CHAPTER FIVE

AUTHENTICITY AND EXISTENTIAL COMMITMENT IN LITERATURE
According to Sartre, one's absolute freedom is the only existence commensurate with an honest desire to exist fully as a man. This explains the significance of authenticity and commitment in the works of Sartre. However, this recognition comes not in ecstasy, but in anguish. It is not a merging with a high power but the realization of one's loneliness and isolation, not a vision of eternity but the perception that one is wholly a process, the making of the self with which one cannot be united.

Nothingness, according to Sartre, is not only the internal negation and revelation of being, but also the desire and the choice of being. When we analyze consciousness as desire, we find its essential structure to be negative, but its results as fully positive. Desire, like values, resides neither in the outside world nor in the consciousness. It is a way in which consciousness relates itself to the objects of the world. Each individual desire, however, trivial, has meaning only in connection with one's basic choice of one's mode of being, the way in which
one chooses to exist.

Paradoxically, every concrete desire is significant to Sartre as it indicates the personal character of the individual. It is not important in itself but because it points to the all pervasive irreducible desire which reveals to us the person. It shows to us the possibilities of authenticity and commitment facilitated by the structure of his consciousness. It indicates the way an individual is directed towards the goals and the values that he cherishes and creates through his choices.

On the other hand, Sartre seems to suggest that we can grasp the authenticity and individuality of the human being by tracing down this irreducible choice; and on the other hand, he maintains that every 'for-itself' basically desires to be one with the 'in-itself', thus seeking to gain an absolute security and certainty, by being a self, a fullness of being. Obviously, this desire, Sartre says, is irrational. It is both the desire of being caused and the desire of being the cause. Like the self-caused God, man desires to be God. However, the question that arises in this context
is how the ultimate choice of being is revelatory of the individual if the desire to be God is true of almost all persons. The answer provided is that there are various kinds of objects by which the individual chooses to work out his basic choice. In this way, an infinite variety of possibilities exists for people.

The concept of *Eros* in Plato's *Symposium* finds a parallel in Sartre's concept of desire. In both writers the individual desire is meaningful, only in the larger context of a desire for being. The differences are also striking. Platonic *Eros* leads one to philosophical vision of the absolute truth. However Sartrean desire leads only to the non-existent ideal, the continued pursuit of which provides an opportunity to escape from one's self responsibility. As such, compared with Plato, Sartre's view appears to be more negative.

Sartre's view stands out still more strikingly when compared to Buddhist philosophy which identifies desire with suffering and advocates the total annihilation of this desire as a means of salvation.
For Sartre, however, to destroy desire means to destroy
the 'for-itself'. For him, the 'for-itself' is desire,
\textit{\textit{i.e.}}, it is the project towards a being which it can
never be, but which as an end gives the 'for-itself'
it\textquoteleft s meaning.

Again, desire in the case of Buddhism is the
quality of lesser personalized self, which must be
destroyed if one is to realize transcendental poten-
tialities; whereas with Sartre, desire, in its most
fundamental sense, belongs not to the psyche, but to
the non-personal consciousness. Only the derived
specific desires are determined and evaluated in terms
of the ego which is itself an object of consciousness.
Moral guilt in one philosophy lies in the specific
desire of the personal self, the same 'guilt' in the
other is to cherish the illusion of possessing an
absolute self.

So, intense is the concern of Sartre with ultimate
human problems, purposes and the sense of human respon-
sibility that some people have gone to the extent of
calling him a deeply religious man, even though he was
an atheist. His entire endeavor is to explain man's
predictable in human terms without postulating an existent God. Sartre himself calls such a position as atheistic humanism.

The question of authenticity refers to the domain of moral questions. In a way, it has its origins in the Socratic dictum that if a man "knows" the good he will necessarily "choose" it. Sartre seems to echo these thought patterns in one of his passages:

"To comprehend myself as evil, for example, could not be to refer myself to what I am for myself, for I am not and cannot be evil for myself for two reasons."

Here, the self itself is its being only in the mode of having to be or choosing to be. Amongst many possibilities from which to choose, it may choose to be good or it may choose to be evil. If one cannot knowingly choose evil, one can be guilty of bad faith, vice and inauthenticity.

There are three fundamental aspects of Sartre's philosophy which are related to his concept of authenticity. The first related to his views on the subjective and the second to the objective or related to the analysis of human character. According to him, any
hman fact is a subjective fact, since consciousness cannot take a point of view on itself as a totality and since any observation of the world entails a subjective observation.

Lastly, Sartre believes in the formulation of values which would arise as a result of tension between absolute freedom and total responsibility. He says in this context,

"It follows that my freedom is the unique foundation of values and that nothing, absolutely nothing, justifies me in adopting this or that particular value, this or that particular scale of values. As a being by whom values exist, I am unjustifiable." (Italics mine)

and again,

"My freedom is annulled at being the foundation of values while itself without foundation. It is annulled in addition because values, due to the fact that they are essentially revealed to a freedom, cannot disclose themselves without being at the same time "put into question" for the possibility of over-turning the scale of values appears complementarily as my possibility. It is annulled before values which is the recognition of the ideality of values." (Italics mine)

Sartre says my acts cause values to spring up like partridges when I engage myself in the world of values. Negative values are created by my indignation and the positive values are created by admiration. In this context he says,
values are seen on my path as thousands of little real demands like the signs which order us to keep off the grass.\footnote{7}

The meaning which the freedom of the individual has, consists of his perception of it, as coming from the world and constituting his obligations. A small article of Sartre defines the nature of these obligations from a social point.\footnote{8} In this he envisages a society which would allow for continual self-transcendence in the direction of greater freedom.

Therefore, for Sartre the choice of freedom is the foundation of all values and is characteristic of an authentic individual who chooses to act if he were free. The authentic individual is he who chooses to live through conditions of his choice. The other possible reaction to the condition of freedom is flight from it, i.e., escape into bad faith, which constitutes the domain of inauthenticity. The authentic individual is also described by Sartre as one who, through his choice, commits to the principles of a just and a free social order.

Respect for the freedom of others, for Sartre, is the moral presupposition of authenticity. The function
of literature is to transmit the writer's perception of social reality to the reader. It is, in fact, authenticity within the framework of surpassing social context towards the whole realization of freedom.  

An authentic writer, according to Sartre, is one who attempts to clarify concepts, define issues in a manner, in which he can breathe life and reality into them and one who is committed to the destruction of doctrinal mystification. The authentic individual of Sartre does not contemplate the absurdity of the world but actively pursues his chosen ends. The knowledge of the absurdity of the world makes the individual responsible for his actions in pursuit of ends which are worthy because he has chosen them to be such. The denial of the absurdity of the world has as its immediate consequence the opening up of an avenue of escape from the responsibility of an individual for his actions. Thus, the absurdity of the world for Sartre implies the condition for individual moral responsibility.

Sartre's social ethics gives the impression of rejecting the universal values while emphasizing the importance of a value-oriented perspective. His social values are determined by the needs of being-for-other.
He proposes the abolition of socially-imposed forms of alienation, which are peculiarly specific to historical circumstances.

In the realm of bad faith, social life is in continuous conflict. Authenticity is identified by Sartre with virtue, it offers partial escape from social conflict but carries with it anguish which makes suffering inevitable.

Sartre speaks of not only the individual conflict but also of inter-personal conflict at the class level. Authenticity, therefore, has to be conceived within the framework of class values, which may define the nature of direction for the realization of ontological equality, and social freedom.

The writings of Sartre express his perceptions of the impact of exploitation and denial of freedom on socially deprived individuals. In fact, what characterizes Sartrean ethics, in such a formidable way is his virtue of authenticity, which like the waves of an ocean has wiped out all the imprints of the earlier formulations of virtue. It has replaced the Christian Commandments. It has created a new
awareness for a man who stands by himself without having a semblance of a theory or a religion or a dogma or a doctrine to fall back upon. It is the ethics of a self-created and self-sustained virtue (authenticity) which is self-validating by virtue of reference to the free choice exercised by the individual.

Sartre's position bears a striking resemblance to the Kantian axion of choosing the end with the explicit awareness that through this choice, he commits the entire humanity to it. For the first time in the history of ethical ideas, an ethical theory laid down a new criteria for the self validation of a moral value. And yet many interpreters have called it an ethics based on an essentialist view of man tending to take the form of a universally valid justifiability.

Authenticity, within the frame of this ethics, therefore, is a total commitment to oneself to pursue that one chooses through which our transcendence to universality becomes the function of free choice.

Sartre has devoted most of his writing to the analysis of what constitute inauthenticity, or lack of commitment within the given human condition. His
description of bad faith rooted in the ontology of human nature, is one of the finest accounts that we can come across anywhere.

Sartre explores the realms of the deep inaccessibility of consciousness and in so doing, he speaks of irony, in which he says, man annihilates what he posits within one and the same act. He leads us to believe in order not to be believed. He affirms to deny and denies to affirm. He creates a positive object which has no being other than its nothingness. This kind of attitude he calls nuissance foi, meaning, bad faith. This is identified with falsehood as indicated in the behaviour of a person who lies to himself and shows signs of bad faith.

Lying is a negative attitude in which negation does not bear on consciousness itself, it aims at the transcendent. In other words, essence of the lie implies in fact that the liar actually is in complete possession of the truth which he is hiding, for it is not possible to lie about what one is ignorant of. He does not lie when he is mistaken. The ideal description of a liar is that he affirms truth within himself while denying it in his words.
The liar intends to deceive and he does not seek to hide this intention from himself, nor to disguise the translucent character of consciousness. Thus, the lie does not put into play the inner structure of present consciousness. It does not require special ontological foundations and the explanations which the existence of negation in general requires in the case of deceit.

A lie, in the words of Heidegger, is mit-sein, meaning being with others and being in the world. It, therefore, presupposes my existence and the existence of the other; my existence for the other and the existence of the other for me. It amounts to hiding the intention from the other through an opacity because of which a lie is taken for the truth.

The one who practices bad faith is hiding a displeasing truth or presenting his truth as what is otherwise, pleasing untruth. Bad faith as such, has an appearance of the structure of falsehood. The only thing that changes everything is the fact that in bad faith, it is from myself that I am hiding the truth. So the ontological duality of the deceiver and the deceived does not exist here. Bad faith implies in a sense the unity of a single consciousness. Bad faith
does not come outside the human reality.

However, there must be an original intention and project of bad faith, and a pre-reflective comprehension of consciousness as affecting itself with bad faith. Within the unity of the structure of a single project, the one to whom the lie is told and the one who lies are one and the same person, i.e. I must know in my capacity as deceiver, the truth which is hidden from me in my capacity as the one deceived.

According to Sartre, the basic concept which it thus engenders is the double property of the human being, who is at once a 'facticity' and 'transcendence'. These two aspects of human reality are and ought to be capable of valid co-ordination. But bad faith does not wish to co-ordinate them or to surpass and unify them into a synthesis. Bad faith seeks to affirm their identity by preserving their differences. It must affirm facticity as being transcendence and transcendence as being facticity.

All those concepts employed by Sartre seem to have a transitive role in human reasoning. We have to deal with him in reality as a being which is what it is not
and which is not what it is. These concepts are in the process of evanescence, but that precisely makes them have the plausibility for the momentary appearance, during which they receive the pretense of existence.

In this connection, it would be worthwhile to examine the idea of sincerity which is the anti-thesis of bad faith. Sincerity presents itself as a demand and therefore is not a state. It is rather a dispositional trait of the character of an individual which he may or may not manifest in outward actions. Therefore, this sincerity consists of inwardmost feeling of genuine concern for the other, even at an unmanifest level.

Sincerity is a universal value which proposes for us an absolute equivalence of being with itself, and in this sense it is necessary that we make ourselves what we are. However the question here arises: what are we if we have the constant obligation to make ourselves what we are? ¹²

Man in bad faith is not incapable of forming reflexive judgements or concepts concerning this condition.¹³ He knows that in the meaning of obligation, the ideal of knowing and an ideal of being have to be
identified. However, all these concepts and all these judgments refer to the realm of the transcendent. There is the nothingness which separates me from what I could have been.

In the context of sadness — a mode of being which concerns only myself, Sartre says:

What is sadness, however, if not the intentional unit, which comes to resemble and animate the totality of conduct? 14

However, being sad is not a ready-made being which I give to myself.

In a very interesting passage, Sartre says that the essential structure of sincerity does not differ very much from that of bad faith, since the sincere man constitutes himself as what he is in order not to be what he is not. This explains the truth that one can fall into bad faith through being over much sincere.

Total, constant sincerity as a constant effort to adhere to oneself is by nature a constant effort to dissociate oneself from oneself. A person frees himself from himself by the very act by which he makes himself an object for himself. 15

Again Sartre says,

The goal of bad faith is to put oneself out of reach, it is an escape. 16
Perhaps the closest approximation to an existential hero who represents an ideal of personal ethics as an embodiment of values of authenticity and commitment is the hero Orestes in *Les Mouches* translated in English as *Fiesh*. This play of Sartre attacks conventional values. Orestes refuses to join with the people in their feeling of guilt and necessity for atonement induced by the sin of Clytemnestra and Agamemnon. He will not be eased by a display of the wonders of the universe.

Orestes proclaims that he became free from his creator at the moment of his creation. Further, that the purpose of his existence is not to obey any prescriptions while he is in this universe. He, nevertheless, accepts full responsibility for each of his acts. He gives us the role of a spectator and commits his freedom to the cause of the people of Argos. He offers to sacrifice his piece of mind for the sake of suffering people. He sits alone to find new paths of action appropriate for a man who can no longer discover his destiny by considering himself as a part of nature's plan. He accepts the dilemma and the dialectic of freedom and responsibility.
The play depicts that the goals themselves were freely chosen by the individuals. Political and social freedoms exist when individuals are able to commit themselves to a course of action and to progress towards the realisation of their goals. Here, Sartre is symbolising the state of bad faith and inauthenticity in which the people of the city of Argos live. It is a city presided over by the statue of Zeus - God of death and flies. Sartre is trying to portray a state of affairs in which people are not aroused by the emotion of indignation and by the sickness of fear and of hatred.

Argos is a city plagued by flies. Sartre calls it a city of the dead and the alive whose people are great sinners. However, they are trying to get out of their sense of guilt by working for their atonement. Zeus says in this context:

*They have guilty consciences, they're afraid - and fear and guilty consciences have a noddy happy in the posterity of the gods. Yes, the gods take pleasure in such poor souls. Could you save them from the favour of the gods? What, moreover, could you give them in exchange? Good digestions, the great monotony of provincial life, and the boreas - oh, the soul destroying boreas - of long days of mild content.*

(italics mine)

The play signifies the sense of helplessness on the part of the people of Argos, who could do no better than
hear cries, echoes and re-echoes in the city streets. Each one of them finds himself or herself to be too alone to do anything. The repentance for the sin of inaction and passivity and as such, sinning against one who was murdered, characterises the whole atmosphere of the city. It is what they called 'Dead men's day'.

Through the dialogue of Zeus, Sartre expresses the impossibility of elimination of situations which demarcate the domain of human conditions, wherein Zeus says: "If flies bother you, here's a way of getting rid of them... They're falling down and starting to crawl on the ground like caterpillars." The estrangement and loneliness of Orestes is writ large throughout the length and breadth of the play, as also his brazen innocence. He nevertheless expresses his authentic search for, and commitment to, the ideal of freedom and he says:

But, mind you, if there were something I could do, something to give me the freedom of the city; if, even by a crime, I could acquire their memories, their hopes and fears, and fill with these the void within me, yes, even if I had to kill my own mother.

In another section of the dialogue between Electra and her mother Clytemnestra, we find a very interesting
situation explicating the sickness with fear as well as inauthentic repentance - a sort of pestilence, a repentance, which more than anything else, covers the heavy load of guilt. Electra says to Orestes not to heed the pretended repentance of her mother when she says:

Don't pity her, Philebus. The Queen is indulging in our national pastime, the game of public confession... but the folk of Argos are getting a little tired of these amusements; everyone knows his neighbour's sins by heart. The Queen's especially, have lost interest, they're official - our basic crimes, in fact.42

In another passage, Electra speaks sarcastically when she tells Orestes to judge only on the sins owned by people and that there are other evil deeds which are no one's business and that they would not thank anyone for detecting them. Clytemnestra says that she lost her son fifteen years ago when Agamemnon gave him away. Electra reminds her mother that she also had a daughter whom she has converted to a scullion and that if her conscience was all that honest, this would not weigh lightly on her.

Electra accuses her mother of feeling repentance for her lost youth rather than regretting the crime that she committed, and due to that reason, Electra tells
her mother that she hates her youth.

The second act of the play is trying to bring out the element of the superstition through the characters. Each time there is a reference to the flies in the play, it refers to a situation which indicates darkness that fills the black hearts of the people who have sinned for a thousand times and who are perishing of fear and superstition. The tutor tries in the play to tell Orestes to have a good look at the citizens of Argos. He says to Orestes,

What an ugly lot! observe, young master, their sallow cheeks and sunken eyes. These folk are perishing of fear. What better example could we have of the effects of superstition? Just look at them.23 (Italics mine)

At the ceremony of the dead man's day, the dead are recalled by the priest and invited to unleash their hatred on the living and to let go their anger and unleash their lust of vengeance unappeased. This description shows how those who departed for their heavenly journey had been inflicted by tortures and denied happiness.24 That life, in its waking and living form has been transformed into one long spell of mourning, has been depicted very beautifully in a dialogue in the play.
we wear mourning unceasingly, and weep for you
from dawn till dusk, from dusk till dawn. But
somehow, try as we may, your memory dwindles
and slips through our fingers; daily it grows
dinner... Yes you are leaving us, ebbing away
like life-blood from a wound. And yet, know
you well — if this can mollify your bitter hatred
— that you, our dear departed, have laid waste
our lives.35 (Italics mine)

The general existentialist theme of being thrown
into the world without being responsible for it, is
given out in yet another passage

we didn't want to be born, we're ashamed of
growing up. What wrong can we have done you?
It's not our fault if we're alive, and only
just alive see how small we are, how pale and
puny. We never laugh or sing, we glide about
like ghosts. And we're so frightened of you,
we're so terribly afraid.36 (Italics mine)

Sartre in his play Huis clos translated as No Exit,
puts forward the captivating and dramatic formulations
which he had built in his philosophical work Being and
Nothingness, regarding the concrete relations between
people. This play has been considered as one of the
most successful in spite of the austerity of notions
that it contains. It describes most nakedly the themes
of authenticity and bad faith. Like in Elios, the
author makes effective use of the myths of the religion
which he rejects.
The play is a certain hell. It is an unexpected kind of hell, a room with no windows and no mirrors but only three sofas, one each for three characters of the play - Garcin, Inez and Estelle. Each is aware that it is a hell. And yet on entering the room each is surprised not to find any of the proverbial fires or instruments of torture. In the end, they all discover the basic truth; that they are their own tormentors. Each tortures the others.

Garcin and Estelle are both cowards and hypocrites. Inez forces them to admit it. Garcin arrives first, Inez is then shown into the room. She asks him rudely why he looks so frightened. He tells her boldly that he is not afraid, and suggests that they are forced to be in each other's company, so they should try to be polite. Inez assures him that she is not a polite woman. Estelle appears on the scene and shares with Garcin the wish to ease the tension out of the situation by a civilized behaviour. It is given to understand that if Inez was not there, these two would get on well together.

Each tells a lie about the circumstances which compelled them to come there. Garcin says that he was
shot for his views. Estelle, who is young and pretty says that she married a rich old man to get money for her family and then committed adultery with a man she loved. Ines laughs at their sprees. How could any of the two be damned, she asks if one had to be a hero and the other a saint. Why not tell the truth, she says:

Yes, we are criminals - murderers - all three of us we're in hell. My pots, they never make mistakes, and people aren't damned for nothing.  

Garcin resists for a while, then agrees to confess. He has been cruel to his wife for five years, has taken mistresses to his home and made his wife bring them breakfast in bed. Ines confesses that she persuaded the woman to leave her husband and then made the woman feel guilty. Consequently, both were killed, Ines and herself. Estelle says she had driven her lover to suicide by killing their baby. This was the naked truth about three of them. The themes of fear, hope and suffering have been depicted very well.  

Garcin suggested that they should try to help each other. Ines rebuffs him. Estelle is friendlier and is even ready to give herself to him. Garcin,
however, wants the good opinion of Inez as well. He wants the good opinion of everybody from which it follows that he was damned not for his cruelty to his wife but for cowardice. He had tried to run away from the war and had been caught and had died a coward's death.

Garcin is worried that his friends would think him a coward. To overcome cowardice, he asks Estelle whether she loves him. She says "Do you think I could love a coward."? Garcin bangs the door in a bid to be let out. But when the door opens, he does not leave and turns back to Inez. He can't persuade himself to go without having convinced her that he is not a coward. He says,

Listen, each man has an aim in life, a leading motive, that's so, isn't it? Well, I didn't give a damn for wealth, or for love, I aimed at being a real man. A tough, as they say. I staked everything on the same horse...Can one possibly be a coward when one's deliberately courted danger at every turn? And can one judge a life by a single action? (Italics mine)

Garcin refuses to leave without convincing Inez and says:

So I couldn't leave you here, gloating over my defeat, with all those thoughts about me running in your head.
The above statements of Garcin show how Sartre is depicting the tormented consciousness of Garcin about his self-image. Even when he has the freedom to go he can not go without extricating an assurance that at least one person has faith in his honesty. He says,

A thousand of them are proclaiming I'm a coward, but what do numbers matter? If there's someone, just one person, to say quite positively I did not run away, that I'm not the sort who runs away, that I'm brave and decent and the rest of it - well, that one person's faith would save me. Will you have that faith in me? Then I shall love you and cherish you for ever. Estelle - will you?32

In yet another para the intense suffering of Garcin is further illuminated.

Anything, anything would be better than this agony of mind, this creeping pain that grows and fumbles and caresses one and never hurts quite enough.33 (Italics mine)

There is yet another dimension which has been highlighted by Sartre in this play, i.e. the presence of the 'other'. Though objectivity with regard to self-affirmation cannot be realised without an agreement of the other, yet the same 'other', becomes a barrier in the coming together of two people.

Estelle suggests to Garcin that to take revenge,
he should love her under the eyes of Inez. Garcin obeys her but cannot escape the contemptuous gaze of Inez for he says,

There...you know the way they catch larks - with a mirror? I'm your lark-mirror, my dear, and you can't escape me... \footnote{34}

and further

I'll keep looking at you forever, without a flutter of my eyelids, and you'll live in my gaze like a mote in a sunbeam, don't forget I'm here, and watching. I shan't take my eyes off you, Garcin; when you're kissing her, you'll feel them boring into you. \footnote{35}

So Inez makes Garcin aware of his inauthenticity and bad faith and says, "It's no use trying to escape, I'll never let you go". \footnote{36}

Garcin on the other hand knows Estelle to be an inauthentic person whose opinion does not count for him and says: "I shan't love you; I know you too well". \footnote{37}

However he has respect for Inez's opinion and knows that she knows where the truth was for he tells her "And you know what wickedness is and shame and fear".

He continues his reflective dialogue,

There were days when you peered into yourself, into the secret places of your heart, and what you saw there made you faint with horror. And then, next day, you didn't know what to make of it, you couldn't interpret the horror you had glimpsed the day before. \footnote{38}
Estelle makes an attempt to kill Ines by a paper-knife, but of course one who is already dead cannot be killed any further.

The play ends with all three realizing that they are condemned to each other's company for all eternity. And Gascin symbolizes this feeling by saying "Hell is other people." Needless to say the above play can be fully understood only in the light of the concepts and theories expounded in *Being and Nothingness*. Several of these ideas have been voiced through Ines. Not that she is virtuous; she is also damned like the others, but she is not a hypocrite. Her intelligence and her aggressive honesty make her bitterly effective in persecuting Gascin. For Gascin, it is the worst moment to be thought of as a coward. Gascin considers Estelle purely frivolous, selfish and having no moral sense at all. Gascin feels troubled by the very presence of Estelle.

Two points which emerge from this play are: illustration of the argument in *Being and Nothingness* that even if two people maintain a mutual relationship of love, the presence of the third person in the world
would ruin the enterprise and throw it into the realm of the impossible.

Another point that came up in the play is that Garcin in his bad faith invokes a falsehood. The role of Inez is to teach him the painful existentialist truth that a man is what he does and no more. Garcin has no essence of the kind he boasts of. He is a coward because his deeds are cowardly.

The structure of the play is so conceived by Sartre that there is no possibility of freedom being enjoyed by the characters of the play as they happen to be all dead. While they have no future and consequently no projects, they do nevertheless, have a complete life-rootedness in their respective past. They are damned, for there is no possibility of salvation open to them. If Garcin, for example, had been alive there would have been a continuing possibility of ceasing to do cowardly deeds and beginning to be brave i.e., the possibility of conversion from the coward into a brave man. Being dead, it is now too late for him to give life to his projects. Death closes all accounts with a dismal finality. The central themes of the above
play, besides authenticity and bad faith, are damnation and salvation, which Sartre has also examined in his *The Flies* and *Nausea*.

In another brilliant and perhaps one of the best written essays on Baudelaire, Sartre analyses the poet as a man who remained uncommitted to things and persons. This essay is also an attack on the morality of the bourgeoisie which prevented Baudelaire from growing up. He is aware only of his consciousness of himself. For this reason, it is the biography of a narcissist who gapes at his own image but can never touch it or get at himself. It is the story of defeat because finally it gives rise to boredom, disgust and nausea.

It is believed that Sartre bore striking resemblance to Baudelaire in terms of biographical details. Between Baudelaire and his widowed mother, a bond of mutual love and adoration grew. Madame Baudelaire was such an encompassing personality for her son that the two were hardly different from each other — existing as if by necessity in divine right. The mother was an absolute for him but she remarried and this was a turning point
in the life of the poet, which threw him into a very individualistic kind of existence. He experienced solitude and loneliness and through these a sense of nothingness. He found no justification for his existence with his 'absolute' - the mother having been snatched away from him.

Sartre says that Baudelaire chose solitude in his freedom. He, in fact, claimed solitude, for he wanted to feel the uniqueness of his situation. Perhaps the original choice of Baudelaire can be discerned here, though he did not discover any destiny. For, according to Sartre, there is no destiny to be discovered. Baudelaire, "who discovers himself in despair, anger, and jealousy, will base his whole life on the stagnant meditation of his formal singularity." The poet concluded that he was destined to be 'for ever alone'.

Sartre describes how Baudelaire escapes from boredom, disgust and nausea into literary creation. However, Baudelaire does not extend his creativeness to the realm of moral principles. He simply accepts the bourgeois Catholic ethics of his mother and his step-father. He possessed an acute feeling of guilt since he could not live according to bourgeois norms. Sartre, however,
believed that Baudelaire could have been saved if he rejected the parental moral code and worked out a new morality of his own.

According to Sartre, life demands a mature reflection for we cannot forever have the absolute security which the mother and the family provides to a happy child. Freud would call a yearning of this kind for the mother the Oedipus complex. But for Sartre it was a theological complex by which he assimilated his parents to divinities.

He does not feel responsible for the world he lives and just wants to be an object that exists. His self-analysis cannot reveal to him the deep mysteries of his being. He comes to hate himself and humanity. Consequently, in his poetry also, he felt he was giving nothing to people because Sartre says about him: "In writing a poem, he felt he was giving nothing to men, or, at any rate, nothing more than a useless object."40

The essay seems to be a vindication of the point that Baudelaire, out of sheer pride and defiance sought freedom to affirm his individuality. He was consequently filled with his own being, filled to overflowing,
but this himself is:

Nothing but a tasteless, glassy mood...without light or shade...a garrulous consciousness which declared it was itself in a long murmuring that could never be hastened.41 (Italics mine)

In order to escape from the undifferentiated flow of his own consciousness, Baudelaire tried to affirm his individuality to see himself as a unique, and irreplaceable being.

The inauthenticity of Baudelaire emerges from the fact that he simply attempted to escape from the responsibility of creating his own values - a necessity which the basic pointlessness of existence had forced upon him. Baudelaire, according to Sartre was the man who feeling most deeply his condition as a man, made the most passionate attempt to escape from it. It was a flight from anguish of the solitary man who knew himself responsible. It was an escape from moral choice, commitment and action.42

Yet another work of Sartre Saint Genet’s Comedian at martyr, is devoted to an explication of the idea of authenticity which had inspired him to criticise Baudelaire. If the idea of authenticity is that we
should accept and assume full responsibility for what we are, even if this goes against the conventional morality, then, Saint Genet is an exemplary work which symbolizes the idea of authenticity. 43

Genet was an orphan entrusted to foster parents. He was the only person in this society of peasants who was an unnatural product of the town and who was without the right to inherit property of his own. In order to console himself for not being a son, he played himself at being a saint. At the same time, however, he stole small objects and sums of money in order to be 'integrated' into the property-owning community. Inevitably his thefts were discovered, and at the age of ten he was condemned as a criminal and as a thief.

Sartre considers this condemnation of Genet as morally unjust. However, this leads Genet to the awareness of authenticity in its true essence. Genet did not contest the system of values by the application of which he was condemned but he decided that in the face of his rejection by the so called 'good people', he would deliberately assume the evil which they projected
on to him. He chose to live and wanted to be what he was. His intense desire to survive at the heart of despair led him to be, twenty years later, the celebrated poet Jean Genet that he, indeed, did become.

Sartre admired Genet because he was the product of the type of society which bases its moral laws upon ownership—a society in which the so-called 'good people' maintained both their possessions and their peace of mind. Genet proved that society can be changed and new values can be brought into existence. The 'criminal' and the wicked are invented by the 'good people' in order to help them to keep the rules so that their own liberty is secured and they will not have the responsibility of making their choices in the future.

The work is a scathing attack on the moral sense of the bourgeois and raises at the same time a nagging question: "by what strange logic have you transformed a child into a scapegoat—a criminal and a monster?" Sartre shows his extreme hatred of the middle-class morality and also a clear preference for a moral superiority of a classless society.
The story of Jean Genet is one of salvation and not of conversion. The criminal becomes a poet but remains a criminal. He wrote not about a thief but as a thief and pederast, and yet is entirely open and unashamed. With his marvellous talent, Genet communicates to the reader the insider's view of experiences and thrills of his criminal life.

Sartre seems to have admired Genet for being the man who undermined the society which spewed him out. He has recognised the authentic morals as "impossible", for he says,

Any morality which does not present itself explicitly as impossible today contributes to the mystification and alienation of man. The moral "problem" arises from the fact that morals are for us both unavoidable and impossible. Action must give itself its ethical norms in this climate of unassailable impossibility.44 (Italics mine)

However, he hastens to make his position clear when he says:

I do not present these contradictions to condemn Christian morals. I am too deeply convinced that any morals are both impossible and necessary.45

As such it appears that in Saint Genet Sartre was interested in achieving the absolute negation of complete evil and to avenge the society through
literature. This he did by distilling the force of his ideas and his acumen into the narrow and honest minds of the so-called 'good people' so as to stir their conscience and to make them doubt the importance of morality and goodness. Beauty in this sense seeks to become a victorious evil and art a media of salvation.

Sartre speaks of yearning for existence in both his works _Nausea_ and _Saint Genet_. For, Sade, at the same age decided to be what he believed himself destined to be, i.e. 'for ever alone'. Genet also decided to be what he heard himself called - 'thief'. Both seek to be different kinds of beings, yet each seeks 'to be'. One is considered admirable and the other culpable. Yet, Sartre exhibits his basic faith in man, in his choices and intentional projects which he makes his basis for moral evaluation and moral justifiabilities. It seems that Saint Genet is indeed, the ethical work which Sartre had promised his readers towards the end of his _Being and Nothingness_.

Sartre, in one of his sharpest and most revealing of modern political plays, _Les mains sales_, translated in English as _Dirty Hands_, shows his critical attitude to the Communist Party. Hugo, a young middle class
communist is sent by the party to kill one of its leaders, Boedeker, who is making a pact with the royalist and the liberal politicians of his country to resist the Germans. He is accused of selling out the workers to the old ruling class.

However Hugo, the appointed executioner, is a gentle idealist by nature and ill-equipped by his upbringing to kill a man he knows. Though he tells himself that these scruples are bourgeois inhibitions, he can't bring himself to do the job when the opportunity presents itself.

However, he can shoot him later in a state of jealousy than he finds Boedeker with his wife. Later, however, Hugo discovers that the relations with Russia have been restored and that Boedeker's policy of collaboration with the royalists and the liberals has become the policy of the party. But by then it is too late to undo what has been done.

The play is trying to reveal the dynamics of the functioning of a political party in power. And in some brilliant flashes now and then in the play, Sartre is trying to show how an element of depersonalisation
comes up when human relations are subjected to political regimentation. How are the orders of the party leaders executed by the faithful followers without even being understood by them? In this context, we have an interesting statement of Hugo when he says:

> With the best will in the world what you can never do is exactly what the party orders...orders leave you all alone, after a certain point. The order stayed behind and I went alone and killed alone - and I no longer even know why."48 (italics mine)

At another place in the play the nature and function of prejudices is beautifully highlighted in a dialogue between Olga and Louis, when Louis is sent for by Olga to consider the possibility of salvaging Hugo and making him rejoin the party. Olga asks her whether she can see him as he really is, for in the opinion of Louis, Hugo was an undisciplined, anarchist individualist, who was only interested in striking an attractive pose of an intellectual. He called him a bourgeois who worked when it pleased him and stopped at the slightest whim.

In response to this Olga accuses Louis of introducing too much of a personal feeling into this affair and tells him that she had not sent for him to discuss 'personal
prejudices'. For she says "I'm speaking to you in the interest of the party."

Here however, a question arises as to how to determine the limits of objectivity with regard to the opinion of a leader about his fellow workers. Do not the subjective visions and perceptions colour the character-analysis of a person? And if this is conceded then is it not the irony of human affairs that many innocent harmless creatures are sacrificed at the altar of ideologies which in the name of universality and objectivity give expression to only their personal whims and prejudices?

The action done in the name of commitment to political ideology is sometimes done first and understood later. Asked whether he thought of the future after he got out of prison, Hugo replies that he had all along been thinking about only the past - what he had done. "I tried to understand why I did it." This expresses the sense of guilt felt and experienced by him.

Sartre also depicts the dehumanization involved in being labelled by a name that may not make sense
but is assigned to a person by the party. When Hugo is asked what is his name, he says that it is Raskolnikov and is given by the party. Ivan laughs at this and says "What a name!" Yet Hugo cannot disdain this name as it symbolizes the name of a murderer, and he himself had been asked to commit a murder.

That superstition lies dormant in the lives of those who explicitly disdain and denounced any belief in them is strikingly obvious when Hugo says to Ivan that he should go to hell. Olga checks him and says, "One does not say things like that." Hugo feels astonished and somehow is convinced that she is superstitious even though at the party level she is not supposed to be. A note of scepticism is struck at yet another place when Olga tells Hugo:

The party isn't a night school. We're not testing your potentialities, but trying to make use of whatever capabilities you have now.

In response Hugo asks Olga sarcastically whether his talents lie in the typewriter with which he was typing at the moment. The question is again who will determine what kinds of capabilities and talents a person has? There may be several talented persons whose capabilities are never identified as in the case of
Hugo who was tired of scribbling something which he never relished and which had no meaning particularly in times when his friends were perishing. He says in this context: "I'm tired of scribbling while our comrades are dying." 53

This condition is an explicit portrayal of a man getting alienated and estranged from his own activity that he is supposed to perform everyday, and which will explain why those who are authentically committed to a revolutionary ideology soon get disillusioned and desperate and sometimes leave the party fold.

A little later, Louis who was unhappy with Hoederer for having called the committee to have then vote on a proposition for negotiations, explains the situation to Hugo in these words:

On one side there is the fascist government of the Regent, which has lined itself up with the Axis; on the other side there is our party, which is fighting for democracy, for liberty, for a classless society... Hoederer had us meet tonight because he wants the Proletarian Party to join forces with the fascists and the Pentagon and share power with them after the war. 55 (Italics mine)

The party verdict is issued by Louis to Hugo to put to an end the life of a man who wishes to join hands with fascists forces. Hugo even though a party worker is
essentially a self-centered, self-loving man. His self-love is given out in his wife Jessica's dialogue with him who says:

I know who is your mistress, your princess, your empress. It's not me, and it's not the she-wolf. It's you, my pet, it's you yourself. Divide snap-shots of yourself in your suitcase.56

Hoocherz explains to his party makes the necessity of understanding each other. George replies however, that feelings of mutual faith cannot be ordered. Hoocherz reiterates his original contention forcefully that such feelings amongst the members of the same party are an imperative necessity to keep it from breaking apart. Hoocherz, who was to be politically assassinated by Hugo, does concede the significance of political assassinations for the pursuit of an end in view he says: “In principle, I have no objection to political assassination. All parties do it.”57 Hugo tries to convince others that he is only acting out a ‘comedy of despair’ for the entire question of life is only to be or not to be; the rest is only clowning. These lines show a sense of the elusiveness of life and despair that there is no serious meaning in life.58

Hugo’s life in the life of a man who finds himself in a precarious tension of the contradictory moral
dictates of his own conscience. He finds himself a divided self playing out the roles of different characters in the same play - of a man in his essential humanity and of a man who is a part and parcel of a political set up.

His dilemma of what he ought to do is very clearly evident when he says to his wife:

Look here, if I haven't killed him by tomorrow, I'll either have to disappear or go to them and say: do with me what you will. If I kill (he covers his face with his hand for a moment) what ought I to do?" (Italics mine)

Hugo accuses Soederer of involving the party in his personal and pleads with him that a revolutionary organization should retain its intrinsic purity. Soederer replies however: "Revolutionary parties are organized to take power." and that even after the revolution the proletariat will remain the weakest class if it cannot acquire enough power as such power ought to be the nucleus for all political planning so that ends can really be attained. But being a faithful party worker, Hugo replies back:

party has one programme, the realization of a socialist economy, and one method of achieving it: the class struggle. You are going to use it to pursue a policy of class collaboration in the frame of a capitalist economy...this party is yours...I beg you don't sacrifice it with your own hands." (Italics mine)
Hoelderer maintains his earlier position that if one is in politics, then one should strive only in the direction of the end in view. He says to Hugo:

What do you think the party is, a racing stable? Why polish a knife everyday if you don’t intend to cut something with it? A party is always a tool. It has only one goal: Power.62 (Italics mine).

He called power politics as the policy of the living for the living in which if the need arises even a lie is justified. For political action necessitates such smaller evils for the sake of a higher goal. He says in this context:

I’ll lie when I must, and I have contempt for no one. I wasn’t the one who invented lying. It grew out of a society divided into classes, and each one of us has inherited it from birth. We shall not abolish lying by refusing to tell lies, but by using every means at hand to abolish classes.63 (Italics mine)

The above quotation gives the clearest exposition of the ideas of Sartre on the question of means-ends relationship. For him, the ideal of classless society which alone can promise freedom and its consequent possibilities of authentic choice and committed action, is supreme and for the realization of this any method or modality of action is justified.64
REFERENCES


2. This has reference to some philosophies of the East, particularly Buddhism which maintains that *trans* (desire) is the root cause of man's 'bondage' and 'suffering' in the world. Only through detachment of transcendence of this *trans* or desire can we attain highest state of liberation called *Nirvana* by Buddha.

   See also, Prof. K. Satchidanand Murty, Nageriuna, (Delhi : National Book Trust, 1971).


4. Jean Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p.335.

5. Ibid, p.46.

   See also, Richard E. Aquila, "Two Problems of Being and Nonbeing in Sartre's Being and Nothingness, Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, XXXVIII, 1, (September, 1977).

6. Ibid.


   See also, Jean Paul Sartre "Materialism and Revolution", in Situations, III, p.172.


11. Jean Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p.68.


13. Ibid, p.73.

15. Ibid, p. 79.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
24. Ibid, p. 79.
27. Jean Paul Sartre, No Exit and Three other Plays, p. 17.
29. Ibid, p. 41.
30. Ibid, p. 44.
31. Ibid.
33. Ibid, p. 42.
34. Ibid, p. 21.
35. Ibid, pp. 35-36.
36. Ibid, p. 46.
37. Ibid, p. 36.
38. Ibid, p. 43.

40. Ibid., pp.220-221.


42. Ibid., p.143.


44. Sartre, *Saint Genet*, p.177.

45. Ibid., p.211.


49. Ibid., p.136.

50. Ibid., p.141.

51. Ibid., p.143.

52. Ibid., p.145.


55. Ibid., pp.148-149.

56. Ibid., p.139.
57. Ibid, p. 191.
58. Ibid, p. 204.
59. Ibid, p. 213.
60. Ibid, p. 220.
61. Ibid, p. 221.
63. Ibid, p. 223.