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Concepts of Truth and Reality in Don Delillo's *Zero-K*

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled “Concepts of Truth and Reality in Don DeLillo’s *Zero K*” is my own work and all the sources I have quoted have been acknowledged by means of references.

Signature

Date

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My Master journey has been tempestuous, with many crises and many lessons. But I admit that I have learned so much and I see things differently now. I thank everyone who in one way or another contributed in the completion of this thesis. My thanks, first and foremost, go to Allah for giving me the strength and ability to embark on this journey and to see it to fruition.

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DEDICATION

To the most educated man I have ever knew

to my father and my father only

who passed away before I reached this degree.ﷺ

May Allah bless his soul with mercy and forgiveness

and dwell him in his paradise.

“Surely we belong to Allah and to him we shall return.”

ABSTRACT

The quest for the truth has been for a long time the concern of many philosophers and authors. In the contemporary era our lived reality has a relation to concepts such as hyperreality, and philosophies such as Existentialism which have enriched the debate about the quest for truth and concept of reality in literary criticism. Therefore, this dissertation aims to examine and explore the ways to reach the truth, and the complex concept of reality in Don DeLillo's *Zero K* (2016). Additionally, it illustrates the intended meaning of 'the truth' in the novel and its relation to the concept of 'hyperreality' as a deformation of the authentic reality. It also provides a reading of an analogy between Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" and the experience that the protagonist goes through in the story in order to understand the multiple nuances of truth and reality. Such an illustration enriches the analysis of three main aspects in the novel. First, it explores the quest that the protagonist found himself involved in. Second, it examines the existential journey that accompanied the protagonist inside the hyperreal setting. Third, it seeks to shed light on the deformed reality causing a blur to his quest. To achieve this, the dissertation relies on Plato's Theory of Forms and The Allegory of the Cave, Jean Baudrillard concept of hyperreality and Simulacra in addition to other concepts Existentialist Criticism.

Keywords: Quest, Truth, Reality, Hyperreality, Existentialism, *Zero-K*.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a discourse concerning the applications of ‘hyperreality’ concept in many fields. Such as, design, social media, advertisements, photography, cultural studies, technology and philosophy. Although, several scholars recognize hyperreality as a versatile concept and acknowledge its presence as a multidisciplinary field of research, there has been discourses which enriched the field of literary criticism and media concerning the concept of ‘hyperreality’ and the multiple meaning of the term. Many questions were raised in the theoretical and empirical literature such as if reality is objective what makes it so? If reality is subjective what makes it so? Can we depend on our senses to absorb the concept reality? Is it right ahead of us? Or it lays somewhere else? Does the truth about reality exist in the world?

In 1981, the French sociologist, philosopher and cultural theorist Jean Baudrillard published his philosophical treatise *Simulacra and Simulation*, where he illustrates hyperreality as a versatile concept. This means that hyperreality can be seen in multiple places through a personal experience that can lead to acknowledgement of it. Baudrillard proceeds to examine the concept of hyperreality in his book using the world of Disneyland as an example where the hyperreality replaced the authentic reality in the world around us

The imaginary of Disneyland is neither true nor false, it is a deterrence machine set up in order to rejuvenate the fiction of the real in the opposite camp. Whence the debility of this imaginary, its infantile degeneration. This world wants to be childish in order to make us believe that the adults are elsewhere, in the “real” world, and to conceal the fact that true childishness is everywhere – that it is that of the adults

themselves who come here to act the child in order to foster illusions as to their real childishness. (13)

Baudrillard argues that Disneyland is a world made to enhance the hybridity between reality and fiction in the real world outside, using the fantasy of Disneyland to convince the visitors that the imaginary is within the world of Disneyland itself only, and what is outside of it is real. It is about the visitors who to go Disneyland and enjoy the fantasy that it provides.

There is a relation that links the concept of hyperreality and truth, since hyperreality covers the truth, and the truth is hidden beyond the hyperreality. Similarly, philosophers have challenged ideas to uncover the relation between these two as in the Greek philosophy separation between truth and its deformed representation. In this concern, Julia Annas addresses this topic in a book entitled *Plato a very short introduction*, where she argues that there is a difference between philosophical essence of figures and its physical manifestation as known as theory of Forms established by Plato. Also, these manifestations are changeable therefore are not trust worthy to build a durable fact upon because they do not reflect the universal essence of the metaphysical aspect of them. Therefore, the idea of the truth is related to concepts of hyperreality in a way that it lays behind the deformed reality around us.

Philosophers discussed the manners to reach the truth, and created a discourse to illustrate the difference between the truth and the deformed reality around us. Concerning such a topic, Plato examines this matter in his famous concept of the 'Allegory of the Cave', represented in an individual who had the chance to see the truth out of an environment that does not contains the reality needed to reach the truth. Currently, this allegory can be applied in our contemporary world with the false representation of news, topics and figures shaping

hyperreality and the mission of the individual is to go through all the layers of this misrepresentation to reveal the truth that he/she seeks.

In Literature, we can see that hyperreality and quest for the truth are characteristics of the postmodern novelists, due to the multi-interpretation nature of the contemporary world that we live in. It is up to the individual to find the way out of the illusion around him to fulfill his aim in order to avoid the existential void that might be caused if he abandoned his individual pursue in life. One of the authors who known for such a theme is Thomas Pynchon. He is arguably one of the most known authors in the postmodern American literature, who has written *V (1963)*, *The Crying of Lot 49(1966,)* and *gravity's Rainbow (1973)* among other works. Don DeLillo is also an author of many fictional works. His works involves themes and concerns such as consumerism, death, intellectualism, mass media and terrorism.

Zero K by Don DeLillo received positive reviews websites and magazines such as *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Guardian* and *The Atlantic*. The story is told by the protagonist Jeffery, where Jeffrey Lockhart's father, Ross, is a billionaire in his sixties, with a younger wife, Artis, whose health is failing. Ross is a major shareholder in a distant and hidden complex where mortality is meticulously regulated, and human bodies are stored until biomedical advancements and new technology may restore them to life as an exceeded promise. When Artis submitted her body in the Convergence, Jeffrey joined them to bid uneasy valediction. We do not get to choose who we are or where we were born. Is it necessary for us to die the same way? isn't it a triumph for humans to refuse a predetermined destiny? Such a questions disturbed Jeffery, precisely Ross Lockhardt who had a desire to travel to another realm and awaken to different world. It is unjustifiable to his son. The narrator, Jeffery is dedicated to examine the combined amazement of life, in our world terrorism, floods, fires, famine in

comparing to the beauty of human average life, love and the warm touch of the sun to earth. *Zero K* is a glorious, soulful novel from one of the great writers of our time.

This being said, *Zero K* is an interesting choice since DeLillo provides a significant illustration of how the individual perceives reality and insight into the complex and changing nature of truth and reality. The novel also offers an interesting outlook on the role of Existentialism in the life of the individual linking his aim the truth and his surroundings that is a hyperreal. Therefore, this thesis attempts to answer the following main question: How is reality constructed in the world of *Zero-K*? It further aims to answer the following sub-questions: How does Don DeLillo relate the experience of the narrator to larger contemporary concerns about the nature of truth and Reality? How does the complexity of existing within a hyperreal world affect the individual's Existential experience? How are technological and scientific advancements affecting the Individual's existence and perception of reality?

Therefore, the thesis examines the complex levels of reality and truth in the context of *Zero-K*. It further offers a reading of Plato's Theory of Forms and the Allegory of the Cave in analogy with the protagonist's experience inside the "Convergence" and his exposure to different nuances of reality and hyperreality. This can explain the nature of searching for the truth as a personal mission using the Existentialism philosophy in a hyperreal environment that blurs the path for the protagonist which creates the plot events and context of *Zero K*. It also examines the personal development of the protagonist in his assessment of life.

Literature Review:

Zero K discusses existential quest that every individual can related to. Therefore, it leads to many interpretations ranging from metaphysical to psychoanalytic and existential. The novel received commendation from several critics for its attempts to incorporate beyond the American

culture the view to existence, truth and reality. *The New York Times* says: “ individual genius, sentence by sentence, DeLillo seduces”, *Los Angeles Times* says: “DeLillo has a signature prose style, language intelligent and abrupt, choppy, atomizing philosophies and ideas”. *The Guardian* commenting: “one of our leading chroniclers of contemporary reality turns his attention to life after death.” James Lasdun states: “One doesn’t think of Don DeLillo as a religious writer, exactly, but there has always been an atmosphere of divination and prophecy about his work; a tendency for his plots to take their characters through successive portals of initiation, often into vaguely cultic mysteries” (Lasdun). The book has been praised by many in the *American Letters*, where it presents an attempt to understand the American life. While DeLillo writes about the cultural context of the American novel he writes about universal topic “The scale of his inquiry is global and historic...His works is astounding, made of stealthy blessings” (Jennifer Egan).

The nature of such an unusual story departs from its complexity in gathering divergence topics, where the presence of death as an inevitable event in every life is faced with an escape from it with the immortality that process Zero K provides. Also, the opportunities that can come along with immortality on one hand and the anguish of having everlasting full of emptiness on the other hand. Additionally, the artificiality of the environment that protagonist was surrendered with in some point in the novel in compared with the authenticity of the life that he lived before that. Sam Lipsyte in his article review “The big chill, Don DeLillo’s novel of finance and cryogenics” states that: “ Zero K deserves to win old and new readers alike. It’s a marvelous blend of DeLillo’s enormous gifts” (n.p).

The novel mentions a significant role for technology leading the story’s events. The Convergence, where Jeffery learns about process Zero K, is a facility filled with technological

devices that reflects the scientific advancement in it .This is a typical postmodern theme since technology is an important part of our daily life and common in DeLillo's works.

We can say that DeLillo is an avant-gardist since he discusses futuristic events in such a realistic and marvelous way. Such as, the catastrophe that is predicted by the scientific in the *Convergence* and the destruction that it can cause. Also, the immortal life after process *Zero K* is an futuristic topic to discuss. In this concern, Charles Finch in his review article "Buying a way past death: 'Zero K' by Don DeLillo" says: "Zero K is excellent in many ways: it's full of DeLillo's amazing inimitable scalpel perceptions; it's fluent in the ideas we'll be talking about 20 years from now; and it reads like a book a millennial could have written. Given that its author is nearly 80, that's dumbfounding".

Research Design and Methodology:

For the purposes of this research, Plato's "Theory of Forms" in addition to his "Allegory of the Cave" in relation to *Zero-K*'s unusual setting that questions the nature of reality and how individuals perceive it. In examining the concepts of truth and reality, Baudrillard's insights on Hyperreality and Simulacra will be used. This is coupled with important concepts from Existential Theories in order to understand the characters' existential crisis within a distorted reality and their quest for immortality along the way. In order to develop a better comprehension of the topic, this thesis depends on a close reading of *Zero K* and a major philosophical and cultural works to analyze the thematic content and the behavior of the protagonist and his interaction in the primary text.

The work will be divided into an introduction, two main chapters, and a conclusion. The first chapter will be dedicated to the theoretical framework. First of all, the theory of Forms precisely tackled along with the allegory of the cave both established by Plato for a better

understanding of the difference between the physical reality and its philosophical essence. Additionally, this theoretical section will be influenced by *Simulacra and simulation* book written by Jean Baudrillard, since it conceptualizes hyperreality and provides analysis for the novel that is being studied. Also, this chapter will illustrate the Existentialism philosophy and its role in determining the meaning of existence in the protagonist's personal life. Moreover, it implicitly determines his behavior that reflects on the course of events in the novel.

The second chapter of the thesis is entitled "Distant Realities and Confounded Truths: Hyperreal Existence in the Absence of God in *Zero K*." It opens its first section with a discussion about the author and the novel. Next, the second section of the chapter deals with the theory of Forms within the context of the novel as a fundamental illustration to the allegory of the cave and its resemblance to the Convergence facility. The third section, will discuss the reality in the Convergence as it was represented in Baudrillard's *Simulacra and simulation*. The fourth section, discusses the replacement of God with science, due to its ability to provide immortality. The last section, will examine the existential crisis that the protagonist goes through due to the absence of God in life and how he reacts to it and the immortality option.

CHAPTER ONE:

Philosophical Concepts of Truth, Reality, and Existential Crisis

1. Introduction:

This chapter is devoted to demonstrate the theoretical foundation of this thesis. The first part is dedicated to the discussion of Plato's theory of Forms as a critical theory. Additionally, it discusses "the Allegory of the Cave" with a clarification for the example that it holds along with the exploration of the philosophical concepts of simulacra and simulation. Thereafter, it proceeds with exposing the difference between reality and falsity in the concept of hyperreality and creating the world of Forms. Next, the second part of the chapter encloses the philosophy of Existentialism and how it is used as a tool to find the meaning of life. Framing a steady philosophical background in this chapter can facilitate the illustration process of how such a perspectives and concepts are utilized in Don DeLillo's *Zero-k*, that will be discussed in the second chapter.

2. The Reality is Elsewhere: Plato's Philosophy.

2.1. The Theory of Forms:

Dealing with philosophical theories is dealing with one of the most significant fields that one can come across, due to its striking depth in the intellect experience of humanity. Generally, it is a universal and expensive way for humans to absorb life around them, and see whether reality of subjects and figures are what is being seen or there is reality that lays somewhere else beyond. Thus, the study of reality and falsity is an inseparable part of life and philosophical theories, and the question of authenticity is still posed. Nevertheless, contemporary literature as a reflection to contemporary world is concerned with this vivid matter and its implementations in life.

The authenticity of subjects and figures in life goes back to Plato's era, where he was influenced by skeptical traditions of his teacher Socrates, who is also a central figure in Plato's dialogues. Many early Greek philosophers recognize that we live in a world that does not provide an easy source of absolute knowledge, due to the changeable nature of the world, seasons are reflection of change, buildings crumble, trees, humans live and then die, even our senses can be unreliable sometimes.

It was Plato who claims that philosophy grasps what he calls "Forms" though he has no technical term, often using Greek idiom, 'the F itself', which conveys little in terms of meaning in English. Julian Annas, philosopher, and Regents professor in the University of Arizona, in her book *Plato a Very Short Introduction* (2003). She introduced the theory of Forms that Plato found, and illustrated it with an example for further insight. Plato sees "Forms" as the supreme core of philosophy, which is an enforcement for the power of ideas. Although Plato is used to preserve his philosophy in a dialogue form, there is no obvious presentation for "the theory of Forms", it was mentioned in the dialogues as an idea that was familiar in among philosophers including Socrates, yet no appropriate introduction was found for a theory that supposed to be that familiar. In the *Parmenides* first part, six objections were mentioned against "Forms" with a conclusion that criticizes the quality of the idea, and its lack for further development to gain affirmation and viability (Annas 83).

Forms is mentioned in the *Timaeus* in a broad sense, including by our acknowledgement of the knowledge and true belief difference, (Plato, as it should be noticed, does not take into consideration that our perception of knowledge might not answer everything, he argues that the knowledge that we seek is capable of that, at least the principles are achievable). Yet, with that

been said. It leaves a large interpretation about the nature of “Forms”, as Plato’s discussion for the matter is difficult to integrate (Annas 84).

In the *Timaeus*, Forms is presented in a very broad sense, it is illustrated through the example of the craftsmen and the process they go through in order to realize their abstract ideas to a concrete object, including the primary four elements that fill matter and spatially situated. Forms are like the patterns that brings the abstract idea of craftsmen to an object in the concrete world. Forms do exist without come to being, in a world of ideas. Whereas, the concrete objects come to being in the physical world. This is the main metaphysical difference between Forms and the concrete objects as their reflection in the physical world, this difference was involved in *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Symposium*, and other Plato’s important passages. Though, we do not always reach the same conclusion concerning the concrete objects and how they “come to be”. At the same time, to the question concerning what objects are “participants” in Forms (Annas 84).

An astonishingly common idea that is absolutely wrong, viz a Form exist for each word we utilize to a number or individuals, therefore, a Form for each general term (Forms became what is going to be called later universals). Such a prospective is built on a misinterpretation of a passage in the *Republic* (596a). Where it truly states that there is only one Form. The principle of Form for each term can be frivolous, and make understanding Forms a confusing matter, items that we need an intellect effort to absorb. Furthermore, it goes against Plato’s firm belief that the way we use language contains conventions and preconceptions, and on its own it is not a valid approach to reach philosophical truth (*Cratylus*, *Statesman* 262-3).

‘Participants’ come to ‘be’. Whereas, ‘Forms’ they just ‘are’. Among many ways that Forms came to be is change. Once a thing owns a property, another time it comes to own another

property, and it is possible to own a property that is eliminating or opposed to the first property. It is easy to find passages where Plato emphasizes the interchangeability of the world that we live in, comparing it the changelessness of the Forms. It is related to understanding, we can have a better conception about the nature of the thing if we are not obliged to identify it in a way that have to be modified as the thing changes, (as a mathematical feature, facts do not change over time). But the fact that the world is changeable is a strikingly invalid reason for their emphasis on the metaphysical inferiority to the object that it do not change. Happily, it is not Plato's own argument.

What brings curiosity even more is the "argument of opposites", and that is the foremost conspicuous ways where Forms are addressed in *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Hippias Major*. It emphasizes on the idea that, whereas we are able to make a genuine claim that an object in our world of experience is Form, also a property is a Form as well. In addition, we are able to find a prospective from where we are capable of claiming genuinely it is the inverse of Form. Sticks which have same length, have the same width as well. A young lady that is lovely comparing to other young ladies is unappealing comparing to goddesses, an act that is right in fulfilling a promise is wrong if it is dangerous and so on. In some cases prospective where we find the obverse of property Form is unlikely in the extreme, but it can be found. Therefore, no object in the physical world is truly Forms, that might eliminate ever sometimes, or the contrary other times. But, there is a conscious about what does it take for something to be truly a Form. We find that our abstract conception about an object is not the same with objects in the world of our experience. Where it can be the contrary of Forms, as well as Forms, but rather " the Forms itself" (Annas 86).The Form that we can absorb in thought when we can comprehend what Forms is.

Among many contemporary scholars who discussed Plato's theory of Forms is Dr. Valerie V. Peterson, a professor of communication studies in the Grand Valley State University, in an essay under the title "*Plato's Allegory of the Cave: 'literacy and the good'*" (2017). here she presented the theory from multi perspective for a better understanding of the theory where she mentioned that a short survey in common educational informations indicates how "the Forms" and concepts as "reality" and " truth" that are linked to Forms have an impact and may even distort the readers interpretation for Plato's allegory of the cave (Peterson 275).

S. Marc Cohen's *the History of Ancient Philosophy* (Phil 320) (2011), talks about Plato's allegory of the cave besides the theory of Forms, and it does not say anything about "the good". He starts by saying:

Plato realizes that general run of humankind can think, and speak, etc., without (so far as they acknowledge) any awareness of his realm of Forms. The allegory of the cave is supposed to explains this. In the allegory, Plato likens people untutored people in The Theory of Forms to prisoners chained in the cave, unable to turn their heads (n.p)

Following these starting lines a semiotic analysis is made by Cohen where he states that if the inmates where called to claim that they "see a book", they will just use the term "book" and they will not be discussing the real object but its shadow simulation the matter became of a reference and items where terms are merely the simulation shadow of the items, terms were for what we can approach mentally only (Forms/ideas) that must not be mixed with real material items (percepts) before us or terms. As Cohen says "our very ability to think and to speak depends on Forms...the terms of language we use get their meaning by 'naming' the Forms that the objects that we perceive participate in" (Peterson 278). Thereafter, Cohen argues (erroneously), if the

inmates were liberated, they will be able to move around to observe the real items and be able to recognize the inaccuracy. (Peterson 278).

Another common source website that contains translation and demonstration on Plato's allegory of the cave provided by resigned psychology professor George Boeree:

Most people, including ourselves, live in a world of relative ignorance. We are even comfortable with that ignorance, because it is all we know. When we first start facing truth. The process maybe frightening and many people run back to their old lives. But if you continue to seek the truth, you will be able to handle it better. In fact, you want more...Once you tasted the truth you won't ever want to go back to being ignorant. (n.p)

In the starting commentary, Boeree emphasizes on "truth" (facing the truth seems to be equated with facing the light of the sun). Boeree does not discuss "the good" in any way.

In *The History Guide: Lectures in Modern European Intellectual History* (2000). Where the emphasis is on "the real":

The allegory presents, in a brief, most of Plato major philosophical assumptions: his belief that the world revealed by our senses is not the real world but a poor copy of it, and that the real world can be apprehend intellectually, his idea that knowledge can not be transformed from teacher to student, but rather that education consists in directing students [sic] minds towards what is real and important and allowing them to apprehend it for themselves. (n.p)

There is an establishment or a weak comprehension of “Forms” in the previous or other discussions about Plato’s allegory. Simultaneously, the debate about “the good” is imprecise, inefficient or vanish completely.

2.2. The Allegory of the Cave:

In the *Republic* (375 BC), Socrates, the mentor of Plato, tells Glaucon one of Plato’s brothers the story of the allegory of the cave. The allegory depicts an underground cave with a number of prisoners tied tightly over their bodies with chains that hinders them from looking anywhere except for the cave’s wall in front of them, for their entire lives. A fire is placed up and behind the prisoners with a path between the prisoners and fire above them, between the fire and the wall there were puppets which the light of the fire is projected on them which they create a shadow on the wall in front of the prisoners, the wall work as a screen that reflects the puppets’ shadow.

Since the only objects that the prisoners ever saw were the reflected shadows, they assume that these shadows are the real objects whereas they are just reflections. One of the prisoners is liberated to see the fire and objects and realize the truth about the shadows. He managed to escape the cave and discover a new world that he knew nothing about before, while been outside the prisoner eyes were blinded by the sunlight because he was not used to it. After his return to the cave and story has been told, the chained prisoners thought that they will be harmed if they left the cave. The allegory of the cave links together many of Plato’s analogies to represent his philosophical perspective toward life, that it can be found in the world around us.

The allegory formed reference for many scholars and philosophers to found interpretations for, due its implications that it can hold. Dr. Valerie V Peterson in her essay “*Plato’s Allegory of the Cave: “literacy and the good”*” (2017) provides an interpretation for the allegory where she

said that in Plato's sense, vision is the solely sense which requires another mean other than the sense apparatus. In order to see an object, there should be "the object", "the eye" and the light that enable us to see (which the sun is the ultimate source of) (Peterson 282). Similarly, any learning process is a merely craft and partial because they are not oriented towards wisdom (the good). The good which "shows the way", it shows the truth about the things to the core:

This, then, which gives to the objects of knowledge their truth and to him who knows them his of knowing, is the Form or essential nature of Goodness. It is the cause of knowledge and truth; and so, while you may think of it as an object of knowledge, you will do well to regard it as something beyond truth and knowledge and, precious as these both are, of still higher worth. And, just as in our analogy light and vision were to be thought of as like the Sun, but not identical with it, so here both knowledge and the truth are to be regarded as like the Good, but to identify either with the Good is wrong. The Good must hold a yet higher place of honor. (qtd. in Cornford 220)

Plato in the previous quote place "the good" above forms of knowledge and truth, it is "the good" that leads to knowledge and truth. Plato mention the sun's ability to bring things to existence as it provides growth and nutrition. Now days we think of photosynthesis and vitamin D, it is rarely where we think of how the sun enable our existence, like Plato said:

You will agree that the Sun not only makes the things we see visible, but also brings them into existence and gives them growth and nourishment; yet he is not the same thing as existence [that which is not eternal]. And so with the objects of knowledge; these derive from the Good not only their power of being known, but their very being

and reality; and Goodness is not the same thing as being, but even beyond being, surpassing it in dignity and power. (qtd. in Cornford 220)

The quote is an additional implication that the allegory includes which argues that “the good” is not merely epistemological but ontological, since the debate about “the good” precedes the allegory. Therefore, “the good” must be contained in the representations of the allegory.

There is a kind of dispute about the allegory, where Plato employs the sun as “the good” and fire as “the sun”. The optical metaphor connects knowledge with “seeing the light” of the sun. Also, at the same time the story criticizes the optical range. The two sources of the light might be confused, but the difference is significant. For the prisoners in the cave the truth is what they see. The eye harm that can be caused by fire is similar to the one caused by the sun. In the allegory, the fire does not represent a “fake sun”, the fire represents “the sun”, under the sun light objects can be known by their appearances, just like we can recognize someone by the characteristics of his physic in a day light, but without a closer look we can be sure and even may confuse the person. The progressive eye harm caused by looking around with the sun light is a representation of learning with the light of “good” (seeing and understanding the truth about things beyond their appearances), the prisoners could not see the truth of figures in front of them until they are exposed to the sun light out side the cave (Peterson 283).

Since the prisoners became used to see under the sunlight, they acquire to the ability to see “the sun itself”. That is a unique achievement since they can see the tool that allows them to see in the first place. Similar to learning, Plato said in order to succeed in the learning process there is another element which need to be taken into consideration and that is “the good”.

The allegory of the cave explains how the hidden facts are nothing more than an appearance that their complete cannot be absorbed without having seen them in the day light (without “the good” guiding the investigation). Merely a part of the truth can be seen when a matter is being judged by its appearance to see “the good truth” accompanied by experiences that might be hurtful. Knowledge must be sought through “the good” otherwise it is not a real knowledge. Without seeking “the good” with knowledge there is no education.

Among other scholars who have shown interest in the *Republic*’s allegory of the cave, and provided many interpretations to it, where they assumed that it is limited to an epistemological framework, while others assumed that it has a political content as well. A case study made by Dale Hall entitled “Interpreting Plato’s Cave as an Allegory of the human condition” (1980). Where he illustrates the allegory from the epistemological perspective as well as from a political perspective. The former might referred to as the ‘Orthodox’ traditions. Though, carefulness should be taken into consideration in using such a term, because there is no convention among commentators in their interpretation for the Sun, the Line, and the Cave (Hall 74).

Despite of the fact that it has been centuries since the allegory of the cave were emerged by the philosophers, the allegory of the cave is still relevant to the contemporary world, where many similarities can be found. In this matter, Dr. Felix Ayemere Airoboman and Mr. Christopher Osamede Osawaru, published a study under the title “Plato’s Allegory of the Cave and its Implications for Modern Living” (2019). Where they illustrated the aspects of the allegory and its reflection on the modern life.

Historically, every generation from the time of Plato wondered about the allegory of the cave and how it can be applied to their lives and society? To what can they compare the cave to in their lives?. Around these questions our generation wonder as well, to what extend the

allegory of the cave in related to our contemporary world?. Many interpretations were made about the allegory by the previous generations, and they still related to our time comparatively:

It is an allegory of sleep and waking, of our time as asleep in the dark of the cave and needing to awake to a clear vision of the world. It is an allegory of our time as needing to be born again, to emerge from the darkness of corruption into the light of truth and morality. It is an educational allegory of our time as needing to ascend through stages of education from the darkness of intellectual and moral confusion in its everyday beliefs, to the light of true knowledge and values. It is a religious allegory of Christian conversion from the cave of self-love and self-gratification to the love of God and devotion to His truth. (Lavine 28)

Many interpretations were set to illustrate the implications of the allegory which are particularly pertinent to our era, as a scathing critique to our modern world. Which are marked by the shallowness instead of the essence. The senses are regarded as the source of the truth. We are oblivious to the fact that we live in a world of illusion. Misinformation, falsehoods and contradictory values (Lavine 28). Masses are involved with material concerns, preoccupied with looking for objects in the world of appearances. They lack understanding of reality's underlying essence. As a result, they misinterpret the illusion as the truth (Airoboman & Osawaru 60).

The allegory alludes to the idea that we live in a society where illusion and ignorance is confused with certainty and knowledge. In today's world the decent life is measured with the satisfaction of desires in family, policy, social life and job. The individual seeks to spend a lot of his attention and energy on matters that have no lasting value. Objects and topics are perfect for us if they meet our desires and help us reach certain goals like the treasured correct speculations in the cave.

Another meaning can be extracted from the allegory that is the shadows that the prisoners saw and took a speculations for to get the right one is a represent of a world with a messed priorities, where people seek the wrong objectives and get rewards for that. Titles, trophies and chieftaincy are given to those who are morally corrupted, who misrepresent or warped the perception of reality. All type of fraudsters and embezzlers are among them, the receivers of the awards are analogous to the prisoners who could guess the upcoming appearing object. On the other hand, the righteous and moral individuals who conceive reality as the way it is are in fact threatened with harm in a form or another, or at least forsaken, degraded or made fun of just like the liberated prisoner (Airoboman & Osawaru 58). In such a way, we promote the appreciation of the anti-values over the virtues and get trophy when we made it. Concerning this matter, we tend to gather money in immoral and illegal ways justifying our actions by saying it is the natural ways of life and how we should find ourselves not realizing they will perish. They are ephemeral phenomena that will be trained through time, it is the unchangeable truth.

The allegory according to T.Z Lavine can be read as a crucial critique for the modern science. Along with its concentration on what can be realized by the senses. As stated by T.Z Lavine, science is chained so a part of it will be seen:

Its basis is in sensory observation; its conclusions are only in the form of correlation of observations. It does not venture into true causes or into long-range consequences. The empirical scientist is not so different from... the prisoners in the cave who excel in identifying the sequence of shadows on the wall. It is a criticism also of our scientific technology and industry, developing and producing to meet superficial needs, without regard for our true needs or for moral or environmental considerations. (Lavine 29)

Particulars are taken as reality when it comes to science. Scientific discoveries surpassed or manipulated by the government or the scientific community. Therefore, it is not always a reflection of reality (Airoboman & Osawaru 61).

In order to relate the allegory of the cave with the concept of reality, Plato theorized that the reflective shadows that the prisoners see on the wall are similar to what we perceive mentally as reality. The shadows are not real and they do not reflect the reality of the figures and no matter how they might seem to the prisoners the truth lays beyond what do they see, a distortion of reality (Airoboman & Osawaru 61). It is a mysterious universe where genuinely exist. It is a impasse for us where we could not have it any other way, our perception ability towards the real outside world is restricted with our senses abilities. Also, we are tricked by our brains during the translation process of what we receive by our senses from the outer world (Topor np).

Another argument Plato depends on is the fact that we are undoubtedly constrained with our beliefs. Reality became the true reality in whichever way we experience it. Mentally, what we do not acknowledge it does not exist. This deception, where we are all caught up is also the root of our knowledge. For example, when we think of object as round or square is a part of knowledge which is limited, merely an aspect of reality not the complete truth.

Due to our limited sight, we can never be able to see reality from all of its aspects, and what ever the conclusion we came out with it will be insufficient, except for the one who knows the truth he sees the world for what it is a mental illusion. In this concern, Joana Topor professor in The University of Chicago published an essay under the title "Simulation, Simulacra" (2002), where she provided an illustration how did the allegory of the cave and Simulacra and simulation interacted with reality, she maintains that the person who is mentally awake from the dream alike reality realizes that there is nothing that deserve to be taken seriously because it is not the real

complete truth that demanded so. We cannot be in a situation of a complete invariable, what do we receive is what we interact, but we can seek to penetrate it and look behind all the layers, a journey of questioning starting with the postulate beliefs seeing them as shadows on the cave's wall (n.p)

The allegory of the cave is perhaps one of the most famous theories which dealt with the concept of reality, it described how can our reception of it be distorted. Therefore, it can distort our perception and judgment of reality. Since the time of Plato many philosophers were inspired by the allegory discussing reality and its distorted representation. According to the contemporary thoughts, the world consists of merely of simulations. Plato uses the metaphor of puppets and their reflections on the wall of the cave to explore the concept of simulation that has many layers of complexity to go through. Because these simulations are layered they cannot be traced to the primary matter because each simulation is relied on the other simulation to exist.

3. Baudrillard's Reality Principles:

The French modern philosopher Jean Baudrillard discussed the concept of simulation in a new context but from a different perspective where the allegory's content and main idea influenced philosophical treatise simulacra and simulation. He built the orders of simulacra system after seeing the simulation of signs in a form of layers, these layers grow too much that it became difficult to point the origins of the simulation. The order of the simulacra functions in a process to the point where the latest achieved simulation cannot be distinguished from the real. Meaning that the process of the orders of simulacra is achieved when the simulation is undistinguishable from the copied reality.

Simulacra and Simulation is a 1981 philosophical treatise by the French sociologist Jean Baudrillard in which the author examines the relationship between reality, symbols and society focusing on signification and symbolism of culture and media in the construction of a shared existence. Simulacra are copies that depicts things that either had no origins or things that no longer had origins. Simulation is the imitation of the operation of real life process or system over time. (Baudrillard 6).

3.1 Simulacra and Simulation:

In his essay *“The Precession of Simulacra”* (1984 – 1991) Jean Baudrillard uses a thought experiment to demonstrate the increasing indistinguishability between “reality” and what he calls “simulation” Baudrillard wonder how “power”, i.e. the repressive apparatus of the state that appears to represent the reality pole in the state in this case, would react to a simulated hold up robbery. Along with the fact that pure simulation is mute execute, Baudrillard asserts that “power”, i.e. the established order is linked to the reality principle and does not allow for such a thing as simulation. What “power” and “reality” have in common is their stability, or impenetrable presence, as Baudrillard describes as “speech without the possibility of reply”, i.e. as unquestionable given. As a result, the power of the “established power” has a privileged relationship to presence, i.e. Indeed insofar, as a presence is the distinguishing features of both, the terms reality and power can be used interchangeably but mercy and power at the mercy of each other but power in order to survive accept nothing but reality. Power as a presence, inextricably is linked to the real, as any question of reality undermines power itself. This is why simulation is prohibited. The introduction of simulation as a form of non-presence will bring the whole system to halt. However, this fact also contributes to the inability of power to respond to simulations, i.e. to what should not actually exist. Because simulation does not exist in the power

scheme, powers accept them as a reality in order to control them. As a result national socialist in our example had to be treated as real by power, with all of the consequences that entails, Baudrillard puts it this way:

The simulation of an offence, if it is established as such, will either be punished less severely because it has no ‘consequences’ or punished a offence against the judicial system. For example, if one sets in motion a police operation ‘for nothing’ but never as a *simulation* since it is precisely as such equivalence with the real is possible, and hence no repression either. The challenge of simulation is never admitted by power.

(20)

While Baudrillard is concerned with the increasing indistinguishability of reality and simulation, he can only explain this “indifference” through the abstractions of “reality” and “simulation”. Despite the fact that hyperreality is always first, and the distinction between reality and simulation is a later abstraction, Baudrillard must first assume the abstract poles of difference in order to explain what the indifference could possibly be. Reality of the real on one hand, and simulation or simulacrum, on the other, are two relations that exists only in de verbo but always form a unity in the hyperreality that surround us. The unity of both, according to Baudrillard, determines our postmodern” life world”. He refers to this as “hyperreality” or “indifference”. However, Baudrillard does not elaborate on his understanding of these three concepts: hyperreality, simulation and reality (Baudrillard 1).

As soon as, we could see the Borges allegory where the mappers from the Empire such a detailed map where it covers the territory precisely (the Empire’s decline is a small proof to the map ruining, but parts of the map’s tatter can still be visible in the wilderness. The metaphysical aesthetic of the ruined abstract map can be seen as a representation that equates the Empire and

rotting carcass, turning back to the territory's grounds slightly as a both ends jumbled with the real one over time) considered as the most aesthetic model of simulation allegory, this allegory has been passed down to us in a reversal way up to the model it were made In the first place containing only the detached glamor of the second ordered simulacrum.

Today's abstraction is not what's on the map anymore, nor the alternative, the mirror or the concept. The simulation of a territory is a referential being, or a substance is no longer possible. It is the generation of a real origins or reality by models a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes or survives the map. Henceforth, it is the map that precedes the territory - Precession of Simulacra- it is the map that gives to the territory, of the fable were to be revived today, it will be the territory whose shreds are slowly rotting across the map. It is the real, not the map, whose traces can be found here and there, in deserts that are no longer the Empire's, but our own. The desert of the real itself (Baudrillard 1).

3.2 The Divine Irreverence of Images:

To pretend is when one act not have while he actually has, or he act to own what he does not own. A case represents absence, while the other represents presence (Baudrillard 3). Since simulation is not pretending it became more complicated: "Whoever fakes an illness can simply stays in bed and make everyone believe he is ill. Whoever simulates an illness produces in himself some of the symptoms" (Littré, n.p). Thus, pretending or dissimulation keep the concept of reality unchanged. The distinction is evident always; it is merely camouflaged, while simulation jeopardizes the distinction between the "true" and the "false", the "real" and the "imaginary". Does the simulator of the illness actually have a medical condition or not since he is producing real symptoms? We cannot diagnose the situation objectively to determine whether the person is truly ill or not. Both of psychology and medicine stop at this level obstructed by the

uncertain reality of the disease. If every symptom can be generated and can not be seen as a natural disease symptom every medical condition will be considered as a simulated or simulatable, as a result medicine will lose its function role, because the role of medicine is to cure medical condition only according to their objective causes. The evolution of psychosomatic around the principles of the disease is questionable. When it comes to psychoanalysis, it transmits the symptoms of the biological side to the unconscious side. The latter has a significant impact comparing to the other. How come the unconscious affect cannot work in the same manners that the previous symptoms in the classical medicine? Dreams are already there (Baudrillard 3)

The psychiatrist undoubtedly claim “for every form of mental alienation there is a particular order in the succession of symptoms of which the simulator is ignorant and in the absence of which the psychiatrist would not be deceived” (back from 1865). To protect the concept of truth at any price and avoid the raised question by simulation, knowing that truth, reference, objective causes have stopped to being. What solutions can medicine provide with either side of the medical condition complications in a context where it is either real or fake? How can psychoanalysis deal with complications of the unconscious context where it can not be exposed because it is not fake either?

What can the simulators provide for the army? Usually, confirming to the evident principle of identification, it can exposes and discples the simulators. At present time a high functional simulator can be unload similar to a real homosexual, a patient with cardiological condition or a lunatic. Including military psychology drives its inspiration from Cartesian sureness and irresolution to distinguish what is real from what is not generating actual symptoms. “If he this good at acting crazy, it’s because he is.” In this concern military psychology also has not

mistaken, in this sense every insane person simulates, and the most serious sort of devastation is the lack of differentiation. In opposition to the shortage of differentiation which classical causes equipped itself in all the classifications. This is what surrendering them today, burying the truth.

This simulation to a certain point is against being represented, representation is built on the idea of finding an equal of the sign that can replace the real (although the sign is idealistic, but it is essential postulate). Simulation on the other hand derived from the idea of the perfect equal of the sign, from the idea that sign is an execution to all referential points, a fundamental denial of the sign as a value. While representations tend to dispute it as a flawed representation, simulation (Baudrillard 6). wraps the entire representation as a simulacrum.

These were the following stages of the image:

It is the reflection of a profound reality;

It masks and denatures a profound reality;

It masks the absence of a profound reality;

It has no relation to any reality whatsoever;

It is its own pure simulacrum.

The first stage if the image is a righteous manifestation, representation is a hollowing secret portrayal. In the second stage, if the image is a wicked manifestation, representation is a maleficent matter. In the third stage, it functions to exist as an appearance, a matter of witchery. In the fourth stage, it is not a matter of appearance any more but a matter of simulation (6).

The switch in the meaning of signs that disguise something to the meaning of signs that disguise that there is nothing is a watershed. The first one depicts a theological truth and

concealment (where the idea of theology can be related to). The second one begins the era of simulacra and simulation in a way no God to know himself anymore, no ultimate distinction between what is real and its artificial reanimation, and between wrong and right, it is like all things died and rebirthed all over again already (6).

If the real is not the same as it was before, nostalgia takes a place to appreciate the true value of it. There are plenty origin's legends and reality's sings, overabundance of the truth of a subaltern originality and topicality, the momentum raised in life events, symbols rebirth where the item and the matter are vanished, the frightening fabrication of reality and references, similar to and even more effective than the material fright, it is the way that simulation emerge in the stage that we are interested in. The design of reality, neo reality and hyperreality that are twice as strong as the design of dissuasion throughout (7).

3.3 The Hyperreal and the Imaginary:

Disneyland is a typical example of the intertwined with one another of the content in simulacra. Firstly, Disneyland is a delusion and fantasy, the pirates, the frontiers and the future world...etc. The efficacy of the procedure depends on the fantasy and the illusion of this world to succeeded. The secret behind the masses attraction to this world of delusion is undoubtedly the diminutive representation of the world, socially and religiously. Reducing the enjoyment of the real America without the restrictions and pleasures (12). You can see one stops the car and wait in the queue and you can see someone else completely alone at the exist, the sole fantasy in this fictitious universe is the shared care and love of gathered masses in one place, also in the adequate and the excess tools needed to achieve a multiple effect. Indoors a broad range of devices hypnotized the populace in outside oriented influx; alienation is oriented in a one device, the car. With the unusual coincidence (however, it generated from charm found in this world),

this congealed; infantile universe was envisioned and fulfilled by Walt Disney that is cryogenized himself, and waited for his resurrection by a raise of 180 Celsius (13).

Therefore, Baudrillard argues that the aim of profiling America throughout Disneyland up to the morphology of the solo or the mass is dragged down; the diminutive and the comical sector magnify everything it stands for. Conserved and calmed. For this reason, Disneyland may hold an ideological interpretation (L. Martin has done this successfully in *Utopiques jeux d'espace* [Utopias, game of space]) absorbed the American life style, a compliment for the American manners, glorified the alteration of the conflicting reality. Definitely, however this masks other things and this "ideological" sheet serves as a warp for to simulate the third content: Disneyland exists for the sake of disguising that Disneyland is the "real" America, and the whole state of America is the "real" Disneyland (to a certain point it is similar to prisons which mask that in their mundane ubiquity, the society is entirely imprisoned). Disneyland is instructed in a manner that makes us believe what's than Disneyland is actually reality, while the entourage it that is represented in all of Los Angeles and America is not considered as real anymore, rather they manifest the concept of hyperreality and simulation as well. It is not the matter of untruthful portrayal of reality (ideology), rather it is about hiding the idea that what is concerned to be real does not reflect reality, therefore conserve the principle of reality (Baudrillard 13)

In such a context, Los Angeles is a city that contains much of charming villages, magical mountains and marine world that reinforce reality, the strength of reality in major cities that it has nothing beyond the fake, ongoing widespread networks, a city of a tremendous ratios with no space and dimension. This city, which has nothing expect a huge plot and horizontal shooting, as much as this city needs an electric and atomic power centers as much as it needs a

cinematography industry, it requires this ancient fiction and friendly neural system produced by boyishness singles and artificial fantasy (14)

Disneyland's fantasy it is not true nor it is fake, it is a dissuasive device that is built to refresh the reality's fantasy in the other side. Where from the weakness of this fantasy, it is the childish degradation. Disneyland' universe desire for a childish content to convince masses that adulthood is somewhere else. In reality to hide the fact that boyishness is all over around us. It is the adults themselves that went to Disneyland in order to enhance the delusion about their own infertilities (14).

4. Existentialism:

Existentialism is one of the most fundamental philosophies in the world that were discussed by many philosophers and thinkers throughout the history, and grabbed the intention of several scholars such as, Christopher Panza and Gregory Gale in a book under the title *Existentialism for dummies* published by Wiley Publishing Inc. (2008). This book addresses the philosophy of Existentialism in simple manners for a better understanding by the common readers. The authors tackled Existentialism from different aspects starting with its definition. It is concerned with studying of the existence, yet if we concerned existence as everything there is, items like trees and buildings will be included. Yet, Existentialism is the study of the existence itself, and what is the meaning behind something to exist at all and why not to exist. Also, what is the meaning behind the opposite of nothing to exist at all. Certainly, the main point of Existentialism is a specific sort of existence, the sort of existence that contains thoughtful beings that are aware of their existence and their minds are full of it.

The main tenets and themes that were discussed in the existentialists' works actually unify them, these tenets and themes which often reappear in the work of existentialists through arts, literature, films and other fields are: absurdism, life is absurd for existentialists; it has no aim or meaning nor an ultimate purpose. But humans require a sense, a meaning and purpose to fulfill. Rejection of meaning giving narratives, because it is not enough to say that life is absurd, existentialists claim that when philosophy, science or religion attempts to come with a purpose out of life, it is always doomed to fail. Alienation, it represents the sense when the individual feels isolated in his own life. Anxiety, the powerful sense when the individual feels that life is a manifestation of absurdism. Forlornness, a sense of loneliness where no one can assist the individual to understand life. Responsibility, all are accounts you must go through life and make sense out of it, because nobody is going to provide a ready road map of life. Authenticity, the human individual desire to live a life that suits him rather than a life that was planned or lived by someone else or another tendency other than the individual himself. Individuality, it is a personal aspect to self-reliance towards life. Motivation, science and institutions that aim to hide the absurdity of life frequently deprive you from your originality. Passion/Engagement, the statement of passion or commitment to another vital part of authentic existence and attacked by the same which strip you from your personality. Death, the reason that undo all human acts and the cause of absurdism in life (Panza & Gale 12).

4.1. The Main Figures of Existentialism:

Soren Kierkegaard's father was a rich Dutch entrepreneur who was highly religious. Michael Kierkegaard believed that he was damned with a massive amount of iniquity throughout his life that might affect his life decisions later. Soren Kierkegaard was the first who developed a main Existentialism principle as absurdism and forlornness, the significance of life choices out

come and called for a full original life, he developed the themes apart from the fundamental Orthodox stream at his time that he rejected. Each person has his own experience with major life question, as he claimed that church commandments can not teach people how to live, it is up the individual to find answers to such matter (Panza & Gale 16)

Friedrich Nietzsche is an essential figure in Existentialism, since he gained tribute from many for his role in developing it. Nietzsche's father was the last Lutheran pastor in the family's history, that Nietzsche followed strictly in his youth which gave him a special position later on when he criticized Christianity due to his knowledge about it more than the followers of it, pointing out the reason why did he left Christianity. Nietzsche turn his work to a tool for devastation, invention and ceremony in untraditional ways that are not plain interpret unlike other existentialists in form of short essays, systematic but a anarchic strong ideas as life is absurd and it is up to the individual to find its meaning. Nietzsche ultimately declared the death of God (Panza & Gale 17)

Existentialism needed more work to grow significantly by being present in a major works that are sophisticated in order for academics to appreciate it and worth their admire, and that what happened in Martin Heidegger's *magnum opus*. Heidegger was regarded as a total academic and a true philosopher among other existentialists. Following his tutor, Heidegger intend to anatomize the existence in a strict manners similar to Newtonian physics, rather from within, from a subjective perspective. The factor that made Heidegger's stands out is the amount of effort that he puts on Existentialism themes such as authentic life experience, irrationality, the significance of interpretation and the role of death in identifying human existence. Therefore, he sets exist in the Existentialism and turn it to a science that deals with humans in a subjective manners rather than a system that waste their individual identity. Due to his empowerment to

Existentialism he deserved to be called an existentialist more than other philosophers. In fact his influence exceeded to other movements where he played a founding role, postmodernism for example (Panza & Gale 18)

While God's death does not concern God only, it is definitely around God. Maybe more precisely it is related to religion, God is only the object of attention. Nevertheless, religion answer questions and provides for God its position and significance. Considering the distinctions among Hebrew scriptures, where the will of God is manifested in the variety of laws and principles, whereas God in the Christian gospels, Jesus epitomize the laws and principles to its main purpose, love for God and neighbor, so the presence of God does not organize the relationship between God and human only, but also the relation with other human and the understanding of life, losing God is losing the whole system of life. We can see two different understand of God itself and even its rules, within the same religion. After that there is a more significant distinction between understanding God in the Judeo-Christian interpretations, and deity as in Eastern religions and paganism (Panza & Gale 37)

If science were not the direct reason to declare the death of God it definitely helped. The classical relation between science and religion (as it was narrated by scientists) was a persecutory, killing God was not in the intentions of the scientists, but to gain a better understanding of the world, why did the church felt concerned about the scientific achievement? The scientists argued that they are using their God given minds to uncover facts On the other hand, the religious community claims that science contains denigration towards religion (in their side of the story), as a several scientists stubbornly excluded the idea of God as an excuse for a more reasonable method to reach facts about the world, claiming that the belief in God is more

than a invalid idea, it can be seen as a obvious heresy. Same discipline new commander (Panza, Gale 40)

Anxiety is well known to be the most fundamental mood for existentialists. Among all moods it plays a key factor to reveal the acumen about one's existence. It's the daily life situation that one find himself into leading him to an unavoidable mood. Despite the fact that it is the case, existentialists insist on the distinction between anxiety and fear, though anxiety is unstable state of mind.

Anxiety can be an indicator of your existence meaning generally through exposing the daily life pattern as aimless loop that does not hold a significance meaning, The manners that the world granted (or has been given) its sense and significance does not own a solid or a well needed establishment. There is no explanation that looks like it fits you. Furthermore, the tools that are available in the world that lead you to know yourself are not fundamental to what made you as an individual. So just like the world does not contain a framework of meaning same goes for you. Anxiety reveals appeal to and dissonance form, because you are absolutely free to provide a meaning for your life in your own personal terms.

4.2 Absurdism:

According to Camus, absurdism does not include irrationality and insanity only. It is a combination of two components the irrational world and the person who tries to come out with a rational explanation. People not only believe that they are sane, they seek to force that mentality and system up on their environment, and that expose them to mockery and this is absurd. Absurdism can be summarized in three points, absurdism is a monitor concerning the world and that's irrationality, absurdism is a monitor concerning people that they seek clearness, and the

world's absurdism that combine the two monitors. These three points summarize absurdism, a conflict between irrational world and a mind that seek to rationalize it.

The existentialists' basic prospective towards the world is that humans are naturally manic beings that seek meaning of life in a earnest manner, with no determined manner but enthusiastically. In fact, it is valuable to humans seeing life from a special prospective that is fundamentally reflecting their essence, even if it is often an unconscious process.

Rather, it looks like that we seek to make sense out of the world and then we confuse it as we uncover the truth about it. When we have the opportunity for an objective view to the world, we observe that the world does not own a shape, in spite the fact that we are firmly imply a system up on the world around us. We do not have a valid argument for the our claim because the world itself does not confirm our discourse. Therefore, it looks illogical due to the irrational nature of the world and the human nature that lean toward organization. Absurdism is the obligated coexistence of the two (Panza, Gale 74)

What concerned Heidegger was the major such as, "What is the meaning of existence?", Heidegger argues that in order to answer a question of that kind you need to examine a specific form of existence of specific beings that are similar to you. Start by thinking of question in your own personal manner about your own existence, a role that you play in life that no else can. Meditating, thinking and asking questions about your existence. What does this ability signify? What system can identify you in life?

In order to examine life, there is a need for a suitable method. Yet what is the suitable method to examine life? Science does not seems to be the suitable method due its nature of studying life from outside, it does not answer what is it like to inquire existence and to live it.

Heidegger suggests examining existence from within and seeking to absorb its essence from the point of view of an insider (Panza, Gale 112)

Among all major questions, if not the biggest question is “what is the meaning of existence?”. Heidegger suggests to start examining existence you need to select exactly what you want to pursue, and observe the different angles of the matter that you select to pursue, the difference can be represented in two major points. First, discussing beings is discussing what exist such as buildings or dogs, not the existence itself. Second, discussing existence is the fact that there is a presence of being at all. Existence is not a being itself. Heidegger wanted you to examine existence itself. Unlucky, He believes that humans have passed that question, due to several reasons. Maybe because the answer to such a question seems to be too obvious, ambiguous or the question is ridiculous. In addition, Heidegger believes that such a question about existence can be mixed up with the question about beings. What he calls *ontic* investigations (the nature of beings) *ontological* investigations (into existence) and investigate in the heart of both (Panza & Gale 122)

What aid does examining your personal existence provides? Why does asking questions about life matters? About this concern Heidegger says that wondering about your personal existence, or asking questions about existence demand a comprehension of life to a certain level, therefore interaction with existence by asking questions about it reveals a certain amount of life understanding. Heidegger argument is questions about personal being and existence are already shown an understanding toward existence. Therefore these questions already indicate a sort of knowing the answer to begin with.

For the existentialists the scientific method does not function in this matter, because it is restricted to study life from out side. It is not hatred towards science; actually scientific method

is a very valid way to examine life. But, what made science so effective is its objectivity and topical principles that function when the technological achievements are discussed. Review any scientific textbook that address human being, and you will find it deal with it from a material or biological aspect that does not answer the question you had in mind about life.

Under many names as “Existentialism”, “The Humanism of Existentialism” and “Existentialism is Humanism”, Jean Paul Sartre’s excessively read essay tends to explain the Existentialism movement’s sense when it reached the peak of its popularity. Yet, it was not meant to be for a academic philosopher, similar to much of his works, it was winding, depressing, definitely splendid and sometimes ambiguous. Among other fundamental aims of Sartre is to advocate Existentialism from offensives and presumptions that some of them still present until now days. The two communities that he dealt with were Christians and Communists, what we can be referred to now days as Left and Right. However, Sartre leans more toward Left, he was dedicated to communism, and both of him and his philosophy were publicly atheistic (Panza & Gale 157)

As Sartre’s essay “Existentialism” was advocating his philosophy, he concentrated on optimism that is ingrained in Existentialism as he observes it, weird sort optimism, yet it stills optimism. Similarly to other existentialists, Sartre did not believe in the objectivity of values. Yet, he argues in his essay that you can distinguish one matter that has to be considered as the most valuable which the highest good is. Normally, this matter is freedom, his reasons are clear you appreciate something only when you selected it freely. An ant may walk in two different roads, but it does not show a concern about the road that it taking. It did not select its road, the road was selected due to a complicated series of physical interactions, with no interaction from the ant, it is a physical mechanism. Freedom is what provides value anything other than that

derives its value from freedom (Panza & Gale 157). According to Sartre to realize the value of any matter you need to figure what provides it with its value. In a similar context, the classical argument for the majesty of God, because everything good is the creation of God. For that God worth praise and gratefulness that without anything has a value not even life itself.

Among other existentialists, Heidegger argues that in order to have an original and significant life there is a need to accept your own mortality. Emphasizing on the importance of accepting death, how can you accept something that you never dealt with? At the end the moment of death is the moment where you do not exist anymore. Heidegger approve the fact that you can not absorb the actual sense of death. Yet, you have the chance to prepare yourself mentally to the idea that death is an unavoidable point in your future at any given moment. Therefore, real life is the one towards death, accepting the fact that death is always present. What is special about death is that it is a incident which you go through alone, where it uncover your individualism away from the masses and oblige you to think about life seriously to make a personal, significant life choices (Panza & Gale 180)

Anxiety is unavoidable when confronting death, anxiety predictably serves valuable purpose in Existentialism. It helps you to realize that you are unique. Once you realize it, you will notice that the society members spend their lives not speaking to you as a unique person. Consequently, death anxiety makes reacting to death a life that is controlled by the society members. Therefore thinking about death includes reconsidering how life should goes on and live it by personal standards.

Being confronted with the idea of mortality and death can be frightening, it can be a reason behind a serious consideration of life choices remarkably, far away from shallow interaction with life. Basically, mortality ingrains in you the firm and strict will to reveal the main question in life

that is how to live life intensely. The anxiety that can be caused by death does not provide an answer to that, it makes you realize that this life is your responsibility and choices and death is what you are going to confront at the end of it. Society members have their own manners to interact with death (a try to dodge it) and they have their own manners if life that they want you to follow. However, when it comes to anxiety they do not have a convincing ability, and can not overcome the idea that they are artificial.

In order to confront death in a genuine manner, to examine life means to confront the dilemma of your limited existence in your own manners. Indeed, away from your social circle and from their patterns, distributions and their manners where they intend to avert your limited existence. It can be strong feeling of alienation, yet choices in life are merely personal. An additional reason that makes it scary is that being far away from others while making a decision that you are not sure about its efficacy. Others can provide the assurance in obvious choices because what is supposed to be out publicly is obvious, whereas personal life insecure. Heidegger argues that individual manner that is strictly followed to interact with death can not be outsourced. Accepting death as an ultimate incident in your life happens on the personal level with no affirmation that you are making the most suitable decisions. The essence of confronting death is can provide the sense of threat and weakness to the individual because death is inevitable, yet that is what is it like to live an original life stands for to be truly free, truly alive (Panza & Gale 185)

5. Conclusion:

The aspects illustrated in this chapter explore the relationship between the allegory of the cave, simulacra and simulation, Existentialism and their interaction with reality along with their attempt to look beyond the appearance in order to uncover the truth about it. These concepts and

insights will be crucial in understanding *Zero K* and how the concepts of reality and the truth overlap and intersect in the context of the novel.

CHAPTER TWO:

Distant Realities and Confounded Truths: Hyperreal Existence in the absence of God in *Zero K*.

1-Introduction:

This chapter analyzes Don DeLillo's *Zero-k*, with the aid of insight and concept of Plato's philosophy, Jean Baudrillard's concepts of simulacra and simulation, in addition to Existentialist theories. Firstly, this chapter begins with an introductory section for the author and the novel. Secondly, it will provide an analysis of the novel in the light of "Theory of Forms", "Allegory of the Cave", "Science and God" and "Existentialism". It deals with the essence of figures and their physical manifestations in the Convergence. Also, this chapter deals with the replacement of God with science by the Convergence residents. The last section exposes the journey which Jeffery had using Existentialism, helping him to determine his position and find his aim in life.

2-Don DeLillo's Writing Legacy: *Zero K* and Earlier Works.

Donald Richard DeLillo (born November 20, 1936) is an American novelist, short story writer, playwright, screenwriter and essayist. His works have covered subjects as diverse as television, nuclear war, sports, the complexities of language, performance art, the Cold War, mathematics, the advent of the digital age, politics, economics, and global terrorism. His works embody the postmodern conditions and society.

Firstly, DeLillo is a highly respected cultural author, who is well known due to the publication of *White Noise* in 1985, he gained the National Book Award for Fiction for it followed by *Libra* 1988 as the bestseller. DeLillo has been nominated twice for the Pulitzer Prize

for Fiction (the first for *Mao II* 1992, the second for *Underworld* 1998), he gained the PEN/Faulkner Award for *Mao II* in 1992 (nominated for PEN/Faulkner Award for Esmeralda 2012), gained the 1999 Jerusalem Award in addition to the 2010 PEN/Saul Bellow Award for American Fiction Achievement. Additionally, he won the Library of American Congress for American Fiction in 2013.

DeLillo is one of the leading and prominent authors; he interacts with the history of his country and anticipates its future with unbelievable precision. DeLillo explains his works as if they simulate “living in dangerous times” during an interview with Chicago Tribune newspaper by Kevin Nance October, 2012 he said: “Yes, I think my work is influenced by the fact that we're living in dangerous times. If I could put it in a sentence, in fact, my work is about just that: living in dangerous times.” His works often capture the essence of many Americans despite of their category with the momentum feelings of hopes, dreams, and fears. DeLillo's works question many topics such as consumerism, intellectualism, technology, death, family, the effect of violence, the impact of the atomic bomb, among other topics.

DeLillo is well known for multiplicity of the topics covered in a single work. Among his recent works, *Zero-k* is a postmodern American fiction novel that received several reviews, and a good critical reception. Alan Michael Parker in a review article under the title “Mortal Panic: Don DeLillo's *Zero K*” (2016), discussing DeLillo's career states that

Over the fifty years Don DeLillo has been publishing novels, thoughtful readers have come to consider each new book of his in relation to each of his best books, an assumption of canonical value earned by and reserved for writers of great literature, as opposed to those damned to the bin of “contemporary fiction,”... Such is the case with his latest, *Zero K*, a death-defying riff upon the coolest abstraction, and the end

result of so much that DeLillo has long considered, death itself. Which is to say that *Zero K* is not *White Noise*, but it certainly belongs in all the libraries (n.p)

Furthermore, Carolyn Kellogg in her *Los Angeles Times Magazine* review entitled “Don DeLillo’s deep freeze: ‘*Zero K*’ takes on death, futurists and cryonics”, states that “DeLillo has a signature prose style, language intelligent and abrupt, choppy, atomizing philosophies and ideas. It sets his work apart from much of American fiction, where you’re likely to find tactile descriptions and articulated emotions”.

Many critics have mirrored this praised but its scope has been extended to a range of a classical and modern American fiction emphasis upon its richer allusive texture and resonant reference. Also, DeLillo’s *Zero K* is not a representation of American literature or contemporary fiction novels in native English-speaking countries only, but it touches upon important concepts across various disciplines such as psychology, philosophy, technology and cultural studies that can be global topic.

The novel’s events are narrated by Jeffrey, an indignant, adrift, man who had various insufficient and unsatisfactory occupations and was involved in multiple unsuccessful, relationships. At the beginning of the novel, he travels to a remote alienated site named “The Convergence” in order to meet his father Ross Lockhardt, and show his affection for his stepmother Artis for the last time. His stepmother is significantly younger than his father, and had multiple sclerosis. Ross is a wealthy entrepreneur that left Jeffrey and his mother Madeline when Jeffrey was a kid. Ross tells Jeffrey that Artis needs to be frozen and preserved up to an era where it is possible to mend her health, then bring her back to life.

Jeffrey and his father have a conversation about “The Convergence”, where Ross tells Jeffrey that he intends to go through the process of being frozen through a process that is called Zero k, because he couldn’t handle life without his wife Artis, though he has no medical conditions. Jeffrey witnesses a conference where he learns that a dreadful, apocalyptic upcoming event is predicted by the members in the conference. These people see the process so called “Zero K” as a way to escape the awful coming event, which will only emerge once the worst happens. Ross has been attempting to appoint Jeffrey in one of his companies position in the real world, but Jeffrey rejected the offer. Jeffrey turns out to have a girlfriend with her adopted son that has an obsession with numbers. Jeffrey eventually accepts the position in college as an ethical specialist and enhance officer. He witnesses the sunset phenomenon aligned with the city’s grid when handicapped youngster cried out of happiness, then he turned his back and said “I didn’t not need the light of heaven, I had the boy’s cries for wonder” (*Zero K* 274)

The ending story provides limited answers, it is remarkable that Jeffrey did not mentioned the boy’s name turning his back to “heaven’s light,” which can be seen as a sign of the apocalyptic event that the facility predicted. Also, it can be a representation of the bizarre limbo of The Convergence in its brutality and shocking lack of context. Jeffrey has eventually has linked with the real world around him, and does not concern himself with what life has anymore.

3-Where is Reality? Reading “The Theory of Forms” in *Zero K*.

Don DeLillo’s *Zero K* addresses a fundamental topic which is truth and the way to seek it through a path that is full of distractions and distinctions between what is truly real and what is not. In this regard, the novel can be read by applying Plato’s theory of Forms, as explained in the first chapter, in order to understand how reality is structured in the context of the novel and how characters navigate their existence between what is real and what is not. DeLillo links the

concept of Forms with the reality in the Convergence facility that the protagonist Jeffery found himself in the middle of, and through his journey to find the truth about the Convergence facility, people and the reason behind the ongoing events.

As the novel begins, Jeffery arrives at the facility which reflects the suspicion about the authentic and reality of the facility to start with. That way, Don DeLillo's *Zero K* is written according to a pattern that suits the postmodern novel. The facility is a sample of reality's questionable credibility. When Jeffery arrives at the facility he describes the building as "The heat made me think I was shrinking but I wanted to remain a moment and look. These were buildings in hiding, agoraphobically sealed. They were blind buildings, hushed and somber, invisibly windowed, designed to fold into themselves, I thought, when the movie reaches the point of digital collapse" (*Zero K* 4). This suspicion about the reality of the facility does not vanish, yet it grows along with the events of the novel when Jeffrey take a closer look into the details "There were matching doors, all doors were the same. There was also recess in the wall and figures standing there, arms, legs, head, torso a thing fixed in place I saw that it was a mannequin, naked, hairless without facial features, and it was a reddish brown, maybe russet or simply rust." (24)

DeLillo's introductive events of the novel shows a lot about the artificial reality within the facility, it shows how deceiving the world around us can be if we depend on it to reach the quested truth. Hence, truth can be found only beyond the appearance of what can be seen. Therefore, what Jeffery said in the facility doors and figures that he found were not the real doors nor the real humans, they serve to provide an illusion of choice and reality that is meant to be there to hide the truth behind the presence of doors and figures. This suspicion aroused with the first interaction of Jeffery with the facility when the man in suit, tie and turban says "They're all

the wrong door” (25). Meaning that what seems to be doors are just a representation of the door but the truth is not what is being seen, it is elsewhere.

In this regard, the significance of truth and its presence beyond the appearance is manifested in the doors and windows in the facility. Doors symbolize a portal to somewhere outside the facility else and that definition is applied in the novel as the portal to the truth that Jeffery seeks to reach. Many doors in the facility were closed denying the entrance to another realm, manifesting that what we consider as a tool that we use to pass to a new level may not be the suitable tool to use in order to fulfill our aim. The realm can present a level that we are not meant to discover, a level that we are not ready for yet. Whatever the reason might be it leads to believe that what we consider as a reality is actually hyperreality that contains amount of falsehood which reduces its credibility. Jeffery finds doors in this place rather curious, he narrates:

Finally, I decided that I had to find out whether there was anything behind doors. I dismissed the possible consequences. I walked down the hall, choose a door and I knocked. I waited, went to the next door and knocked, waited. Went to the next door and knocked. I did this six times and I told myself one more door and this time the door opened and a man stood there in a suit, tie and turban. (25)

Also, windows can be seen as a portal to another dimension that holds meaning. Therefore, the absence of windows can refer to the ban of any interaction with the outer world to prevent reveling the artificiality of the facility in comparing the outer world with the inner world and concluding the difference between the artificiality of the facility that is been hidden and represented as the authentic reality and the real reality that lays outside the facility. It is mentioned that “When Ross was not seated behind a desk, he was standing by a window. But there was no window in his office” (26)

An additional element that draws a further attention to the artificiality of the facility and its lack of reality is the presence of mirrors. Mirrors are often considered as a reflection of the truth, since they reflect the exact image of the figure that is standing in front of. This concept of reflecting the truth has been broken in the novel to assert the distortion of reality and the lack of credibility in the facility since it does not work as the way it should do, In the novel Ross tells Jeffery:" Yesterday, I washed my face and looked at the mirror. Seriously and deliberately looked. And I found myself disoriented," he said, "because in the mirror left is right and right is left. But this was not the case. What was supposed to be my false right ear was my true right ear" (184)

The experience that Ross had with the mirror reflection was not as the way that it should be. In fact, it was the very exact opposite. This incident is shocking and it reveals that the mirror is not real, it can be seen as a sign for another reality that exists outside the facility and sense hyperreality can grow to includes all the facility making Jeffrey doubts even more about the authenticity of the place around him.

As the theory of Forms illustrates that the authentic essence of objects is different then the changeable physical presence. The experience which Jeffery had in the Convergence includes the theory of Forms. What he had in mind about doors, windows, humans and pre knowledge about the world out side as a whole, seems to be insufficient inside the Convergence. Jeffery's interaction with his new environment made him think twice about what thought he knew and whether it can be applied to reality around him.

4-Portals to Reality: The “Convergence” as Plato’s Allegory of The Cave.

In Don DeLillo’s *Zero K*, the idea of hyperreality is dominant with all of its forms of manifestations. The concept refers to an image or simulation, or an aggregate of images and simulations, that either distorts the reality it purports to depict or does not in fact depict anything with a real existence at all, but which nonetheless comes to constitute reality (Collinsdictionary.com). As explained previously, the idea springs from Plato’s allegory of the cave. In the context of this novel, the allegory is manifested in the Convergence where characters can only see what is inside the facility and what is reflected in it, unknowing of a reality situated outside the Convergence.

Since Jeffery come from the outside his experience in the Convergence can be linked to the chained prisoners within a cave that they never left, exposed only to reflection of figures on a wall in front of them caused by the light of fire behind them. The similarity between the cave and the Convergence can be seen in the attitude of the people in the facility were Jeffrey had the chance to talk to one of them:

I stooped alongside a robust man seated in his carrel. He wore a knit shirt and resembled a fellow on a golf course. Plunked down in his cart. I stood in front of him and asked how he is feeling.

“He said, ‘who are you?’”.

I told him I was a visitor eager to be educated. I said he looked pretty healthy. I said about time he spent here and how much longer it will be before he was taken to wherever they would take him.

“He said ‘who are you?’”.

“I said ‘don’t you feel the chill, the damp air, the tight space’”.

“He said “I am looking right through you.” (Zero K 93)

This conversation is symbolic. It reveals a lot about the nature of the facility and the way that is built to effect resident’s minds and behavior in a similar way to the prisoners in the cave that saw nothing but the cave throughout their lives which effected their minds and their behavior, The Convergence or the cave built a space that allows intentionally a limited amount or side of the truth to be revealed, which effected even their reception of reality where they cannot distinguish between the reality created inside the Convergence and the reality situated outside it. In this case, Jeffery is the one who saw reality both of the outer world and inner world of the cave or the Convergence.

In a another comparison between the Convergence and the cave, the prisoner who were liberated from the chains in the cave and had the chance to see the real world outside the cave has been bothered with the sunlight that he saw for the first time, although it burnt his eyes, yet it opened them as well to the reality of the world around him and allowed him to see the truth of the figures whose shadows were reflected on the wall the prisoner came back to enlighten the others and explain that what they used to see are not the figures themselves but only reflections of the real figures. We can see the example the prisoner’s enlightenment attempt example in the novel where Jeffery meets the man who told him “I am looking right through you” (93)

Jeffrey attempts to grab the attention of the man whom he had the conversation with to the artificiality of his surrendering since he himself come from the outside noticed it. The fact that he come from outside the Convergence gave him the knowledge of the situation to enlighten the man with the features of the facility and its artificiality.

5- A Religious Disneyland: The Convergence and Baudrillard's Hyperreal.

The Convergence facility is similar to Baudrillard's example of Disneyland, it represents the isolated, fabricated closed facility that creates a reality inside of it that is different than what is real outside. Disneyland is a constructed place that gathers people's dreams and promises to fulfil their childhood fantasies. In the same way, the Convergence is filled with what is needed to be run by certain people that work in secret offices in order to manipulate what is going in the facility developing and fulfilling an eternal dream for humanity which is prolong the human life in using high tech support this enclosed and contrasted space fits with Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality – Creating a model that becomes its own reality.

Artificiality and hyperreality manifested around the facility, it can be seen in the dialogue between Jeffery and Ross, where Jeffery was wondering about the localization of the Convergence that was isolated, unexpected place with high temperature, "These were building were hiding, agoraphobically sealed. They were blind buildings, hushed and somber, invisibly windowed, designed to fold into themselves" (4), Ross gave Jeffery an explanation which sheds the light on the artificiality behind the whole thing. In the same passage, Jeffery asked about the reason behind the hidden employee and offices, and Ross uncovers the main reason behind everything, the process of Zero K and its effect on the life as we know it:

"But why so isolated? Why not Switzerland? Why not suborn of Houston?"

"This is what we want, this separation. We have what is needed. Durable energy sources and mechanized systems. Blast walls and fortified floors. Structural redundancy. Fire safety. Security patrols, land and air. Elaborate cyber-defense. And so on"

"People in offices here. Hidden away. What are they doing?"

“They’re making the future. A new idea of the future. Different from the others.” (30)

In his book *Simulacra and Simulation* Jean Baudrillard illustrates the idea of simulacra and simulation as they are related mostly to addressing the confusing between the concept of reality and the concept of illusion due to the manners which these two concepts are represented. He argues that “The impossibility of the rediscovering an absolute level of the real is of the same order as the impossibility of staging illusion. Illusion is no longer possible because the real is no longer possible. It is a whole political problem of parody of a hypersimulation or effective simulation, that is posed here.” (Baudrillard 21). Furthermore, it is important to note that these simulacra are not just a mediations of reality, nor a deceitful mediations of reality. They are neither based on reality nor hide reality. They hide the fact that there is nothing like reality in our current comprehension of the world (Baudrillard 1). This can be seen in what Jeffery saw when he was in the facility and had a view that he did not know how to deal with what he was receiving:

I stood there and tried to absorb what I was seeing. I search for the word. There was a word I wanted, not a *crypto* or *grotto*, and in the meantime all I could do was look intently searched for the word. There was a word I wanted, not crypt I stood there and tried to absorb what I was seeing. I faces every one, ash gray, and shriveled hands, barely intact. features, all worn down, eroded, eyes, nose, mouth, ruined and try to accumulate the details. These mannequins had in all worm down, eroded, eyes, nose, mouth, ruined and shriveled hands, barely intact. features, one, ash gray, faces every There were roughly twenty such figures and a few that were full-bodied, standing, in old gray shredded robes, heads bowed. I walked along, bodies on both

sides of me, and the sight was overwhelming, and the place itself, the word itself-the word was *catacomb*. (*Zero K* 133)

Jeffery's presence in the facility was full of doubts about the authenticity of it which prompted him to a further question its credibility and what it promises to give he was surprised because he was not familiar with what he saw and took time to figure it out. He think of naming the place "grotto". This naming reinforces the analogy between the facility and allegory of the cave, his observations to the smallest details is an attempt to make sense of the details in front of him as well.

One of the most manifestations of simulacra in the novel are the mannequins Jeffery finds along with his walk through the place, these mannequins were a representation of humans. Yet, they were not perfectly intact, they were deformed and missing parts in a strange way, the whole setting was strange even the word as he called it "catacomb":

"The mannequins," I said"

"Ross leaned toward me"

"The mannequin. Where?"

"I don't know where. The woman in the hallway. The woman gesturing, sort of fearfully. The rust-colored woman. Naked woman"

...

"I never imagined they weren't real people. I knew the word. Chadors. Or burqas.

Or whatever the other names. This is all what I needed to know" (*51-52*)

The mannequins were objects of hybridity, they were not a real human nor an obvious mannequin; they did not look completely human nor an obvious inhuman shape, something that gathers the both. The mannequins are manifestations of the hyperreality concept, which

influenced Jeffery to think not about the mannequins only, but about the authenticity of the facility as a whole.

Another concept that Jean Baudrillard addressed in his book is hyperreality. It is where he argues that the “imaginary world” of Disneyland attracts visitors and it has been introduced as “imaginary” in order to convince them that everything around them is real, (Baudrillard 13). There are various devices at Disneyland that attempts to enter imagination and illusion into the realm of the “real”. It includes the American values and lifestyle in a way hiding the fact that what is real is not real anymore, therefore preserving the principles of reality. This can be manifested in many passages in the novel since it is built up facility that is full of technology which is main reason behind the inability for the protagonist conscious mind to distinguish between what is the true reality and what is the simulation of reality, when Jeffery was talking to Ross and said:

maybe I am too limited in vision. Inadequate to my experience. All I seem to be doing is relating what I’ve seen and heard in these few days to what I already know.

There is a chain of a reversed associations. The cryonic pod, the tube, the capsule, the toll booth, the phone booth, the ticket booth, the shower stall, the sentry box. (99)

The mindset that Jeffery has had changed after his residence in the facility, where he starts to rethink about what he knows in comparison to the facility’s environment. His mind state becomes similar to a visitor to Disneyland who has a no previous knowledge about the place, when he enters it and starts reconsidering what he knew about the world since there is so much change. Jeffery went through a period of doubt about what he knows from the world outside and tried to find a relation between what is happening inside the facility to make sense out of it because it was unfamiliar “Five times counting this visit. Twice before with Artis. The

experience tightened my idea of myself . I let certain preoccupation fall away . I shrugged them off . I begin to think more inwardly” (99). At the end of his quest to find the truth about the place he was staying, where people around him were fooled by the appearance of the surrender he could see the true color of it and figure that what he was living is an illusion that can be refer to as hyperreality. As the visitor of Disneyland realize that the environment that he found himself surroundings with is all fake. Yet, he has to carry on his journey inside of Disneyland until he is out of it.

6-Science is the New God: a technology that promises immortality.

As the it might be expected, the relationship between science and religion is complicated and their interaction through history is long. The nature of their has known many debates between philosophers. One of the most known philosophies that discussed such a topic is Existentialism. Christopher Panza and Gregory Gale are two authors who described science as a prey to the close minded of the church authority and religion’s strictness, since science has been seen as a threat to the position of religion and authority of church (38). Scientists defend themselves saying that the aim of their work was to discover truth and facts about the world around us using God given minds. Whereas the religious institution claims that scientists and their work and discoveries hold denigration towards religion, scientists defend themselves saying that excluding the idea of God is a better approach that helps reaching facts, since the scientific tendency dictates that the scientist should leave his personal beliefs out of the scientific academia and lean towards the proven scientific facts (38). Therefore, over time religion lost its influence on masses over time, where people tend to embrace what science is dictating, replacing religion with science in their daily life.

These complicated opposite orientations are present in the novel they influence the course of events in it, in addition to the characters mindset and behavior. This matter has been manifested in many passages like when Jeffery met Artis and had a conversation with: “At a time that's not necessarily so far off. And this is what I think about when I try to imagine the future. I will be reborn into a deeper and truer reality. Lines of brilliant light, every material thing in its fullness, a holy object” (*Zero K 47*).

After Jeffrey’s tour with the escort, he saw how well equipped the facility is. The scientific advancement and technological devices presence in the facility shows Jeffrey how powerful they can be. One of the manifestations is the conversation that Jeffery had with Artis, where she talked about her hopes and dependent on the scientific breakthrough to reach her aim, it replaces the trust in God which leads the believers life that mainstream religions preaches. Furthermore, she depends on technology “Zero K” to give her life again as an escape from death, it is a similar concept that the religion hold as known as the afterlife where God will recreate people perfectly to have a everlasting life in heaven. Her attitude reveals again that science and its breakthrough replaced God and religion. Especially, when she said “holy” it refers to the link between technology and divinity It is that what made Jeffery think that science exceeded the limits, replacing a position that religion and God used to hold to the level where it can manipulate death and prolong life in a way that humans desire. As a result, this can be seen as a reason to replace God and religion with science.

The key factor to prolong human life is to find a way to cure diseases and develop the medical treatments, in order to ensure the best results, science and technology are the used tools since they have a lot to provide to reach this aim. However, certain medical conditions do not have a cure. Thus, these medical conditions can be avoided by high technology which can

provide a solution for such dilemma, it can even provide an everlasting life. It is a major concept that the events inside the Convergence revolves around, when Jeffery was with the escort, he wondered: “But is there a link to older beliefs and practices? Are we a radical technology that simply renews and extends those swarming traditions of everlasting life?” (K 64).

The process Zero k is a cryonics technology, which according to dictionary.cambridge.org is the process of storing a dead body by freezing it until science has advanced to such a degree that it is able to bring that person back to life. With this definition cryonics has a lot to offer for Artis because it provides the opportunity to live a new life in the future when the ability to cure the chronic diseases is possible. Therefore, a new life for her, reflecting on her as a healthy physical state and the chance to restore her youth back. Also, cryonics offers the opportunity to live in an open time-line to achieve life goals that she ever wanted since it promises immortality. In addition, going through the Zero K process along with Ross will guarantee her a long life with her loved one without the fear of death that threat the elderly relationship.

Process Zero K promises immortality and it provides a solution to Artis’ medical condition. Yet, it has a negative effect that raises arguments against cryonics, such as the fact that death is natural life incident that must happen otherwise destabilizes life’s natural balance. Also, escaping death is can cause a cultural stiffness from diversity. Joseph Weizenbaum, MIT computer science professor and creator of ELIZA says “Our death is the last service we can provide to the world: Would we not go out of the way, the following generations would not need to re-create human culture. Culture would become fixed, unchangeable and die. And with the death of culture, humanity would also perish”. On the existential level, immortality makes life aimless, setting goals to seek will be delayed since there is no urgent achieve them with a provision of

endless amount of time. Therefore, being motivated and making the most out of life will be aimless.

Due to Artis' intractable medical condition, she had to go through process Zero K. Yet, going through it is not an easy choice to make because it has consequences that she has to deal with. The process caused Artis an existential void where she could not determine herself, where she is at or how long she is going to be where she is. The lost sense of time and place reinforced her sense of how she is, she attempts to make sense out of the chaos to find the truth about herself. She is in a state of dissociative personality disorder alike due to her quest in such a circumstance, one who is within herself and one is outside, aware of the fact that she exists, but cannot tell who she is for sure. She knows that she exists because she has thoughts as René Descartes said “I think therefore I am”, these thoughts raise a question if she is really herself or someone else even though the answer is within her she could not find it. She thought of gathering her two selves maybe that will help her find out who she really is, she could not do so because she is restricted to the here and now. In order for her to break this infinite loop she starts to use her senses to locate her existence but they did her no good, she went back to her thoughts and that made her wonder about who was she. It was her and herself. The rare complicated situation that Artis found herself into reflects the profound existential quest during process Zero K.

7-Existential Crisis in the Absence of God:

The experience that Jeffery had in the Convergence was not usual what so ever on many levels, what he saw and interacted with in the days that he spent in the Convergence left him in situation of questioning, doubts and search about what is the actually meaning of life if he took the road to immortality. Jeffery's life before going to the Convergence was average living with

his girlfriend and her adopted son with no extreme complicated events up until he received an invitation to the facility so called the Convergence where he faced a complete new phase of his life. After his indwelling in the Convergence facility he changed his perspective toward what he saw as normal life. His new experience gave him a new vision to assess its normality, a feeling of anxiety due to the question whether this life need to be lived as a mortal being or live the dream of immortality? Weather life deserves to be lived at all in the first place? Do we choose our pattern of life? Or it is life that choose for us? Many questions were going in his mind about the nature of his existence.

What Jeffery was going through is known as existential crisis. Existentialism is a philosophical movement that stresses the individual's unique position as a self-determining agent responsible for making meaningful, authentic choices in a universe seen as purposeless or irrational: existentialism is associated especially with Heidegger, Jaspers, Marcel, and Sartre, and is opposed to philosophical rationalism and empiricism according to (Dictionary.Com). Inside the facility, Jeffery is promoted reassesses the value of life after having a choice that is rare to be given, where he had the chance to be immortal through the process Zero K that was available in the Convergence. Yet, a conversation between the tall twin men that Jeffery heard made him think about the consequences of such a decision and evaluate life from macro perspective rather than being hasty about it, questioning is this what he really want? is avoiding death something he should take? Or is it that life must end at some point? Such an existential questions are manifested in many phases inside and out of the Convergence. Yet the conversation was full of existential questions (*Zero K 69*)

Although Jeffery had been long thinking of this, and he did not find the ultimate answer to base his decision on. The first statement that were made in the conversation reveals the relation

between immortality and universe's life, meaning if they took a step towards immortality they will exist as long as the universe exists in its physical and philosophical aspect and relating the situation to its consequences: "This is the first split second of the first cosmic year. We are becoming citizens of the universe." (*Zero K* 69). The possibilities of it are a matter of questions and debate, each owns a vision to the topic, what he is capable of doing and the aim he wants to reach, or is the available technological advancement is going to make them idle since they have an endless amount of time to reach their aims; "Once we master life extension and approach the possibility of becoming ever renewable, what happens to our energies, our aspirations", "The social institutions we've built", "Are we designing a future culture of lethargy and self-indulgence?" (*Zero K* 69)

On the other hand, where death as a deadline to a person's lifetime, is sign to a limited amount of time that can raise the value of life, and it represents a motive to make the most out of life and reach many achievements which makes death a grace and has a positive effect on the life of the individual. "Isn't death a blessing? Doesn't define the value of our lives, minutes after minutes, year to year?" (69). Another prospective was an enhancing human lifetime a bit longer enough to achieve personal aims without the everlasting, tedious, idle endless life. Also, extreme human desire toward perfection, and its fantasy can be distractive for scientific achievements aim and lead to undesirable results: "Isn't it sufficient to live a little longer through advanced technology? Do we need to go on and on? (69). In addition to that, how will immortality affect the events track of history, do the previous major events going to remembered at all?, what about the structure of economy and world finance situation, can it handle the endless needs or immortal humanity or there will be an renewable energy sources? what will happen to religion during

immortality is it going to lose its influence or keep its spiritual presence?: “What happens to history? What happens to money? What happens to God?” (69).

In addition to questions about the consequences of reaching immortality, more of an existential question were posed to in order to find an aim and a answer to the meaning of life. For example, what define life is that it is limited and goes to an inevitable end, as a part of nature’s plan to restrict human existence in order to heal itself up from the damage that happened to it. The human actions like pollution and wars caused a lot to nature, what is in it for nature to allow humans to live forever but a more damage to its ecological system. Therefore, a limited life for humans means a gain for nature. “The defining elements of life is it ends”, “Nature wanted to kill us off in order to return to untouched and uncorrupted form”, “what good are we if we lived forever?” (70).

During a speech delivered by a man who were a university professor speaking about the catastrophe: “It’s an escape from our personal mortality. Catastrophe. It overwhelms what is weak and fearful in our bodies and minds. We face the end but not alone. We lose ourselves in the core of the storm.” (66). In order to escape the catastrophe, the professor suggested to go through process Zero K, though the choice of immortality has consequences as well, staying alive is better than extinct. Jeffery’s rejection of such a choice was because it causes an existential anxiety, where the survivors are in an isolated place where they are safe from the catastrophe but isolated from life as well, alive but not living. Also, when the survivors are revived again, they have to face another existential crisis and that is immortality, as it might good it looks, immortality means endless amount of time, which cause existential void where it keeps the survivors wondering about what to do with such a gift. These two reasons gave Jeffery existential anxiety and make him reconsider the consequences of going through the process.

Jeffery's journey in the facility along with the provided possibility of immortality heightened his existential crisis. Existential anxiety such as the one that Jeffery has is concerned with the existence in life and its appurtenances meaning, freedom and inevitable death. The latter can be related more since death is ever faced alone, so is the process of freezing the residents in the Convergence gave a raise to a profound type of anxiety that is similar to the anxiety of facing death alone because the frozen resident is dead alike to a certain point. Jeffery thinks about the situation during the process Zero K:

Solitude, yes. Think of being alone and frozen in the crypt, the capsule. Will new technologies allow the brain to function at the level of identity? This is what you may have to confront. The conscious mind. Solitude in extremis. Alone. Think of the word itself. Middle English. All one. You cast off the person. The person is the mask, the created character in the medley of dramas that constitute the mask drops away and the person becomes you in its truest meaning. All one. The self. What is the self? Everything you are, without others, without friends or strangers or lovers or children or streets to walk or food to eat or mirrors in life. which to see yourself. But are you anyone without others? (67)

The process Zero K happens in a capsule, which means a closed and confined place where the resident is inside of it all alone, such a scenario incites anxiety and it reveals the fragility of human psychological state in a closed environment. Add to that, the freezing process to preserve the human body that can be regarded as painful is nerve wrecking. It is that what made Jeffery wonder about the aftermath of the process and its effects on the human consciousness, is it going to preserve that as well or it is going to be lost over time? It reveals a high level of existential anxiety and worry about the human consciousness being the core of the human identity is a

question that need a firm answer. According to oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com the state of being able to use your senses and mental powers to understand what is happening. Therefore, the human consciousness is the real definition of who the individual is without the outer appearance. A complete solitude, the only place where you can be all alone with any interfere of others. Yet, Jeffery wonders about the human consciousness and its interaction with the outer world: “I thought, Is this the world as it truly looks? Is this the reality we haven’t learnt to see?” (46). It is the self of the individual the profound being without any interior variables. What is human being without the outer interaction that makes him so valuable and risky to lose, causing an existential crisis over.

Life and death might be very contradictory concepts. Yet, the two concepts interact with each other and life contains death in certain ways. The matter of death and its presence in life as an inevitable event that undoes, as the Indian poet Tagore, where he said: “Dying is as much a part of life as being born Death belongs to life as birth does. The walk is in the raising of the foot as in the laying of it down [...] We shall know some day that death can never rob us of that which our soul has gained, for her gains are one with herself” (n.p).

Life cannot have a meaning without death. Therefore, we must address the essential issue of finitude and the temporal of human existence. Every human life must come to an end. It is the job of the specialists that aid dying patients and their mourning family members to ensure that this passing occurs in a decent manner, with care and least amount of pain. We are witnessing scientific and technological breakthrough that were unfathomable, few decades back in the early twentieth century. Medical sciences when combined with technology enable us to enhance the quality of human life while also raising an ethical dilemma concerning existence as a whole.

Such dilemmas heighten an existential anguish before the dispute between the choice and inability. Though, even in the case of inability there is an open choice precisely with the availability of knowledge about the topic. This being said, Leo Pessini in his paper untitled "Reflections on Death: ethical dilemma" discussing the bioethical debate where he argued that it is built on the understanding of the bioethical field that gathers many other fields, medical fields and moral humility, ability and consequences which provides a new perspective to the human existence even exceeds the human senses (n.p)

Jeffery's journey in the Convergence had this death dilemma concerning death in a familiar way to human kind or a continuation of life through an unprecedented medical technology available which is can realize a dream for the human kind. Yet, how would humanity deal with its consequences which have a huge impact on the humans life and existed civilization. A conversation between Jeffrey and Ross manifested such a matter:

"Those in authority here. They will carry out your wishes."

"We don't need to get into that."

"They will do this for you. Because it's you. Simple injection, serious criminal act"

"Let it go' he said"

"And in return, what? You've framed wills and trusts and testaments granting them certain resources and holdings well beyond what you've already given them."

"Finished?"

"Is it outright murder? Is it a form of assisted suicide that's horribly premature? Or is it a metaphysical crime that needs to be analyzed by philosophers?"

"He said, 'Enough'"

“Die a while, then live forever.”

“I didn’t know what else to say, what to do, where to go.” (*Zero K* 114)

The conversation starts with Ross explaining the possibility that process Zero K has to offer in order to convince Jeffrey with his decision. Realizing the dream that humans only dreamed of for their entire existence, now is in the reachable range. Jeffrey’s rejection to discuss the matter in the first place shows his position towards the topic, Jeffrey tried to grab his attention towards the serious ethical offense that can be committed by taking such a decision. It might seem simple but its weight ethically is significant. Avoiding death as a natural inevitable fate for any human is a form of tricking and deception therefore is unethical behavior, where Jeffrey’s orientation is more towards the ethical conservative tendency, the conversation carry on with more manifestation of the ethical dilemma.

8. Conclusion

All in all, Don DeLillo ’s *Zero K* is a novel that deals with a crucial concept in our lives that such as truth, reality and the purpose of life. As a reader of this novel, one can observe that Don DeLillo has shown how the truth is beyond layers of illusion around us covering our perception of reality. Our surrendering contains the concept of reality. Yet, it is covered with layers of illusion that makes it difficult to determine what reality is. In addition to that, Don DeLillo manifests Existentialism and the protagonist’s journey to reach the aim of his existence. Moreover, the novel implicitly illustrates the effect of the technology on the contemporary and its consequences on the futuristic human society. Don DeLillo has presented a new form of truth, Existentialism and reality in a context of our contemporary world by the two perspectives of Ross and his son Jeffrey to the same topics. It is not a call for immortality, it might be accepted by some and rejected by others.

Conclusion

After reading Don DeLillo's novel *Zero K*, it can be realized that the truth is a complicated and crucial to the life of the individual. This novel can illustrate a lot about the truth and related concepts and philosophies such as hyperreality and Existentialism. The truth seems to be a conceptually defined as life quest that is vague with hyperreality full of question along with Existentialism. Overall, this thesis has presented and linked the three topics. The first, focused on defining truth to for the protagonist and the barriers in comprehending this truth which were presented in the concept of hyperreality. The third, illustrated the existential journey that the protagonist went through.

The first chapter under the title "Reality is elsewhere, Plato's philosophy" has discussed the theoretical background of this thesis. It is divided into three interrelated sections: Theory of Forms, The Allegory of the Cave, Baudrillard reality principles, Simulacra and Simulation, The Divine irreverence of images, The Hyperreal and imaginary, Existentialism, The Existentialism and its main figures and Absurdism. Thereby, the first chapter has attempted to discuss the theorization of the truth, hyperreality and Existentialism and their scope as critical theory to understand the meant truth in the novel since it is a topic that has been discussed by many authors and philosophers. Also, it implicitly discusses the relation between individualism and seeking the truth of life.

Plato's *Allegory of The Cave* has been crucial and influential allegory in this thesis' illustration of the truth while concentrating on the hyperreality and its relation to the quest for the truth that leads to a distinction between reality and hyperreality in addition to presence of Existentialism as a tool used to figure what was the protagonist dealing with. The truth

philosophically is a supreme concept. Thus, it is in a place that is far from its seeker with a distance that is filled with illusions resulting a deformation in the reflection of the truth. Therefore, this section provided an illustration about how the physical world around us is changeable, thus it does not reflect the truth in its supreme meaning. Also, it demonstrates how the truth can be found beyond the appearance of the physical world that takes more than the average person insight to see it. Secondly, this chapter demonstrates how can original matter can be simulated so many times to the point where original object can not be distinguished from a copied one due to the simulation of it. Also, it refers to the layers that distort the original matter and hinders its authenticity as a hyperreality. A concept that gathers the reality of a matter with illusion of the simulation together to create a new reality.

The third section tackled Existentialism and Absurdism as a part of it. This interconnection conceptually leads to a philosophical assessment of life. For this reason, it has concerted on the basis of this philosophy, explaining how this philosophy can be helpful to determine a personal purpose for the individual's life. Also, it indicates the link to the protagonist quest for the truth that he is seeking. In addition, it shows how the reality that we are dealing with seems absurd and deceitful.

The second chapter has analyzed Don DeLillo's *Zero K* within a selected sample. Consequently, by placing the selected samples under scrutiny, this thesis has examined and presented the novel's philosophies. Don DeLillo has depicted the quest as a journey that starts with question about its true essence. A difficult mission especially that the truth is not crystal clear. What we receive as reality to use as a tool to reach the true essence of life, is not worthy of depending on but it is structured in a way which hide the true essence of the quest.

Furthermore, this chapter shows how the author utilized the technology available in our modern world and its ability to realize a lot of what was considered as a fantasy for humans. Technology has a huge impact on the world, changing even fundamental beliefs, such as death, God and existence. The change that technology had on these fundamental beliefs, left a void on the existential level; causing more confusion to the protagonist in his quest. The outcome of it was absurdity of life and how empty it is unless he has to fill the void with a personal aim, an existential duty towards himself.

All in all, Don DeLillo's *Zero K* is a novel that deals with a crucial concept in our lives that such as truth, reality and the purpose of life. As a reader of this novel, one can observe that Don DeLillo has shown how the truth is beyond layers of illusion around us covering our perception of reality. Our surrendering contains the concept of reality. Yet, it is covered with layers of illusion that makes it difficult to determine what reality is. In addition to that, Don DeLillo manifests Existentialism and the protagonist's journey for self-understanding and for reflecting on the real value of life. Moreover, the novel implicitly illustrates the effect of the technology and its consequences on the futuristic human society. Don DeLillo has presented a new form of truth: Existentialism and reality in a context of our contemporary world by the two perspectives of Ross and his son Jeffery to the same topics.

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ملخص

كان السعي وراء الحقيقة لفترة طويلة موضع اهتمام العديد من الفلاسفة والأدباء. في الفترة المعاصرة، ترتبط الحقيقة بمفاهيم مثل الواقع الهجين، وفلسفات مثل الفلسفة الوجودية التي أثرت النقاش حول البحث عن الحقيقة ومفهوم الواقع في النقد الأدبي. لذلك، تهدف هذه الأطروحة إلى فحص واستكشاف طرق الوصول إلى الحقيقة، والمفهوم المعقد للواقع في رواية **صفر كالفن** (2016) لدون دييليو. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، فإن هته الأطروحة توضح المعنى المقصود لـ "الحقيقة" في الرواية وعلاقتها بمفهوم "الواقع الهجين" كتشويه للواقع الأصلي، كما أن هته الأطروحة توفر قراءة للتشابه بين "رمزية الكهف" لأفلاطون و التجربة التي يمر بها البطل في القصة من أجل إستيعاب الفروق الدقيقة بين الحقيقة والواقع. تقدم مثل هته القصة الرمزية تحليلاً أكثر عمقا للبحث عن الحقيقة الذي يقدمه دون دييليو في روايته: أولاً، البحث الذي وجد البطل نفسه مشاركاً فيه. ثانياً، الرحلة الوجودية التي هي جزء من بحثه. ثالثاً، تسبب الواقع المشوه في طمس الحقيقة التي يسعى ورائها. لتحقيق ذلك، تعتمد الأطروحة على نظرية أفلاطون للمُثل و رمزية الكهف، ومفهوم جون بودغيار للواقع الهجين والمحاكاة بالإضافة إلى مفاهيم أخرى في النقد الوجودي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: السعي، الحقيقة، الواقع، الواقع الهجين، الفلسفة الوجودية، صفر كالفن.