

## ***A Critical Study of Jean Paul Sartre's Ideas in Islamic Perspective***

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### ***Abstract:***

*The research paper explores the theory of Jean-Paul Sartre, corresponding to Islamic ideology of existence or moving at contrary against Islamic ideology. In accordance with the said philosophy the researcher has collected some of the stand points of Sartre, presented in form of Symbolic quotes, challenging Islamic ideology. Further, some contemptible statements of Sartre's quotations have been discussed which are incongruent to the Islam. An exploratory nature of research has been adopted to give analysis of the ideas of Sartre which has been initiated and anticipated in Quranic teaching and Islamic ideology. Therefore, the current research concentrates on the question existentialist school of thought that has delineated the stand point, standing on own beliefs and thoughts which are represented in their literary work or ideology which are exclusively deviated from the principles of Islam. In this regard Sartre represents the same images because he was atheist but on contrary he took people towards a devastation point by giving existentialist thoughts in his work, although majority of people have endorsed which have popularized the theory of existentialism. However, on contrary Islam is the divine and true religion, showing misguided judgments from the Holy Quran and instructing people to be aware from such practices. Thus, the current research deals with Sartre's quotes which are totally incongruous from the Quranic verses and the findings of the research incorporates existentialist*

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*ideology is deviating people from the true way and basic principles of life.*

**Keywords:** *Existentialism, freedom, existence, nothingness, despair, absurdity*

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## Introduction

Jean-Paul Sartre was surely referred to as Charles Aymard Sartre (1905-1980). He was an existentialist, a visionary, dramatist, filmmaker, a novelist and a critic who celebrated the liberation of individuals. He was considered the most influential figure in the French philosophy of the 20th century. Jean-Paul Sartre was bestowed for the 1964 Nobel Prize in Literature for his research. His research was rich in ideas and the spirit of democracy and in searching for truth has had a far-reaching influence on present generation. He was regarded as the Founder of Existentialist philosophy". He was often related to other existentialist philosophers of the 20th century like Martin, Gabriel Marcel, and Karl Jaspers.

He strived to preserve a minimal style in all his work and disregarded the long or fluffy words to be scratched by symbolism and romanticism. His views on mankind were, we should not be concerned with what others think about us but that we should be truthful and true to ourselves and our decisions. Via his syntax, Sartre also revealed his view of humanity. Sartre's style was cyclical as he returned and repeatedly touched the same thoughts which itself was about how our lives continue to sound the same repetitive way. Sartre summarized his message with his style to completely display his thoughts. Sartre is still remembered for his ordinary integrity and depictions that interlink with his stories and messages.

Jean-Paul Sartre's intellectual career focused on the development of an existentialism theory. It was a movement which addressed the problems of life in the 19th and 20th centuries such as death, fear, financial, social, sexual, equality and responsibility. The early works of Sartre were characterized by the creation, the self-interest, and ethics of classical phenomenology. In the philosophical masterpiece of Sartre (Being and Nothingness (1943) he described his ontology which was a true paradox of "human is that being which is not what it is and is what it is not".<sup>2</sup> Sartre quoted: "Human has been doomed to be free; for he is responsible for everything he does once thrown into the universe (Being and Nothingness, Chapter 1, part 4). It is your duty to give meaning to life and value is nothing but what you want to mean. There is usually no irreducible taste or

tendency. They all represent a certain suitable choice. The task is to make comparisons and classifications of existential psychoanalysis.<sup>1</sup>

Name of Sartre is strongly linked to the existentialist movement but refused to take the label: he said, “My ideology is an existentialist philosophy, I do not know what Existentialism is”. Firstly, this term had been coined by Gabriel Marcel in 1943 when he was speaking about Sartre.<sup>2</sup>

He proclaimed that for human beings the idea that existentialist “exists” is “essential predecessors”: what you are (your nature) is the product of your choice (your life rather than the other way around), nature is not destiny; you are what you make yourself to be. Sartre was an adamant atheist and believed that there could be no Divine Artisan in whose hands our basic resources were conceived. He did not believe there was any other universal source of morality. So, he emphasized that the doctrine must be taken from human experience and denied any claim to eternal nature. Sartre is the pioneer and originator of existentialist theory because Sartre perceived that life is meaningless and it has no actual position. The theory becomes popular because the time of War and destruction the entire Europe was pessimistic and life was absurd for people. Therefore, Existentialist school of thought gives an independent thought to people as focused that life is no meaning; God does not exist; after death there is no life and time is meaningless. The philosophy distorted the traditional thoughts of religion and became the slogan of the time and attracted a larger group in the West. However, intaking Islamic ideology like other religion does not stand with the existentialist philosophy and gives the message of optimism which is the central point of the study .

In accordance with the said statement the present study tends to explore the comparisons between existentialism and religion Islam. The philosopher has tried his best to state the incompatibilities between these two scenarios. Existentialism was founded by Soren Aabye Kierkegaard a Danish philosopher who claims that all expect humans exist by God by fundamental rules and so can be described. The only phenomenon that precedes its essence is the man. Human beings have been born without goals; human beings come into being and are then selected based on their existence and structure. Thus, before rendering his inclination there is no attitude or conviction.<sup>3</sup> The ideals of this school are as follows:

Sartre philosophy consists of the following points:

- i. Human flawlessness depends on human will and liberty.
- ii. Acceptance of existence: A human being is the only free being known to man that no causative need governs him.

- iii. Human beings are intelligent and natural: Some scholars like Kiyerke Gour and Carl Yasperse have faith in God and Jean-Paul Sartre opposes God and has a contradictory view of God and human rights .
- iv. Human beings enjoy conscience-knowledge, tradition, choice, and selection.

### **Statement of the research:**

Existentialism is an atheist philosophy the not only deviate from Islamic teaching but dismantle all religious practices of every religion as every religion stands with the acceptance of God and approve the concept of oneness of God where existentialism rejects the existence of God. Sartre the pioneer of existentialist philosophy came with the same opinion and his selected quotes seem to be pregnant with similar thought and oppose Islamic ideology. Therefore, the current research explores the difference between Sartre ideology of existence and Islamic ideology.

### **Research Objectives:**

- i. To explore the basic concept of Existentialist school of thought indifferent from Islam.
- ii. To give analysis of Sartre's quotes, pregnant with existentialism.
- iii. To show Sartre's quotes indifferent from Islamic ideology of existence.

### **Research Questions:**

How Existentialist philosophy of existence is indifferent from Islamic ideology?

How Sartre quotes are pregnant with existentialist school of thoughts?

What are the basic difference between Sartre's philosophy of existentialism and Islamic ideology of Existence.

### **Significance of research**

The research is worth important because readers who are inspired from existentialist school of thoughts forget about their religion and sometimes they switch from their religious practices to Atheism and become existentialist. Therefore, the religious identity is distorted. Therefore, the current research work is a sign of optimism to integrate basic ideology of every religion more importantly of Islamic ideology to stand with their true practices and further enable themselves why people convert to existentialism, is stopped.

## Literature Review:

Nuri, M. (2018) analyzes this novel 'The Alchemist' by Paulo Coelho's through the theory of Sartre's point of view. Jean-Paul Sartre has defined (Muzairi, 2002:4-5) existentialism as the philosophy which had been expressed the freedom and responsibility of human life. It focuses on being human. Therefore, existentialism is resisting forces to accept that this universe and human beings' life does not end and be imperfect. It means still facing existential problems such as anxiety, fear, liberation, and death, etc. <sup>4</sup>

In his book, Faud Hasan notes that Existentialism is a theory focused on a particular human being. Human beings in philosophic studies are seen as free individuals. The existentialists claim that one person is different from another creature of God only man exists. <sup>5</sup>

Muris, M. (2013) analyzes the Existentialism in the novel "When God Was a Rabbit" by Sarah Winman. Suyitno reflects on Existentialism and noted it is a kind of theory that had been emerged as a reaction to Era of modern life. Modern life gives us nothingness, misery, and a sensation of abhorrence. This dilemma is to be solved by individual-based liberty (1986:108).<sup>6</sup> According to Muris we are living in an absurd world with a monotonous routine and we have no purpose in our life. So, humans appropriate the little bit norms of existentialists in our life.

Israel. D (2013) analyzes Islam and Existentialism in which he argues Jean-Paul Sartre saying, "Existence precedes essence" in Existentialism is a humanism however he attempted to read it in his own particular manner to make a few associations with the Muslim perspective. He thought 'existence precedes essence' is the manner by which humans feel now and then, where they are here, yet aren't certain about what their identity is, their character, what characterizes them, and what form to fit into. "We say that man lives first and foremost, encounters himself, appears in the universe and then defines himself". We are here and there is no conservative definition of what we do, as Canadian or American Muslims. Precisely because of our way of life as Muslims cannot be significant. We Muslims seek to obey the prophetic traditions but we usually do not accept that.

Kabir, H. M. (2004) reviewed ideas of Bacon in his essays: A study from an Islamic perspective. In his essays he tried to discover certain ideas which contradict Islamic ideas. He has listed several Bacon's baseless claims concerning Holy Prophet (PBUH) and Muslim Ummah. In the view

of the Holy Book he also supported the threadbare study of his essays. He also found that Baconian theories are detrimental to humanity.<sup>6</sup>

From the above discussion, it opts that existentialism is investable because it helps us to analyze the incongruous comparison between Jean-Paul Sartre's quotes from the perspective of Islam. The theory is innately imperfect. In this manner, it's aimless to state that Islam ought to have the option to confront philosophical requests. It's now won the fight since reasoning is too powerless to even think about being of any value.<sup>7</sup>

The research is based on qualitative evaluation. This inquiry is guided by analyzing Sartre's quotes in the light of Islam. The Existentialist philosopher has been selected because he alludes to his atheistic beliefs and a culture detrimental to youth. This inquiry follows the approach of qualitative analysis because in its essence it is textual and analytical.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, Sartre's ideology is contradictory to Islamic ideals and principles. What Sartre's philosophy says about the life of human beings is not history-supported. As a consequence of the contents of his book quotations, young students are likely to be deceived. The work explores the themes of existentialism by analyzing the quotations from the plays of Sartre. In this article, an attempt has been made to examine all this.

### **Critical analysis of quotations under the view of Islam**

Being and Nothingness(1943)

“(1)Man is condemned to be free”

Jean-Paul Sartre's major philosophical work is “Being and Nothingness” and is a famous discussion being “Existentialism is a humanism” in which he has emphasized the “Man is condemned to be free”. It is being a paradoxical statement. As freedom has positive connotations while on the other hand condemnation has negative feelings so this statement appears to be a juxtaposition. As we have no choice in the matter of being free so Sartre has used the term “condemned”. According to his view, we are responsible for our actions because we have chosen them according to our own willingness hence no one is to answer for that. We cannot find anything to depend on as God does not exist so he describes freedom to be a king of burden.

Employing the example of paper cutter Sartre explains his belief. By focusing on a paper cutter we will assume that creator has a plan (an essence) for it. Human beings have been of no essence due to there being no Creator is there. So due to this thing, we can say that our actions and

manners cannot be explained and we have been responsible for our actions. The very nature of a paper cutter is to cut paper. Having this purpose in mind the maker of it has made it. Therefore we cannot refer to what we are meant to do as there was no maker of human beings. There is a single thing which we can choose. "We with some excuse are left alone". There has no God to respond to, and the person has been chosen according to his own will so he cannot make excuses for their actions. Sartre believes that every person is absolutely free to create history and in selecting his future. He assumes that there is no existence of God. If there is any existence of God then we find no values and orders to turn to our conduct which is legitimate. We are alone with our excuses and have no justification before us.

The view of this quotation is entirely incongruous with the Islamic point of view. In context to the Holy Quran the outlook of this quotation is totally incongruous with the Islamic view. Firstly, God says "And I made no jinn or mankind rather than to worship me" .<sup>9</sup> Then we find a contradiction of Sartre's idea in another verse as Allah says "So you think we produced you uselessly and you would not be returned to us?".<sup>9</sup>

So, there is another difference between God's saying and the ideas of Sartre about the actions of human beings. Allah says in this verse of the Holy Quran, "He knows what you hide and what you say. And God knows beyond the breasts about that".<sup>11</sup> Once more in another verse of the Holy Quran in which Allah says "close to you than your neck's vein".<sup>12</sup> So, a clear contradiction can be observed in the ideas of Sartre as viewed by Islam<sup>10</sup>.

Therefore after the analysis of these verses, it can be concluded that the statement given by Sartre in his philosophy that we are condemned to be free and there is no authority in the world speaks the choice of our deeds has no logic. We have the right to choose our path and make our essence because the philosophy of Sartre that we are born purposeless is totally incongruous and exotic with the viewpoint of Islam.

The Flies (1943)

" (2)Once freedom lights are beacon in a man's heart, the Gods are powerless against him."

The play "The Flies" deals with the important theme of freedom which belongs to existentialism. According to existentialist human freedom is very important. The play is about the freedom of people. Sartre wants to show the freedom through protagonist of the play Orestes .<sup>11</sup>

Greek play writers Sophocles, Aeschylus, and Euripides used the



adaptation of Electra Myth that is also used in this play. This play has been dealt with Orestes and his sister Electra who have been in quest of avenge for the murder of their father Agamemnon king of Argos who is murdered by his wife Clytemnestra with the help of her lover Aegisthus who becomes the new king. In the play, Orestes makes up his sister's mind to murder when Electra is an exile from the Argos. This act resembles ancient Greek tragedy or modern drama. Orestes feels no remorse for the death of his mother because he is free and thinks that he is doing the right job. After obtaining the desire of vengeance he comes to know the idea of freedom. As it is refusing to obey the will of gods so it lies in the freedom of choosing his path. Orestes delineates “why do I really care about Zeus? Justice amongst men is matter and I don’t need God to direct me”. Orestes, Electra, and the people of Argos are unable to understand freedom. In this play, Sartre incorporates the theme of existentialist having the battle of Electra and Orestes with Zeus and his furies who are the gods of Argos. The characters in this play learn that their gods being as human beings possess innate freedom which cannot be negated and they are powerless.

Sartre having the idea in his mind that people have the ability to create their own world through freedom. His view is that people have their own choice and they are free to act according to their own choice. So, in this play we can say Orestes is free to decide about her future and her sister on the other hand is not free and thinks of the past to get revenge. Therefore, she does not think of the future. She narrates “I had a dream of murder and revenge for fifteen years”. In the play, human freedom has been shown as the most paramount issue and it is obligatory than the deeds of the Gods. So the lower position of the gods has been shown in the play.

The Holy Quran shows that Sartre’s idea is very exotic according to the Islamic point of view. The Holy Quran shows the power of Allah in this way “It is Allah who created in six days the heavens and the earth and all that is within them and He founded himself above the throne. You have neither protector nor intercessor besides Him”.<sup>12</sup>

Then in another verse that shows the power of Allah Almighty, “who is the knower of the unseen and the seen, the Merciful, the Powerful in Might. Who perfected all that He created, and began creating man out of clay? Then He disdained his prosperity out of a liquid extract. He then proportioned him and breathed into him from his created spirit, making hearing and vision and hearts for you; tiny, you are grateful”.<sup>13</sup> There is another verse that highlights the supremacy of Allah Almighty, “It is Allah



who built the heavens without pillars that you can see; then He established Himself above the Throne. And made the sun and the moon subject, each of them running their course for a specified term. He arranges every matter; and it is He who spreads the earth and places it in firmly set mountains and rivers, and from all the fruits He makes two mates therein; He causes the day to be covered by night”. In fact, these are signs for people who think and then God says “If we are ashes, are we really going to be brought into a new creation? Allah knows what each woman carries, and what the wombs lose or surpass. And all with Him is by the proper measure.

Another verse in the Holy Quran that shows the power of Allah Almighty. It is to be sufficient for Allah to address the command of “Be” for the object as we see in this verse, “When He wants something, He commands it ‘Be’ and that’s it” . The creator who has been assigned a particular effect to every factor and cause is able to neutralize and suspend that effect at any instant. Like, just as one order brought the universe into existence. Then there is another verse in The Holy Quran at the time when enemies threw Abraham (A.S) into the fire and he prayed for help to Allah Almighty and this verse shows the power of Allah Almighty, “They said, Burn Abraham, and so God help you if you are a man of action. We ordered the flames, be calm to Abraham and do him no harm”.

The Holy Quran clearly mentions the power of Allah Almighty then how we can reject His power, as we see The Holy Quran clearly mentions “He is the Lord of the East and the West: there is no God but He: take Him, therefore, for the Disposer of things”.<sup>17</sup> Another verse in which God says “Allah belongs to the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth, and Allah is authoritative in all things.”<sup>14</sup>

As described earlier in the verses of The Holy Quran. According to the concept of Islam Allah Almighty is not powerless so, Sartre's statement about freedom and power of God is not very strong. With the point of view of the play ‘The Flies,’ it is clear that when a man does something wrong at that time freedom is also not for man as we see in this verse of Quran God says that “And be aware of the Day on which you will be brought back to God, on which every human being will be fully rewarded for what he has earned, and no one will be wronged” .<sup>19</sup> So we can clearly see the difference between these two concepts.

Existentialism Is Humanism(1945)

Nausea(1938)

(3)Every existing thing is born without reason prolongs itself out of

weakness and dies by chance.

Nausea was a philosophical French novel which was the forerunner of existentialism by Sartre. Moreover, he has been going to formulate his work “Being and Nothingness” in 1943.

The story has been written in the form of a diary. The story describes a person who had been increasingly disgusted by his own existence at the age of thirty. His name is Marquis Roquentin and he narrates the story. He is writing a history book about an eighteenth-century diplomat and traveler named Marquis de Rollebon. Further, in the story, we are told that he is afflicted by the attacks of nausea. For example, once he was sitting in a café Mably where people were talking to each other. He liked the atmosphere but at the same time he felt lonely. Later on in the story, Nausea felt that life was absurd and had no purpose and meaning. He came to know the fact that “no absolute reason for living”, furthermore he lives in the absurdity of life. Also, he knew that he existed due to thinking that he hated existence. Moreover, he started to make time pass as life bores him. E.g. sometimes he ate although he was not hungry. All the decisions which he made showed passive characters as he has no zeal in life .

The main theme of existentialism has been brought by this novel. For example at one place in the novel Roquentin narrates, “Now, I am finished. I don’t have the slightest reason to live”. Sartre believes in complete freedom but it includes huge freedom.

The idea which has been described in this novel through the character of Roquentin is totally unusual because life is not absurd or meaningless as we see in the novel rather life is purposeful as it has been described in The Holy Quran verses, that God made human beings and other things to serve Him. He creates things for a sublime purpose and great reasons. For example, in this verse, God says “Will you think we produced you in play (without any purpose) and you will not go to be brought back to us? <sup>15</sup>

There is another verse from the Quran that also highlights the reason for creation “And we did not create the heavens and earth and all that is between for a mere play”. <sup>16</sup> Another example from the Quran verse “Truly, there are signs for people of understanding in the creation of heaven and earth, and in the alternation of night and day. Those who recall Allah as they stood or sat on their faces and thought of the creation of Heaven and earth: Our Lord, you have not made it without reason, exalted are you; so, then defend us against the penalty of the Flames”. These verses clearly highlight

this thing that life is not purposeless and we are born with some reasons.

These verses clearly highlight this thing that life is not purposeless and human are born with some reason. The Holy Quran describes the examples for those who do not believe in the wisdom of His creation. For example, here God says that “And we created without purpose, not the heaven and the earth and everything that is between! That is for those who are disbelievers consider. Then, woe to those from the Fire who disbelieve”.

Allah Almighty has not been created humans merely to eat, drink, and multiply, in that case they would be like animals. Allah Almighty has been honored and favored man far above many of those whom He has been created but there are many people who insist on disbelief. That’s why care about the pleasures and enjoyments of the world as they are ignorant of or deny the true wisdom behind their creation. The life of such people has been no more like animals and indeed they have been even more astray. For example, in another verse from The Holy Quran God says that “while those who disbelieve enjoy themselves and eat as they graze cattle, Fire is going to be their residence”.

(4): Existence precedes essence.”

The formula of three-words originated in his 1945 lecture “Existentialism is Humanism”. It is called as a central claim of existentialism. According to Sartre, a personality has not been not built over a previously designed model or a precise purpose because, the human being has to choose to engage in such an enterprise. Your essence has been the result of your existence rather than the reverse. The essence is not destiny as you are what you make yourself to be. <sup>17</sup>

Every person has been defined or made essentially with the aid of the development of his man or woman via his time and interplay with the world. Person has not been own any inherent identity or price. He turned into stating that we go out first and its miles as much as we to discover what defines us then live our lives consequently. Sartre says that existence precedes essence in human beings as he believed that the self or body or in other words, the human being has been entered this world after the existence comes into being. With his interaction with the surroundings, people, and opportunities around him he defines or makes up his essence. Sartre also says a human being is free to interact and make their choice.

While comparing the idea of Sartre to the Holy Quran Allah which says that “And only to worship me, I created the jinn and human being”. There is another verse in Quran in which God says that “So you thought we

produced you in vain and that you would not be returned to us”. In another verse which shows that the purpose of mankind is predetermined God says “We created them with truth only (i.e. to analyze and test those who are obedient and those who are disobedient and then to recompense those who are obedient and to punish those who are disobedient, but most of them do not know”. There is another Quranic verse that shows that human beings are not free to do anything in this world and their actions must be accountable on the Day of Judgment “The people will leave that day to show their actions separately”.

So, in this quote the difference between Sartre’s view and the view of Islam can be clearly seen. According to Sartre, existence comes first then we made the purpose of life but going through the analysis of Quranic verses, it can be seen that the purpose are already mentioned before the existence of human beings. So these two ideas are completely exotic with each other.

### **Conclusion**

In this research article philosophy of Sartre has been critically analyzed from the perspective of Islam. The quotes discussed here contradict not only Islamic beliefs and ideals but also misguide and deceive the general public. In addition, it has been shown that the existentialist perspective and pessimistic attitude of Sartre are not compatible with Islamic philosophy. Present study has discussed how Sartre’s theory of existentialism opposes the spirit of Islam.<sup>18</sup>

The above references have been taken from the greatest religious text. The Holy Quran will definitely help the examiner to check the incongruous views of Sartre’s philosophy. However, he was an atheist that is why he ever portrayed a reflection of Islamic philosophy or thoughts in his quotes. So, after reviewing his quotations, it can be conclude that the existentialist movement, the concept of Sartre is totally in contradiction with the Islamic view. Therefore, it has been obvious from the Holy Quran verses that Muslims will never force any unbeliever to convert into Islam. In reality, what is promoted by Islam is not compulsive..

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