

## Study on the Existentialism in Works of Kamala Markandaya

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### Abstract

Kamala Markandaya was born in a Brahmin family in 1924. She belonged to Chimkurti, South India. She learned the Hindu culture and values. She was a raised Brahmin. She was a student at the University of Madras where she studied history from 1940 to 1947. While studying at the University, she worked as a journalist, wrote short fictions. In 1948, she decided to pursue her dream of becoming a writer by moving to London, where she met her husband Bertrand Taylor, a native Englishman. In her life time, Kamala Markandaya Published ten novels, all dealing with post-colonial themes in modern India. She is famous for her novel Nectar in a Sieve, the best seller published in 1955. Some of her other novels are Silence of Desire, some Inner Fury, A Handful of Rice, Possession, The Coffin Dams, The Nowhere Man, Two Pleasure City, and The Golden Honeycomb

**Keywords:** Existentialism, works, Kamala Markandaya.

### Introduction:

Markandaya's first novel Nectar in a Sieve (1955) has been compared with Pearl Buck's The Good Earth, though a nearer and apter analogy would be K.S. Venkatramani's Murugan the Tiller. In this novel Markandaya takes us to the heart of South Indian village where life has apparently not changed for a thousand years. Now industry and modern technology invade the village in the shape of tannery and from this impact sinister consequences arise. In this novel she writes empathetically and convincingly about the peasant life in South Indian bucolic community. The novel shows the fear of dark-future, fear of sharpness of hunger, and the fear of the blackness of death.

The novel Nectar in a Sieve is widely acclaimed for its portrayal of manwoman relationship. There is a complex relationship between male and female. It represents an ideal and fulfilling man-woman relationship against the backdrop of life harrowing experiences. The traditional matrimonial bond between Rukmani and Nathan rests on the solid foundation of trust, faith and understanding Nectar in a Sieve evokes the values and tradition of Indian patriarchal culture while trying to answer the questions as to show how a woman can acquire happiness in life. This novel is also known for presenting the cultural clash between Whites and non-Whites and for its success at revealing the commonality of the human condition. Her Some Inner Fury recalls Venkatramni's Kandan the Patriot, where Venkatramani is poetical and masculine, Markandaya is suggestive and feminine like the earlier novel. This too is cast in the autobiographical form and exploits the freedom of reverie. But of course there is a world of difference between Rukmani and Mira, the heroine of Some Inner Fury. Mira is a creature of imagination and memory. Her naturalness and sophistication are in uneasy partnership. Some Inner Fury is a tragedy engineered by politics, whereas Nectar in a Sieve is a tragedy engineered by economics and in both novels, the chief characters transcend the bludgeoning of economic or political mischance and assert the unconquerable spirit of humanity.

In Some Inner Fury, an auto-biographical novel Markandaya probes the EastWest conflict through the dilemma of Mira, a young woman in love with an Englishman during the tumultuous 1940s of India's freedom movement. She is divided between her ardent and genuine love for Richard, an Englishman and the compelling political forces of Indo-British turmoil. These forces pull them apart and her mind once reveling in romantic love returns to the harsh realities of life. Kamala Markandaya's third novel A Silence of Desire tells of a life journey of a loving, wealthy middle class family, living comfortably and enjoying luxuries. However, things quickly worsen when Dandekar loses respect for his wife, Sarojini, after suspecting her relation with a strange man. The story focuses on strong bond of love dedication between the family, and the willing they have to make things work between them.

A Silence of Desire leaves economics and politics behind and invades the imponderable realm of spiritual realities. Dandekar, a government servant tortures himself and nearly goes to pieces because his wife Sarojini, ailing from tumour seeks faith -cure from swamy. Here a clerk, Dandekar is caught between the traditional and the modern, the eastern and the western and the spiritual and the material.

Possession, Kamala Markandaya's fourth novel, is in a sense a continuation of A Silence of Desire. The cultural clash figures again in Possession. The Swami figures again but he seems to have grown in the meantime, he is a modern swami. He flies to London. He is as much home in society as among the silences. He has admirers in most sophisticated circles. In A Silence of Desire his antagonist is pitiable Dandekar who is afraid of losing his wife, silver and gold. Ultimately the swami wins and Caroline suffers discomfiture. Even in A Silence of Desire although Dandekar apparently wins, for after all Sarojini returns to him and Swami practically disappears, the real victory is with Swami. When the issue is joined the sovereignty of the spirit must score over the ego's armoured regiments. All possession is slavery or a perilous precariousness what we try to possess is taken away sooner or later.

In A Handful of Rice, Markandaya wrestles with issues of social hierarchy, Where as in the novel Shalimar she portrays two parallel societies in India. The main character, Rikki is introduced to both these societies during his adolescence. Rikki was born into the life of fishing. His father, brother and cousins were all fishermen. However, in his youth his entire family falls victim to the might of the sea. Rikki is taken in by a family of missionaries. Their guardians show Rikki a completely new life. Markandaya shows that the presence of both cultures has painted beautiful picture of what has become India. The novel depicts the evolution and development of Indian society and culture by describing the changes of Shalimar. This novel is a nice addition to her already extensive list of work. In her latest novel, The Coffin Dams (1969) Markandaya return in a sense. to her effort at fiction The problem caused by tannery in Nectar in a sieve is going to be caused by the dam which Clinton and Mackendrick are building across the south Indian river here in The Coffin Dams. Even here the tribesmen who had occupied the site near the proposed site are persuaded to shift to a less convenient place. It presents a confrontation between modern and traditional values. The tribal headman is full of forbidding. He is afraid that before the great dam is finished the man-eater (river) will have its flesh a score or more. They know better that the monsoon in India and the behavior of rivers are not simple to be taken for granted. They know that nature in India is not to be mocked and are sure enough that something will happen. For Clinton, the completion of the dam according to the agreed schedule is the main thing. What the tribal thinks or feels is nothing to thing. He is armed with blue prints, time schedules and statistics. Once when the labourers were trying to set river to flow over its new bed something goes wrong and forty labourers are killed, the novel as a whole is a deeply disturbing protest against the onslaught of modern technological ruthlessness.

The Nowhere Man (1972) deals with the problems faced by many immigrant's relationship with the British, parent-child conflict and racist violence. When srinivals, after living for 30 years in England is taunted by racist thugs with "Go back to your country" he is shocked. "But this is my country", he says (25). Markandaya is often grouped with three stalwarts, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao. With her limpid stype, she created a distinct place for herself in modern Indo-British fiction. Perhaps the most enduring quality of her novels is her passionate portrayal of Indianness and a sense of profound sympathy. Though she lived most of her life in London, she was never alienated from her Indian roots. Though she shunned literary limelight, her humanity and vision were widely admired. Her characters are all ordinary people intensely aware of the passage of A Handful of Rice. She reflects, "A hundred years from now, it doesn't really matter. I have drunk from the chalice of happiness, but now it is time to set it down and go" (139).

Markandaya is also known for representing western realism against Eastern Spiritualism and for contrasting the views of the whites with the non- whites. She wishes to expose the universal human trails of the Indian peasants, and she does this by creating complex

characters like Rukmani and Srinivas: "This book is a classic example of characterizing all the essential traits of people today, with all the emotions that affect people"(29). She creates a character with whom so many people can identify with. K.R. Srinivas Opines that *A Handful of Rice* is a poignant novel about the triumph of human spirit over poverty's privations and predicaments. "The Significance of the title of the novel can only be grasped by people who have witnessed the spiraling of grain prices in India" (446). Prema Nanda Kumar compares it with Bernard Malamud's *The Assistant* and says, "It is a purely Indian tale, realistically linked to the present Indian economic situation" (445).

Citing Shantha Krishna Swami P.Geetha comments Kamala Markandaya as the feminist writer and says that Indian woman needs enough courage. To raise the questions to response new developmental strategies in the Indian social polity. In her attitude Kamala Markandaya is much influenced by the feminist school of writings:

Her novels are not of course didactic in narrow sense of pleading for specific reforms but they illustrate the ambivalence of change in women and men. She is conservative feminist, to a certain extent and feminism is implicit in her novels. (10)

P. Geetha finds Kamala Markandaya essentially Indian in sensibility. Though she has changed the impact of the Indian culture, her female characters are in the archetypal pattern of Satis (Widow immolation) But they are in the great protest of such sacrificial rule. For example she writes : "The early novels seem to present the wife in her customary role of sati – Savitri archetypal pattern. But underlying this suffering sacrificial role, lurks the new woman active with her emancipation cries" (12).

Alka Saxena defines the reality of love in much devotional and emotional bindings and contrasts the men's doubtful love towards their women and says that men always lack the genuine love and respect :

Love is a very tender emotion which comes after much devotion. Love is the essential emotion which binds people together. Unfortunately, men have a very callous attitude towards women. Men are found lacking in showing genuine love and respect towards women. (18)

Kamala Markandaya's female characters always quest for the devotional love but due to the lack of such love females show their voice of unfulfilled love silently. Jaymma, Nalini, and Thangam are not exceptions they only accept their fate. In this regard, Rumour Golden Comments, "To create tension and develop themes Markandaya focuses on how characters address the issue of fate" (18).

While exploring upon Kamala Markandaya's fictional Characterization, K.Madhavi Menon writes that females are not feminists in role but sufficiently present the problems and attitudes in social milieu. She writes:

Diliberate fictional exploration of the feminist roles may not be present but in the presentation of the Indian women, Markandaya knowingly and unknowingly presents her problems attitudes and responses to social milieu. (231)

Menon focuses on Markandaya's exploration of the problems of females. From the afore-mentioned criticisms it is clear that Markandaya's *A Handful of Rice* has been analyzed from feminist perspective as well as post colonial perspective. However, it has not been studied from existential to point of view. Therefore, the present researcher attempts to analyze *A Handful of Rice* from existentialist perspective. The idea of existence is a part of the modern conception of the self, and under this heading many of the themes of the preceding section will recur : an opposition of individual and society, an inner division of particularity and universality, temporal emergence, the struggle for authenticity and a troubled assertion of freedom. But existentialism is a very intense and philosophically specialized form of the quest for selfhood. It is the term that came into prominence particularly after World War II in France and Germany. It is a philosophical movement or tendency. It is a set of philosophical ideals that stresser the existence of the human being and also deals with the anxiety and depression which pervade each human life. There are two



kinds of existentialists : theists and atheists. Friliderich Nielzsche, Sartre and Heidegger are the main thinkers who introduced the theory existentialism.

The protagonist of the novel A Handful of Rice is atheistic existentialist: the major theme the frustration of life is developed through the psyche of the adolescent youngman Ravi. Ravi is a teenager who is a part of the large exodus from an arid village to an over populated, poverty ridden city. Though beset with problems of specific place--George Town is probably Madras-- he represents not only the many teen-agers in similar circumstances but also the universal adolescent. He wrestles with his conscience, with every evil act. Thus childhood upbringing haunts him and he questions his motivations in his search for identity.

## **Existentialism**

Existentialism is philosophical and literary movement which became prominent in Europe, particularly in France, immediately after the World War II. It focuses on the uniqueness of each human individual as distinguished from abstract universal human qualities. In the literary field there are a number of writers who are labelled as existentialists such as Dostoevsky, Franz Kafka, Jean Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Martin Heidegger and others. These writers, philosophers and critics focus on the absurdity of human existence and their freedom of choice. They always raise a question of being (ontology); human condition in the vastness of the universe though these scholars differ in their ways of thinking but basically they agree that human beings exist without justification, human beings exist absurdly in a world into which he is "thrown" and are condemned to assume full responsibility for our free actions and for the very values according to which we act, that make existentialism a continuing philosophical challenge.

The World War II brought feelings of estrangement and despair. Such feelings made people create their own value in a world in which traditional values do not function any longer. Existentialism emphasizes on arbitrary choices as there are no fixed objective standards to determine choice. Existentialism admits that human being is thrown into the world dominated by pain, frustration, sickness, contempt, malice and death. During the World War II existentialist movement began to flourish when Europe found itself in pitiable predicament when it faced death and destruction and it was in crisis. The movement reached its summit in the years after the World War II At that time the whole World was in despair, perhaps without the hope of social reconstruction but with the pessimistic and morbid feelings to accept the existentialist outlook of lack of design and intention in the universe and the nausea of human existence and its frustration such as sickness could be found even in the optimistic and confident nineteenth century.

The works of the authors are as diverse as Karl Marx, Soren Kierkegaard, and Frederich Nietzsche. Existentialism is a set of philosophical ideals that stresses that existence of the human being and deals with the anxiety and depression which pervades each human life. It is less of an "ism" than an attitude that expresses itself in a variety of ways. No single definition of existentialism is possible because of the diversity of positions associated with it. However, it suggests one major theme: the stress on concrete individual human existence and consequently on subjectivity, individual freedom and choice. Michael Ryan gives an explanation of existentialism :

Hence there is no single existentialist's philosophy and no single definition of the word can be given. However, it may be said that with the existentialists the problem of man is central and that they stress man's concrete existence, his contingent nature, his personal freedom and his consequent responsibility for what he does and makes himself to be. (639)

Existentialism is a revolt against the traditional European Philosophy which claims philosophy to be a science. It rejects the concept which takes philosophy as science; traditional philosophers produced knowledge that was supposed to be objective, universally true, and certain. The existentialist philosophers do not attempt like traditional philosophers to get ultimate nature of the world in abstract system of thoughts. Instead of it, they search for what it is like to be an „individual“ human being in the world.

The existentialists predict the fact that every individual, even the philosopher seeking absolute knowledge, is only limited to human being. So, every individual has to face important difficult decisions with only limited knowledge and time to make these decisions. This is the condition which is at the core of the existentialism. According to them human life is a series of decisions which should be made with no way of knowing conclusively what the correct choices are. The individual must continually decide what is true from false, what is right from wrong, which beliefs are to be accepted and which beliefs are to be rejected. What to do and what not to do “Yet, there are no objective standards or rules to which a person can turn for answers to problems of choice because different standards supply conflicting advice,” says the World Book Encyclopaedia (437). Therefore, which standards are to be accepted and which standards are to be rejected must be decided by the individual.

Thus, the existentialists reach a conclusion that individuals finally must take their own choice without taking any help from external standard laws, ethical rules, or traditions. They reach the conclusion that human choice is „subjective“. As the individuals make their own choice, they are „free“ but they are completely responsible for their choices because they are free to choose. Macintyre says, “Even if I do not choose, I have chosen not to choose” (149). These philosophers emphasize that responsibility follows the freedom here. Moreover, the individuals have their freedom but their responsibility also thrust upon them “They are condemned to be free, (152). This philosophy indicates and emphasizes the lack of meaning and purpose in life and the isolation of human existence. It shows the meaninglessness and purposelessness of human life. It says that “existence precedes essence”(160 Sartre). It means that human being has no essence, no essential self, and no more than what he is. He is only the sum of life so far that he has created and achieved for himself. For the clarification of Sartre’s view, the following illustration can be taken:

We are like actors who suddenly find ourselves on stage in the middle of a performance, but without having a script, without knowledge the name of the play or what role we are playing, without knowing about what to do or say- yes, without even knowing whether the play has an author at all whether it is serious or a farce. We must personally make a decision, to be something or other a villain or a hero-ridiculous or tragic. Or we can simply exit, immediately. But that is also choosing a role and that choice, too is made without our ever knowing what the performance was about. (qtd. In Skirbekk and Gilje 444)

This is how we are plunged into existence. We exist, we find ourselves here free, because there are no prescriptions – and we must decide for ourselves, define ourselves as the kind of person we are going to be. The essence, thus, follows existence. The fundamental problem of Existentialism is concerned with ontology, i.e. study of being. Human being’s existence is the basic fact; he has no essence that would come before his/her existence. Human being as a being is nothing. This nothingness and the non-existence of an essence is the central source of the freedom being faced in each and every moment. He has liberty in view of its situation in decisions which make him solve his problems and live in the world.

Human being is condemned to be free. S/he is thrown into the world. She must take this freedom of being and the responsibility and take his/her actions. Each action negates the other possible courses of action and their consequences. So, human being must be accountable without excuse. Human being must not slip away from his responsibility. Human being must take decisions and assume responsibilities without which there is no significance in the world. Human being cannot find any purpose in life, her existence is only a contingent fact. Her being does not emerge from necessity. If human being rejects a false pretensions and illusions of her existence having a meaning she encounters absurdity, the futility of life. Human being’s role in the world is not predetermined or fixed, every person is compelled to make a choice in something that human being must make. The trouble is that most often the human being refuses to choose. Hence s/he cannot realize her freedom and experience futility of existence. Michael Ryan summarizes the concept thus:

Man is free and responsible, but he is responsible only to himself. As with Nietzsche man creates moral values. Besides, being freeman is a finite and contingent being; existing in

a world that is devoid of purpose. The pessimism resulting from this position is likewise expressed by Camus's doctrine of "the absurd". Absurdity or contradiction arises from the clash between human hopes and desires and the meaningless universe into which man has been thrown. (639)

Basically existence is of two types: authentic and inauthentic. The authentic being is only rarely attained by humans still it is what humans must strive to gain. The inauthentic (being-in-itself) is characteristically distinctive of thing. It is what the human being is diseased with for is failure to act as a free agent and his/her importance to reject bad faith. Things are only what they are. But the human being is what S/he can be. Things are determined, fixed and rigid, whereas, human being is free because he/she can add essence in the course of his/her life and S/he is in a constant state of flux and able to comprehend his/her situation.

Human being does not live in a predetermined world: human being is free to realize his/her aims and his/her dreams. Hence S/he has only the destiny he/she forges for himself/herself because in this world nothing happens out of necessity. Human being disguises himself from freedom by self-deception, acting like a thing as if S/he were a passive subject, instead of realizing the authentic being for human being, this is faith. In bad faith, human being shelters himself from responsibility by ignoring the dimension of alternative course of action. Human being behaves as others demand of him/her by forming to the standards of accepted values and by adapting roles designed for him. S/he loses the autonomy of his/her moral will, his/her freedom to decide.

In bad faith, s/he imprisons himself/herself within inauthenticity for S/he has refused to take the challenge of responsibility and the anxiety that comes along with his/her freedom. „Anxiety“ ascends from human being's realization that destiny is not fixed but is open to an undermined future of infinite possibilities and limitless scope.

The void of future destiny must be filled by making choices for which S/he alone will assume responsibility and blame.

Anxiety is present at every moment of human being's existence and is part and parcel of authentic existence. Anxiety leads human being to take decisions and to be committed. Human being tries to avoid this anguish through bad faith. But the free authentic human being must involve in his/her own actions, responsibility and his/her being which is his/her own. Existentialist thinkers opine that problem of being ought to take precedence in all philosophical inquiry. Existence is always particular, unique and individual. Existence is essential and fundamental. Being cannot be made a topic of objective study. Being is revealed to and felt by the human being through his/her own experience and his/her situations so, it maintains that existence is the first and central problem.

Existentialism as a distinct philosophical and literary movement belongs to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but element of existentialism can be found in the thought of Socrates, in the Bible, and in the work of many premodern philosophers and writers. In fact, existentialism refers to self-awareness and understanding of existence. The connection of being and thinking was Greek insight and it is this very insight that modern existentialists are trying to reestablish. The ancient Greek thought was revolutionized by Socrates who shifted the attention of the study of philosophy from nature to man; man as the centre of existence. The problem of what man is in himself can be perceived in the "Socratic imperative „know thyself“, as well as in the work of Montaigne and Pascal, a religious philosopher and mathematician" (New Encyclopaedia 612).

The basic ideas of existentialist theory were already common to religious thought when existentialism was first introduced (the idea of man being responsible for his own actions, and so on). The subjectivism of theologian St. Augustine during the fifth century AD exhorted man not to get outside himself in the quest for truth, for it is within him that truth abides (612).

Existentialism is often seen as a revolt against traditionalist philosophy. It contradicts Descartes's view in that man is open to the world and the object in it without intermediary



stratum of ideas or sensations. Also there is no distinct realm of consciousness on which one might infer project or doubt the existence of external objective. Existentialists are more concerned with being than knowing therefore, this is a rejection of Cartesian dualism. Existentialism as a distinct philosophy began with Danish-Christian thinker Kierkegaard in the first half of the nineteenth century. He was critical of Hegel's philosophical system which analyzed being or existence in the abstract and impersonal way.

He swerved the study of philosophy to the subjective, emotional and living aspect of human existence. Against Hegel's objective and abstract anatomization of reality, Kierkegaard advocated for the real existence against Hegelianism. He discussed man's essence with existential predicaments and limitations: hope, despair, anxiety and so on. Jostein Gardner in *Sophie's World* acknowledges the thought that both "idealism of the Romantics and Hegel's historicism" had obscured the individual's responsibility for his own life" (377).

The development of modern existentialism was preceded by the works of Franz Kafka (1883-1917) and Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). They were immediately followed by the modern Existentialists. In this century German existentialism was represented by Martin Heidegger (1889-1979) and Karl Jaspers (1883-1969), French existentialism by Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-80), Spanish existentialism by Ortega Y Gasset (1883-1955) and Italian existentialism by the works of the French existentialists Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Albert Camus (1913-60). No one has contributed more to the popularization of existentialism of this philosophical trend than Sartre. In literary influence, the Russian novelist, Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821-81) and Austrian Jewish writer Franz Kafka (1883-1927) contributed significantly. Dostoyevsky in his novels presented the defeat of man in the face of choice and the result of their consequence and finally the enigmas of himself. Kafka in his novel like *The Castle* and *The Trial* (presented isolated men confronting vast, elusive, menacing, bureaucracies. In arts the analogues of existentialism may be considered to surrealism. An important aspect of the existentialist movement was its popularization due to the ramification not only in existentialist philosophy but also in literature, psychology, religion, politics and culture.

Existentialism made its entrance into psychopathology through Karl Jasper's *Gamine Psychopathology* (1913) which was inspired by the need to understand the world in which the mental patient lives by means of a sympathetic participation in his experience Christian existentialism, inspired by Kierkegaard is a creed of its own kind Camus's semi philosophical essay *The Myth of Sisyphus* won sympathizers.

Although the classic form of existentialism is the characteristic of post World War II philosophy, literature and art, we have already seen with Dostoyevsky, existentialist ideas were anticipated long before. The important ideas are from Friedrich Nietzsche. There are at least three ways in which Nietzsche qualifies as a classic existentialist, all of which we can see in what may have been his „magnum opus“. Nietzsche focuses precisely on the non-existence of all values in one of the most famous saying in the history of philosophy: "The Death of the God is Nietzsche's replacement of God by the „Übermensch“ Superman This was originally translated as „superman“ since the Latin super means "over" as does German „Über“. When Nietzsche says „man“ (Mensch), he means someone egotistical, brawling, aggressive, arrogant and insensitive. The superman is not vulnerable to taming and domesticity" (818).

The second most important thing is that the superman is free because all his own values result from his own will. Value is a matter of decisions, a matter of will. As the superman, in whom we find the triumphant will to power, is free, he takes what he wants and does what he likes, he is authentic. The third point which is advanced as the grimmest teaching of Zarathustra and so does Sartre's redefinition of responsibility. Though actions to Nietzsche are no longer good or evil it still does not after all mean that they are right or wrong, it simply means that before you do something, you must determine that you really want to do it.

Phenomenology and Ontology have had remarkable influences on existentialism. Sartre and Heidegger were disciples of the founder of phenomenology, 18 Edmund

„Husserl“. And Sartre himself somewhat younger was then influenced by Heidegger. Skirbekk and Nils Gilje define phenomenology in this way:

Phenomenology aims to describe the everyday items that we use-as they appear to us: the pencil with which I am now writing is described as it is in this context Phenomenology airlocks the view that the pencil is only a collection of atoms. In this sense, we can say that this school aims to reconstruct the universe in all of its diversity and fullness with all of qualities, as opposed to one dimensional standardization based on scientific philosophy. (440)

Phenomenology and Existentialism, though combined together by Heidegger and Sartre, have their own independent identity and are the two branches. Further shaping and elaborating of this movement was made by Martin Heidegger, one of the main exponents of the twentieth century Existentialism who attempted to disclose the ways of being in his most famous and controversial book *Sein und Zeit* (1927). In this book Heidegger discusses what it means for a man to be or how it is to be. It leads to a fundamental question. “What is the meaning of being?” He has tried to reach the final truth of existence, the situation of Being. In his another book was *First Metaphysicals* (1929). Heidegger has elaborated *das Nichts* („nothing“) and given a phenomenological approach to the situation of human existence.

Existentialism is a movement of the 40s and 50s, literary and artistic as well as philosophical, with Sartre himself as probably the most famous representative. Sartre is also convenient representative because for a time he actually acknowledges being an Existentialist and offered a definition. Sartre finds valuable philosophical materials in Descartes’ subjectivism, Husserl’s analysis of consciousness, Heidegger’s existentialist concepts and themes and also in the two major forerunners of existentialism, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. From Kierkegaard, Sartre takes the emphasis upon individual conscious existence and from Nietzsche, he takes the concept of “The Death of God”. Sartre’s originality of these materials into a bold new integration which became the centre of French existentialism. Sartre divides existentialist thinkers into two groups: theistic and atheistic.

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