

# Good example of jean paul satre and existentialism literature review

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## Philosophy Journal

"Burnt Norton" by T. S. Eliot

This poem is told through a narrator speaking directly to an audience. He warns of living in the present and not to suffer the past or worry about the future, "If all time is eternally" present. To worry about what one has already done in the past, "Down the passage which we did not take Towards the door we never opened will not help to live well in the present." (Eliot) To spend one's time thinking and planning for the future is also a waste, "Here is a place of disaffection Time before and time after". (Eliot) By being in the moment, a person can make effective change and do the right thing. Being in a state of thinking, reflecting or worrying will not lead to action. Action in the present is what makes for a life well lived.

Some say that this poem is about original sin and redemption. I did not get that impression at all. I felt it was more of a lesson and that the narrator was warning me. He speaks of a rose garden, taking time to explore the garden. This garden is my life. I will find good and bad in this garden which represents life. There are the flowers and the thrush representative of positive things and the dry pool which represents emptiness in life.

"And the end and the beginning were always there Before the beginning and after the end. And all is always now". Music, language, life all exist in the moment. The sound of the music does not exist in the past, nor has it occurred yet in the future. I learned from this poem to stay in the moment and enjoy it.

This was a very interesting movie. I had a hard time really understanding the definition of existentialism but watch the movie and the interaction between the characters made it real and tangible for me. The movie follows three characters who are locked in a room together. The room represents hell and the three characters, Joseph, Ines and Estelle are there for very good reason.

They all recognize that they are in hell but are slow to reveal why they are there. Joseph, a coward was killed by a firing squad. He also cheated on his wife. Ines, a lesbian who stole her cousin's wife and responsible for his murder. Estelle, a married woman who had an affair, killed the child that was the product of that union and caused the suicide of the father.

I love the fact that when they arrive in hell, they look for instruments of torture and find each other. They are the torture instruments for each other. They will face eternity dealing with each other. As the play unfolds, I think that this version of hell is much worse than what most people envision. Physical torment would be welcomed after being stuck with these people forever. The love triangle that forms between the three is what causes the pain and wanting and constructs their hell. In existentialism, the philosophy is that we are responsible for our actions and behaviors. There is no higher power, only human will. Only we are responsible for what we do, so we must be willing to accept the consequences of our actions. What we do defines us and we must accept that. Hell is other people, what they think of us, how they react to us. The lesson for me was to try and live a decent life, so that I am not stuck with such annoying people for all of eternity.

## **Emily Dickinson, “ Because I Could Not Stop for Death”**

Dickinson describes death as a carriage that stops and picks her up, “ He kindly stopped for me—The Carriage held but just Ourselves—And Immortality” (Dickinson). There is no longer the need to work or the opportunity to play, “ And I had put away My labor and my leisure too” (Dickinson).. Just an ongoing carriage ride past schools, fields and who knows what else. There is a stop at her new home, “ We paused before a House that seemed, A Swelling of the Ground—“(Dickinson). This obviously references a grave, but the stop is brief and the carriage moves on. Dickinson describes this eternal carriage ride as “ Since then—'tis Centuries —and yet Feels shorter than the Day”(Dickinson). The experience of death and the afterlife she describes seems pleasant, calming and quiet. In light of viewing “ No Exit” by Satre and his depressing and tense view of hell after death, this poem was comforting. The other poems we read by Dickinson on death also painted a tranquil scene when death comes to a person. She makes no mention of hellish flames or a glorious heaven, simple quiet and peace when life is over. I find this idea comforting. Dickinson offers no judgment after life, simply a different kind of existence.

## **“ Socrates on Self Confidence-Philosophy ‘ A Guide to Happiness”**

This video explored Socrates and his philosophies of life. Socrates wrote nothing down, we rely on his student Plato’s writings and his descriptions of Socrates and his ideas. The video opens with the idea that people are like sheep. We tend to follow the crowd because they must what is best. We assume that people in authority also know the right thing to do and we

should trust them. Socrates espoused questioning these things. We should ask questions of those in authority. Socrates was a nonconformist who was looking for the truth through dialog with people.

Socrates held that we should overcome our laziness and timidity and stand up for what we believed in. We should take time to develop our own ideas and stand by them. Socrates developed a method to test the opinions we develop. There are five steps: common sense ideas; find an exception to the common sense idea; is there an exception; take the exception into account; continue to look for exceptions.

This method of questioning and exploring helps us to develop independent thought and builds our self-confidence. This is what is referred to as a self-examined life. Becoming more independent in our thought processes leads to confidence and happiness.

In today's society we are very quick and eager to adopt someone else's opinion. It is a much easier route than having to develop our own. We use the internet to "share" ideas. Are we sharing our own original thoughts or merely the opinions that we have been spoon fed by others. Politicians, movie critics, music programs, counselors and advisers in school are just a few of the places we look to develop our opinions. If everybody loved the movie, it must be good, right? These are the shoes everyone's wearing so they must be the best. Everyone is going into this field of study so it must be the right field of study for me. If we sit back and reflect on the many decisions we have recently made, we will quickly discover that the vast majority of them were "following the crowd" mentality.

Politicians are in office because they know what to do, they know how to lead

us. They are in possession of information that is not at our disposal to make the right decisions for the populace. This idea is so far from the truth. As citizens we have the right and a duty to question authorities, we should pursue the truth. I think I prefer Socrates way of life much better than being a mere sheep that shuffles along, bleating the same things as the rest of the flock.

## **Sigmund Freud**

Freud held the belief that both our conscious and unconscious are responsible for our thoughts and actions. There are three parts of the mind: the id; ego; and superego. These three parts of the mind represent very different aspects of our personality and are in constant conflict with each other. This struggle is what causes our thought processes and behaviors. The id is like a child. It seeks pleasure and searches to fill our most primal needs. The id looks for immediate gratification for its wants. The id does not consider consequences. It operates, according to Freud, on the pleasure principle. The ego on the other hand looks for balance between right and wrong. It was created out of the id and it seeks to fulfill the desires of the id, but in a manner that is acceptable to others and in the context of society. It works on the reality principle. Lastly the superego which operates on the principle of morals and standards that we have. It is the opposite of the id. The ego balances the forces of the id and the super ego. The conflict is often unconscious and we are not aware of it.

I think that Freud has an interesting way of describing our thinking and our actions. I don't think that Freud gives enough credit to our conscious self and

our thinking processes. I think if one is in touch with their thoughts and reflective in nature there is an opportunity for change in thought and actions. Freud does not allow for our desires and morals to change in his philosophy. I think people can change. I think that people are influenced all of the time, sometimes positively and sometimes negatively.

I also think there is too much emphasis on Freud's other ideas such as oral fixation, Oedipus complex and other ideas on psycho-sexual development. There is some truth in them but I don't think these drives are responsible entirely for our development.

### **Zoe Weil, “ The Interconnectedness of All Life”**

Zoe Weil is a humane educator. She teaches about human rights, animal protection, environmental stewardship and cultural issues. Her philosophy is that as we navigate life we make choices every day. MoGo is a catch phrase she uses the means the Most Good and the Least Harm. As we navigate our daily life we make a million small decisions. Should we drink coffee from a ceramic mug or a Styrofoam cup? Should we use a cloth diaper or a disposable one? Should we throw our empty six pack in the ocean or recycle it later?

I really enjoyed her talk on YouTube. Her philosophy is one that I do follow as do many of my friends. Weil makes it a point that we cannot think our way into living well but being active. Do good things, show respect for others and the environment. When I make a purchase I think about the source of what I am buying? How do I dispose of the product when I am finished with it? I don't litter and I recycle. Am I respectful towards the people around me? Am

I informed about political, environmental and cultural issues? Am I active in contributing to society?

I thing that her example of writing your epitaph now and not later is an interesting idea. How do I want to be remembered? Did I do my part for this world? She encourages people to be proactive. Sitting around thinking about how we can better our planet and the people on it is not enough. Every day we need to be proactive in devising and implementing solutions. We need to act responsibly in every act we perform. She also suggests seeking joy in service which is something that brings us a great sense of happiness and fulfillment. Weil also advises us to let go anger and despair, these emotions will hold us back and not allow us to be active and be an agent of change.

## **Confucianism**

Confucius was a Chinese teacher who was born in 552 B. C. It has been very influential in Chinese life. There is debate as to whether Confucianism is a religion or a philosophy. This is not important to me. I find that some of the beliefs and tenets of Confucianism interesting if applied to life. Confucius had a deep respect for ancient rituals and moral stories and histories.

The first principle is ren or humaneness or benevolence. There is respect and understanding of rituals and etiquette, being true to one's own nature, reciprocity and family. The rituals he discussed were not complex religious ceremonies but rather everyday etiquette and courtesy. Treating others with respect and dignity. Social order is achieved through these practices. It is also important that humans understand their roles, in their family and all relationships. They should conform to these roles and have respect for those



who are performing in their role.

Confucian philosophy strives for perfectionism in people. We should be kind, respectful and know our place in society. These ideals are true to a certain extent but I am not sure if they apply to life in modern times. Respect and etiquette are positive things that should be practiced. As a student I must respect my professors and conform my behavior to their expectations. As a child, I must respect my parents. However, in this ever changing world, people are becoming more independent and questioning. There is not an inherent respect or even trust in government, our elders and our families. Young adults are being raised to question and think outside the box. Each generation has become a little more selfish and unthinking about the world around them. I think we need to find balance between the teachings of Confucius and the norms of modern life.

## **Hinduism**

Hindus believe in one Supreme Being. Their text are the Four Vedas. There are many sects of Hinduism and they have different ways of practicing their denominations. The basic beliefs are cremation immediately following death. This allows for the release of the soul for reincarnation. Karma are the actions we perform every day. Dharma are the rules and laws that are expected in a society. Karma will determine what type of life you will be born into in the next life. Ahisma is the idea that all things are interconnected. Nonviolence is also a common practice among Hindus, Ghandi is a prime example of this. The cycle of birth, life, death and rebirth is part of the Hindu way of thinking.

I find the practices associated with Hinduism very interesting. To do good things to or for other people, to practice kindness and respect all demonstrate good karma. By observing laws, customs and other societal restraints and norms we also make positive karma. So many philosophies that we have examined have similar principles. There is no room for violence or bad moral behavior. You don't want your next life to be a bad one so try to live a good one right now.

The path of action, The Vedas is to live a good life both in the home and in society. One should raise a family and worship appropriately. The next path is knowledge, Upanishads. Through meditation one can become enlightened with Brahman, and live in a higher reality. The third path is devotion, bhakti marga.

In today's world, many have tried to understand Hinduism and make it a practice and a way of life. Meditation and yoga have become immensely popular as a way to achieve a connection between mind, body, soul and the universe.

## **Buddhism**

The video on yogis who practice Buddhism in Tibet was fascinating. How these men practice their religion to such an extreme degree is beyond me. Tibet is a harsh place to live. It is freezing and forbidden. Buddhist monks are on a journey to achieve peace and enlightenment. They practice nonviolence. Tibetan Buddhism also embraces the arts and sciences and their teaching. They feel this knowledge helps to achieve enlightenment. I really enjoyed the video. It touched on so many aspects of the life of

Tibetan Buddhists, their leader, the Dalai Lama and their contributions to life around them. Their persecution at the hands of China was horrible. These yogis are peaceful people. The culture has been broken by the Chinese takeover. There are few yogis who still practice their form of Buddhism. Once a secluded and secretive society, yogis are becoming more open and discussing their way of life and practices.

They are now sharing their knowledge of deep meditation, control of their mind and teachings are passed from one teacher to their student. These lines of lineage are very important. Yogis are different from monks in that they have a profound understanding of all phenomena. They are the seniors of the monks. They have been on extended retreats where training of the mind has reached extreme levels. Yogis try to generate positive energy and let go of negative energy and thoughts.

Yogis look for quiet places and remove themselves from society so that they can achieve enlightenment. Although I have profound respect for these men, I question their voluntary removal from all of society. How can one effect change in the world, if one is not living in the world?

## **Deepak Chopra, “ Life after Death”**

This series of videos was fascinating. Deepak Chopra is a brilliant thinker and presents very interesting ideas. He challenges both religion and science. His principle is that life and death are a continuous cycle. He maintains that we are pure consciousness or a soul. Life as humans doesn't exist. Life as we know it in the physical sense is a projection of our consciousness. Chopra's views on life and death are very controversial. He has met with resistance

from both the religious world and the scientific profession.

He also states that religion is obsolete. Organized religion is responsible for violence and chaos. Morals are created within us. We know what is inherently right and wrong. When we understand the true meaning of our higher consciousness we are only able to be good and ethical.

Chopra not only dismisses organized religion but science as well. He compares scientists to fundamentalist religious leaders. He questions scientists that their studies are also meaningless. They are not examining what really matters in life. The genes that drive our conception and development are not important. Our consciousness is what matters. Chopra takes eastern philosophy and religion and introduces into western thought. I find Chopra's ideas fascinating. The video really clarified his philosophies for me. I would like to read some of his books so that I can really understand his encompassing beliefs and see how I can apply them to myself. I like his ideas on living a simple life. He makes a comment about personal material goods are a waste. He is a millionaire several times over but you would never know it. He still meditates and practices living a good life that reflects his beliefs. Of all the philosophies and ideas we have covered, Chopra is the one that I would like to investigate further.

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