

## **Siren Kierkegaard and Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist approach: A comparative, textual analysis**

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### **Abstract**

Growing uncertainty in the modern age among people drives researchers to address this problem and come up with meaningful solution. In this regard Existentialism plays the substantial role to make people aware about their abilities to know who they are and what they must do in order to overcome modern challenges which hunt them with equal intensity. This study is being conducted from the work of two most influential Existentialists Soren Kierkegaard and Jean Paul Sartre and to know their existentialist approach collectively. They both have worked a lot on the Existentialism. To identify their existentialist approach, the qualitative method is taken into consideration through that the textual analysis would be carried out by picking up few chapters from the written works of Kierkegaard and Sartre and the comparative analysis is being done very closely and with great attention and care. However, the result of the study is this that they both talk about individual freedom but their approach and ways look different. Kierkegaard seems more religious and the major point that Kierkegaard proposes a man must know "what he has to do? Not what he has to know?" it shows that how much practical He is in his Existentialist Approach. This type of understanding and awareness precedes the actions. The point is here to identify thyself and what really God wants from us to do? Kierkegaard emphasizes on the subjective truth and absolute can be obtained through subjectivity not objectivity; whereas Sartre is more outspoken and talk about Existentialism openly and widely. Sartre believes in freedom of intention not freedom of successful actions. He considers himself "the Existential Atheist", and his famous phrase is "Existence precedes and governs the Essence". Here Existence implies for subject and Essence highlights the object. So, the subjectivity of man always comes before the objectivity.

**Keywords:** concept of existentialism, comparative approach of Kierkegaard and Sartre

### **1. Introduction**

#### **1.1 Background of Existentialism**

There are various ideas presented by many scholars about origin and birth of Existentialism. It is regularly acknowledged misleading statement that Existentialism is really the rebel against Western customary rationalistic philosophy. Some argue that Existentialism is the continuation process of expansion philosophy of Western philosophers like Hegel, Kant, Marx, Husserl and Descartes. These two-half truths cannot give us a complete truth about origin and birth of Existentialism because existentialism is not merely the philosophy or philosophical uprising but it is the concept and expression of self-realization and attitude towards the force of present age. It is the philosophical recognition of a self-consciousness existing in the "Broken World" (Marcel, 1962) <sup>[19]</sup>, an "Uncertain World" (De Beauvoir, 1948) "a dislocated world" (Merleau Ponty, 2002) <sup>[20]</sup>, a world in which we are "thrown" and "condemned" yet "discarded" and "free" (Sartre, 1946), a world which appears unconcerned and even "absurd" (Camus, 1955) <sup>[10]</sup>. Existentialism is the movement for self-discovery and finds a place and home in the world. Its root is in the Greek when (Socrates, 1979) says, "I know one thing that I know nothing". This "I" holds much importance and connection with existentialism because the ultimate destiny of all existentialists is to know thy self. "I think therefore I am" (Descartes, 1637) <sup>[11]</sup>.

Existentialist's philosophy is perhaps like other philosophies finding its feet into the world and justifying its message yet. It is revolving around many circles but the it ends at an

individual thought or idea or freedom or self-realization or self-actualization and pushing individual to find his or her existence into this cruel world and there is no any other force will come and save you or protect you. It's you only to do everything on to yourself. Existentialist's attitude that promotes the philosophy and idea of self-consciousness.

Some of existentialists believe that every act and attitude of individual must be taken according to their wish and choice but the problem is this that existence itself is not selected. One figures out oneself in it. (Dostoevsky, 1993) tells us that self-consciousness is a "disease".

(Stuart Mill, 2005) argues for quality of "pleasure" by standing out and disappointed Socrates from fulfilled pig. The first is an ideal since Socrates has encountered both Socratic joy and pig joy and he like other men, has stayed Socratic. As a matter of fact, Socrates must choose between limited options. He can act like a pig, yet he can't live it up as a one. Thus, existential state of mind isn't universal and existentialist's philosophy isn't well known fact, (Albert Camus, 1955) <sup>[10]</sup> says, for many of us it is simply a necessary.

#### **1.2 Theoretical Concepts**

There are differing strategies and methods for doing textual analysis but for this study qualitative method is being taken into consideration through that the textual analysis is carried out by picking up few chapters from the written books of Kierkegaard and Sartre and ultimately the comparative analysis is being done very closely and with great attention and care.

### 1.3 Research Questions

- What is the concept of Existentialism?
- How Kierkegaard and Sartre differ in their existentialist approaches?
- What are the similarities between their existentialist approaches?

### 1.4 Objectives of the study

- To explore the concept of Existentialism
- To find out the similarities between Kierkegaard and Sartre's approach about Existentialism.
- To seek the differences between Kierkegaard and Sartre's approach about Existentialism.

## 2. Literature review

The dispute on real definition of Existentialism is continued because each writer comes up with total new debate and discussion about it. Thus, the term itself is widely associated with some of the core writers of existentialism like, Soren Kierkegaard, Simone de Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre and so on. Scholars concentrated at the time on the idea of human presence. Beauvoir and Sartre soon received it as a brand name for their common philosophy. Toward the finish of the Second World War, they propelled what Beauvoir calls the existentialist hostile which was a progression of books, mainstream articles, and open talks that endeavored to impact the new social and political state of the world literature.

Sartre's celebrated address Existentialism Is Humanism (1946) was a piece of this battle, and is maybe most to fault for the perplexity over the significance of the term that it set out to characterize. Most fabulously, he figured out how to assert that existentialism prefaced on agnosticism, that there are Christian existentialist scholars, and that it doesn't make a difference to the existentialist whether God exists or not. Maybe more damagingly, his technique was to attempt to build up his philosophy in connection to different understood philosophers, for the most part by giving them a role as existentialists as well. Each of these scholars does in reality hold something in the same way as Sartre; however, this scarcely gets the job done to tie them all together as a fascinating class.

## 3. Research methodology

This study covers the various concepts of Existentialism and for that Qualitative Method is being used in this study by comparing the Existentialist Approach of Soren Kierkegaard and Jean Paul Sartre by doing textual analysis on their selected chapters which are extracted from their books which are written on the subject of Existentialisms.

## 4. Data Analysis

Following are the samples in the form of chapters of my study which are being extracted from their books and textual analysis would be carried out through them. Kierkegaard's following works,

1. Eulogy on Abraham, from the book *fear and trembling*, 1843
2. *Metaphysical Disjunctivism And Some Foils*, from the book *Either/Or*, 1843
3. *The concept of dread*, 1844
4. *The Sickness unto Death Is Despair*, from the book *sickness unto death*, 1849

## And Sartre's following works

1. *Being-For-Itself*, from the book "*Being and Nothingness*", 1943
2. *The Self-Love Theory*, from the book "*Being and Nothingness*"
3. *Bad Faith (Self-Deception)*, from the book "*Being and Nothingness*"
4. *Existentialism is Humanism*, famous lecture delivered by Sartre, 1946

## Existentialist approach of Soren Kierkegaard

If Existentialism is a movement then Kierkegaard is the supreme mover of this movement and chief among all existentialists because of being first who talk clearly about the "subjective truth", choice, individual personality, passion and importance of being one and individual away from collective thoughts or decisions. He was first who told us about the freedom of choice. There is no inference of rational thinking that promotes or push human behavior to do something but it's only the work of human choice, self-indulgence and personal taste that play a crucial and vital role in human lives to discover and create something unique and something special. He believes that by making choices in life that lead to the active actions rather to live and follow aesthete of life which is inevitably paradox and orthodox in nature.

In fact, Kierkegaard throughout his philosophy tries to distinguish the three spheres of existence. First is aesthetic, second is ethical and finally the religious. In his book (Kierkegaard, 1843) <sup>[17]</sup>, he retells and dramatizes the Old Testament story of Abraham and Isaac. His own choice of life lives for being the true Christian. That is the reason his philosophy of existence falls into the category of and type of being "Religious Existentialist".

This is one of the major points that Kierkegaard proposes a man must know "what he has to do? Not what he has to know?" because this type of understanding and awareness precedes the actions. The point is here to identify thyself and what really God wants from me to do? This very point makes way for person to know the actual truth which ultimately perpetuates to live for as well as die for. It is totally appalling and unreasonable thing to go and discover the "objective truth", though that objective truth has no concern with "subjective truth" which is clear and workable or which brings many revelation and manifestations to person to go for any with some sort of reasons and purposes. People are always busy to endure "objective truth" and accomplish the world which is not their own but yet they create that objective utopia for others and consequently, during that whole journey person lose his own image and existence and his originality, his own identification etc.

Kierkegaard believes that Truth is subjective not objective. A person cannot pursue the knowledge or revelation of truth objectivity because for unraveling and unleashing the truth a person has to participate or involve fully himself in that task to seek truth otherwise objective truth is always deceptive in nature and incomplete or half side of man's shadow. At its peak level, Truth mainly relates or lies into passion of man and that truth then converts into paradox. In this way one corresponds to other.

Morals focus to reality as an errand and accept that man is in control of the conditions essential for performing it. "This is manifested plainly in its meaning of goodness and in what

Aristotle says frequently yet additionally in *Ethica Nicomachea* confirms with beguiling Greek Naivete that, all things considered, excellence alone does not fulfill a man and substance, but rather he should have well being, companions, natural merchandise, be glad in his family". (Kierkegaard, 1844) <sup>[18]</sup>.

Either the entire of existence is to be communicated in the necessity of morals, or the condition for its satisfaction must be given and that the entire of life and of existence starts over again, not through a characteristic coherence with the previous which is a philosophical inconsistency, yet by an extraordinary certainty which isolates the redundancy from the principal existence by such a parted, to the point that it is just a different method of expression to state that the prior and the resulting state are identified with each other as the totality of the living animals in the ocean are identified with those noticeable all around and on the land, albeit concurring to the conclusion of some regular researchers the previous should be the model which in its blemish prefigures everything which winds up noticeably show in the last mentioned. The entire enthusiasm of subjectivity develops, all things considered, and after that power authors. "Opportunity is constantly conceivable, as soon as it will be it is real, in a similar sense in which it has been said by a before theory that when God's existence is conceivable it is essential". (Kierkegaard, 1843) <sup>[18]</sup>

"Misery is a sickness of the spirit, of the self, and accordingly can take three forms. In despair not to be conscious of having a self not despair in the strict sense; in despair not to will to be oneself; in despair to will to be oneself". (Kierkegaard, 1849) <sup>[3]</sup>

"A person is soul. In any case, what is soul? Soul is the self. Yet, what is the self? The self is a connection that relates itself to itself or is simply the connection's identifying with itself in the connection; the self isn't simply the connection however is simply the connection's identifying with itself". (Kierkegaard, 1849) <sup>[3]</sup> An individual is a union of the boundless and the limited, of the worldly and the endless, of opportunity and need, to put it plainly, a synthesis. An amalgamation is a connection between two. Considered along these lines, a person is as yet not a self In the connection between two, the connection is the third as a negative unity, and the two identify with the connection and in the connection to the connection; along these lines under the ability of the psychical the association between the psychical and the physical is an association. Accepting, regardless, the association relates itself to itself, this association is essentially the positive third, and this is the self.

In the event that a man is genuinely not to be in give up, he should at each minute demolish the likelihood. This is by and large not the situation in the connection amongst reality and probability. Miserable's lies in man himself. On the off chance that he were not a union, that couldn't give up by any means; nor might he be able to give up if the blend in its unique state from the hand of God were not in the best possible relationship. Beyond any doubt he was in charge of getting the disorder, yet he did that exclusive once; the continuation of the ailment is a straightforward consequence of his getting it that one time and its encouraging can't be followed at each minute to him as the reason; "he brought it upon himself, however it can't be said that he is bringing it upon himself". (Kierkegaard, 1849) <sup>[3]</sup> It must be an affliction of which the end is passing and demise is the end.

This is exactly what give up is.

In actuality, the torment of hopelessness is correctly this failure to pass on. On the off chance that a man were to bite the dust of lose hope as one "kicks the bucket" of an infection, at that point the everlasting in him, the self, must have the capacity to bite the dust in an indistinguishable sense from the body kicks the bucket of affliction. A person in lose hope loses hope over something. So it appears for a minute, however just for a minute; in a similar minute the genuine gloom or hopelessness in its actual frame shows itself. In miserable over something, he truly gave up finished himself, and presently he needs to be freed of himself. "For instance, when the driven man whose motto is either Caesar or nothing does not get the opportunity to be Caesar, he gives up and finished it. In any case, this moreover implies something different: correctly on the grounds that he didn't get the opportunity to be Caesar, he now can't stand to act naturally. Therefore he does not give up in light of the fact that he didn't get the opportunity to be Caesar however gives up over himself since he didn't get the chance to be Caesar. This self, which, in the event that it had moved toward becoming Caesar, would have been in seventh paradise a state, by chance, that in another sense is similarly as hopeless, this self is currently completely heinous to him. In a more profound sense, it isn't his inability to wind up Caesar that is unfortunate, yet it is this self that did not move toward becoming Caesar that is horrendous; or, to put it significantly more precisely, what is grievous to him is that he can't dispose of himself. Time everlasting is obliged to do this, in light of the fact that to have a self, to be a self, is the best concession, an unbounded concession, given to man, yet it is likewise time everlasting's case upon him. (Kierkegaard, 1849) <sup>[3]</sup>

Existentialist Approach of Sartre

He fully applied this term in his day to day life. During his life he mainly raised voice for freedom and responsibility. He gave his first breakthrough work by writing novel (Sartre, 1938) in which Sartre gave the grim and very unusual picture of the world. As for as existentialism approach is concerned in the novel, Sartre's major theme in novel is "Contingency". The protagonist or hero of novel is "Roquentin", who's world is meaningless however, everybody wants to be indispensable but this character is wandering without any clear idea., (Sartre, 1943) main work Being and Nothingness came out and broke the shackles and discussed the actual meaning of "Existentialism". The fundamental theme of this work is "individual freedom". Sartre has defined very critical concept of individual freedom in his book. Like he distinguishes between "being of the things and being in itself being of consciousness and being for itself". Only consciousness has freedom to move and things do not have such property. Freedom to him thus characterizes as freedom of intention not freedom of successful actions. This very condition and ability solely are attached or given to human being.

We all give priority to an individual freedom and their choices to do anything they want to do. There is someone else or any other force that will come and design and play our part and role but a person himself to carry out his own actions and enjoy adverse as well good time of life.

Sartre illustrates the example in his popular lecture Existentialism is Humanism (Sartre, 1946), that "When we consider God the maker, we are considering him, more often than not, as a supernal craftsman. Whatever principle we

might consider, regardless of whether it is a tenet like that of Descartes, or of Leibnitz himself. We generally take after this that will do everything. More or less it can be understandable that when God creates then he knows exactly the conception that what he is going to create. Exactly as artisan knows before he is making paper or anything else. Thus each individual has got some conception in their human understanding and dwells the divine understanding they appear in this universe. The notion and concept of God in modern time has been damaged and suppressed but at the same time there are some philosophers who still go with this idea that "Essence comes first", philosophers like Kant, Voltaire, Diderot etc. but the problem is this that wild man of woods, man of state nature, bourgeoisie etc. are all alike and have got same definition and qualities. Sartre, on other hand does not stand with them and he says clearly and believes in "Existence precedes and rules essence". He trusts that if God does not exist in any event there is one being whose existence precedes its embodiment, a being which can be characterized before any origination of it. That being can be man himself or as Heidegger says a "human reality".

What do you mean by his statement "Existence precedes essence"? Where this statement stands let's examine it first? According to this statement, Sartre says, first of all man exists and then he encounters himself, then he comes into the world and then he begins to define himself, this is a complete process and cycle that revolves like wheel. As an existentialist when man sees himself then he begins from concept of nothing and indefinable. Then he will start to search and find and defines himself what he is and what he ought to be. The way is clear and concept is smooth and plain and simple from this that a man himself writes his destination and is sole responsible of his actions and deeds. Thus, there is no human nature because there is no God or any other force who has conception of it. Simply there is a man. He is not simply man because he conceives or thinks of himself rather what he wills to be out of himself. Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself because he is the master of himself and architect of his own fate. And this is the very first and fundamental principal of existentialism. This is a thing or term people call it as "subjectivity". Man has achieved far greater dignity than stone or table because of rationality which he possesses with himself and through that he can do what he likes to do.

The closest to the heart of existentialism is the free commitment of a man by which every individual realizes himself means realizing the humanity. Commitment is always understandable because it carries through man in every situation with everyone in the world. That absolute commitment binds people together and make platform for each of us to respect and care one another's freedom and choice. Existentialism is nothing else except for an endeavor to make the inferences from a reliably agnostic position. It doesn't matter whether God does exist or not. The real problem is not about existence of God. What man needs to do is to make sure nothing can save him from himself, not even existence of God or any other force. In this sense it can be summed up here that existentialism is an optimistic approach, it is the doctrine and dogmas of action, it leads man towards their destination. It is just spread wrong approach and idea by Christian against us that we, Existentialists are in despair and hopeless and refuse the existence of God. They are absolutely wrong in their

explanation. Existentialism is really a force for good and makes man real human being. (Sartre, 1946).

Let's talk about Sartre's concept of "Being itself" (1943). According to Sartre, being itself reflects or depicts consciousness of human being which is very special and it is not something that human being possesses rather indicates what they are. It means human being is not pure and thinking purely like "Angels", on the contrary, human consciousness is far and wide intellect quality. In this regard human consciousness is also bunch of fears, hopes, desires, wishes, emotions, memories and even body falls in that pocket. Resultantly, these all peculiar qualities are always go hand in hand with being itself because each individual is the product of such and such qualities and responsible of doing them in their day to day life. So far that purpose being itself or being in itself is not having any particular stimuli or depend on anything else but it is within the reach of an individual person to perform them. Consciousness depends on matter in other words consciousness depends on human being because human being keeps matter that is why if there is no matter then there is no existence of consciousness and if there is no consciousness then there is no matter so they are interdependent on each other.

we base our regulation upon unadulterated subjectivity – upon the Cartesian "I think": (Sartre, 1946) which is simply the moment in which single man achieves himself; a position from which it is hard to recoup solidarity with other men who exist outside of the self. The inner self can't contact them through the cogito. The inquiry is confused in light of the fact that there are two sorts of existentialists. There are, from one perspective, the Christians, among whom I should name Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel, both purported Catholics; and on the other the existential agnostics, among whom we should put Heidegger also as the French existentialists and myself. What they have in like manner is essentially the certainty that they trust that presence precedes essence – or, maybe, that we must start from the subjective. What precisely do we mean by that? What do we mean by saying that presence goes before substance? We imply that man above all else exists, encounters himself, surges up on the planet – what's more, portrays himself a brief span later. In the occasion that man as the existentialist sees he isn't noticeable; it is by virtue of regardless he is nothing. He won't be anything until a while later and a short time later he will be what he makes of himself. (Sartre, 1946).

In this way, there is no human instinct, on the grounds that there is no God to have an origination of it. Man, basically is. Not that he is exactly what he sees himself as to be, notwithstanding he is the thing that he wills, and as he envisions himself after viably existing – as he wills to be after that hop towards nearness. "Man is nothing else with the exception of that which he makes of himself". (Sartre, 1946) That is the main guideline of existentialism. Preceding that projection of the self-nothing exists; not even in the heaven of understanding: man will simply accomplish nearness when he is the thing that he purposes to be.

The main impact of existentialism is that it puts each man in ownership of himself as he seems to be, and puts the whole duty regarding his reality unequivocally upon his own particular shoulders. What's more, (Sartre, 1946). I should never locate any evidence whatever; there will be no sign to persuade me regarding it. On the off chance that a voice addresses me, it is still I myself who must choose whether

the voice is or isn't that of a blessed messenger. On the off chance that I respect a specific strategy as great, it is just I who say that it is great and not awful. We are cleared out alone, without pardon. That is the thing that I mean when I say that man is sentenced to be free. Censured, in light of the fact that he didn't make himself, yet is in any case at freedom, what's more, from the minute that he is tossed into this world he is in charge of all that he does. Feeling is framed by the deeds that one does; in this way I can't counsel it as a manual for activity. What's more, in other words that I can neither look for inside myself for a legitimate motivation to activity, nor would I be able to expect, from some ethic, recipe that will engage me to act. "Man is nothing else aside from what he purposes, he exists just in so far as he comprehends himself, and he is in this manner nothing else with the exception of the entire of his exercises, nothing else aside from what his life is." (Sartre, 1946)

There is no other universe except for the human universe, the universe of human subjectivity. In the event that God existed that would have no effect from its purpose of see. "Not that we trust God exists, but rather we believe that the genuine issue isn't that of His reality; what man needs is to get himself again and to get it that nothing can save him from himself, not even an authentic proof of the nearness of God". (Sartre, 1946).

Sartre distinguishes individuals with consciousness. Consciousness isn't something individuals have; it is the thing that they are. Obviously, that doesn't mean he considers individuals as unadulterated judgment skills (like holy messengers). In actuality, for Sartre awareness goes considerably more distant than the insightful. Consciousness is similarly our apprehensions, confides in, wishes, needs, emotions, memories — even our bodies. We will see a greater amount of this later on. Nonetheless, get acclimated to it now. To portrays the for-itself as "rising" out of the in-itself, it "surges up," as he says in *Existentialism Is Humanism*, (Sartre, 1946).

## 5. Conclusion

Two of the most loved and celebrated philosophers who wrote on the same subject "Existentialisms". No matter in which century they lived but they did exceptionally well in their respective approaches. However, Existentialism is so much abstruse concept to be summed up in one definition because it has got multidimensional, multifaceted and various perspectives itself. Like, Existentialism is not merely the philosophy or philosophical uprising but it is the concept and expression of self-realization and attitude towards the force of present age.

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