

## **Existential Self (ves) as reflected in two Metaphysical poets': John Donne's "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning" and Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress"**

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### **Abstract:**

Defining Existentialism reveals that there are plural Existentialisms. The same could also be said of Metaphysical poetry. Throughout the history of literary criticism metaphysical poetry has gained different, positive and negative definitions. Therefore, it could be claimed that the case of metaphysical poetry is as perplexing as Existentialism; not only because of the opinions of critics who have impacted the definition of Metaphysical poetry in positive or negative senses- ranging from Dryden, to Johnson and T.S Eliot- but also because relating that poetry in particular to the term "Metaphysical", has even increased the obscurity and the difficulty of defining it, or describing it clearly. Metaphysical poetry is also a unique case of contradictions, and the grounds for a wide range of plural moral, existential, religious as well as social questions. Reading Metaphysical poetry through the lenses of Existentialism might reveal hidden links between both concepts and even show the two concepts in a new epistemological light. This article is a close reading of John Donne's "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning" and Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress". Being two eminent Metaphysical poets, each one reflects his own Metaphysical version of what Metaphysical poetry is. At first reading these might seem utterly opposed to each other. However, the focus of this article is all about the self (ves) in the two poems from the perspective of Existentialism. The article triggers questions about the self in different explanations of Existential philosophy. It raises the question whether there could be any cross references or boundaries between the Metaphysical self (ves) as reflected in the two poems of the study and the Existential self (ves). Besides, the idea of self-revelation in the two poems might redefine the metaphysical dimension of the self (ves) as well as the Existential one.

### **Key Words:**

Existentialism, Metaphysical Poetry, The Self (ves), Self- revelation, Contingency, Nihilism

Before embarking on analyzing the concept of the self in both Existential philosophy and Metaphysical poetry, it is important to define Existentialism first. However, it is also significantly important before examining definitions to highlight the historical and time gap between Existentialism in the first half of the Twentieth century and metaphysical poetry that appeared in the Seventeenth century. Jonathan Webber's *Rethinking Existentialism* (2018) is one of the many attempts to define Existentialism. He discusses the many definitions of Existentialism, either the ones given by its founders such as Jean Paul Sartre, and Simone de Beauvoir, or the ones given by the philosophers who tried to deny the relationship of their philosophies with Existentialism (2). Existentialism's core idea of "existence precedes essence" raises many arguments about the existential concept of the place of the individual in the world. The individual in existential philosophy, as Webber explains, is not influenced by his / her birth or nature; he / she decides their objectives, values, and interests. Thus, the Aristotelian idea of common traits shared by humanity is completely inapplicable in existential philosophy. As Webber points out, Existentialism takes after John Locke's idea of the "essence" which means that humans make decisions and choices that make them what they are, and not the Aristotelian "essentia" that reflects inborn qualities common to all humans (4).

The debate between different philosophers such as Camus, Heidegger, de Beauvoir and Sartre on the relationship between human existence and existentialism's ethical concerns, leads to philosophy's all times' question as Webber claims. The question is an ethical one; how humans live their lives is the question. The answer to this question revolves around existentialism's thorough account of all aspects of human existence whether physical, social, or rational. Existentialism, as Webber explains does not stop at one aspect of human existence as other philosophies do, but it aims at a complete investigation of the different aspects of human existence (7). Sartre's "existence precedes essence" stresses the idea that human imagination, emotions, motivations and even desires are determined by one's choices and therefore, one's outlook; social and public image are determined by the set of values and objectives one chooses to have. However, the failure to recognize one's outlook results, in Webber's analysis of Sartre's Existentialism, from the failure to match the objectives and values one chooses on the one hand, to one's own outlook and public behavior or even social expectations, on the other hand. This failure Sartre calls "bad faith". Authenticity, as Webber clarifies, is existentialism's opposite of "bad faith". Unlike "bad faith", "authenticity" has no conflicts between one's own outlook, values, and choices and one's public and social behavior (8). Thus, Sartre's existentialism could be viewed as an attempt at a complete ethical system that does not only examine the question of how humans live their lives, but also offers patterns of behavior through the ideas of "bad faith" and "authenticity" to apply existentialism's core concept of "existence precedes essence" through an ethical framework. Thus, the definition of Existentialism given by Sartre as the founder of existential philosophy, focuses on the existence of the individual and his / her choices that determine both the self- image and the public image. Existence in Sartre's point of view is equivalent to personal and public values, choices, and objectives.

As mentioned earlier, Existentialism is related to man's personal and public choices. This stresses the two faces of Existentialism and leads to defining it through Existential sociology. Joseph. A. Kotarba and Andrea Fontana (1984), describe existential sociology as a movement that is mainly concerned with the "actual experience "of both social and individual life (224). The movement, as the editors point out, is a result of a social urge for self-realization and hence, the various and different attempts by many researchers, writers and philosophers to understand and define the self or individuality. They review two popular approaches to the study of the self: the "positivistic" and the "ethnographic". The "positivistic" approach is promoted by the psychological interest in analyzing what underlies the real self through a preconceived set of questions given to a person in the context of an interview. The questions do not reveal the true self of the person interviewed but could indicate something about the personality of the interviewed. In contrast, the "ethnographic" approach is mainly interested in examining the actual experience of the individual (224). Thus, the existential self, from an existential sociological perspective, commends the self while at the same time avoids making any kind of

general defining statement about the self. This is justified in the editors' point of view as part of existential sociology's inherent nature. Existentialism is primarily a philosophy that confirms the absurdity of life in general and therefore the impossibility of defining the self; existential sociology seeks to examine the actual real experience of the individual in its various shades without committing to any inclusive statements (231).

In his article "The Question of the Self in Existential Thought" (2011), Paul McGinley explains that the concept of the self in existential philosophy is mainly influenced by the idea of relativity. He argues that the "Self" is a varying self; one that is "constructed "according to context and situation (2). However, he stresses the idea that relating the matter to relativity is not enough and that leads him to Heidegger's *Being-in-the-World* (1962). Thus, the idea of the 'Self' in Heidegger, as McGinley states, is primarily either a 'Self' within the context of time, or one to be considered as a "possibility" and, in this sense, is still part of temporality. Therefore, self-understanding depends on the temporal and historical since without them, a self cannot realize itself or even become a possibility (4). This entails two issues: the first, is the idea of the "Self" or the "I" is a continuous change of status since the "Self" changes continuously by the context within which or through which it becomes a self; the second matter is related to the basic principle of existentialism: "existence precedes essence"; confirming the idea that becoming a self is something acquired not given (4). McGinley adds that there must be a given context for the self to be an acting part in it or even a development of the given context. All this leads, as McGinley explains, to self-realization. Thus, the self in this context, as McGinley comments on Heidegger, embraces and "transcends" all the different and various selves "I, you and we" (8).

One of the main concepts of Heideggerian phenomenology is the resistance to either the objectification or the subjectification of the self. In order to find the self and achieve self- understanding according to Heidegger's concept of the self, one must refuse studying the self as an object as natural sciences do, or the behavior of the self as psychology does. The self is realized and understood when it is part of an actual world, which explains what Being-in-the world stands for.

A third definition of Existentialism is given by Paul Tillich in "The Nature and the Significance of Existential Thought" (1956). Tillich defines Existentialism as the relationship between two sets of important contrasts: "essence and existence" and "subjectivity and objectivity". The focus on the two sets of contrasts triggers a significant problematic question about Existentialism. The dilemma of Existentialism is all about the concept of the subject as separate from all the components of existence. Tillich refers to Husserl's bracketed experience to analyze the subject – Husserl brackets all the elements of existence including time and space to reach a transcendental subject- Heidegger, on the other hand, cannot perceive of the subject except as part of Being-in- the world. He places the subject as part of space, time and all their components. However, Tillich stresses the idea that Existentialism is mainly a "protest against the dissolution of the existing subject into the objects of his own creation, into the world of things and the essences which constitute them" (741). Thus, the definition highlights two intriguing concepts related to Existentialism: finitude and non-being. The two concepts, as Tillich explains, represent complex, dubious relationships between subjectivity and objectivity on the one hand, and finitude or temporality as well as infinity and eternity, on the other hand.

Existentialism triggers complex questions that have bewildered philosophers for a very long time. Tillich discusses the idea of finitude and infinity from different perspectives and their relationship to existential thought and more importantly how they define the existential concept of the subject. The concept of finitude and infinity, as Tillich reveals, questions the relationship of the thinking subject to temporality and the place of that same subject within temporality. In other words, the matter of finitude and infinity places the subject as part of finitude in place of the object that is conceived and measured by time and duration, thus belonging to the transient; and at the same time the subject transcends the temporal and the transient by comprehending the existence of the infinite and the immortal. Tillich refers to Greek culture and the Old Testament as good examples of the duality of the subject since he / she in the context of both Greek culture and the Old Testament,

are aware of their own transience and mortality. In Greek culture humans are the only mortals who can understand the possibility of transcendence and immortality, and in the case of the Old Testament man's awareness of his /her belongingness to the divine kingdom explains humanity's transcendence despite their physical transience (743).

Non-being is one of the characteristic features of the existential subject. It stands, as Tillich explains Heidegger's non-being, for the "potential" of non-existence against actual existence. This entails existential anxiety as well as an accompanying quality of non-being. Non-being works through the realization of the existential subject of the "objectifying" process that realizes non-being in terms of belonging to a finitude in contrast to the infinite. This, as Tillich argues, draws attention to the ontological aspect of realizing non-being (744). Thus, existential anxiety is about the existential subject realizing the possibility of non-being. Tillich goes on to explain that the realization of the possibility of non-being which is known as existential anxiety is a trait found in humans and animals alike and compares it to fear. Fear is the objectifying process existential subjects experience when they identify the source or reason of their fear. Unlike existential anxiety, as Tillich argues, fear has a definite source that could be identified, while anxiety is vague because its source is unidentified. This explains why animals become afraid while humans are the only ones who experience anxiety.

Existence apart from and even before essence, Being-in-the world, subjectification or objectification of the self, the possibility of non-Being in order to realize Being, are all possible Existential scenarios to define the self or the selves. The main dilemma goes back to the question of man's place in the world. Whether "existence precedes essence" or existence is bound by temporality and space is a crucial question. If the whole human experience is limited by time and space boundaries, which determine the values, the choices and the objectives, then defining the self is also subject to time and space boundaries, and if the self is free of time and space boundaries, then defining it is also unbound by the limitations of time and space. However, the many and different versions of Existentialism find resonance in metaphysical poetry's notorious reputation. The problem remains unresolved and defining the concept of the self through existential lenses complicates the matter. Nonetheless, this article is a close reading of two representative metaphysical poets who present different possible definitions of the self or selves and project all the possible contexts of the self or selves. The paper is an attempt to read metaphysical poetry as the crystallization of the sophisticated Existential dilemma, long before the emergence of existentialism as a philosophy.

Bradford Smith (1934) defines metaphysical poetry as primarily concerned with love, life and death. It is metaphorical poetry and, in his opinion, is distinguished by a special "thinking flavor" and unusual use of imagery. It is deep poetry that delves into the depths of human experience (261-262). Smith stresses the word "complexity" as the core to understanding metaphysical poetry. Metaphysical poetry presents a complex human experience that does not resolve the complexities of life or the universe, but combines all the contradictions of life, man and the universe in one unit. For this type of poetry, Smith refers to John Donne, Carew, Christopher Marlow and their followers as examples of metaphysical poets. He comments on the use of imagery in metaphysical poetry not for "embellishment" but to examine and analyze all the contradictions of life and emotions; images combine the highly intellectual character of metaphysical poetry with emotions to form one unit. Imagery in metaphysical poetry is used to analyze and explain complex abstract ideas (264).

As mentioned in the abstract, metaphysical poetry has many, sometimes even contradictory definitions. Smith reviews different opinions and definitions of metaphysical poetry. He refers to William Drummond the Scottish poet, John Dryden, Samuel Johnson, Chapman, T.S Eliot and Sir Herbert Grierson. As Smith explains, Drummond was the first to use the word in reference to the seventeenth century poets describing their poetry as "scholastic quiddities" (qtd in Smith 263). He also refers to Dryden's definition of metaphysical poetry as "nice speculations of philosophy" (qtd in Smith 263). However, Smith points out that Johnson gave credit to the metaphysical poets' complex "far-fetched" conceits as surprisingly revealing some new truths. As for Smith's review of Chapman, the latter gave a positive view of metaphysical poetry describing metaphysical poetry as

enlightening. T.S Eliot is another important literary figure who sought to revive metaphysical poetry in the twentieth century and give it its due literary importance. Eliot coins the "unified sensibility" theory that explains the metaphysical poets' 'ingenious ability to combine intellect with emotions, the spiritual and the physical. Grierson agrees with Eliot's opinion about the complex combination metaphysical poetry gives of the human experience and adds that metaphysical poetry is also "psychological" since it analyzes emotions. He believes that metaphysical poetry reflects an "inner conflict" since it delves into the depths of love, religion and death, attempting to analyze the conflicting strands related to those deep issues of human existence (Smith 264). Smith attempts to summarize some of the characteristic features of metaphysical poetry through examining some quotations from canonical metaphysical poems. He observes that metaphysical poetry is mainly concerned with the combination of thought and emotion. Unlike Romantic poetry or philosophical inquiries, metaphysical poetry, as Smith observes, combines body and soul, intellect and emotion in sensual and even sometimes erotic metaphor and tone. He points out that the metaphysical poet is concerned with himself/herself in all the details of the human experience. This includes all its complexities, contradictions and confusions. However, instead of delving deep into philosophical dilemmas, the metaphysical poet focuses on his/ her life with all its details and particularities. Metaphysical poets use common everyday diction and sometimes scientific and religious diction to convey the minutest details of human experience through an extended image rendered through a complex, unusual metaphor. However, this involvement in the personal aspect of human life leads metaphysical poets to universal truths without an intended philosophical query. Intellect is a distinctive characteristic of metaphysical poetry. However, emotions are present in metaphysical poetry, but they are strictly controlled by intellect and therefore, there is no room for mere sentimentality in metaphysical poetry (Smith 265-269).

In his article "What is "Metaphysical" Poetry?" George W. Boyd (1960) traces the origins of the term and how it came to signify a wide range of meanings and concepts in criticism since Dryden drew attention to the term and even before and after Dryden. Boyd focuses on interpreting the multiple definitions of the term "metaphysical" from different perspectives. He refers to Dryden's popular definition of the metaphysical poets as wasting energy on intellect to influence the fair sex while they should try to influence their emotions. Dr. Samuel Johnson, on the other hand, as Boyd explains, notices how the metaphysical poets combine contradictory ideas and force different aspects of life and nature to become one. For Johnson, metaphysical poets sacrifice pleasing the reader to give space to their learning and sophistication. Alexander Pope, as Boyd reveals, shares with Dr. Johnson a similar view. In Pope's view metaphysical poets focus on wit and conceit in an unrealistic manner. Boyd attempts to read the critics' views of the metaphysical poets' characteristics in order to give an answer to the intriguing question of the definition of metaphysical poetry (13-15).

Boyd's analysis points out that there are two distinct views of metaphysical poetry: one before the twentieth century or late nineteenth century; this includes John Dryden, Alexander Pope and Samuel Johnson as eminent critics, and another that started by the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century by H.J.C Grierson and T. S. Eliot. The first view focuses mainly on what those critics consider as the negative features of metaphysical poetry. Twentieth century critics, on the other hand, aimed at reviving metaphysical poetry nearly for the same reasons held against them by previous critics. These include the combination of learned language with the colloquial, the sensuous, passionate embodiment of thought, juxtaposition, conceits, wit and unusual farfetched imagery, to name a few. The Grierson-Eliot's definition of metaphysical poetry that focused on analyzing and defining metaphysical complexity, explaining the unusual combination of passion and intellect, led to George Williamson's definition of metaphysical poetry in 1930, as Boyd points out. Williamson's definition summarizes all the previous explanations and definitions of metaphysical poetry describing it as: "complex, sensuous and intellectual as opposed to the simple, sensuous and passionate tradition" (Qtd in Boyd 18).

However, by the mid-twentieth century, particularly during the forties as Boyd explains, a rethinking and a revising of metaphysical poetry was started by Professor Douglas Bush. The “minority report” written in 1945 by Professor Bush started a third wave in defining and explaining metaphysical poetry. Boyd refers to Professor Bush’s report as a work that initiated an important trend in discussing metaphysical poetry. Bush, as Boyd elucidates, questions the influence of John Donne on metaphysical poetry and whether the latter’s characteristic features form the grounding elements of metaphysical poetry. Bush went even as far as questioning the validity of Donne’s twentieth century reputation as one of the founding figures of the metaphysical school (19). Boyd refers to many scholars who followed the trend set by Professor Bush such as Miss Rosemond Tuve’s *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery* (1947) in which she explores the origins of the metaphysical style. Miss Rosemary Freeman is another example of the influence of Professor Bush’s new trend in examining and defining metaphysical poetry. She analyzes the effect of the emblem books on metaphysical style in her book *English Emblem Books* (1948). A.J. Smith reviews E.M.W Tillyard’s *The Metaphysicals and Milton* (1958) giving the discussion of metaphysical poetry a new dimension. Smith introduces Tillyard’s opinion that the idea of the long tradition of opposing the metaphysical poets to Milton, is a mistake since the latter examines the work of Donne’s followers such as Herbert, Carew or Vaughn. Tillyard, as Smith explains, finds that the opposition of Milton to the metaphysical poets is less than the one between Donne and his alleged followers. The former advocates the idea of not dividing seventeenth century poets into separate schools, but rather starting a rereading of seventeenth century poetry (21). This brings back T.S. Eliot’s concern for using the term “school” in describing metaphysical poetry. The concern is out of Eliot’s doubt of the legitimacy of classifying Donne and his different followers as a school.

Andrew Cutrofello’s “How Do We Recognize Metaphysical Poetry?” (2017) comments on T.S. Eliot’s explanation of metaphysical poetry as embodying the abstract experience of the metaphysical poets’ and their thoughts in poetry. Cutrofello goes back to Keats and Shelley explaining Eliot’s opinion of metaphysical poetry as “miss[ing] its moment” because of the early death of Keats and Shelley. This in Cutrofello’s point of view justifies unaccepting metaphysical poetry in the eighteenth century. Compared to the Romantic poets who in Cutrofello’s point of view wrote about their emotional experience and did not give space to their abstract thoughts, Donne wrote about his abstract ideas and thoughts as if he wrote about objects giving his thoughts life. This embodiment of thought is described by Eliot as Cutrofello points out in the famous phrase of the “unification of sensibility” that was never experienced after the metaphysical poets (78).

Cutrofello refers also to Grierson’s *Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century*. He explains Grierson’s definition of the “full sense” of metaphysical poetry in terms of the metaphysical poets’ interest in philosophical concepts that tackle the universe and man’s relationship to the universe and man’s place in it. However, He points out the controversy about who is a metaphysical poet and who is not that many critics were concerned with including Grierson, Dryden and Johnson. The controversy reveals the extent to which the coinage of the word metaphysical is evasive and brings different and even contradictory meanings. Grierson for example as Cutrofello says considers Milton more metaphysical than Donne and his followers. However, Grierson does not give a clear definition of his version of metaphysical poetry other than intellectual character sophisticated conceits, and the unusual mixture of intellect and passion. Johnson on the other hand, as Cutrofello explains, views Cowley as more metaphysical than Donne because the former adopted a metaphysical style rather than metaphysical concepts. Cutrofello also discusses the important effect of Cowley’s wit and how Johnson compared it to that of Pope. In Johnson’s point of view, Cowley’s wit is mainly a deep intellectual exercise rather than a mere word play as that of Pope (79). Johnson’s critical evaluation of Cowley’s special flavor of the metaphysical raises an important point in understanding and defining metaphysical poetry and the concept of the metaphysical self who speaks through the metaphysical voices in the poems. Johnson appreciates Cowley’s wit particularly because he exercises an intellectual game that addresses the intellect rather than the imagination or fancy. Johnson explains Cowley’s wit as a separation

between intellect and fancy, which is completely the opposite of Eliot's view of the significance of metaphysical poetry. Eliot, as mentioned earlier, considers that the "unification of sensibility" is the most significant feature of metaphysical poetry that marks a point in human sensibility that is not experienced in later periods (80).

In view of the earlier discussion, the definition of metaphysical poetry, who is a metaphysical poet and who is not, remains a controversial matter. Critics cannot agree on one definition of metaphysical poetry, nor even on representative metaphysical poets. The question remains as confusing and controversial as is Existentialism, its meaning and its representatives. However, a close reading of John Donne's "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning" and Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" offers an opportunity to visualize the abstract, complex issues of existence and essence in more concrete terms through the personae and voices in the two poems. In addition, Existentialism can be employed as a philosophical framework for the two metaphysical visions in the poems analyzed. Besides, it confirms the intellectual nature of metaphysical poetry.

"Marvell Semperviren" is a review article written by Donald M. Friedman (2015). The article reviews works written on Andrew Marvell such as Takashi Yoshinaka's "Marvell's Ambivalence: Religion and the Politics of the Imagination in Mid-Seventeenth-Century England" (2011), Joan Faust's "Andrew Marvell's Liminal Lyrics: The Space Between" (2012), and Derek Hirst and Steven N. Zwicker's, "Andrew Marvell, Orphan of the Hurricane" (2012). The review tackles the idea of the revived interest in the study of Marvell's work particularly with the publication of "Nicholas von Maltzahn's "An Andrew Marvell Chronology" in the *Author Chronology Series* by Palgrave/ Macmillan in 2005.<sup>22</sup> (136). Friedman describes the "scope" and "variety" of the interest in Marvell's work since it was initiated in the nineteen twenties by T.S. Eliot and H.J.C Grierson. He refers to the challenging unusual tone of Marvell's lyrics which coincides with the latter's infamous reputation. Friedman further points out Marvell's contribution to the political scene of his time and his liberal political views that aroused his critics' curiosity. He draws attention to the complexity of Marvell's work that even challenges interpretations. Friedman traces a shift in Marvell's critics that started in nineteen seventy with the publication of John M. Wallace's *Destiny His Choice: The Loyalism of Andrew Marvell*. The book in Friedman's opinion shifted the critics' attention to Marvell's role as a devoted member of the parliament and focused on the poet's political role and views, which remained a trend for Marvell's critics for some time. Marvell's dedication to his political role is explained by his critics as an embodiment of the "dissociation of sensibility" and the choice to stop writing lyrics and turn all his power to writing satires that reflected his times. The debate whether to consider a literary work as a text, or consider the historical background that produces the text, remains, as Friedman illustrates, one among literary critics whether belonging to formal criticism, historicism or new historicism. Both stands towards the literary text; reflect in Marvell's case the "dissociation of sensibility" the separation of his lyric poems from the satires he wrote to reflect his times, or his parliament reports (138).

"To His Coy Mistress" starts directly with an important existential dilemma: "Had we but world enough and time / This coyness lady were no crime" (Marvell) The existential question here is one that triggers the idea of man's place in the world; it is related to the existential idea of time and space as defining the self in existential philosophy. As mentioned earlier, Heidegger's Being-in – the -world as one definition of existentialism, defines the self. Therefore, nobody exists apart from Being-in-the world. Existence is directly and necessarily related to the "world" which is governed by time and space, and there is no Being apart from time and space. Thus, the speaker's concern at the opening lines justifies his existential anxiety. Existential anxiety, as J.M. Magrini describes it in his article "Anxiety in Heidegger's Being and Time: The Harbinger of Authenticity" (2006), is an eye-opening, useful experience since it puts Being (or Dasein as Heidegger refers to it) in direct contact with its hidden reality, the reality of nothingness or death. This mode of Being or Dasein, as Margini explains, is related to "authenticity", a word that Heidegger uses against inauthenticity which he means

as “everydayness”. This explains the speaker’s contrast between the exaggerated options of the extended image that starts with enumerating the activities the speaker and his beloved in the realm of inauthenticity or “everydayness” can choose to do:

We would sit down, and think which way  
 To walk, and pass our long love’s day.  
 Thou by the Indian Ganges’ side  
 Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide  
 Of Humber would complain (Marvell).  
 against authenticity or death or nothingness:  
 But at my back I always hear  
 Time’s wingèd chariot hurrying near;  
 And yonder all before us lie  
 Deserts of vast eternity (Marvell).

The choices, values, and objectives the self chooses according to Jean Paul Sartre, are in accordance with one’s public image. As discussed earlier, “bad faith” in Sartre’s point of view is the contradiction between one’s self image and his/ her public image. Therefore, in order to realize one’s own self, one must make peace between one’s private self and one’s public self. This confirms the fundamental existential principal of “existence precedes essence” since it gives one the freedom of choosing values, objectives and interests and at the same time determines the public self-image. Self-realization is also an important concern of Existential philosophy since it concerns itself with all aspects of man’s life. Self- realization is part of man’s social aspect and is therefore part of the Existential self’s development. The speaker in “To His Coy Mistress” is true to himself as he reveals his private self to his beloved when he chooses to express his love to her in a way that agrees with his values, choices and objectives on the one hand-On the other hand, he remains authentic or true to his public image or public self when his expression of love is announced to his beloved boldly and without any social hypocrisy.

“To His Coy Mistress” is divided into 3 stanzas that reflect the three possible scenarios or definitions of the Existential self (ves). The first stanza is the speaker’s proposition to his beloved “objectifying” their love story. The speaker makes his beloved visualize what could be a scenario for Being-in-the- world with the condition at the opening lines that they have “World enough and time” in a reference to time and space limitations that also play a major part in Being-in-the world experience. The projections of Being-in the world experience the speaker makes in the first stanza are Heideggerian since they involve the speaker and his beloved in a Being-in-the -world experience that **is** also bound by time and space; the experience is not a bracketed experience like the Husserlian ones that bracket all experience to study the subject in separation from his / her world or the objects of his / her creations, but rather an immersion into the world in which there is no separation between subject and object; both the subject and the object are part of each other. However, the second stanza projects another existential scenario showing both the speaker and his beloved wrapped in nihilism, nothingness or death. The extended death metaphors of stanza two:

Thy beauty shall no more be found;  
 Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound  
 My echoing song; then worms shall try  
 That long-preserved virginity,  
 And your quaint honour turn to dust,  
 And into ashes all my lust; (Marvell)

confirm the existential scenario that defines the “self” in terms of the conflict between finitude and infinity, the subject and the object or essence and existence. The silence of the tomb the speaker refers to in stanza two:



"Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound / My echoing song;" (Marvell) is framed in the first two lines of the second stanza that refer to "Times's winged chariot" and "Deserts of vast eternity" by both time and space. Time and space as part of existence or as qualifiers of the subject's experience, are bracketed in Husserl's use of the term and the subject remains alone to experience nothingness and death. The image of the speaker and his beloved in the lonely tomb is a confrontation between the subject and the object of his / her experience; unlike Husserl's bracketed experience, essence and existence or finitude and infinity as another possible definition of the existential self are in direct confrontation. This scenario stresses existentialism's vision of life and the subject's experience as absurd. The last two lines of stanza two with their sarcastic tone sum up Existentialism's bitterness or anxiety by sharing an inescapable fact about existence; the fact of death that can only be realized through Being- in - time rather than shunning time. This also supports Heidegger's version of Existentialism; one that makes sense of existence only through Being-in-the-world.

Stanza three is a summation of all the existential scenarios of the self or selves. It combines Sartre's foundational existentialism with the principle of "existence precedes essence", existentialism's thorough account of all aspects of man's life and the intriguing version of existentialism that stresses the importance of Being-in-the-world experience without "dissolving" the subject into the objects of his creations. Stanza three is the conclusion of the hypothesis that started in stanza one by the condition of "Had we but world enough and time" and developed in stanza two to picture the non- bracketed experience that puts the subject in a direct confrontation with the object of his / her creations in the form of time and space challenges only to leave the subject to make a decision in stanza three. The decision made in stanza three confirms existentialism's basic principle of the subject's free choices of values and objectives and enhances the idea of the ethical concerns of existentialism and self-realization. Stanza three reaches the decision of challenging time and space limitations and even transcending them; the decision comes after a long argument in stanza one and two-confirming both lovers' abilities and willingness to accept the challenge:

Now therefore, while the youthful hue  
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,  
And while thy willing soul transpires  
At every pore with instant fires, (Marvell)

The personification of "the youthful hue" sitting on the beloved's skin, the simile of the hue's freshness that resembles the freshness of the new morning, and the metaphor of the soul that "transpires" love are all the lovers' means to challenge and transcend time and space. However, the lovers' means all belong to the realm of the mortal and the transient which in an existential context is a crucial point in defining the existential self. The conflict between finitude and infinitude, and the subject and the object, leads the existential subject to experience his / her place as mortal and transient when they put themselves in place of the object which is always ephemeral and brief. Although the subject in the existential context of the conflict between finitude and infinitude experiences transience, the same subject experiences transcendence which existential philosophy regards as an unusual situation that only humans experience; humans are the only mortals who realize their transience because they also realize the existence of the immortal and the infinite. The speaker in stanza three starts to sum up the argument he started in stanzas one and two by confirming the fact of his and his beloved's transience. The images he uses and the repetition of "while" twice and "now" three times, both belonging to brevity and shortness, all confirm the subject's transience and finitude; however, the following lines stress the speaker's challenge to that transience and his realization of infinitude and immortality which also define the existential self and help towards self-realization. He emerges as a subject who can realize the realm of the immortal and the infinite despite his own transience. The speaker's decision to turn into "amorous birds of prey", to "devour" time and to roll all the "strength" and "sweetness" into "one ball" to "tear the pleasures with rough strife", reflects his choice to become a true existential self; one that realizes the absurdity of life as a

whole, and decides to transcend time, space and his existence before anything else. The speaker's final stand confirms existentialism's basic principle of "existence precedes essence". The choice of diction in the concluding lines supports the speaker's choice of transcending the limitations of time and space towards self-realization. The focus on diction that stresses exhausting and ravaging time as well as the extended images of "preying" and "devouring" support again the existential concept of freedom. The subject transcends the limitations of his /her situation (the limitations of time and space) and chooses to be a free subject. In the last lines we observe an existential self that chooses to combat time and even transcend it through ravaging the part that makes it an object and insists on not losing its subjectivity by objectification. In the third stanza the speaker concludes his argument to his beloved by being true to his existential self and insists on "existence" rather than "essence" that is usually acquired later in people's lives through their existence in societies and communities.

A *Valediction: Forbidding Mourning* by John Donne, is another moment where the metaphysical self, intersects with the existential one. The poem represents a unique moment where existential philosophy about the self, particularly in the conflict between the mortal and the immortal, or finitude and infinitude, is embodied in the unusual love story in the poem. In stanza one the speaker starts with a reference to death in a love poem this is an unusual start which raises questions about the relationship between love and death. However, typical of metaphysical poetry's concern with love, death, life and the universe, the speaker begins by comparing the death of virtuous souls to two lovers "melt[ing]" in union. The comparison is interesting because the speaker considers death as the unification of the soul with the immortal. There is an insinuation in "As virtuous men pass mildly away, / And whisper to their souls to go" (Donne) that death is welcomed and even wished for since it liberates the soul from the prison of the body and unites it with the immortal. This is shown in the speaker's choice of "virtuous men" not just any men as if "virtuous men" are privileged with the union of the soul with the immortal. Therefore, "their sad friends" do not understand the privilege those "virtuous men" are given because they judge matters by the laws of the mortals and consider death as an end to life. The "sad friends" do not understand that death for the "virtuous men" is the beginning of another life and may be a truer life than the short, transient one on earth. The beginning of the poem sets its tone of it and places it in the context of metaphysical poetry and its concern for the complex, deep ontological question.

The poem is designed as an intellectual or logical proposition: "As virtuous men" in stanza one. This introduces the speaker's argument and is followed in stanza two by "So, let us melt" which is the proof of that claim. Starting from stanza three till stanza seven, the speaker gives detailed explanation and different examples to justify his reasoning. Stanza eight is the conclusion based on inference from the evidence provided in the previous stanzas. The introductory image of the death of "virtuous men" is a Heideggerian note on existentialism. It is because it sheds light on death as the Heideggerian "non-being". In Heidegger's version of existentialism, death is a scenario that can only be grasped in terms of "non-being"; and "non-being" is the possibility for non-existence against the objectification of the self. As discussed earlier, "non-being" is a source of existential anxiety, which is the realization of the possibility of "non-being". However, in the poem, the speaker turns that possibility for "non-being" into a possibility for self-realization.

Living in authenticity is another feature of the existential self that "A *Valediction: Forbidding Mourning*" reflects. The speaker confirms in different situations his and his beloved's keen insistence on living in authenticity and becoming true existential selves. He compares his love to other people's loves only to show that his love is "authentic" or, in existential words, his love reflects living in authenticity if compared to other people's love which he describes as:

Dull sublunary lovers' love  
 (Whose soul is sense) cannot admit  
 Absence, because it doth remove  
 Those things which elemented it. (Donne)

The lines criticize "Dull sublunary lovers" because their love is not constant and is based on senses only; the speaker considers that kind of love as bad faith because it is against what he believes in, in terms of being true to one's own values, choices and interests. It is compared to his kind of love:

But we by a love so much refined,  
That our selves know not what it is,  
Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss. (Donne)

that does not depend on the senses but is more - "refined". This is rather puzzling. His love is truer or, in other words, more on the side of living in authenticity because, as an existential self, he chose to embrace his human self with its sensual and spiritual aspects instead of focusing on one only. This choice is a good example of metaphysical poetry in T.S Eliot's terms of the "unified sensibility" that characterizes metaphysical poetry. It is A poetry that depicts a rare unification of soul and body, intellectual and spiritual experiences. The speaker refuses to objectify himself and his beloved, which is an existential choice as well. As discussed earlier, Existentialism is also defined as a "protest against the dissolution of the existing subject into the objects of its own creation, into the world of things and the essences which constitute them" (741). This is clearly embodied in the speaker's refusal to live in bad faith like other inconstant lovers, "sublunary lovers". Their love depends mainly on the transient senses. However, he insists throughout the whole poem on his constant love, one that is not affected by the physical absence of the lovers. The speaker refuses to be a mere object that melts into other objects. He is determined to keep the boundaries between subjects and objects, and between finitude and infinity.

The conceit of the compass that starts in stanza seven and is carried through the end of the poem, triggers questions about the subject and his / her place in the world. It also questions man's existence in both his / her spiritual and physical states. The compass conceit confirms the speaker's choice of his place in the world. He and his beloved are true existentialists because they willingly choose to be constant lovers despite distances, separation and other worldly challenges. The existential subject is one who chooses his /her values, objectives, interests and conforms to Sartre's basic principle of existentialism "existence precedes essence"; this is what the compass conceit stresses in more than one situation: "Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show / To move, but doth, if the other do. "(Donne) Besides, in stanza eight the speaker describes in the extended personification:

And though it in the center sit,  
Yet when the other far doth roam,  
It leans and hearkens after it,

And grows erect, as that comes home. (Donne)

the unique relationship between him and his beloved. He makes the two hands of the compass in constant chase of each other as two people chasing each other. Although one hand represents the center, the other is tightly related to it, waiting for the point of their union. Describing his love relationship in the conceit of the compass, confirms the lovers' choice of constancy and their challenge of time, space and change. The last stanza, and particularly the last line: "And makes me end where I begun, "(Donne) leads the readers back to the first principle of existentialism "existence precedes essence" where the lovers' existence as lovers determines their choice of constant love despite any other challenges either temporal or spatial. The speakers end where they began as true constant lovers and their end is determined by their beginning which in their case is an existential choice. They refuse from the beginning to live in bad faith and choose living in authenticity instead. Considering Donne's version of metaphysical poetry and Marvell's version, one could

see the difference between the two versions of metaphysical poetry as well as the different versions of Existentialism. Marvell's speaker in "To His Coy Mistress" is a clear example of an Existential self that chooses "authenticity" rather than conforming to social codes and traditions that would put him and his beloved in "inauthenticity". Donne's speaker on the other hand, determines his end or rather chooses his own end by insisting on true love regardless of the challenges of time and space. The two speakers in the two poems represent two basic Existential issues "existence precedes essence" and "authenticity" versus "inauthenticity". Although both represent different approaches to Existentialism, yet both are still two representations of Existentialism.

In his article "Thinking (of) Feelings in Donne's Poetry: The Signifying Rift and 'The Evidence of Things not Seen'", Charis Charalampton refers to some of Donne's critics such as Ben Johnson (1572-1637), Lewis Theobald (1688-1744), Clayton Mackenzie, Lyndy Abraham and others. Charalampton explains "Discordia concors" as coined by Johnson and marking many of Donne's works. According to Donne's critics, Donne's poetry is a mysterious combination of metaphors that do not appear to be relevant, since his poetry depends on shocking the reader with the combination of unusual opposites that have no immediate cognitive reference in his readers' minds. As Charalampton further points out, Donne makes a reference to a familiar object but tends to relate that common object, that has a clear cognitive reference in his readers' minds, to another object that has no relationship with the first, thus creating a third object that is totally new to the reader and has no cognitive reference in his/her minds. Charalampton refers to "Discordia concors" as creating such effect by combining unusual opposites in one strange metaphor and making the unique metaphysical conceit. He argues that Donne's conceits achieve something unprecedented since they bring together opposites that are hard to combine: the union of mind and body, or reason and spirit is an unusual reconciliation of opposites that defies logical understanding, but can only be conceived intuitively, thus creating a metaphor outside the symbolic system of cognition (73-74).

In addition, Charalampton discusses A.S. Byatt's and T.S. Eliot's reading of Donne's poetry and especially their understanding of Donne's "Discordia concors". Accordingly turning thought into an experience, is Donne's most interesting characteristic; both critics agree that Donne makes unique poetry through turning intellectual thought into an experience that can be felt. In their opinion, Donne makes readers feel and sense intellectual thoughts and they refer to the example of the rose. Donne makes his readers not just smell the odor of the rose, but also think about their experience of smelling the odor of the rose, and the "mental activity" of thinking about the interesting experience of turning an intellectual thought into a felt experience. However, Charlampton does not agree with both Byatt's and Eliot's reading of Donne's; he thinks that Donne focuses on finding too different opposites and combining them into an experience that defies rational analysis, thus "blocking" his readers' ability for rational cognition. This explains the concept of "Discordia concors" as a technique that escapes any rational signification. For Charlampton it is not turning thought into a felt experience, but rather searching for "irreconcilable opposites" that cannot be explained rationally but aim at shocking the readers and creating an "aesthetic" effect rather than rational cognition (80-81).

### **Conclusion:**

Existentialism and metaphysical poetry reveal intersections and common grounds. Both share a notorious reputation and contradictory definitions. In addition, the previous analysis of both Existentialism and metaphysical poetry shows common, important issues. This is particularly reflected in Existentialism's stress on "existence precedes essence" as well as its interest in the subject's all aspects of life. This entails reflections about life, death, "authenticity" and "inauthenticity" in their existential senses, as well as self-realization. Metaphysical poetry, on the other hand, is also mainly concerned with questions about life and death. It focuses on communicating the intellectual experience of the speaker in many metaphysical poems, particularly the ones analyzed earlier in this article. The metaphysical poems analyzed crystalize the Existential dilemma of the subject, as well as the intriguing relationship between love and life. This is particularly revealed in both Marvell's and Donne's "To His Coy Mistress" and "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning" respectively. The speakers in the two poems represent two versions of existential "selves" that reflect different nuances of existentialism and open new interpretations for metaphysical poetry, thus, confirming that metaphysical poetry could be considered a very early literary application of the Existential manifesto.

**المستخلص:**

الذات و (الذوات) الوجودية عند شاعري ما وراء الطبيعة جون دون في قصيدته "كلمات في النهى عن الحداد" و أندرو مارفيل "إلى حبيبته الخجولة" مها محمد منيب

يشير تعريف الوجودية إلى أكثر من مفهوم للوجودية وينطبق هذا على شعراء ما وراء الطبيعة أيضا. اكتسب شعر ما وراء الطبيعة خلال عصور النقد الأدبي مفاهيم متعددة ومختلفة تتضمن كلا من المفاهيم السلبية و الإيجابية معا. و لهذا يمكن الزعم بأن شعر ما وراء الطبيعة محيرا كما هو حال الوجودية ليس فقط بسبب آراء النقاد الذين أثروا في تعريف شعر ما وراء الطبيعة سواء بالسلب أو بالإيجاب من أمثال درايدن أو جونسون أو تى اس إليوت ، وإنما ربط هذا النوع من الشعر خاصة بكلمة " ما وراء الطبيعة" أدى إلى زيادة غموض هذا النوع من الشعر وصعوبة تعريفه أو وصفه بلغة واضحة مميزة. يعتبر شعر ما وراء الطبيعة حالة فريدة من المتناقضات وساحة لكثير من الأسئلة الأخلاقية و الوجودية و الدينية والاجتماعية أيضا. قد تكشف قراءة شعر ما وراء الطبيعة من خلال منظور أو عدسة الوجودية روابط خفية بين شعر ما وراء الطبيعة والوجودية حتى أنها تظهر الفكرتين في ضوء معرفي جديد. هذه المقالة قراءة متعمقة لقصيدة جون دون " كلمات في النهى عن الحداد" و قصيدة أندرو " إلى حبيبته الخجولة". يعكس كل شاعر منهما باعتباره علما من أعلام شعر ما وراء الطبيعة مفهومه الخاص لهذا الشعر و الذى قد يبدو للوهلة الأولى مختلفا عن صاحبه تماما ، و مع ذلك فإن هذه المقالة تركز على دراسة الذات أو الذوات فى القصيدتين المذكورتين من منظور الوجودية. تطرح الى مقالة قضايا عن الذات فى الرؤى المختلفة للفلسفة الوجودية ونقاط التقاطع بين من الذات أو الذوات فى كل من الفلسفة الوجودية وشعر ما وراء الطبيعة وكيف يمكن للكشف عن الذات فى القصيدتين ان يؤدى إلى إعادة تعريف مفهوم الذات من منظور ما وراء الطبيعة ومن منظور الفلسفة الوجودية.

**كلمات تعريفية:**

الوجودية، شعر ما وراء الطبيعة، الذات (الذوات) الكشف عن الذات، الطارىء، العدمية.

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