Sartre and The Other between Philosophy and Fiction

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Abstract

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This study examines the existential representation of the Other in three selected works by Jean-Paul Sartre: *Being and Nothingness*, *The Age of Reason*, and *No Exit*. The first work is philosophical, the other two are literary.

*Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (1943) is the major philosophical work of the first half of Sartre’s career. The essay examines man, the being who questions being, and concludes that he is both his body occupying a place in the world, that is an object among objects and a subject or a consciousness reflecting on objects. Since it is basically a negating function, consciousness produces the concept of nothingness; man is the being by whom negation is introduced
into a complete world. Moreover, *Being and Nothingness* is a massive essay of key existential concepts, including those of "contingency", "bad faith" and "freedom". Sartre proclaims absolute freedom through Being-for-itself, which is distinguished from Being-in-itself, a nonconscious state.

Focus is made on Sartre's philosophical and literary treatment of the Other in the concrete interpersonal relationships which include: love, masochism, indifference, desire, hate, sadism, togetherness, and conflict or estrangement which makes a strong basis for all these concrete relations with the Other.

The relations between the characters in Sartre's novel *The Age of Reason* and his play *No Exit* echo the philosophical theory of being--for-others in *Being and Nothingness*. This study proves that Sartre's theory of the Other is illuminated through the existence of many existential insights in his literary works.

Moreover, Sartre's fictional heroes embody the existential motifs in their daily lives. They are besieged by the vanity and emptiness of their acts. They try to avoid falling into the Other's world, but they fail. Accordingly, they evade freedom by self-deception; instead of realizing their authentic beings, they fall in "bad faith".