. Jean-Paul Sartre, "Francios Mauriac and Freedom." *Literary and Philosophical Essays*. (New York: Rider and Company, 1955) 8. Sartre, himself, was "nominally" a Catholic. See the biographical/autobiographical texts on Sartre as cited in the selected bibliography.
2. N. P., *Funk and Wagnalls Standard Desk Dictionary*. (USA: Harper & Row Publishers Inc., 1984) 448.
3. John Hospers, *N&TA*. (USA: The University of North Carolina press, 1946) 117-9.
4. The terms, "least aesthetic" and "most aesthetic", are commonly used in writings related to Aesthetics to indicate the number of *mediums* present within an art form. As indicated in the example, the drama can encompass several mediums (e.g. language, action, dance, visuals, music, odor, etc), while a piece of literature, has fewer mediums at its disposal. The terms are not necessarily intended for grade evaluations, as that would propmote the idea that more is better.
5. Vera Gottlieb, "Theatre in Crisis." *Modern Drama* 33 (March 1990): 57-8. Also see, Martin Esslin, *Field of Drama* (New York: Methuen Inc., 1987): 130. Esslin claims the theatre is not just about dramatic performance: he cites four aspects: a business industry, an entertainment, a ritual, and also as a cultural phenomenon.
6. Aristotle, *The Philosophy of Aristotle*, trans. J.L. Creed and A.E. Wardman, (Markham, Ontario: Penguin Books Canada Limited, 1963) 416.
7. *Ibid.* 418.
8. *Ibid.* 420.
9. Jesse Lynch Williams, "Writing and Playwriting." *The Art of Playwriting*. (New York: Books for Libraries Press Inc., 1962) 13.
10. These terms are commonly used in dramatic theory, they are also employed in aesthetic theories.
11. Martin Esslin, *TA*. (Toronto: Penguin Books Canada Ltd., 1991) 329.
12. Martin Esslin, *Field of Drams*. (New York: Methuen Inc., 1987) 23.
13. These features are extrapolated from the works of Martin Esslin as cited in the selected bibliography.
14. Martin Esslin, *TA*. op. cit. 24.
15. Jean-Paul Sartre, "Dirty Hands." *No Exit and Three Other Plays*. (New York: Vintage, 1989) 125-242.
16. Eugene Ionesco, "Rhinoceros." *Plays*. vol. 4, trans. Derek Prouse (London: John Calder, 1958)
17. Daniel McIvor, "This is an Article." *Theatrum: The Theatre Magazine* 30 (September/October 1992): 15-7. Daniel McIvor is a contemporary playwright (born in Cape Breton in 1962) whose works have won four Dora Mavor Moore Awards and one Chalmer's Canadian Play Award. The drama cited, *House* (a one-man show which interacts with the audience), is about one

man's struggle to find a meaning in life. The bare plot is a man attending a support group.

18. Samuel Beckett, "Act Without Words I." *Breath and Other Shorts*. (London: Faber & Faber, 1971): 25-9. The play has one character who is puzzled by mysterious whistling and the appearance and disappearance of certain objects. There is also a "Act Without Words II": 33-5. This play features two actors.

19. Aristotle, op. cit., 428-9.

20. Ibid., 429.

21. Mario J. Valdes, *NW*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) 20-1.

22. Ibid. 39.

23. Ibid.

24. Eugene Ionesco, "How to get Rid of It." *Absurd Drama*. (Great Britain: Penguin Books, 1969.): 25-116.

25. Samuel Beckett, "Waiting for Godot." *I Can't Go On, I'll Go On*. ed. Richard W. Seaver (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1976): 365-476. The passage is located on page 413. This speech is delivered by Lucky who is the servant of Pozzo; he is usually mute throughout the play, but once his hat is on, he can "think" for the entertainment of the other characters.

26. Martin Esslin, *Pinter: The Playwright* (New York: Methuen, 1984) passim. This is also mentioned in the forwards to his plays in a number of other publications.

27. Harold Pinter, "The Caretaker." *Masterpieces of the Drama*. ed. Alexander W. Allison et. al. (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1986): 887-915. The passage is located on page 900. It is an exchange between Aston, the elder brother and Davies (or Jenkins) who is a tramp being offered the job of a caretaker.

28. Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*. (New York: Vintage books, 1955) 8.

29. For example, Bertolt Brecht (associated with Epic theatre) believed that drama should stimulate the intellect while Henrik Ibsen (associated with Problem Plays) believed drama should be used as a discussion for social issues. August Strindberg, (perceived as a forebearer of the Theatre of the Absurd) however, returned to the conclusion that, whatever else may be added to the drama, its first directive must be the aesthetic (vagueness noted). It should be noted that all three of these playwrights have been associated, as forerunners, with the absurdist movement.

30. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Sartre on Theatre*. ed. Michel Contat and Michel Rybalka, trans. Frank Jellinek (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976) 65.

31. Ibid.

32. Antony Flew, ed. *A Dictionary of Philosophy*. (London: Pan Books Ltd., 1984) 115-6.

33. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Sartre on Theatre*. op. cit. 65-6.

Part 3: A Refutation of Con-Arguments

In conclusion then, at least some of the artistic forms are acceptable in the case of the existentialists. It has been demonstrated that at least two of the artistic forms (the novel and the drama) can create a successful union with existentialism; that is, there is a mutual compatibility, the final product has the capacity to convey knowledge in a beneficial manner for the existentialist, and also certain artistic forms possess certain other features (such as a live performance and also practical concerns) which deem them advantageous for the existentialist, and for what he wishes to convey. Therefore, the existential philosophies are properly and respectably expressed in certain artistic forms.

Yet, despite this justification, there are those who are unwilling to acknowledge artistic forms as a valid alternate to the analytic form: succinctly put, the artistic form pales in comparison (perhaps, even fades into oblivion) to the typical philosophical analytic form. This claim appears to be based on problems concerning the following: first, the manner in which artistic forms convey knowledge; and second, the identity and/or role of the literary artist in contrast with the identity and/or role of the philosopher.

The first problem can be divided into two separate parts: first, the process of the imagination; and second, the use of metaphors. That is, both imagination and metaphor

usage are integral parts of the literary artistic form, and unfortunately both raise epistemic problems. The second problem concerns the issue of stereotypical thinking and its influence upon cognitive capabilities.

Before these issues are addressed, a clarification concerning the terminology for this chapter will be made: the word "*literature*" will be used to refer jointly to the novel and the drama (unless either one is singled out), or more pointedly, the artistic forms that were justified as an alternate means of philosophic expression for the existentialist.

A. Imagination

To cause people to exercise their imagination is above all the task of the artist - especially the novelist and the dramatist.¹

R.M. Hare, *Freedom and Reason*

First, the process of imagination will be considered.

Imagination can be defined as,

A form of mental activity held to be distinct from cognitive or rational processes; a free, creative ordering of the contents of the mind. Imagination in this sense is often confused with the production of mental imagery, which would be better called 'imaging.'²

This provides a basis; there is much debate as to what the actual role of the imagination is. (We will discuss this later.) This definition does present the crux of the problem with imagination: it is claimed as distinct from cognitive and rational processes. If it is distinct from cognitive and rational processes, then how can it produce "something" that can be classified as knowledge, in any epistemic sense? That is, there is an assumption that anything borne of the imaginative process is only figmental: imagination is not true. Conversely, there is a claim that knowledge necessarily comes from the cognitive and/or rational processes.

How, then, does this problem of imagination relate to artistic forms? It is tempting to say that the content of artistic form is borne of the imagination. That is, the literary artist mentally develops an idea, or, in accordance with the definition, freely and creatively orders certain

contents, and then eventually structures this idea via his particular art form. For example, Beckett had an idea that, "life has no meaning", or that persons must establish their own sense of life (make their own meaning), or they will be endlessly waiting for something (the meaning of life) that does not exist, and he structured this in the form of a play, *Waiting for Godot*. In this play, two men, Estragon and Vladimir await an enigmatic third man called Godot who never arrives. They wait in Act I and they wait again in Act II. (During the first performances in Great Britain, the audience believed they were being fooled into watching the same play twice and many left during Act II.) However, there is no real Estragon or Vladimir and the whole story of their waiting is Beckett's concoction - *it is not true*. Therefore, it seems that this artistic form is dependent on the faculty of imagination.

If this is the case, then the following problem arises: artistic forms cannot produce knowledge. The argument has the following structure. Knowledge necessarily comes from the cognitive and rational processes; artistic forms are necessarily dependent on imagination, which, by analogy, becomes the source of knowledge; the process of imagination is distinct from both cognitive and rational processes; therefore the artistic form cannot produce knowledge.

Consider an illustration. The following scenario will be employed to exemplify the difference between cognitive and/or rational processes and the imagination process:

Billy states, "Amy had braids in her hair." Now suppose Billy is asked, "How do you know this?" If he responds by saying, "I saw her this morning.", then the basis of his statement is either cognitive or rational, consequently, it is knowledge. That is, the statement is the result of an observation. It is a report of a particular state of affairs; moreover, it can be verified (i.e. other witnesses can be produced, Amy can be asked, etc.). If, however, Billy responds with, "I imagined it.", then the basis of his statement is imagination, and consequently, it is not considered knowledge.

This example has raised the question of criteria for knowledge: namely, truth and verifiability. If these criteria for knowledge are acceptable, then imagination, to be a knowledge yielding process, must be able to satisfy them. It is argued that the imagination cannot satisfy these criteria, Mario J. Valdes states,

My colleagues from analytical philosophy would rule out the possibility that the imaginative configuration can make a serious truth-claim. Their argument is that the imaginative experience is non-falsifiable and also non-verifiable; therefore, it is not a truth-claim, for verifiability requires the possibility of confirmation, and thus, since any claim to truth on my own terms must be simultaneously a rejection of falsehood, the imaginative construct is neither true nor false.³

Aside from the verifiability problem, this passage also implies another problem of the imagination; that is, it is a product of the self alone, and this increases the problem of verifiability. That is, if the imagination is a creative,

mental product of the self, then it seems that only that specific self can "verify" the final product: have I created what I set out to do? However, this self-verification certainly does not aid the verifiability problem.

Therefore, if these criteria are acceptable as conditions for knowledge claims, then the imagination faculty appears to have a problem. That is, knowledge has a truth condition and this in turn, has a verifiability condition. What is deemed knowledge is true, and what is deemed true can be verified. Products of the imagination do not seem to have either capacity.

Now that the problem of imagination has been explained, a solution can be addressed. To do this, the following must be demonstrated: first, that imagination has the capacity for truth, second, that products of the imagination can be verified, and consequently, that imagination is not as far removed from the cognitive and/or rational processes as the definition claims.

The first two points can be argued for jointly. That is, it is the connection between truth and verifiability that constitutes the knowledge claim. Therefore, by addressing the following two questions, a valuable distinction regarding this problem will be noted: first, what is the relation between the two? And second, what kind of method constitutes the verification of truth? That is, the verifiability criteria for the imagination may be different than what is normally expected for other processes that yield knowledge

claims, such as scientific knowledge. Therefore, if it can be demonstrated that imagination does have some sort of means of verifiability, then the problem no longer concerns us.

There are two notable responses: the claim that there is a necessary dependence of literary figures on non-literary figures, and also the idea posited by John Hospers: a fidelity to human nature. Although these responses are related (both are claiming there is a necessary relation to reality), they will be discussed separately, since their details are distinct.

Firstly, there is a claim that there is a necessary connection between art and reality. That is, although imagination may be the cause or starting point of art, its truth can be verified in terms of its connection to reality. For example, there is a claim that literary characters are derived from actual persons.⁴ It is important to note the actual figure may be a single person, or a composite, or even a synthesis of variety of persons. Therefore, as we saw in Part II, one of the standards for judging truth in literature is dependent on how accurately it mirrors reality.

This claim may serve to justify knowledge claims in literature, but, as was noted in Part II, it only serves literature classified as *realism*. It does not directly support the existential literature, since some portrayals are not realistic. However, it is not the purpose of this thesis to justify the existentialist's particular usage of literature (that was discussed in Part 2). What this argument

does accomplish is that truth-claims based on imagination can have a method or standard of verification.

Secondly, Hospers presents the idea of fidelity to human nature. This can be explained in three claims: that there is a necessary *life component* within literature; that there is distinction between *truth to* and *truth about*; and lastly, the literary artist must possess a special insight. Although these claims have been separated, they can be discussed jointly. That is, the claims function together to support the idea; theoretically, they are distinct but, in practice, they are united.

Firstly, literature depicts life, and consequently, these depictions must be *true to life*. "*Truth to*" differs from "*truth about*": *truth to* refers to plausibility (with respect to perception and judgment) whereas *truth about* refers to facts about reality.⁵ Consequently, the artist must be familiar with what he is creating: various aspects of the social life of human beings. Therefore, the literary artist must be acutely aware of his social environment, and hopefully, profoundly aware of the interior workings of other human beings,

The social dramatist must often have at his command a depth of insight and detail of facts such as would almost necessitate his being, in addition to a dramatic artist, a specialist in the field which he makes the subject-matter of his drama.⁶

That is, to accurately depict life situations, the artist must be knowledgeable of them: the popular adage is, "write

what you know". For example, if the artist is writing a story on the topic of abortion, then he must possess knowledge of the issue. Therefore, many of the situations presented in literature rely on the notion of *how it is*.

It can be argued that Hospers's idea of fidelity to human nature is applicable to the existentialist's usage of literature. That is, the existentialist is depicting his logical conclusions regarding human nature, which ultimately entails that there is no *human nature per se*. Life is absurd (i.e. has no concrete or precise meaning). Therefore, if an existentialist piece of literature appears somewhat erratic, such as Eugene Ionesco's *The Lesson* (bare plot: a teacher kills forty students daily), this is only a metaphor of his claim as to what human nature is: unexplainable. The existentialist is claiming life is not orderly like the realist would have us believe. Therefore, in an important sense, the existentialist is exemplifying his interpretation of human fidelity.

If this is acceptable, then the following can be concluded: the knowledge claims within literature can be verified, yet in a different manner. It is not the stringent verification method associated with the knowledge claims located in science. If this is the case, then the imagination is not as distinct from the cognitive and rational processes as previously suspected. That is, it, too, has the capacity for knowledge.

It can and has been argued that there is a *cognitive*

imagination, and/or that imagination is part of the overall cognitive process. This will be discussed from two perspectives: a definition of this cognitive aspect of the imagination, and also, a practical application.

Basically, this view claims that the imagination is a necessary relation between experience and cognition. That is, an experience is perceived as a collection of sensations; the imagination represents the ability to sporadically arrange these sensations before they are cognized (i.e. placed in the universal categories). For, example, consider that a person has an experience of a dog: the collection of sensations may be things such as color, size, relation, etc. His immediate response assesses the situation and ponders any other possibilities: could this dog be other than it is? At this point, the cognitive process structures the experience accordingly.

Much of these ideas on imagination are derived from the philosophy of Immanuel Kant although the argument as presented has been synthesized (pun intended) with the ideas of Paul Ricoeur and Kenneth Dorter (who no doubt borrowed Kantian ideas as well). The point being introduced is that Kant claimed there was a *reproductive* and a *productive* imagination; the former indicating what is now referred to as *imaging* while the latter indicates the ability to create new thoughts. However, it seems unlikely that this distinction is anything other than theoretical: if the productive imagination is capacity to create new thoughts, then from

what is it deriving its information? The reproductive imagination is the obvious answer.

This can be explained with an illustration: a person is strolling through the woods when he stumbles upon a river. He needs to cross it. To do this, he may ponder about all the previous means he has seen in the past as a crossing for rivers. This is his reproductive imagination. If none of these is available, he may access his productive imagination to determine a new method. However, in doing this, he is relying on the reproductive as a basis from which he will derive a new solution. Therefore, the productive imagination is ultimately dependent on the reproductive: its ability to reproduce reality and/or the experiences a person has encountered throughout his life.

Now it can be noted that the imagination is applied, from a practical perspective, for philosophic reasons. That is, within ethics, and meta-ethics, there are references to the imagination as an active tool. The consequentialist theories, for example, all require that the imagination be activated to determine the outcome of an action.

The underlying problem with the imagination, then, appears to be that it can be *misused*, as far as serious thinking endeavors are concerned. That is, imagination can be used for fantasies, and dreams, aside from imagining the consequences of a moral action within an ethics debate. However, logic can also be *misused*: a valid argument can be false. The philosopher can be accused of being guilty of a

case of special pleading: it is wrong to imagine a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, yet it is right to imagine that we are brains in vats. In conclusion then, there are different levels of the imagination, but ultimately, this is only a theoretical distinction. That is there is only one imagination but it possesses many abilities. To denounce it on the grounds that one of its abilities is questionable, is a logical contradiction. Without imagination, none of this would be possible. If the philosopher wishes to claim that imagination cannot yield knowledge then it cannot rightly, be a tool within philosophic theory. Therefore the imagination is indispensable on the basis that it contributes to the production of knowledge both actively and passively.

B. Metaphor

To draw attention to a philosopher's metaphor's is to belittle him - like praising a logician for his beautiful handwriting.⁷

Max Black, "Metaphor"

Since a metaphor is a technique which permeates literature, its affect on the capacity to yield knowledge must be considered. As is indicated in the above citation, philosophers are suspect of the use of metaphors in general, let alone in artistic form. Regardless, the technique is a favorite in literature, and can also be very potent.

Existential literature is not an exception. Aside from the standard use of metaphors within their literature (such as Garcin's famous line in *No Exit*: "Hell is other people"), some pieces of their literature can also be classified as metaphors (it is a large and expansive family) and/or extended metaphors. For example, Franz Kafka's, *The Trial*: this novel can be considered as an extended metaphor of the interaction type. Therefore, there will be no precise translation which would accurately replace the value presented in the novel. But, loosely, this novel can be interpreted as an existential question of locating meaning in one's life; that is, if one had to justify one's actions, how would one do so? How could one justify both the trivial and the sublime aspects of one's life, or even determine which is which? In this novel then, a man's life is "on trial".

Therefore, as was noted in the Imagination section,

the metaphor has considerable importance for the artist and/or existentialist. Consequently, it must be regarded a legitimate means of communication in its own right, otherwise the existentialist is discredited.

The original definition of a metaphor is roughly as follows: *a comparison between two unlike objects without using the words "like" or "as"*. However, this was considered inadequate for two reasons: first, it incorrectly emphasizes the notion of comparison; and second, it does not necessarily occur between two objects.

The metaphor is not always based on the notion of comparison, nor is it always between two objects, it has a greater range. That is, a metaphor may be used within the context of a verb as well. For example, "He danced around the answer." Regarding the form of the metaphor, Max Black states, "some words are used metaphorically, while the remainder are used non-metaphorically."⁶ The words which are used metaphorically, he entitled the *focus*, and the non-metaphorical: the *frame*. Black also claims that the metaphor can have at least three classifications: substitution, comparison, and interaction (previously mentioned).

Briefly then, a substitution metaphor refers to those metaphors in which there is a literal translation. For example, "Billy is an angel." can be easily interpreted as "Billy is a good boy." That is, these metaphors are so widely used that they are readily understood and acknowledged. A comparison metaphor claims there is an underlying similarity

between the objects mentioned. For example, "Billy is a glacier." can be interpreted as "Billy is an emotionally frigid person." That is, these metaphors are explained in terms of how the salient features of the *focus* reflect upon the *frame*. Lastly, the interaction metaphor claims that there is an extended meaning due to the implied relation between the concepts presented. For example, "Billy is a tongueless Jesus." cannot be adequately expressed in normal language usage; the attempt can be made but something ineffable is lost in the translation.⁹

With these distinctions in mind, the following as a basic definition of a metaphor will be offered: the application of a term (s) to another term (s) to which it is not literally applicable. (It can be argued that this applies to the verb metaphors as well: the metaphor can be perceived as a relation to the verb, or the action indicated in the statement.) Now that a working definition of a metaphor has been established, the problem it directly causes for this thesis can be approached.

Chiefly, the metaphor is problematic on two levels: first, there is a concern regarding a correct translation or meaning, and second, there is also a related problem of speaker/author intention. If these inadequacies of the metaphor are valid, then this is a strike against the thesis of this paper: the existentialist would be relying on inadequate means of expression. However, if these inadequacies can be refuted, at least in the case of the

existentialist and his use of literature, then these problems will no longer be of concern.

First, metaphors do not obtain meaning the same way most terms or phrases do; that is, its meaning is not derived according to the standard usage of language. That is, the word "cat" ordinarily means feline; however, in a metaphor, this definition would change.

Consider an example within existential literature. We will use the famous line previously cited: the character Garcin states "*Hell is other people.*" (*No Exit*)¹⁰ How do we know what the meaning is? Interpreted via literal means, this statement is nonsensical: from a semantic perspective, it is meaningless. That is, "hell" is not other people; "hell" is a concept of eternal damnation. Therefore, the metaphor necessarily requires some sort of translation.

This is what Max Black was addressing in his categories of metaphor types. While the substitution and comparison theories may adequately explain the meanings of the type of metaphors they indicate, the meaning of the interaction metaphor remains elusive. (It should be noted that this does not mean that the metaphor is not understood; only that a precise or literal meaning cannot be established.)

Second, one solution to the first problem is to analyze speaker intention; that is, an examination of what the speaker intended may reveal a meaning. However, this fails on two accounts: first, speaker intention is not always

available; and second, metaphors can be created without intention. While the first misgiving refers to a problem with practicality, the second refers to a deeper rift between the philosopher and the artist,

. . . a metaphor need only be extrinsically related to what it symbolizes (an owl is not wise, so artists may know how to make compelling metaphors without understanding the intrinsic nature of the particular kinds of things from which they make the metaphor.¹¹

Therefore, there is a claim that the artist may or may not be genuine in his intentions. That is, there is no discernible way to determine if the artist is aware of the implications of his metaphor: the connection may be a fluke.

The crux of the problem related to metaphors then is: it causes an unclarity and impedes the possibility of obtaining one precise meaning. Therefore, the ability for a reasonable argument is also impeded; a common ground may or may not be established. That is, the underlying idea cannot be evaluated if it cannot be agreed upon. Therefore, since metaphor increases the probability of a misconstrued idea, it is not a useful technique in philosophic discussion.

This problem can be refuted on the basis of two arguments: first, it contains an unnecessary presupposition and second, the use of metaphors is compatible with the existential philosophies.

First, the desire for a precise meaning has begs the question, it presupposes that there is a precise meaning. This may or may not be the case: that is, some ideas

encapsulated within a metaphor may not possess a precise meaning. For example, consider the case of *catachresis*; a metaphor may be coined to express an idea which is missing from the vocabulary. Or, a metaphor may also be a deliberate tool of ambiguity; that is, a metaphor may intend to have a plethora of meanings (contrary or compatible), each one being equally valid. A metaphor may be a short cut for indicating a vast array of ideas.

Second, the desire to obtain a precise meaning is not necessarily compatible with the existential philosophies. That is, according to the existentialist, the truth is subjective. Therefore, the presupposition that there is a precise meaning is not in accordance with the content of the existential philosophies: the existentialist claims that existence precedes essence. Therefore, essence is self-created. Consequently, there is no one simple equation. Therefore, the use of metaphors does not conflict with the existential philosophies; if a metaphor is unable to produce one precise meaning, then this is consistent with the content of the existential philosophies.

C. Status of the Literary Artist

The metaphysician believes that he travels in territory in which truth and falsehood are at stake. In reality, however, he has not asserted anything, but only expressed himself, like an artist.¹²

Rudolph Carnap, *Elimination of Metaphysics*

Before this argument is begun, some terminology will be clarified: the word "philosopher" will be employed abstractly and somewhat vaguely. That is, it will be used to refer to those in the discipline who are opposed to the thesis of this paper, and also opposed to any affiliation with art and or the artist. In this section then, a philosopher will represent the person with platonic tendencies, or more recently, with analytic tendencies. The existentialist, naturally, will be exempt from this label for this section. Also, the word, "artist" will refer to literary artists.

In regard to the status of the literary artist, there is some confusion as to what his proper role in society actually is. This confusion can be dissected into the following areas: a question of compatibility with the role of the philosopher; a problem with stereotypical thinking; the philosopher's desire to be distinct from the artist.

Firstly, what or who is the artist? That is, is he equipped with a special sort of intelligence or is he just a fluke with eloquence? More pointedly: is he an entertainer or a scholar? There is a desire to categorize him as one or

the other; this categorization affects his compatibility with the role of the philosopher. An entertainer will be defined as, one who amuses, although not necessarily with humor. A scholar will refer to one who does "authoritative research and writing in some special field".¹³

Now the problem concerning which category best describes the artist must still be addressed. His problematic identity is captured in the following passage,

On the one hand poets can be seen as figures privilege and reverence, the possessors of special insights and conscience. . . On the other they may be regarded as relatively unimportant functionaries in the social body - amusing, perhaps even charming, but in the end ornamental figures useful to 'swell a progress, start a scene or two.'¹⁴

This distinction is important to the debate: that is, if the philosopher is undeniably a scholar, then he cannot be an entertainer for it contradicts his position. Therefore, if the artist is classified as an entertainer, then the philosopher cannot rightly be affiliated with such a position.

However, this may be a case of *bifurcation*. That is, the fallacy of "considering a distinction or classification exclusive and exhaustive when other alternatives exist."¹⁵ That is, there are at least two other possibilities: first, there is the possibility of shared qualities, and second, there is also the possibility of multiple roles.

First, the philosopher and the artist may very well share a certain number of qualities. To return to the

entertainer/scholar distinction: an entertainer may be scholarly and likewise, a scholar may be entertaining. What is being noted is the distinction between, for example, *jazz* music and *jazzy* music. However, if the tension between artists and philosophers is as steep as it appears to be, then the word '*artistic*' may very well become pejorative, as far as philosophers are concerned. That is, to call a philosopher *artistic* may be viewed as degrading the quality of his work.

The second alternative offers a stronger solution. That is, it is not a logical necessity that a person satisfy the criteria for one role and one role only: persons may occupy many roles simultaneously. Therefore, the role of the literary artist may very well be multifarious: he may be philosopher, entertainer, and scholar, as well as holding several other roles. Consequently, any categorization would have to reflect this.

This introduces the problem of stereotypical thinking. This can be defined as a *hasty generalization* that becomes *fixed*: it is a tendency to generalize and abstract from experiences and conclude that this generalization is *right*. This tendency inevitably focuses on any salient features which then become the norm. This is considered to be a cognitive capacity; that is, it is a method of categorization.¹⁶ Although a method of categorization may be necessary to process knowledge, when this categorization reaches the level of stereotypical thinking, it is

problematic: "They are not easily undermined, because they are often accurate, at least to some extent. They function as cluster concepts, so that the reality component at their core lends them an unwarranted credibility."¹⁷

That is, a stereotype is a fixed idea, based on these salient features, whether actual or supposed. For example, a person may have the belief that Cape Bretoners are friendly (based on the fact that he met three Cape Bretoners and they were amicable), yet he meets another Cape Bretoner who is not friendly: he dismisses this in favor of the fact that this person has lived elsewhere for a number of years. Therefore, the person expects the salient features to be present, and also, refuses to accept the incident as that particular category without these features.

As a result, then, this process can impede the ordinary cognitive capabilities; a person becomes accustomed to thinking in a certain manner, and the claim is, this affects his perception. By analogy then, it is reasonable to claim that this philosopher/artist identity problem has been subjected to this process of stereotyping. That is, Thomas Gilovich reports that even the educated fall prey to this tendency.¹⁸ It is being claimed that this tendency has contributed to the artist/philosopher identity problem in the following manner: there is a belief that a person can only have one occupational role, at least, at any one time.

The argument can be formulated rather simply in the following manner. As a career, an artist is deemed to be

completely enveloping; that is, it integrally occupies the individual. In support of this, there is a popular notion that the artist reveals *the soul of a nation*.¹⁹ Likewise, as a career, the philosopher also represents a very devoted occupation. Therefore, the conclusion of this stereotypical thinking can be voiced as: how can any person possibly juggle the responsibilities of both? That is, if a person makes such an attempt, then one of these careers is bound to suffer. Therefore, as long as both are perceived as distinct and time-consuming occupations, there will be a problem related to stereotypical thinking.

However, these problems are necessarily related to the core belief that the philosopher and the artist are distinct and time-consuming occupations. That is, the phenomenon of stereotypical thinking can only contribute to the rift if this core belief is held. There are those who believe that these two share virtually equivalent roles. This converse belief is necessary to the philosopher/artist identity problem. Consider this question: why is there a refutation in the first place? That is, if the two are truly distinct, why was there ever a need to construct an argument indicating that distinction?

At some point, the philosopher felt inclined to distinguish between himself and the artist. This is curious: why not present an argument for the distinction between a philosopher and a psychologist? Camus claims that, "It would be impossible to insist too much on the arbitrary nature of

the former opposition between art and philosophy."²⁰ From this, we can derive two claims: first, that there must be an underlying similarity between the artist and the philosopher (otherwise there would be no need to offer an argument for distinction), and second, that the philosopher felt inclined to sever this connection.

The underlying similarity between the artist and the philosopher is two-fold: from a philosophic perspective, they are engaged in similar tasks; and from a practical perspective, they produce similar effects.

Both artist and philosopher are engaged in creating and/or developing thought. Camus claims, "The philosopher, even if he is Kant, is a creator. He has his characters, his symbols, and his secret action. He has his plot endings." and then, in comparison with the artist, he offers, "The novel has its logic, its reasoning, its intuition and its postulate. It also has its requirements of clarity."²¹ Therefore, both seek to establish or promote some system of thought.

Secondly, both can produce similar effects; that is, both have the capacity to affect the social climate and to influence the mindset of the individual. Pointedly, they accomplish this via similar methods: they write something created by their minds. Therefore, in the eyes of the general public, it can be argued that the two are similar. This is reflected in language usage: people refer to being *well read* as advantageous.

Who then, initiated the distinction and began the rift which has resulted in the identity problem? It seems that Plato had a great deal to do with the development of this mindset. However, if the philosopher had cause to distinguish himself from the artist, then it seems that this stems from his desire to not be perceived as a *simple storyteller*.

For, if the stereotypical thinking problem holds true, then it would not be in the best interest of someone like A.J. Ayer to be regarded in the same light as someone like Stephen King. But, as Camus so notes, it is not fair to hold *bad writers* (i.e. such as the 'simple' storyteller who does not possess the intellect of the philosopher) as exemplars of the discipline.²² For if this was the case, then the same could be done to philosophers.

D. Conclusion

In the end then, it seems that the existentialist is justified in his usage of artistic forms, in particular, his usage of the drama. The artistic form has been shown to meet the requirements of philosophy and perhaps more importantly, it has been shown to be advantageous to the existential philosophies. It seems that one of the crimes of the existentialist's was re-initiating the philosopher/artist identity problem. That is, the philosopher had been slowly detaching himself from any serious connection with the artist when the existentialist exploded onto the scene with his hybrid ideas, which, as it turns out, happened to be well founded. Thanks to the likes of Jean-Paul Sartre, a man who regrettably believed that crayfish followed him around,²³ the identity problem was powerfully re-instated.

Notes

1. R.M. Hare, *Freedom and Reason*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990): 181.
2. Antony Flew, ed. *A Dictionary of Philosophy*. (London: Pan Books Ltd, 1984): 163-4.
3. Mario J. Valdes, *WM*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992): 16-7.
4. Walter Kaufmann, "Literature and Reality." A&P. ed. Sydney Hook (USA: New York University Press, 1966): 255-60. However, it is also noted that we do not measure the credibility of a character to others, but that a character may serve as a comparison for others. For example, Hamlet is used to describe procrastinators.
5. John Hospers, *M&TA*. (USA: The University of North Carolina Press, 1946): 162.
6. *ibid.* 123.
7. Max Black, "Metaphor." PA. ed. Joseph Margolis, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987): 535.
8. *ibid.* 537.
9. *ibid.* *passim*.
10. Jean-Paul Sartre, *No-Exit and Three Other Plays*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1989): 45.
11. Kenneth Dorter, "Conceptual Truth and Aesthetic Truth." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 48 (Winter 1990): 45.
12. Rudolph Carnap, "The Elimination of Metaphysics." *Logical Positivism*. ed. A.J. Ayer (New York: The Free Press, 1959): 79.
13. n.p. *Funk and Wagnalls Standard Desk Dictionary*. vol. 2 (USA: Harper & Row Publishers Inc, 1984): 596.
14. Jerome J. McGann, *Towards a Literature of Knowledge*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989): 129.
15. S. Morris Engel, *With Good Reason*. (St. Martin's Press: New York, 1986): 126.
16. Lorraine Code, *What Can She Know?* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991): 189-91. This necessity of categorisation is also posited by Immanuel Kant, *op. cit.* See book 1 chap. 1 sec. 3 ('Categories': 111-9), and also book 2 chap. 1. ('Schematism': 180-7) of the *Transcendental Analytic*.
17. Lorraine Code, *op. cit.* 192.
18. Thomas Gilovich, 'How We Know What Isn't So.' (Toronto: Maxwell MacMillan, 1991) *passim*. This text is cognitive psychology: it focuses on the problems/causes of erroneous judgment.
19. This is representative of the claims presented by the works of Martin Heidegger in the selected bibliography.
20. Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1955): 71.
21. *ibid.* 74.
22. *ibid.*
23. Simone de Beauvoir, *La Force de l'age*. 282. *as*

quoted by Maurice Cranston, *Sartre*. (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1970): 7.

Conclusion

When this work was conceived, the validity of the existentialist's choice to employ an alternate means of communication for his philosophy was being contemplated. Whereas other modern philosophers employ a direct, almost analytic, approach to their writings, the existentialist commonly engages in fiction or personalized accounts of lived experiences. Typically, the modern philosopher attempts to exude the qualities of the objective scientist, while the existentialist proclaims that he can think only in human terms. To express all of this, the existentialist chose different vehicles of expression. How much of this is justified?

In this work then, three tasks have been accomplished which support the following conclusion: the existential philosopher is justified in using an alternate means of expression, namely, the literary arts, to communicate his philosophy.

Firstly, in Part One, a working, albeit general, definition of the existential philosophies was established. It was claimed that existentialism is a philosophy of existence, revolving around the experiential aspects of the individual person. The characteristics of existentialism were divided into two categories: logical implications of the main tenet, "existence precedes essence"; and second, a more personalized look at how the individual address/confronts the

first category. Whereas the first category claims that the individual is free and self-created, the second category claims that such a revelation can, does, or will overwhelm the individual. Although the individual is free and acts of his own accord, he may not always choose to believe so.

By establishing this working definition of the existential philosophies, and then, in Part Two, a general definition of literary artistic forms, certain degrees of compatibility and also necessity were demonstrated. This is a necessary demonstration if the union (between the existential philosophies and literary artistic forms) is to be possible in the first place. If the two forms were not compatible with each other, then the query is no more. Once it was established that this union was possible, then it was possible to address the major concerns regarding such a union.

Secondly, in Part Two, as already mentioned, the issue of various literary artistic forms was addressed. Two of the more commonly used literary forms were examined, the novel and the drama, and the latter was the focus. To demonstrate a compatibility with the generic definition of the existential philosophies, three things were provided: first, a working definition of these literary artistic forms, second, the capacity to convey knowledge (as far as the existential philosophies are concerned) within these literary artistic forms, and finally, any other beneficial qualities that these forms may be able to offer the existentialist,

such as practical and personal concerns. It was concluded that these literary artistic forms (in particular, the drama) are both compatible and advantageous for the expression of the existential philosophies. Fiction has a capacity to convey knowledge, and also, it has a number of other qualities, such as practical concerns, which are beneficial to the expression of the existential philosophies. In conclusion, the drama was chosen as the best possible vehicle for the existentialist. This decision was largely due to the existentialist's emphasis on experience; the existential revelation may often be somewhat ineffable. This is further supported by the existentialist's belief that language may not always adequately describe a given situation. Consequently, a *learned* experience becomes preferable to a *taught* experience, and drama can provide this. Drama can successfully present an attitude or create the feeling which corresponds to an idea; the existentialist can and does, make use of this characteristic.

Finally, in Part Three, the chief complaints against the employment of literary artistic forms (i.e. imagination, metaphor, and the status of the literary artist) were acknowledged and disputed. The use of imagination has been considered questionable due to its inability to produce knowledge; however, it has been shown that this is not the case. Imagination can very easily be placed into the knowledge process; it may also be a necessary part of this process. The issue of metaphor usage has been criticized for

its difficulty in determining a precise meaning. However, it has been also noted that such a feature is compatible with the existential philosophies. If these philosophies advocate the lack of a "precise" meaning, then the metaphor becomes an advantageous, if not necessary, form of expression. Lastly, the questionable status of the literary artist was addressed: where does the artist fit into the scheme of things? It has been demonstrated how this may be due to a process of stereotypical thinking, and/or a tendency to generalize and categorize.

In light of all this, then, a reasonable justification of certain literary artistic forms as an alternate means of philosophic expression for the existentialist has been presented. Due to the particular nature of his philosophy and the nature of the literary artistic forms, the existentialist is well within his rights to choose this method of expression.

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