

I. Introducing to Murdoch's *Under the Net* and Absurdity

The thesis focuses on the existential theory Iris Murdoch's *Under the Net*. Iris Murdoch, one of the most prolific female writers of the second half of the twentieth century, wrote a number of novels and is partly considered a realist. While studying the novel, the researcher stresses on the struggles and challenges of the main characters like Jake Donaghue and his friends in the light of existential theory. The researcher raises the issues such as what the narrator and his friend Finn feel in the beginning, how they are treated by Madge, what they learn at last. The researcher seeks the answer that Jake Donaghue and Finn are devastated by the misbehavior of Madge in the beginning because she has forced them to leave the house. Jake gathers enough courage to ascertain his career and faces challenges to lead the life successfully because of adversities he envisages. The researcher applies existential theory to study the thesis.

The thesis focuses on the existentialism, a term applied to the work of a number of late 19th- and 20th-century philosophers who, despite profound doctrinal differences, which shared the belief that philosophical thinking begins with the human subject—not merely the thinking subject, but the acting, feeling, living human individual. In existentialism, the individual's starting point is characterized by what has been called the existential attitude or a sense of disorientation and confusion in the face of an apparently meaningless or absurd world. Many existentialists have also regarded traditional systematic or academic philosophies, in both style and content, as too abstract and remote from concrete human experience.

Kierkegaard is generally considered to have been the first existentialist philosopher, though he himself did not use the term Existentialism. He proposed that each individual—not society or religion—is solely responsible for giving meaning to

life and living it passionately and sincerely. Existentialism became popular in the years following World War II, and strongly influenced many disciplines besides philosophy, including theology, drama, art, literature, and psychology.

After the Second World War, many thinkers started to support this doctrine and they did not believe in traditional concepts like rationality, morality, unity, value, and even Christianity. The certainties and scientific reasoning that ruled the nineteenth century smashed into anxiety, absurdity disintegration, chaos, and uncertainty. Kierkegaard's determination about individuality as he remarks: "According to Kierkegaard rather than searching for the Truth with capital 'T' it is more important to find the kind of truths that are meaningful to the individual's life. It is important to the 'truth for me'. He thus sets the individual, or each and every man, up against the 'system'" (Gaarder 379).

Marjorie Greene defines existentialism in the sense of human values not the existence. It is also against the scientific philosophies because science understands only the physical body not the mind. Green writes:

Existentialism does not, then, turn to existence in the sense that it finds human values emergent from mere facts, as pragmatism or positivism try to do. It is a reaction as much against the claims of scientific philosophies as it is against the more high-sounding but no more ambitious systems that preceded them. But in that case one may wonder how existentialism differs from other contemporary movements that claim to redeem a lost humanity by rescuing us from, not through, science. There are, notably, two directions for such revolt against the intellectual and spiritual predominance of the scientific temper.

(12)

Thus, existential theory studies the subjective feeling rather than the objective one. It

opposes the dominance of science over intellectual and spiritual power.

Friedrich Nietzsche is known as the grandfather of postmodernism for Lowenthal. He is open-minded to all kinds of concept. He is skeptic to all the scientific ideas. Lowenthal further writes:

Friedrich Nietzsche's distrust of systems, his questioning of all values and morals, his all-pervading reflexivity, qualify him as the grandfather of postmodernism. Newcomers to his writing can hardly fail to be impressed by the radical open-mindedness of his thinking, and by the rigour and energy he brought to overturning preconception and received wisdom. He took scepticism and a 'scientific' curiosity to their nth degree – perhaps to the madness in which he ended his days. (52)

Thus, it is quite difficult to understand human minds. He says that madness is also a kind of detachment and postmodernism.

Joanne P. comments that the title of the book comes from the experience of Jake Donaghue who comes across with lots of adventures and understands the world from his own perspective in new way. Joanne comments:

Its hero, Jake Donaghue, is a drifting, clever, likeable young man who makes a living out of translation work and sponging on his friends. A meeting with Anna, an old flame, leads him into a series of fantastic adventures. Jake is captivated by a majestic philosopher, Hugo Belfounder, who's profound and inconclusive reflections give the book its title – under the net of language. (2)

The protagonist faces many problems and gets familiar with difficulties. Murdoch means to say that people become stronger and braver when they face challenges like the hero.

Under the Net is the story of a struggling young writer, Jake Donaghue. Iris

has written the novel in artistic way; its mixture of the philosophical and the picaresque has made it one of Murdoch's most popular. The novel describes Jake Donaghue who has just arrived back in London from a trip to France. Finn, a distant relative who is so obliging that he is sometimes mistaken for a servant, tells Jake that they are being thrown out of Madge's house, where they have been living rent-free for eighteen months. A conversation with Madge reveals that they are being moved to make way for her new lover, the rich bookmaker Sammy Starfield.

He goes with his suitcase to the cat-filled corner shop of Mrs. Tinckham to check he has all his manuscripts and figure out where to live. Only one manuscript is missing: his translation of *Le Rossignol de Bois*, a novel by Jean-Pierre Breteuil. It is a mediocre work, which he has done for money. He thinks of an old friend, a philosopher named Dave Gellman, and goes to his flat. A political meeting is being held there, and Dave is dismissive, but allows him to leave his suitcase. Finn suggests that he ask Anna Quentin, a singer he once fell in love with.

About the novel different critics have commented in different way. Robert Daniel comments the novel as the female centered because it was written by female author. According to him, the female characters are more believable in the novel than female characters. In his own words:

It seems to me that most male authors have male central characters, and female authors female central characters, especially when the novel is in the first person. It also seems to me that female authors (in general) create more believable female central characters, and male authors (in general) more believable male characters, especially concerning central characters and particularly when in the first person narrative. (3)

Thus, he sees in problem with male characters because of the tone of the author in the

novel. The characters in the novel are more believable particularly the female ones, according to Daniel. The first person narrative is also reliable because the narrator has expressed personal experiences.

On the other hand, Aly Lawson argues that Iris created sparkling account of the penniless artist. The novel is a kind of absurd life of Jake who struggles so much in his life. According to Lawson:

The author created a sparkling account of Jake Donaghue, the penniless artist who networks with an array of magnetic characters throughout London and Paris. Drifting through these quintessential corners of the world, Jake flirts with starlets, crosses bookies, and brainstorms about life with the eccentric. Rekindled love and episodes of the absurd burn and douse the pages; smoldering gems of satire and panache (too much?) reveal themselves en route to Jake's final philosophy on life. (4)

In this way, she sees the philosophy of life that one has to move from one corner to another to make life meaningful. Lawson is impressed by the way the protagonist Jake is presented as an example of struggling character. There are many aims in his life including a successful artist. But he has other problems related to his place of residence. The more he faces the problems, the more meaningful his life becomes.

However, the researcher sees the absurdist theme in the novel. This is related to existentialism. Life is not permanent but temporary not having the fixity of life. The researcher will find out the themes that are related to meaninglessness and emptiness of life. According to the theory, the world does not support us but it always hinders us in many ways. It does not help us to progress in our life. There is problem everywhere. We must struggle with it until our death. The protagonist of the novel is not happy with his life. He moves from one place to another to get meaning in life but

he gets problem everywhere. He wants to develop his career by translating documents but part of it misses, he does not get support even from his close friends. He does not get enough money for his work. Various people in the novel only use him.

In the next chapter, the researcher will discuss about the theory of absurdity and will bring the textual analysis for evidence in detail. The necessary theorists will be used to talk about the meaningless and empty life. Frederic Nietzsche, Albert Camus, Martin Heidegger will be used to prove my hypothesis.

II. Finding Happiness against Meaninglessness

Existentialism is a term applied to the work of a number of late 19th- and 20th-century philosophers who, despite profound doctrinal differences, shared the belief that philosophical thinking begins with the human subject—not merely the thinking subject, but the acting, feeling, living human individual. In existentialism, the individual's starting point is characterized by what has been called “the existential attitude” or a sense of disorientation and confusion in the face of an apparently meaningless or absurd world. Many existentialists have also regarded traditional systematic or academic philosophies, in both style and content, as too abstract and remote from concrete human experience.

Human being is considered as an isolated individual into an alien universe under existential theory. It faces the doctrine that human being is a manifestation of absolute truth. Especially after the Second World War, many thinkers started to support this doctrine and they did not believe in traditional concepts like rationality, morality, unity, value, and even Christianity. The certainties and scientific reasoning that ruled the nineteenth century smashed into anxiety, absurdity disintegration, chaos, and uncertainty.

The thinkers and writers of the time found the world totally absurd and alien. This feeling of utter alienation was the product of the recognition of death of God and the holocaust of the World War II. The writers capture the outcome of these two great wars sense- of alienation, the spiritual emptiness, sense of insecurity and absurdity-. Not only God is dead as Nietzsche proclaimed, but also all the intermediary values connecting God and man declined. Man lost even the certainties and values of his own existence, which he had originally received from his belief in God. He is, thus, a castrated and deserted animal in the overwhelming and the absurd universe.

An individual is free to choose and create truths himself/herself. One can create truths or her/his own personal interest and use freedom of choice. Therefore, an existentialist stress on concrete individual existence, freedom and choice.

Unlike Renaissance thinkers, the existentialists take freedom as a curse. Jean Paul Sartre describes freedom as: “We are condemned to be free” (qtd. in Tarnas 56). This existentialist concept of freedom and value raise from the view of the individual, Sartre in his book *Existentialism and Human Emotion* says “since we are all ultimately alone, isolated island of subjectivity in an objective world, we have absolute freedom over internal nature and source of our value can only be internal” (23). Due to this freedom, there is none to dictate us what to do and what not to do.

As a school of thought, existentialism is devoted to the interpretation of human existence. It lays stress on concrete individual existence, freedom and choice. John Ryan explains: “There is no single existentialist philosophy, and no single definition of the word can be given. However, it may be central and that they stress man’s concrete existence, his contingent nature, his personal freedom and consequent responsibility for what he does and makes him to be” (639). It means existential feeling is objective but the subjective one. Ryan claims that there is no single definition of existentialism.

Likewise, existentialists do not take them with the traditional attempt to get the ultimate nature of the world but they really concern to the problem of men. They focus on what it is like to be an individual. Existentialism focuses on the nature of truths, by saying that focus on what it is true to one may be false to another because individuals finally must make their own choices without any help from external standards as laws, ethical rules and traditional philosophy. In this sense, individuals are free to choose and they are completely responsible for their choice. One critic

Macintyre argues: “Even I do not choose I have chosen not to choose” (140).

Therefore, existentialism concludes that human choice is subjective and an individual is free to choose for his authentic existence.

Existentialism as a philosophical concept has been in vogue only in recent years, but its origin goes far back to some classical and middle ages. Before the modern existentialist, we could find some norms of existentialism in the works of St. Augustine, Pascal, Socrates, and other in extent. They were followed by Nietzsche, Dostoevsky, Kierkegaard, Husserl, Heidegger, Jaspers, Berdyaev, Camus, Simon De Beauvoir, Sartre and Marlean Plarty. Although existentialism was germinated from classical period, it got full-fledged shape in the post- war era. Protagoras expresses the idea of subjective truth: “Man is the measure of all things” (Gaarder 62). Socrates focuses on the need of the self instead of the whole cosmos. For him, self was prior to everything.

The medieval age was known as the era of religion and there was strong belief in God. However, existential elements can be found in the philosophy of Saint Augustine. He talked about the self-awareness and believed that truth should be searched from within. Augustine asked man not to go outside himself in the quest of truth. He affirmed the existence of truth human ego in the soul. He gave importance to the individual self.

Existentialism philosophy began with Danish Christian thinker Soren Kierkegaard in the first half of nineteenth century. By criticizing, Hegel’s philosophical in system; he gave the importance of subjective, emotional and living aspect of human existence. In this regard, Soren observes, “He thought that both the idealism of the romanticist and Hegel’s Historicism obscured the individual’s responsibility for his own life” (Gaarder, 371). Thus, existentialism opposes idealism

and objectivism.

According to Kierkegaard, the existentialists are mainly influenced by the subjectivism and individuality. By challenging traditional ideas about absolute being, they stress on human existence. The possibility of human existence is the anticipation, the expectation and the projection of the future. Existence is always stretched out towards the future.

Existentialism has become one of the prominent theories at present and is applied in many literary texts. Although existentialists have many similar ideas, their view-points are conflicting and sometimes contradictory and it can be divided into two groups: theistic existentialists and atheistic existentialists. The first group of existentialists like Soren Kierkegaard, Karl Jaspers, Martin Butter, and Gabriel Marcel believe on religion and view that anxiety of modern man can be relieved when one dedicates oneself to the will of God. Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Jean Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus belong to the second group of Existentialists who denies to accept the existence of God. For them, nobody is there to support human being. So, one is free to choose.

Kierkegaard developed this problem in the context of his radical approach to Christian faith; Nietzsche did so in light of his thesis of the death of God. Subsequent existential thought reflects this difference: while some writers (Sartre and Beauvoir) were stubbornly atheist in outlook, others (Heidegger, Jaspers, Marcel, and Buber) variously explored the implications of the concept “authentic existence” for religious consciousness. Though neither Nietzsche’s nor Kierkegaard’s thought can be reduced to a single strand, both took an interest in what Kierkegaard termed “the single individual.” Both were convinced that this singularity, what is most my own, “me,” could be meaningfully reflected upon while yet, precisely because of its singularity,

remaining invisible to traditional philosophy, with its emphasis either on what follows unerring objective laws of nature or else conforms to the universal standards of moral reason. A focus on existence thus led, in both, to unique textual strategies quite alien to the philosophy of their time and ours.

For Kierkegaard existence emerges as a philosophical problem in the struggle to think the paradoxical presence of God; for Nietzsche it is found in the reverberations of the phrase “God is dead” (Gaardar 455) in the challenge of nihilism. Nietzsche sought to draw the consequences of the death of God, the collapse of any theistic support for morality. Nietzsche’s overriding concern is to find a way to take the measure of human life in the modern world. Nietzsche’s idea that behind moral prescriptions lies nothing but ‘will to power’ undermined that authority.

Sartre’s slogan “existence precedes essence,” may serve to introduce what is most distinctive of existentialism, namely, the idea that no general, non-formal account of what it means to be human can be given, since that meaning is decided in and through existing itself. Existence is “self-making-in-a-situation” (Fackenheim, 37). In contrast to other entities, whose essential properties are fixed by the kind of entities they are, what is essential to a human being—what makes her who she is—is not fixed by her type but by what she makes of herself, who she becomes. The fundamental contribution of existential thought lies in the idea that one’s identity is constituted neither by nature nor by culture, since to “exist” is precisely to constitute such an identity. It is in light of this idea that key existential notions such as facticity, transcendence, alienation, and authenticity must be understood.

Sartre’s slogan ‘existence precedes essence’ in the life of Jake and Finn. They want to live first and think about their other problems they may have to face later. Transcendence refers to that attitude toward characteristic of practical engagement in

the world, the agent's perspective. An agent is oriented by the task at hand as something to be brought about through its own will or agency. Such orientation does not take itself as a theme but loses itself in what is to be done. Thereby, things present themselves not as indifferent givens, facts, but as meaningful: salient, expedient, obstructive, and so on. To speak of 'transcendence' here is to indicate that the agent 'goes beyond' what simply is toward what can be: the factual always emerges in light of the possible.

The narrator focuses on the present rather than the past. He believes that when someone writes epic age becomes an important factor. The old age is not an appropriate time to write the epic. It may be because he is guided by the cultural views. In many cultures, people believe that people cannot perform anything big in their old age. However, from the perspective of existentialism, it can be argued that people can do anything in any age. What they need is will to power of Nietzsche. The narrator reveals his thoughts:

At that time too it had not yet become clear to me that the present age was not one in which it was possible to write an epic. At that time I naively imagined that there was no reason why one should not attempt to write anything that one felt inclined to write. But nothing is more paralyzing than a sense of historical perspective, especially in literary matters. At a certain point perhaps one ought simply to stop reflecting. (19)

Historical perspective is one of the hindrances of writing literature. He means to say that people can perform anything in their life whether they are old or young. Age for him is not the problem, but the thought itself is the problem.

Likewise, the anti-Cartesian view of the self as in situation yields the familiar existential theme of the 'alienated' self, the estrangement of the self both from the

world and from itself. In the first place, though it is through projects that world takes on meaning, the world itself is not brought into being through projects; it retains its otherness and thus can come forth as utterly alien. In the second place, the world includes other people, and as a consequence that merely the revealer of the world but something revealed in the projects of those others. Thus, function of the projects, but is also a matter of 'being-for-others.' Sartre brings out this form of alienation in his famous analysis of 'the Look.'

Existentialism did not develop much in the way of a normative ethics.

However, a certain approach to the theory of value and to moral psychology, deriving from the idea of existence as self-making in situation, are distinctive marks of the existentialist tradition. In value theory, existentialists tend to emphasize the conventionality or groundlessness of values, their 'ideality,' the fact that they arise entirely through the projects of human beings against the background of an otherwise meaningless and indifferent world. Existential moral psychology emphasizes human freedom and focuses on the sources of deception, self-deception, and hypocrisy in moral consciousness. The familiar existential themes of anxiety, nothingness, and the absurd must be understood in this context. At the same time, there is deep concern to foster an authentic stance toward the human, groundless, values without which no project is possible, a concern that gets expressed in the notions of 'engagement' and 'commitment.'

The nineteenth century Danish philosopher and religious thinker Kierkegaard is the first writer to call himself existentialist. He was infuriated by Hegel's philosophy which stressed on rationalism which according to Kierkegaard: "Both the idealism of Romantics and Hegel's historicism 'obscured the individual's responsibility for his own life'" (Gaarder, 377). Therefore, Kierkegaard's thinks that

Hegel and Romantics are “tarred with the same brush” (Gaarder, 377). Kierkegaard’s thought of personal choices and responsibility count a lot. Objective truth has nothing to do with the human life. He advocates that individual existence is prior to be everything. Gaarder comments: “Kierkegaard had sharp eye for significance of the individual. We are more than the children of our time. And moreover, every single one of us is unique individual who only lives once” (Gaarder, 377). Kierkegaard’s determination about individuality as he remarks: “According to Kierkegaard rather than searching for the Truth with capital ‘T’ it is more important to find the kind of truths that are meaningful to the individual’s life. It is important to the ‘truth for me’”. He thus sets the individual, or each and every man, up against the ‘system’” (Gaarder, 379).

Kierkegaard emphasizes on individual choice at a moment. Most of the existentialists follow him in this respect. He thinks that man makes free decisions and choices to project himself. Taking example of Kierkegaard, Ellmann and Fiedelson remark: “By choosing even by choosing wrongly it that is done with earnestness and struggle, we became new selves that could not have existed until the choice was made. Beyond ethical choice religious is the use of freedom to surrender it back to divine giver” (805). Thus, one cannot remain without making decisions. By making decisions, he goes on establishing his existence. There are two options for the individual to choose: either he has to choose God and get redemption from the angst, an ethic-religious choice or he has to respect God and go to prediction, and atheistic choice.

The centrality of individual passion in contrast to the passion of the ‘Crowd’ as Kierkegaard called, or Dostoevsky’s “an ant in an ant heap” us one of the basic concepts of existential philosophers (Ellmann and Fiedelson, 803). Kierkegaard

believes that one is free to make choices. In addition, one exists up to the point of making choice. The concept of 'subjective truth' is dominant in his writings. Any systems, rules and regulations cannot determine an individual and his freedom. Instead of single truth, there are many truths, which are personal. What is right and what is wrong depend upon one's own decisions and thoughts.

Friedrich Nietzsche, the nineteenth century German philosopher, one of the forerunners and chief source of inspiration for existentialism, has influenced the development of the idea of human existence. He made a critique on Christianity. For him, western philosophical tradition and Christianity snatches away authentic individuality and happiness of people. Nietzsche observes, "Both Christianity and traditional philosophy had turned away from the real world and pointed towards heaven or the world of ideas" (Gaarder, 455). It shows that he is in favor of individual freedom.

Similarly, Nietzsche has made very sharp critique of Christianity and God. For him Christianity is a "slave morality" (52) and the religion having no truth because God is already dead and Christianity have become a shelter for weak and disabled people that he hated. His proclamation on God and Christianity pushes atheistic existentialism on God that is already dead or there is no more God at all to determine the existence. He tries to clarify his view on religion and on God from his this argument:

The Christian conception of God-God as god of sick, God as a spider, God as a spirit is one of the most corrupt conceptions of the divine as ever attained on earth. It may even represent the low water mark in the descending development of divine types. God degenerated into contradiction of life.

Instead of being its transfiguration and eternal, God as the declaration of war

against life, against nature and against will to live. (Ellmann and Fiedelson 818)

For him, to think of God is to go against life, against the will to power. As there is absence of God in the world, the supermen are the Gods. The supermen are the higher men because of their genuine thought to life and heroic spirit. Thus, the man of action is force for human existence for Nietzsche. Nietzsche focuses on the subjective activities of individual. He does not believe the idea of absolute truth.

As god is dead, there is nobody to govern and individual rather he is the master of himself. This view of Nietzsche has become clear in the given abstract: Nietzsche asserts:

Objective man is not a model, either, he walks neither before nor behind anyone ... he is an instrument, a piece of slave ... As a mirror, he is a work of art to be handled carefully and honored. But he is not an aim, not a way out nor a way up, not a complimentary human being through whom the rest of the existence is not a conclusion ... he is nothing solid, nothing powerful, nothing self-reliant seeking to become master. (Ellmann and Fiedelson 817)

Nietzsche supports individuality and subjectivity of truth. An objective man is nothing more than a slave who is very much submissive. Man should be active and subjective for the sake of his individuality. Man is master of himself. Thus, he should exercise his individual power. In his views, moral values are not objective and universal.

Nietzsche takes every individual as a free thinker. One individual has his own right to think in his own perspective and to make decisions in his own favor. He clearly expresses:

I say especially that they shall free, very free thinkers, these philosophers of the time? It is certain, however, that they will not be merely thinkers but

something more, something superior, greater and thoroughly different,
something that does not want to be misjudged or mistaken for something else.

(Ellmann and Fiedelson 815)

In this way, he provokes the idea of existence of human being and individual freedom. For human individual is greater and more powerful than society. Nietzsche believes in freedom of people. Free thinkers can only become philosophers, according to him. He implies that if their thoughts are constrained by anything, they cannot be good thinkers.

Another German existentialist is Heidegger who was influenced by both Nietzsche and Kierkegaard. Though he himself did not agree to count as an existentialist thinker, he was able to influence most powerful existentialist philosopher Sartre. His idea constitutes the basic characteristics of existentialism. According to him, Western metaphysics mistakenly presents an individual as a representative of mass. He shows sharp distinction between 'beings' and 'Being' i.e., group and individuality. In his essay, "Recollection of Being", he states that "in fact metaphysics never answers the question concerning the truth of being ... because it thinks of being only representing being as beings" (Ellmann and Fiedelson 879). By this he focuses on the problem of being. For him, being is not realized in normal situation. It can only be realized in the state of boredom or anxiety. The narrator of the novel sometimes realizes that he is disturbed by anxiety when he is unable to attain something, he is hopeful for. The narrator discloses in the lines: "By the evening of the second day I was completely unable to go on with my work. Devoured by mingled nervousness and curiosity, I sat too looking out of my window, and blowing my nose, and wondering how to set about establishing the human contact which was by now become an absolute necessity" (55). He suffers from anxiety because he cannot get

what he expected. He has the mixed feeling of nervousness and curiosity. He thinks about his present condition and decides to lead his life on his own. He realizes that it is meaningless to find meaning in relation to others.

As most of the existentialists are very much indebted by the works of the German phenomenologist Edmund Husserl, Heidegger was also influenced by Husserl's concept of self and subjective truth. Heidegger has found the basic attributes of existentialism in Husserl's work in which he addresses the multiple truths and goes against the objective truth or universal truth. Most of the existentialists take Husserl as an influential figure even if he is a phenomenologist. Among them, Heidegger shows positive response for his subjectivism. However, there is a sharp contrast between phenomenology, which tries to objectify the unobjectifiable, and existentialism, Heidegger's relationship with Husserl is unavoidable. For Heidegger we cannot realize being in normal situation rather we can realize it in the period of suffering. Therefore, he says in his essay "What is Metaphysics?":

No matter how fragmented our everyday existence may appear to be ... It irrupts when one is bored, profound boredom drifting here and there in the abysses of our existence like a muffling fog, removes all things and men and oneself along with into a remarkable difference this boredom reveals being as a whole. (4)

Hence, we can find his close relation to existentialism, which he directly rejects to reveal. In very difficult moment of life one can report to him.

According to Heidegger, the universe is alien to us and we shall face explicitly the problem of being as we create our own existence making choices. He was interested in the study of particular way of existing. He believes that one has to determine his own existence by creating his own existence by creating his own

possibilities and making choices and commitment, which shows that man, is what he tries to be or to make himself.

Thus, Heideggerian existentialism emphasizes on existence, boredom, choice and freedom but in freedom, also there is suffering, or angst that compels human being to select and take change of his being. He also stresses that there is no absolute force to govern a man. That is why; an individual himself creates his own essence. So, the main focus of Heidegger is to investigate for individual, especially for man's being.

Sartre, one of the eminent French existentialists and the leading figure of Existentialism, became popular after the Second World War for his existential theory. For him, "existentialism is humanism" (65) as included by Gaarder in *Sophie's World*. Sartre put himself in the group of anti-religious existentialists. His philosophy mainly focuses on personal freedom and responsibility. He thinks that there is no fixed human nature or essence and so the individual has to choose his being. Along with Albert Camus and Samuel Beckett, he developed the existentialist philosophy to its farthest point. Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Heidegger are the chief philosophers who have left much impact upon this thinker. Every human being has his own right to do thing or select his best. In this respect, he made an existential choice when he rejected to take Nobel Prize for literature in 1964.

Moreover, Sartre also believes on subjective truths or multiple truths. Therefore, he expresses, "It is therefore useless to search for the meaning of life in general" (*Being and Nothingness* 457). He means to say that there is no fixed or absolute truth in this universe. As an atheistic existentialist, Sartre's view on God is that the concept of God is devoid and not absolute power. He further expresses:

It states that if God does not exist, there is at least one being in whom existence precedes essence, a being who exists before he can be defined by

any concept, and that this being is man, or as Heidegger says human reality.

What is meant here by saying that existence precedes essence? It means that first of all, man exists, turns up, appears on the scene and, only afterwards, defines himself. (Ellmann and Fiedelson 828)

As God does not exist, there is no essence by nature. Sartre means to say that existence comes before essence. Essence is not universal truth; it is determined by our existence whatever we decide, it is going to be. Since our involvement in the world creates essence and there is no predetermined essence to govern our existence, rather our existence creates essence and determines our essence.

As most of the existentialists claim, Sartre also stresses upon the subjectivity of the individual. His view towards it is positive although he frequently talks about freedom. For him, freedom is a kind of curse as commented as “Man is condemned to be free ... This freedom condemns us to make choices throughout our lives” (Gaarder, 467). It shows that freedom is not blessing but a curse because a person has not created himself, he is nevertheless free, and this freedom condemns people to make choices throughout their lives.

An individual is free to choose the course of life. He is responsible for his action in life. He never disclaims the responsibility. Sartre further says: “To choose between this or that is at the same time to affirm the value of that which is chosen: for we are unable ever to choose the worse. What we choose is always better; and nothing can be better for unless it is better for all ... Our responsibility is thus much greater than we had supposed (Ellmann and Fiedelson, 835). Because of our freedom, we can choose either this or that. It is our responsibility to do one or other action. What we have done depends on our choice. We are responsible for choice and action. Like most of the existentialists, Sartre emphasizes on the subjectivity of the individual. He

blames those persons who do not use freedom because freedom is used the freedom itself and it is the way of life.

Sartre's concept of human existence is determined as a dominant state.

According to him, there is no such innate nature of man like essence. He argues:

“Existence precedes essence ... Man simply is not that he is simply what he conceives himself after already existing as he will to be after that leap towards existence. Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself” (Ellmann and Fiedelson 828). Thus, an individual can create essence, which comes after existence of a person. The will of a person helps him to be something of being not the essence. The focus of Sartre is this idea of human existence. Instead of having an essence by birth an individual is free to choose options either this or that.

Sartre divides living as authentic and inauthentic between these points. He chooses authentic living and says that one must choose and make commitment to exist. Sartre's primary focus lies on existence. For him freedom and existence go together. Therefore, our freedom obliges us to make something of ourselves to live 'authentically' or 'truly'. Thus, as many existentialist thinkers, Sartre emphasizes upon freedom of choice and personal responsibility and action because there is no absolute force like God to govern us to create our own essence. By doing so, we can meet the meaning or essence of life.

Albert Camus, a well-known thinker of absurdity of human life, is one of the remarkable atheistic existentialists of the twentieth century. He has multidimensional personality for his writing. Camus takes human being as an isolated existent in an alien universe and the condition of a man is absurd; whatever he searches for life with any purpose is meaningless and fruitless. The world does not possess any inherent truth, value and meaning. In this regard, M. H. Abrams remarks:

Albert Camus views a human being as an isolated existence who is cast into an alien universe, as possessing no inherent truth, value, meaning and to represent human life-in its fruitless search for purpose and meaning, as it moves from nothingness when it came towards the nothingness where it must end as an existence which is both anguished and absurd. (1)

Albert Camus has compared modern man to Corinthian king Sisyphus who disobeyed God for his passion of life and suffered external torture heroically. He further says, this Universe, henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile.

Camus has reached to the conclusion to declare the condition of man when he realized that the speculative system of past provided no authentic guidance for life. In his views, the awareness that comes within an absurd man of his futile lifestyle, he is naturally filled with anxiety and hopelessness but he does not surrender himself to the authority. Rather he uses his absurd consciousness as a reliable guidance to revolt against it. According to Camus, every individual works in accordance with his thought to choose. No individual surrenders himself in the mouth of death. Human destinies are made by human themselves. In *Creation of Knowledge*, it is quoted that “like Sisyphus ... human make their own choices and to that extent are in control of their own destinies” (67). Hence, Camus stands in favor of subjective choice, which is already accepted by other existentialists as well. Like Sisyphus, every human being chooses whatever he wants to do. The same action leads him on the pathway of absurdity even though he is happy when he gets a chance to choose something. For Camus the idea of choice is optimistic and humanistic. He advocates for freedom of choice.

Under the Net is an example of existential theory in which the characters suffer due to their individualism and they become happy at the end as they realize that they cannot

find meaning if they do not cooperate with each other. As the novel opens, Jake Donaghue meets Finn, a distant relative who informs Donaghue that they are thrown out of Madge's house. They understand that she has done so to enter her lover Sammy Starfield. She is guided by individualism and does not realize the difficulties of Jake and Finn. Jake reports:

‘It’s not what we’ve done, it’s what she’s after doing,’ said Finn. ‘She’s going to get married to a fellow.’ This was a blow. Yet even as I flinched I told myself, well, why not? I am a tolerant and fair-minded man. And next moment I was wondering, where can we go? ‘But she never told me anything,’ I said. ‘You never asked anything,’ said Finn. This was true. During the last year I had become uninterested in Magdalen’s private life. If she goes out and gets herself engaged to some other man whom had I to thank but myself. (8)

Jake and Finn talk about their situation that they are not happy with their present life. Jake, the narrator, reveals that they have different nature. Jake is a tolerant and fair-minded person. They worry where to go the next morning. Something has happened to them unexpectedly. Madge is only a character to deceive people. Modern people have become selfish and self-centered like her. They do not think beyond their own works. Madge is ready to do anything to satisfy her desires. However, it is good news for Finn and Jake because they can learn many things from there. They can start their new life and get lesson for advancing their life independently. This is the secret of existential theory.

As Magdalen's chooses her private life, they are aware that whatever she is doing, it is her freedom. She has her own life, she is responsible, and free to spend whatever, she wants. In the beginning, people see each other from far and they increase their intimacy. Gradually they try to be possessive and attempt to control. It

has happened in their relationship with Magdalen. Magdalen has her right to judge herself and make her life meaningful. Jake explains what happened:

It was more than two hours till opening time, and I could hardly face the thought of seeing Magdalen at once. She would expect me to make a scene, and I didn't feel energetic enough to make a scene, quite apart from not knowing anyway what sort of scene I ought to make. That would need some thinking out. There is nothing like being ousted for making one start to specify what it is one is being ousted from. I wanted time to reflect on my status. (9)

In fact, they are physically together but psychologically separate. Existential theory respects individual freedom because everyone has right to live in his or her own will. Magdalen wants to live on her own. It is culture or perception to think people as their relative or close. In contrast, people have complete freedom to choose people and change them if they wish to.

When Jake and Madge talk about their current affair, both of them seem to satisfy themselves rather than others. They first think about their self and evaluate about others later. The narrator explains about her:

Her laughter had a cutting edge, but her eyes were troubled, and I felt an impulse to make her, even at this late stage, some sort of rash proposal. A strange light, cast back over our friendship, brought new things into relief, and I tried in an instant to grasp the whole essence of my need of her. I took a deep breath, however, and followed my rule of never speaking frankly to women in moments of emotion. No good ever comes of this. It is not in my nature to make myself responsible for other people. I find it hard enough to pick my own way along. (12)

Madge and Jake think about themselves. Jake the narrator is worried about his

condition and reacts based on that while she thinks from her own perspective. Madge has some affair with another person, so she wants the narrator and his friend to leave the house. Friendship, in fact, does not occur out of selfishness. It exists because they think about themselves and take people accordingly.

The characters in the novel also think in the same way. They believe that they are responsible for their own activities and consequences. In the name of individualism, Madge does not think from the perspective of others but she only focuses on herself. She wants Jake and his friend to leave immediately because she wants to keep another person for her need. She tells them: “‘Jake, will you get out!’ said Magdalen. ‘Anyhow,’ I said, ‘you aren’t going to live here with Sacred Sam, are you?’” We shall need this flat,’ said Magdalen, ‘and I want you out of it now” (15). Magdalen is guided by self-centered ideas. She does not give importance to other people but herself. She wants to give the flat to Samuel Starfield instead. She does not take decision based on moral grounds but the selfishness. God is one abstract idea in which people take differently.

Anna understands her situation and believes that she can be master of her own life. She chooses her life in her own way. She does not like to follow her boyfriend Hugo because he wants to control her. She chooses her individual life rather than being exploited by her love. She does not try to get into films though she is good at it. She follows her own will and wishes to lead her life accordingly. The narrator describes about her:

Anna never tried to get into films. I don’t know why; she always seemed to me to have much greater potentialities than Sadie. But perhaps her facade had a certain superficial lack of definiteness. You need to be a vessel with a sharp prow to get into the film world. After she parted from Sadie, Anna did a

certain amount of more serious singing; but she lacked the training necessary to take her far in the world. When I last heard of her she was singing folksongs in a nightclub, and that sort of combination expressed her very well. (29)

She enjoys spending life by singing folksongs at the nightclub freely. She does not want to live from the perspective of others but herself. She is the example how people lead their life and become happy.

The narrator is happy when he is alone because he can have enough time to muse upon himself. It is his freedom to live in his own way. He learns to be individual and subjective because he experiences many things being close to Anna. Now he can listen to the river, murmuring the past. It is his personal feeling to perceive the surrounding around him. The narrator describes his feelings:

I was glad to be alone. I had had what was for me an intolerably eventful day-- and now for a long time I leaned on the windowsill, looking down towards Hammersmith Bridge. The river murmured past, carrying with it the last fragments of daylight, and finally it became a dark gulf of unseen movement. I thought over my meeting with Anna. She had said some strange things, but it was not on these that I was brooding. I was remembering the way she moved her hands, her nervous gestures as she fingered now a ball and now a necklace. (44)

He recalls what happened with Anna in the past. He revises everything and realizes that life goes smoothly even in her absence. The past has become his support to lead his present and future. He accepts the truth that the life is not what he lives in but the one he takes or perceives.

Similarly, in the text the narrator confesses that he is afraid of crowd. He realizes that he is soul decision maker of his thought and life. He understands his own

problems and tries to calm down. There is no role of anyone in his thought. Even god does not help him to control himself. Everyone thinks in the same way if they face the problems. Some people believe in god and attempts to correct their mistakes by giving credit to Him. But the narrator realizes that he can himself do it and become free of fear. Jake describes his situation:

I am afraid of crowds, and I should like to have got out, but now it was impossible to move. I calmed myself and started watching the fireworks. It was a very fine display. Sometimes the rockets went up singly, sometimes in groups. There were some which burst with a deafening crack and scattered out a rain of tiny golden stars, and others which opened with a soft sigh and set out almost motionless in the air a configuration of big colored lights which sank with extreme slowness as if bound together. (192)

The life is what people take. It is subjective not objective. Different people take life in their own ways. No one can give proper definition of life. Jake expresses his own plight and focuses on individual life. He is scared when he finds himself in crowds. He feels like being suffocated there. However, he tries to adapt to the situation and faces the problems. He gradually learns that difficulties are not adversities but the lessons to be learned.

Sadie is happy with her situation now. She chooses her personal life and becomes happy. Sadie wonders when she sees Jake's room. She is carefree and remains happy on her own. She does not mind how people look at her but she gives meaning to her own situation. She takes everything quite easily. She does not worry how other people comment about her. The narrator mentions her feelings:

'My dear, it's an enormous flat,' said Sadie. 'You can have a suite of rooms. I'll just feel so much safer if you can come and stay there till I go away. This

fellow is quite madly in love with me. He keeps calling and trying to get in at all hours, and when he doesn't call, he rings up, and I'm just a nervous wreck.' 'You won't start being afraid of me, I suppose?' I said, leering at her in the glass. Sadie went off into peals of laughter. 'Jake, darling, no, you're just too utterly harmless!' she called out. (51)

The narrator also believes in freedom of people. He does not want to possess her but loves her. She is so much impressed by his manner. She tells him that he is harmless. It feels good when people enjoy in their own way not interfering each other like natural beings. Sadie and Jake respect each other's existence and enjoy in their own way.

Jake's plight is felt everywhere and every time. He finds that the world he is living in is not appropriate to enjoy and get pleasure. He tries to find the meaning in his life and moves from one place to another but he is still unstable.

I sat down and took an empty sheet of paper. I wanted to write a letter to Hugo. I took one of Hugo's pens and Hugo's ink. A starling flew in at the window, saw me, and flew out again. There was a soft chattering on the balustrade. I looked up at the blue sky above it. Hugo, I wrote on the paper. Then I could think of nothing more to say. I thought of putting Send me your Nottingham address, but this sounded too weak and impersonal and I didn't write it down. In the end I just drew a curving line across the page, and signed my name at the bottom of it, adding the address of Mrs Tinckham's shop. (243)

The narrator is confused when he wants to write something on the paper. He attempts to get ideas by looking at his surroundings. He sees a starling flying at the window and feels that it has seen him. It means he experiences the existence of other creatures like this. Such thoughts come in his mind when he does not find happiness in him.

Jake and his friends are entrapped in the political conflicts and face problems. They have the feeling of complete vacant in their mind when they are attacked by the groups. The narrator explains how he felt when he was struck on the shoulder. He feels bored and asks for help. Now he does not find anyone solving his problem. He is himself to get meaning and rise up from there.

The world blacked out and something struck me violently on the shoulder. I had made myself so flat I almost bored into the earth. Somewhere the shouting and the splintering continued. I tried to get up but something was pinning me down. I became panic-stricken and struggled madly, and then I found myself sitting up with the remains of the wall, in pieces of various sizes, scattered round me. I looked about wildly for Mars, and soon saw him crawling out from under a pile of debris. He shook himself and came towards me with nonchalance. (154)

He gets shocking experiences when the political group attacks him. In the beginning, he does not know what has happened. Later he finds being surrounded by the debris. This experience is an example how people look for meanings when they face problems. He understands real meaning of his life.

The narrator, Danaghue, goes through innumerable difficulties and pains. He becomes victims of many people being lover. He comes to close to Sadie, whom he loves much. He makes friendship with Finn and struggles together. The pain has taught him many things. He realizes that expectation and disappointment come together not they are opposite with each other. He gradually understands the meaning of life when he has painful situations. The narrator explains:

Arriving in Paris always causes me pain, even when I have been away for only a short while. It is a city which I never fail to approach with expectation and

leave with disappointment. There is a question, which only I can ask and which only Paris can answer; but this question is something, which I have never yet been able to formulate. Certain things indeed I have learnt here: for instance, that my happiness has a sad face, so sad that for years I took it for my unhappiness and drove it away. (172)

He comes to the conclusion that there is sadness in happiness and happiness in sadness. In fact, both of them come to people together. Many people try to ignore sadness and focus on happiness which is problematic.

Moreover, Jake feels the same though he is in group of people. He seems to be talking to the people and spending time with them but in reality, he is alone and feeling alienated and lonely. He describes the journey he makes with his friends. There is a crowd of people and they are standing in one place, but their destination is different and people are different. They are confused what to do. Jake is one of them who cannot decide what to do. The narrator explains his condition:

So, I reflected; and was reluctant to get off the bus. But when we reached Oxford Circus I rose and pulled Mars after me down the stairs. It was the rush hour. I threaded my way through the crowd with the dog at my heels, and turned down Rathbone Place. Soho was hot and dusty, sulky idle and senseless with the afternoon. People stood about waiting for opening time. In an upper room someone was playing a piano. Someone else picked up the tune and whistled it, going away into the distance. I walked along Charlotte Street.

(246)

He reflects how he felt in the journey. He feels lonely and pulls Mars to come to him. He is with the dog and Mars but he has his own destination. He does not feel like being in the group. It is because of the feeling of absurdity. He is like an aliened

person in the world. He does not have prestigious presence in the company of people. He does not have better position than the dog in the context of existential theory.

The narrator realizes that the world is not objective but the subjective one. It is what people perceive not what it looks. It means the world is one but there are innumerable perceptions about it. He compares the situation by looking at the kittens, which are with Mrs. Tinckham.

Yes, you see,' said Mrs Tinckham. I knelt down and began to lift the kittens one by one. Their bodies were as round as balls and they squeaked almost inaudibly. One of them was tabby, one was tabby and white, and two of them appeared to be completely Siamese. I studied their markings and their crooked tails and their fierce squinting blue eyes. Already they seemed to be squeaking more huskily than the others. (256)

The narrator, therefore, explains everything from his perspective. He meets many people and evaluates their attitudes with others. He comes to a great conclusion that people struggle alone and perceive the world in their own. The kittens are cute but have different colors.

In conclusion, the novel brings in the circumstances of the characters who are struggling for their existence and survival. They experience the world and situations differently. The more difficult they feel, the better they become to move ahead in their life. In the beginning, they become like a crow in the fog, but later they assimilate their situations and learn to move ahead.

III. Conclusion: Absurdity beyond the Threat

This research project is about the feeling of absurdity of the main characters as they undergo lots of experiences and learn to live crossing the threat of the world's existence applying existential theory as main methodology. Irish Murdoch's *Under the Net*, is related to the author's childhood when she experienced many fluctuations after World War I and II. She realized that ideology of politics was different from subjective feeling towards it. She got experience during the time of unemployment. After the deep study on the thesis, the researcher came to the conclusion that struggle and difficulty make people brave and courageous. The principal character of the novel, Jake Donaghue is representative person of the author who faces many problems and go through numerous adventures.

The author relates her work to humanism and focuses on their patience, power, and cooperation among characters. In the meantime, her characters realize that they are individual and alone after all even if they are in their communities. While researching on the thesis, the researcher does not move too far from the theme of the author's writing. The research stresses on the ideas that everything is taken from the different perspectives. The thesis explores to what extent the theme of love is included in the author's novels and which forms are possible to locate. There are many aspects in the societies in which love, hate, power, incest, death and so on are defined by people in different ways. Love, for Murdoch, becomes a central theme and she emphasizes that it teaches people live meaningfully in the world. In fact, the world does not have anything to do with the personal feelings like love and hate. It is the personal attitude people how they look at the situations in multiple ways.

The struggle and difficulty of Jake and Finn start when they are thrown out of Madge's house. She throws them out of her house because she wants to bring a person

in for her pleasure. As they experience such selfishness of Madge, their understanding of human nature begins. Although many critics have commented the novel, from various perspectives, the researcher proved that their struggle and helplessness are the keys through which they have learned how to live meaningfully.

Jake asks everyone with whom he thinks he can get help and learns many things that friends, relatives and family members are not there to help when their assistance is required. His distant friend Finn is his close person to help in need. As he faces numerous problems, then he understands the real value of his life and other people. He understands that many people are guided by selfishness and take life from their perspectives. Even female characters are influenced by the modern societies and behave accordingly. Madge, for instance, is the product of the societies.

The researcher claims that life is very short to define it. It is bad thing to take life from the perspective of fixity. The feature of life is to experience change and learn in every step. In fact, Jake and Finn learn many things when they face challenges. Moreover, they learn that the world, society, community, people are only illusion. They do not support us when we really need them. They experience that problems exist everywhere. We must struggle with it until our death. Jake is not happy with his life when he is taken out of the rental house. His real life begins from there and learns more than he expected. The protagonist, wants to develop his career by translating documents but part of it misses, he does not get support even from his close friends. He does not get enough money for his work. Various people in the novel only use him.

Like existentialism, the main character such as Jake and Finn acquire philosophical knowledge that life is merely a thrown object, it can drop anywhere at any time. The world is an object, but people understand it differently. Normally

people feel happy when all the circumstances are in their favors. However, reality is different. People learn when they face adversity like the characters. Another important aspect, people need to understand is to distinguish between the abstract ideas and the concrete world.

Many people prefer to live in abstract world but the reality is different. They have dreams of living in pleasant world. It is not possible to get in the real world. The researcher found out such truths after studying the pros and cons of struggles and difficulties. Magdalen's chooses her private life by deciding to throw Jake and Finn from her house. They come to the real feeling when they are thrown. They were in the idealistic feeling before that. Prior to being taken out of the house, they are in illusion that Madge is their person to manipulate. Thus, experiences, struggle, difficulties are not the adverse things but the lesson to teach people every day. Absurdity, in the same way, is not the bad happening but a book to teach people how to understand the value of life like the characters in the novel.

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