

Quest for self in McEwan's Atonement: An Existentialist study



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Abstract: *This study examines existentialism as a useful self-identification strategy. Existentialism emphasizes freedom, choice, and self. The study focuses on McEwan's Atonement's self-desire. The human condition is to define life. We'll demonstrate in this study how existentialism aids in self-definition. If there were no objective trends, this philosophical perspective would be subjective. Examining existentialism's impact on self-identification, the study. Different approaches to self-identification are presented by Human Existentialism and Absurdum. Existentialism requires that every individual define and interpret their own life. According to McEwan, atonement alters one's viewpoint of the world. That's what this study will show. Personal characteristics and human existentialism. We'll look at existentialism's impact on the personal meaning in this study. Deconstruction will be used in this study's pragmatic analysis of existentialism. Instead of examining a logical totality, deconstruction theory examines conflicting meanings. The "Binary opposition" deconstruction lens is one of the most significant ones.*

Key Words: Existentialism; Self-identification; Absurdum; Subjective; Objective; Appearance; Disappearance; Binary oppositions

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Introduction

The possibility of presence occupies an important place in existentialism. It is used in this context from an obvious standpoint. Existentialists use presence to explicitly refer to individuals. There is a widespread belief that only concrete can exist. Existentialists share this viewpoint, portraying people as

significant individuals, who can exist. Existentialists acknowledge that human beings exist and they should be aware of it. In that sense, it cannot exist apart from people. Kierkegaard was quick to use the phrase "thorough perspective (Ascari, 2019).

" His primary concern was the possibility of human mindfulness. As he put it, how far could a person prosper by breaking free from

the paltriness, pettiness, and blitheness of regular daily existence? The triumph of self-employment in a specific presence. "Existence Precedes Essence" Existentialism believes in the personal experience of the individual. Therefore, it is conceived as a philosophy of existence, a philosophy of proof and acceptance, and a rejection of attempts to rationalize existence. However, the question arises whether there is an essence in human existence. In this regard, existentialism is most often recognized by the contemporary French existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre in his famous maxim "Existence takes precedence over essence". "Man exists first, only then does he become this or that," says Sartre. "One must create one's essence" (Grossmann, 2013).

This is the basis of German philosopher Martin Heidegger's existentialist claim that there are other thoughts and ideas into which humans have been thrown. My strategy for dismantling the notion that an existential approach is distinct from absurdity involves using deconstruction theory. What exactly does "deconstruction" mean? The act of disassembling something into its component elements to get a deeper comprehension of its significance is what the term "deconstruction" refers to. Deconstruction is a term that is used in the context of philosophy to describe the process of disassembling language to find what is truly being stated under the surface; in most cases, this will be different from what is previously thought to be known about the text (Bazaluk, 2016).

The deconstructionist investigates not only what the text says but also what it does not say to conclude that no text has a single, predetermined meaning and that, if one can break down language thoroughly enough, one will find that it can mean anything to anybody. Take, for instance, the restaurant and food service business. Dishes that have been "deconstructed," or broken down into their essential components and then

reassembled differently, have been a popular trend in the culinary world in recent years. Chefs who prepare meals in a deconstructed style feel that by disassembling a well-known dish into its component pieces and presenting it in a manner that is different from how it is often served, they are reintroducing diners to the food and providing them with the chance to experience it freshly. This use of deconstruction is very much like the definition of deconstruction when it's applied to literary works (Sallis, 1987).

A taco that has been disassembled and put on a plate with the shells and filling mixed rather than being served customarily. The theory of deconstruction asserts that the fundamental elements of society and language are logical structures that are founded on binaries, sometimes known as binary pairings. A binary is made up of two ideas that are contrasted with one another and depicted as being in opposition to one another. Some examples of these pairs include life and death, the intellect and the body, and masculine and feminine. However, deconstructionists have discovered, via the process of examining these binaries, that the line that is supposed to separate these contradictory concepts links them, making them interdependent. For illustration's sake, life is meaningless without the counterexample of the notion of death to compare it against. Therefore, when one engages in the practice of deconstruction, they are attempting to comprehend a phrase or idea by focusing on what it is not. To comprehend life, one must first learn about death. The purpose of deconstruction is to bring to light the binary oppositions that underpin our thinking and the connections we maintain with others, as well as to highlight the precarious nature of these oppositions in light of one another (Crowley, 1989)

A binary is, in the philosophy of deconstructionism, the combination of two

concepts that are presumed to have opposing meanings. By demonstrating that the line that ostensibly divides two concepts that are thought to be opposites unites them, the goal of deconstruction is to shake up the binary oppositions that underpin society.

Research Questions

- 1) How do contradictions make possible ways to identify the self?
- 2) How does McEwan portray the subjective relationship with this objective world?
- 3) What are the assumptions assumed by an individual to clear the consciousness of an individual?

Research Objectives

- To explore how self-identification is essential for human existence
- To recognize how existentialists play their vital role in defining the individual self
- To examine how an individual is thriving for his or her existence and self-satisfaction.
- To find out how existence is more fundamental and immutable than essence.

Literature Review

Unlike conventional pragmatic reasoning and science, where intercession is seen as a fundamental rule of thought, existentialism seeks to understand the self as a determinate and immediate solidarity of subject and element (Wolin,1990)The first stages and actual existence are related to experience and are deciphered in existentialism as abstractions. The experience of being "down to earth". The existentialist sees existence as a human or hands-off existence, which, as he likes to think, cannot be known even by logical or philosophical means.

A large number of people such as Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty have

used Husserl's phenomenological method to describe the construction of presence. They believe that perceptual design is built through an orientation towards others. According to Heidegger and Sartre, presence is attuned to nothingness and knows its finitude (Cerbone, 2013). As a result, Heidegger's description of the design of existence is a description of the different forms of human life, including worries, fears, goals, and perceptions, characterized by death and dealing with the different ways of entering. In contact with nothing, The same is true of the shockingly shocking snapshots that Jaspers calls fringe situations, the presence of which reveals the human being as the basis of his existence.

Existentialism characterizes existence by its finitude, the last option deciphered as transience, and it's perspective treated by death. Real-time is objective, infinite, and repeatable; existential time, which is a pure quantity or a sequence of passed minutes, is not. Heidegger and Jaspers both believe that it is a matter of fate. Time is indivisible from the fundamentals of existence, which are new life, love, redemption, and death (Peach,2004). The existentialist perspective on time emphasizes the significance of foretelling the future. The future, along with existential ideas like 'goal', 'business', 'trust', etc., emphasizes the real nature of the individual (as opposed to the general vastness of time) and human actions and endeavors. With masculine, efforts and assumptions.

In existentialism, the credibility of human life is consistently reflected in a given situation, in which it is "thrown" and has explicit characteristics such as natural and spiritual qualities, these situations are constrained. They are the presence in the general sense or the observed appearance of the situational quality of being 'on the ground' (De Unamuno, 2023).

Another important existential idea is greatness or the "past." The various kinds of

philosophical thought perceived by the different archives of existentialism are based on clear translations of supernatural and supernatural manifestations. Marcel, Jaspers, and the late Heidegger acknowledge the supernatural truth. However, an important element of his thought is symbolic and even (in Heidegger) mythical. It should be "suggested". This may be in contrast to the basic principles of Sartre and Camus, which are intended to present a misleading idea of greatness (Sprintzen, 2019).

Existentialism is shaped by the realistic practice of indoctrination, which diminishes the opportunity to recognize its necessity, and the humanistic nature, which constitutes the opportunity to encounter ordinary human tendencies and exercise their "natural" powers. Discard deteriorated habits. For existentialists, an opportunity presents itself, existence is an opportunity (Makoyo, 2014) The existentialist meaning of opportunity is based on an understanding of awesomeness, as the design of existence communicates "from development to development" greatness. For Marcel and Jaspers, this means that the timing is right on God. In short, because for Sartre to be free meant to act naturally, "one is obliged to be free". Addressing important weights. People, as people, should care about that concern. He can give up his opportunities, stop acting natural, and become "like all men," but at the cost of denying himself personally.

For Heidegger, the world in which people lurk is classified as "they" (people in German). It is the general reality that everything is unknown, there is no object of action, only the object of action, and each one is the 'other', remembering people by them. Nobody chooses anything, and in this way nobody is responsible. For Berdiaev, this world is classified as a "typology universe", and its achievement is"

In this standardized universe, contracts between individuals do not exist. All they do is stress how alone everyone is. Camus

demonstrated that we must confront the emptiness that renders life meaningless and ludicrous (Breivik, 2010). There is no way to bridge the chasm between men, and genuine discussion between them is impossible. Camus and Sartre see deception and fraud in all kinds of individual friendships, love, and kinship, blessed by conventional religion and profound qualities. Sartre's energy to reveal a kind of distorted, depraved cognition, or 'revenge', turns into an interest in accepting situations of cognition that are separate from others and himself. According to Camus, there is only one kind of genuine connection. Humanity is united in its opposition to the "stupid" world and its emphasis on the temporary nature of the human condition. Ecstasy has the power to bring people closer together. In general, however, it is the joy of defiance or destruction brought to a man of "ridiculous" despair.

Mickey, (2016) explores that the general state of mind of existentialism is one of deception and investigation. The existentialists deny what has been achieved and try to go further. The disastrous and generally critical tendencies of this thought are positioned in the face of the current public emergency and the scandalous alienation that prevails there. Therefore, existentialism is sometimes called emergency thinking.

Different disciples of existentialism have different sociopolitical positions. Camus and Sartre were therefore individuals of opposite development. Since the end of the 1960s, Sartre's position has been explained by radicalism which have believed is natural rebelliousness and social reforms and leftist fanaticism. The New Left's strategy for social and political change was heavily influenced by the writings of Camus and Sartre. Heidegger, a Nazi comrade at the time, had more moderate social and political views than Jaspers and Marcel, both of whom were liberals. The existentialist movement was a mirror into the societal consciousness,

illuminating its ills and paradoxes. However, he had no way out of this predicament to give (Macann, 2023).

We cannot resort to systems of laws, customs, or traditions to give definitive direction to our life choices. All options must be personally appropriate. The human condition necessitates choices that stretch the bounds of decency and tradition (Elliott, 1985).

Tillich's phrasing is a great expression of this idea. He mentions how much we worry about the "threat of nonexistence." Death, the ultimate end of life, and birth, the ultimate beginning of existence, are just two of the countless types of nonexistence that exist. The danger of extinction is revealed and causes us pain in both happy and tragic circumstances. Being human means being "thrown" (Heidegger) into a universe devoid of a coherent logical, ontological, or moral framework. As a species, we devise extremely original but ultimately futile ways to avoid facing death, uncertainty, ourselves, and life itself (Tillich). Because of the impossibility of escaping them, philosophical and literary works typically center on extreme events as a metaphor for the human condition (Critchley, 2004).

Sartre expressed this feeling of absurdity by referring to an unfulfilled need for perfection. Our mere existence compels us to ponder the big issues, and our search for meaning in life has led us to discover that there are no easy solutions. In light of this absurdity, we must construct meaning via the making of brave decisions. There is no way to interpret this decision as a sign of moral clarity. Rather, it is an act of moral heroism in a morally ambiguous and chaotic environment.

It should be said that the existentialist basic to be an individual is upfront however another basic becomes significant in certain existentialists (particularly Buber): be a person in-local area. Relations to things

on Earth are deceptive, as the fallacies of scientism demonstrate; what matters are connections between people (Buber's I-Thou relationship as opposed to I-It experience). When examined closely, meaning-making entails constructing and discovering connections between people. For strict existentialists, every relationship stems from the one between God and humanity.

Here is one of the best conflicts among existentialists, affirming maybe the inevitable dubiousness of the field of life inside which individuals should settle on choices that make meaning. However, the idea of that field of life and its ground are decisively challenged, all existentialists hold that a choice corresponding to it is the central point of contention for people.

It has been said that the world is excessively little for more than one free reality. This infers that either God is free or individuals are, yet entirely not both. To say that both God and people are free prompts unbearable issues of theodicy and inconsistencies while denying opportunity to the two prompts a horrendously trivial and incomprehensible world. This supposition is shared by an odd, different gathering of masterminds. (Sartre, 2007)

Calvin and Spinoza said not set in stone, to do equity to the opportunity of God. Because humans are autonomous, hence there is no God, according to Sartre. The skeptic existentialist's rejection of God's reality is motivated by the belief in human possibility (and, more accurately, the relinquishment of possibility). Strict existentialists give significant examinations of moral and strict decisions that are curiously not quite the same as the investigations of gutsy decisions outfitted by agnostic existentialists. For instance, Kierkegaard clarified three phases of life: the stylish, the moral, and the strict, focusing on the levelheaded aloofness, particularly of the progress from the moral to the strict; the models lessen the decision to be strict is

fundamental for the existence of confidence (Verbeek, 2005).

Existential treatment offers explicit mediation that can assist clients with fostering a feeling of importance and mitigate emotional well-being side effects (Prasko et al 2012). As found out, existential treatment needs strong exploratory sponsorship to show its viability. Even though existentialism is hard to concentrate on exactly, it very well may be challenging to comprehend what progress resembles in treatment on the off chance that this isn't characterized. Also, existential treatment has confronted analysis for having ambiguous methodologies and objectives; however, this permits individual clients to track down significance in the manner that turns out best for them.

He concludes that the story's protagonist is an apathetic guy based on the data he presents. His manner of life is distinctive from the norm. His reaction to his culture and the nihilism he displays in his behavior both attest to his apathy. O'Brien (1970) argues that Meursault's indifference is his way of rebelling against the monotony of his existence. Caligula from *Caligula*, Meursault from *The Stranger*, and Sisyphus from *The Myth of Sisyphus* are all compared by O'Brien in this book. Meursault is the hero of the ridiculous with Caligula and Sisyphus. However, in reality, these three characters were built using significantly different methods (Schreier, 2009) Camus paints Caligula as a monstrously cruel man, and while creating Meursault's persona, the reader is compelled to feel pity for him. Even when Meursault murders someone in the novel, the reader is shielded from the brutality of his actions. Sisyphus uses a different tactic.

Methodology

The study offers a clear perspective for evaluating McEwen's existential study of

Atonement. Work on opted for deconstruction theory and Sartre's existential method for this reason to accomplish this research's goals and uncover the questions. Text for the articles was downloaded from the internet. The researcher has examined the literature regarding McEwen's cover-to-cover. Analyses of McEwen's features and prevalence are present throughout.

Results and Discussion

The premise that "existence precedes essence" is central to Sartre's philosophy. Defining "existence" and "essence" is necessary for grasping the proposal's implications. To me, "existence" refers to the fact that things exist and have a role in establishing our identities, while "essence" refers to our inherent nature and serves as a kind of biological blueprint or birth description. My understanding of Sartre's "existence precedes essence" thought is that we as humans come into being first and then shape our essential nature via the decisions and acts, we do. That is to say, it is our actions, not our genetic make-up, that define us.

The deciding factor between doing nothing and taking action is..." (Bryony) She hoped that if she went to the top and looked around, she would discover herself. "There was no seam, no stitching, and yet she understood that behind the flawless one-piece garment lay the actual self—or was it just her soul? (What Lola thinks about Bryony)."Mystery always breeds a second notion after the first one has been pondered. To what extent did other people share her level of vitality? When the wave broke, did her sisters reveal their true selves? If the answer was yes, then the social world would be an intolerably complex place. everyone's ideas were equally important, everyone had an equally strong claim on life, and everybody believed they were special, even if nobody was. Sartre's worldview places a premium on freedom for those of us treading

water, since there are no absolutes (there is good in evil in good). To take action and maintain moral rectitude would be to face an overwhelming number of risks and difficulties; instead, one must make decisions and live with the results. Bryony, the protagonist, revels in her independence and then experiences the pain of repentance.

The idea of good and evil, of heroes and villains, was what most piqued her interest. She didn't have to pass judgment; all she had to do was demonstrate that these were three distinct perspectives, each as alive as her own, and each wrestling with the concept that other brains were as alive. Emily Tallies, the matriarch of her family, sacrifices her independence to ensure her loved ones may continue to live. She wants to fit in with her family and willfully subverts her independence to do so.

"Even as she slept in the pitch black, she saw clearly." The less effective she became. The more Her awareness grew. According to Bryony's portrayal, As for Bryony's affection for her daughter, "now the demons of self-consciousness and talent had stuck her dumb and though Bryony was no less loving." "When emotions ran high, members of the family would stroll across the bridge to investigate the situation, but nobody bothered to hitch a ride." "Bryony was soon absorbed and grimly content," while giving off external appearances of a girl in the grip of a dreadful mood. The majority of people will always try to pretend you don't exist.

They bring you to pieces. If you don't have a solid wall to hide behind, they won't accept your identity. In *Atonement*, Lola's identical twin struggles to make ends meet while also dealing with homesickness, an inferiority complex, and the stifling influence of "others" in their life. Having lost access to the pool, they found themselves suffocating under the weight of idle time. When Perrot complained that he was hungry and that supper was still hours away, they all felt a pang of homesickness. Bryony reflects on the

passage of time. The knifing pangs would wipe out all thinking as the sluggish thing made its way from the edges into the middle, as the proverb goes.

As a researcher, I've been looking into Bobbie's personality, and I've found that he makes promises to himself. He is trustworthy, honest, and helpful to both himself and others. Despite coming from humble beginnings as the son of a gardener, he has found success by the decisions he has made, both for himself and Cecilia.

He no longer needed his notes, but he had invested too much time and energy into them, and he still couldn't bring himself to throw them away. That was easy (Bobbie Turner)

Anyone who reads the book should come away with a clear understanding of the novel's primary themes, which center on guilt, forgiveness, and atonement. The main character, a lady, spends her whole life trying to atone for a wrongdoing she did when she was a little child. This event drives the storyline of the entire book. The conclusion of the book does not provide an answer to the question. Does Briony find a way to ultimately make up for her sins by putting down her narrative, enabling her lovers to live, and ensuring that their love will continue?

The literary canon is the subject of the second aspect of the guilt theme that is being explored. Briony feels terrible not just for the crime she did when she was younger, but also for the skills she has as a writer. She is aware that she has the freedom to create whatever kind of narrative that she wants to write. In the same way that she could put Robbie in jail, she could also ensure that he lives through the conflict. The fact that readers place their trust in Briony to tell them "What happened" causes her to feel terrible about the job she has done throughout her life, and she transfers this sense of guilt onto the history of the English literary canon. When

reading a book with a period of sixty-five years, the reader may expect to follow the protagonist and other characters as they go through various stages of growth and development. But when it comes to identity as a central issue, "Atonement" operates on a completely other level.

Briony Tallis can create whatever she can imagine because of her vivid mind. She is Briony the serious kid, Briony the renowned writer, and Arabella, the star of a play that she has just written as the narrative begins. When Briony is feeling angry, she goes to a place where she can be alone and fantasizes about being anything she wants to be, such as a killer, a fencing champion, or a great novelist.

In the third section of the novel, Briony has completed her training to become a nurse, but she is handed a badge with the wrong initial on it. The conflict, her social situation, and her sense of shame have utterly emasculated her, and she feels like a coward because of it. When she is comforting the dying French soldier, he mistakenly believes that she is someone else. Out of compassion for him, she plays along with his dream for a while, but in the end, she gives him her true identity.

Other characters in the novel also struggle with their identities during the narrative. What are the key differences between Nettles and Mace, as well as Jackson and Pierrot? They are unable to establish whether Turner is a well-educated lad from Cambridge or a lower-class prisoner similar to themselves. Even Robbie, who has a degree in literature but now works in landscaping and is thinking about going to medical school but does not have a father, is unsure of what he wants to do with his life.

The muddled sense of one's identity reflects both the perplexity of coming into one's own amid the golden era of lost innocence and the uncertainty of what a country is while it is at war. It would seem that Cecilia Tallis is the only one who is completely

at ease with who she is. As readers, we are even compelled to wonder if Briony Tallis or Ian McEwan was the author of the novel.

Novels about young adults coming of age often center on themes related to self-discovery. This overall inquiry of what makes up one's sense of identity and how secure that person has gotten with that outward image is made more complicated by the fact that we receive Briony at three various moments in her life, all of which are quite different from one another.

Conclusion

The philosophical movement known as existentialism focuses on two major themes: the analysis of human existence and the primacy of free will. Accordingly, existentialist philosophy directs its primary speculative resources into questions of metaphysics and free will. The works of Sren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche serve as their cornerstones. For existentialism's finest twentieth-century archetype on the subject of human existence, see Karl Jaspers; for the best representative on the subject of human agency, see Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre pins down the climax of human existence in serendipitous moments. According to Sartre, it is possible to describe an agent's motive in terms of mobile or motifs for each particular action. Since "the mobile is nothing other than the apprehension of the motif," he claims that the two are "correlative" (B&N: 471). Awareness of the theme, or the perception of the circumstance as expressed in this or that manner, is the mobile (B&N: 492).

The room seems messy because my perception of it is shaped by my want for it to be so; the messy appearance of the room reveals to me my wish for it to be thus. The point is not that one form of explanation of my motive is insufficient without reference to the other, nor that one kind is correct when the other is untrue; rather, explanations in

terms of theme and those in terms of mobile simply select out the same explanatory event in different ways. various types of explanations focus on various aspects of the event in question. it — in the duty of self-confidence and the possibility of choice — and, in this way, devotes a great deal of effort to depicting the human propensity towards "dishonesty," reflected in mankind's unreasonable efforts to reject its obligation and escape the reality of its unavoidable

opportunity. Ian McEwan's *Atonement* contrasts a variety of themes, including youth and adulthood, love and war in England, class guilt and forgiveness, privilege and oppression, and liberty and confinement. By juxtaposing the many ways his characters see the world, the author demonstrates how their realities are as much a product of their own biases, assumptions, and limited knowledge as they are a reflection of an objective, external truth.

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