From Radical Autonomy to Divine Trust: Rethinking Human Freedom through Sartre and Tawhid

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Abstract: This article critically examines the concept of human freedom through a comparative analysis of Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialism and the Islamic doctrine of *tawhid*. Employing a qualitative library research method, the study analyzes Sartre's foundational texts—*Being and Nothingness* and *Existentialism is a Humanism*—alongside key Islamic philosophical and theological sources. Sartre views human freedom as absolute and burdened with self-definition in the absence of divine authority, leading to anxiety, alienation, and moral subjectivism. In contrast, Islam situates freedom within the framework of divine will (*qada'* and *qadar*), viewing it as a trust (*amanah*) exercised under God's guidance and evaluated through moral accountability. Through four key themes—ontological freedom, responsibility, divine will, and moral implication—the study demonstrates that while Sartre articulates the existential depth of human autonomy, the Islamic worldview offers a more coherent and ethically sustainable model of freedom. This integrated understanding grounds freedom in spiritual purpose, communal responsibility, and the moral agency of the individual.

Abstrak: Artikel ini mengkaji tentang konsep kebebasan manusia melalui analisis perbandingan antara eksistensialisme Jean-Paul Sartre dan doktrin *tawhid* dalam Islam. Dengan menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif berbasis studi pustaka, kajian ini menganalisis teks-teks utama Sartre—*Being and Nothingness* dan *Existentialism is a Humanism*—bersama sumber-sumber filsafat dan teologi Islam klasik maupun kontemporer. Sartre memandang kebebasan manusia sebagai sesuatu yang absolut dan menuntut definisi diri sepenuhnya dalam ketiadaan otoritas ilahi, yang pada akhirnya melahirkan kecemasan, keterasingan, dan moralitas yang subjektif. Sebaliknya, Islam menempatkan kebebasan dalam kerangka kehendak ilahi (*qada'* dan *qadar*), sebagai amanah yang dijalankan di bawah bimbingan Tuhan dan dipertanggungjawabkan secara moral. Melalui empat tema utama—ontologi kebebasan, tanggung jawab, kehendak Tuhan, dan implikasi moral—studi ini menunjukkan bahwa meskipun Sartre berhasil mengartikulasikan kedalaman eksistensial dari kebebasan manusia, pandangan Islam menawarkan model kebebasan yang lebih koheren dan berkelanjutan secara etis. Pemahaman yang terintegrasi ini menempatkan kebebasan dalam tujuan spiritual, tanggung jawab sosial, dan agensi moral individu.

Keywords: *Freedom, Existentialism, Tawhid, Responsibility, Sartre, Islamic philosophy*

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Introduction

The Islamic concept of *tawhid* establishes a fundamental theological framework wherein Allah is recognized as the absolute Creator, Sustainer, and Legislator of all existence. Within this worldview, human beings are granted a unique status as *khalifah* (vicegerents) on

earth—endowed with free will but ultimately subject to divine decree (*qadar*). The enduring debate between religious doctrine and human reason has long spurred reflection on the role of faith in understanding human existence. As observed in contemporary scholarship, "the tension between religion and rational thought raises critical questions: Is human destiny entirely governed by religious doctrine, or do individuals possess the autonomy to shape their own fate?" (Anggrayni et al., 2024). This inquiry becomes even more relevant in the modern era, where traditional religious interpretations increasingly face critique from secular philosophies.[1]

Meanwhile, Western thought—particularly Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialism—presents a radically different perspective, one that declares human freedom to be absolute and unconstrained by any predetermined essence or divine will. His famous assertion that "existence precedes essence"[2] positions the human being as entirely self-determining, without any inherent nature or destiny imposed from beyond. This view sharply contrasts with the Islamic conception, which links human purpose directly to divine intent.[3]

This philosophical divergence extends beyond individual belief systems and into broader societal structures and cultural values. On one hand, religion offers a foundation of absolute truth rooted in revelation, while on the other, human reason promotes skepticism, critical inquiry, and intellectual autonomy. The clash between these paradigms fuels ongoing discussions about authority, morality, and the meaning of life in a pluralistic and globalized world. Thus, the search for an integrated understanding of freedom holds not only metaphysical significance but also practical implications for daily life.

Sartre's existentialism emerged in response to the perceived absurdity of life in a godless universe. Rejecting both religious determinism and Enlightenment rationalism, Sartre argued that human beings are "condemned to be free"[4], meaning that freedom is not a privilege but a fundamental burden. In the absence of divine guidance, individuals must generate meaning and assume full responsibility for their choices. This radical autonomy inevitably invites ethical dilemmas: If no higher moral law exists, on what grounds can actions be deemed right or wrong?[5] In contrast, Islam posits that true freedom does not lie in the rejection of divine authority but in the alignment of human will with divine wisdom. The Qur'an emphasizes that human beings are given the capacity to choose—for instance, "Indeed, We guided him to the way, be he grateful or ungrateful"[6]—but this freedom is framed within a moral universe governed by the principle of *tawhid*. Unlike Sartre's human being, who defines himself in a moral vacuum, the Islamic view maintains that human purpose is derived from submission to Allah, balanced with a sense of moral and social accountability.

This tension between Sartrean existentialism and Islamic theology presents a profound philosophical challenge: Can human freedom be meaningfully understood apart from a theistic framework? If Sartre is correct in arguing that humans are entirely self-created, how does this reconcile with Islam's belief in *qada' wa qadar* (divine decree and predestination)? Conversely, if divine sovereignty diminishes human autonomy, does this render moral responsibility illusory?

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[1] Anggrayni et al., "Filsafat Eksistensialisme Dalam Perspektif Islam."
[2] Sartre Jean P, *Eksistensialisme Dan Humanisme*.
[3] Iqbal, *The Secrets of The Self (Asrar-i Khudi)*.
[4] Sartre Jean P, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, ed. Carol Macomber (Yale University Press, 2007).
[5] T.Z Lavine, *From Socrates to Sartre: The Philosophy Quest*. P. 314-315.
[6] Qur'an 76:3

This study seeks to demonstrate that the Islamic concept of *tawhid* provides a more comprehensive and sustainable foundation for understanding human freedom than Sartre's existentialism. At the same time, it engages seriously with the ethical concerns and existential questions that animate Sartre's philosophical project. By placing these two traditions in dialogue, we may uncover deeper insights into what it truly means to be free.

Metode

This study adopts a qualitative library research approach, focusing on the philosophical analysis of human freedom as viewed through two distinct frameworks: Sartre's existentialism and the Islamic concept of *tawhid*. The material object of this study, in Kaelan's[7] terms, centers on Jean-Paul Sartre's key works—particularly *Existentialism is a Humanism* and *Being and Nothingness*—which serve as the primary sources for examining existentialist ideas on freedom, responsibility, and meaning. The research method combines descriptive and analytical techniques. The descriptive aspect outlines Sartre's conceptualization of freedom, especially the notion that "existence precedes essence" and the idea of radical autonomy in a godless universe. The analytical method is then employed to critically assess these concepts by comparing them with Islamic philosophical and theological thought, particularly the doctrine of *tawhid*, the role of *qadar* (divine decree), and the ethical responsibilities embedded in the human role as *khalifah* (vicegerent) on earth.

Secondary sources from both Western and Islamic traditions are utilized to deepen the analysis. These include the works of Muslim philosophers such as Al-Farabi, Ibn Miskawaih, and Fakhruddin al-Razi, as well as modern scholars like Harun Nasution and Ali Shari'ati. The Qur'anic verses related to human choice and divine will, such as Surah Al-Insān (76:30) and Surah An-Najm (53:39–42), are also analyzed to explore how Islam frames freedom within divine boundaries. Through this method, the study seeks not only to highlight the fundamental differences between the two paradigms but also to construct a more integrated understanding of human freedom—one that accounts for both spiritual transcendence and ethical agency.[8] The goal is to develop a philosophical synthesis that remains faithful to the sources while addressing the moral and existential challenges of the modern world.

Result and Discussion
1. The Nature of Freedom

Jean-Paul Sartre once declared, "I am destined to be free," a statement that encapsulates the core of his existentialist philosophy. For Sartre, human freedom knows no limits except freedom itself—it is inescapable and absolute. One cannot retreat from this freedom; we are forever bound to it. In his work *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre explores the structure of human existence and asserts that to live authentically is to embrace the burden of freedom and to act without external justification.[9] Sartre differentiates between *l'être-en-soi* (being-in-itself) and *l'être-pour-soi* (being-for-itself). *L'être-en-soi* refers to inanimate, unconscious entities—trees, rocks, or animals—that merely exist without purpose, reflection, or choice. Their existence is

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[7] Kaelan, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Bidang Filsafat*.
[8] Surahmad, *Pengantar Penelitian Ilmiah*.
[9] Sartre Jean P, *Being and Nothingness*. P. 37

static, governed by natural laws, devoid of freedom or agency.[10] These entities are not active or passive; they simply are. For Sartre, this condition of inert existence is nauseating, a meaningless repetition of fact without depth. In contrast, human beings are *l'être-pour-soi*, conscious beings capable of self-awareness, negation, and transcendence. We are the "hole" in the fabric of deterministic reality, able to question, deny, and create meaning beyond what merely is. Our freedom lies precisely in this capacity to rise above fixed existence and determine our own path. This ability distinguishes us from mere objects—we are not imprisoned by the material world, but are free through our consciousness and intentionality.

Consciousness, for Sartre, is not a static mirror but an active, self-making process. There is always a gap between the subject (the one who is aware) and the object (the self as realized). This gap, which Sartre calls "nothingness" (*néant*), is the space where freedom is exercised. Human beings never fully "are" what they think they are; they are always becoming. Like water that wishes to become ice but remains fluid, humans constantly move forward, incapable of fixing their identity permanently. This perpetual motion is both our curse and our dignity: we are "condemned" to be free, to continuously make choices, and to define ourselves anew with every action.[11] Yet this freedom is not without anxiety. Humans often seek to escape from the responsibility that freedom imposes. Still, it is through this very freedom that our essence as human beings is revealed—we are beings who continually recreate ourselves through conscious choice. Unlike natural objects that have a fixed essence, humans first exist and then define who they are. Sartre famously stated, "Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself,"[12] affirming the existentialist principle of radical subjectivity: human identity is the product of willful action, not fate.

In Islamic thought, the discourse on human freedom has always been nuanced and cautious. Freedom is seen as one of the greatest gifts distinguishing humans from other creatures—a gift that enables conscious moral responsibility.[13] Muslim philosophers generally agree that human actions are closely tied to the question of freedom, although they also recognize the influence of *tabi'ah* (natural disposition) as a factor shaping human behavior. In this view, human freedom is not absolute.[14] A person is considered free when they possess both *irada* (will) and *qudrah* (ability), and when their actions stem from reason (*ta'aqqul*). However, this freedom operates within two main boundaries; first, Social Constraints: The will and choices of others that may affect individual action. Second, Natural Limitations: The immutable laws of nature (*al-ashya' al-tabi'iyyah*), which humans cannot change.

True freedom, therefore, does not mean unlimited power to do anything, but rather the ability to make meaningful choices within the limits of one's condition. As Al-Farabi explained, the value of actions—whether good or bad—emerges from human will and choice. Blaming nature or fate for one's decisions is unacceptable because, within the given framework, humans still have autonomy to act responsibly.[15] Islamic philosophers have also emphasized the ethical dimension of freedom. Fakhruddin al-Razi, for instance, distinguishes between a free soul and

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[10] Hadiwijiono Harun, *Sari Sejarah Filsafat Barat 2*. P. 158.
[11] Hadiwijiono Harun. P. 160-163
[12] Fuad Hassan, *Berkenalan Dengan Eksistensialisme*. P. 134.
[13] Madkour, *Aliran Dan Teori Filsafat Islam*. P. 134
[14] Al-Farabi, *Kitab Ara' Ahl Al-Mainah Al-Fadilah*. P. 118.
[15] Al-Farabi, *Kitab Al-Millah Wa Nusus Ukhra*. P. 69.

one enslaved by desire. A *free soul* (*al-hurriyyah*) is not governed by physical impulses (*gharizah*), while a soul that constantly pursues or struggles against lust remains in subtle bondage. True freedom, in this sense, is not merely the ability to fulfill or suppress desire, but the capacity to transcend it altogether.

This view is echoed by thinkers such as Ibn Miskawaih, Al-Farabi, and again al-Razi, who argue that the essence of human freedom lies in the ability of reason to govern passions. Reason is not just a cognitive tool, but a moral compass that distinguishes right from wrong. Human beings may never fully escape the material world, but spiritual freedom is achieved when one reduces dependency on material attachments and prioritizes rational, ethical considerations. Furthermore, Islam affirms that while humans possess freedom, their capacity to act and choose ultimately belongs to God. All faculties—will, reason, ability—are created by Him. Thus, even as humans choose their path, they do so within the parameters of divine will.[16] This is beautifully captured in the verse, *"Indeed we belong to Allah and to Him we shall return"* (*Q.S. Al-Baqarah: 156*), reminding us that human freedom exists not in opposition to the Creator, but as a form of devotion and stewardship under His guidance.

2. Human Responsibility

As previously discussed, Sartre defines the human being as a *pour-soi*—a being-for-itself—capable of self-awareness and of perceiving both external objects and its own existence. This capacity creates an ontological gap between the subject and its own self, which Sartre terms "nothingness" (*néant*). It is within this space of negation that human freedom operates, compelling the individual to constantly transcend their current state and move toward self-creation. Thus, human existence is characterized by movement, action, and transformation—a dynamic process through which freedom becomes manifest. Sartre views freedom and consciousness as inseparable. To be conscious is to be free; without freedom, action becomes meaningless. He affirms, "the freedom of the acting being is the indispensable and fundamental condition of all action."[17] In this light, every human being is not a finished entity, but a continual project. According to Sartre, "Man is free because he is not himself but presence to himself."[18] In other words, a human being is not defined by a fixed essence, but by the ongoing effort to become through free will and moral choice.

This absolute freedom, however, leads to existential anxiety and moral tension, especially in relation to others. In Sartre's framework, "to exist is to coexist," yet the presence of others becomes problematic. The moment another person sees me, I am transformed into an object in their perception. My freedom is now challenged, reduced, or negated by the judgment or presence of the other. In this condition of *être-pour-autrui* (being-for-others), the individual no longer exists solely as a free subject but also as an object of another's world. Sartre calls this phenomenon the conflict of subjectivities, and he contends that "respect for the other's freedom is an empty word."[19]

These dynamics are captured in the following model:

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[16] Muslih M Kholid, *Worldview Islam: Pembahasan Tentang Konsep-Konsep Penting Dalam Islam*. P. 194-202.
[17] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness; A Phenomenological Essay On Ontology*. P. 563.
[18] Muzairi, "Kebebasan Manusia Dan Konflik." P. 132.
[19] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness; A Phenomenological Essay On Ontology*. P. 305
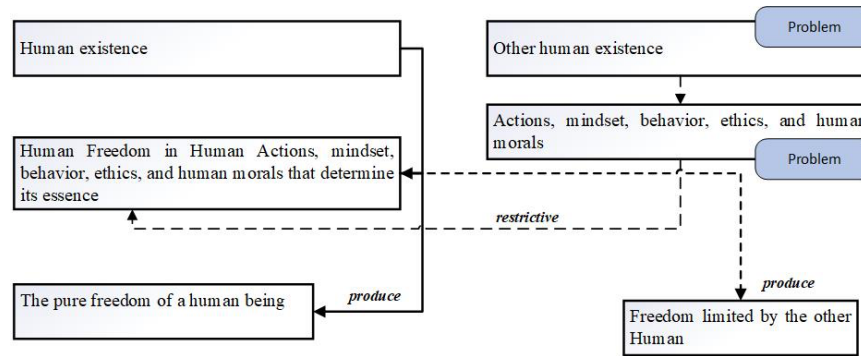
Figure 1. Sartre's model of human freedom.

Individual existence produces pure freedom, which shapes human actions, ethics, and self-definition. However, the presence of other human beings restricts this freedom, leading to moral tension and existential problems through intersubjective conflict. Sartre's framework illustrates how freedom, in its pure form, produces moral and behavioral expression. Yet, when other individuals enter the frame, they inevitably restrict this expression, producing a constrained version of freedom shaped by social tension. The implication is clear: in a world where everyone is absolutely free, freedom itself becomes a problem. In contrast, Islamic thought offers a different lens through which to understand responsibility. Human beings are seen as *khalifah fi al-ardh*—vicegerents on earth—entrusted with a divine mandate. This role is not symbolic but carries profound moral and spiritual implications. As stewards of creation, humans are accountable not only for their individual behavior but also for the welfare of society and the natural world.[20]

The function of *khalifah* encompasses both vertical responsibility to God (*habl min Allah*) and horizontal responsibility to fellow humans (*habl min al-nas*). The Qur'an affirms this cosmic trust: *"Remember when your Lord said to the angels: 'Surely I will make a caliph on the earth'..."* (Q.S. Al-Baqarah: 30).[21] This verse confirms that human beings are not merely autonomous agents but moral subjects accountable before a transcendent source of authority. Islam also emphasizes *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) as a foundational principle of social responsibility. This includes *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (religious solidarity), *ukhuwah wathaniyah* (national unity), and *ukhuwah insaniyah* (universal human fraternity). [22] These dimensions of solidarity extend beyond religious boundaries, affirming that all human beings possess equal dignity as creations of God. Interpersonal relations, therefore, are not threats to freedom but arenas for practicing justice, compassion, and moral virtue.

While Sartre views the presence of others as a constraint upon freedom, Islam sees it as an opportunity for ethical realization. The existence of others is not a negation of autonomy but a context in which moral responsibility is enacted. Freedom, in this sense, is not diminished by community—it is fulfilled within it. Thus, Sartre's notion of human responsibility is grounded in radical individualism, where freedom is absolute but inherently unstable in social contexts. Islam, on the other hand, harmonizes individual freedom with divine accountability and communal ethics. Where Sartre sees conflict, Islam offers coherence—a freedom that does not reject the other, but embraces the responsibility to serve, guide, and uplift them.

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[20] Amanda Sephira Nuraini et al., "Membedah Konsep Takdir Dalam Aqidah Islam: Antara Ketentuan Ilahi Dan Kebebasan Manusia."

[21] Indonesia, *The Qur'an*. P. 42.

[22] Faesal, "Konsep Ukhuwah Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an Dan Relevansinya Dalam Kehidupan Bermasyarakat."

3. The Role of God / Divine Will

Jean-Paul Sartre posits that human freedom is absolute—radical, unconditional, and independent of any external authority, including God. For Sartre, human existence precedes essence, meaning that there is no divine blueprint determining what a human is meant to be. Instead, individuals must define themselves through their own actions and choices. In this framework, God is seen not as a liberator but as a constraint. If one believes in God, Sartre argues, then God must share in the responsibility for human action, thus undermining true autonomy. Therefore, the idea of God must be rejected in order for man to be fully responsible for himself.[23]

Sartre's view is deeply rooted in atheism: if God does not exist, then everything is permitted—not as an endorsement of chaos, but as a call to radical responsibility. Without a transcendent moral order, humans are left with no choice but to create their own values, purposes, and meaning in life. This total freedom is what Sartre refers to as man's "condemnation"—to be free without excuses, to carry the burden of defining one's essence.[24] In this view, human reality is pure subjectivity: man lives in a state of nothingness, constantly making himself through free and conscious action. Even attempts to escape freedom, such as through belief or conformity, are acts of freedom.[25]

In contrast, Islamic theology provides a fundamentally different account. Islam affirms human agency but situates it within the framework of divine sovereignty.[26] The concept of freedom in Islam is not rooted in negating God, but in submitting to God's will. Human beings are given *ikhtiyar* (the freedom to choose), but this freedom is exercised within the bounds of *qada'* (divine decree) and *qadar* (predestination).[27] Islam teaches that all events in life—whether joy, hardship, health, or death—are under God's control. However, this does not nullify human responsibility; rather, it defines the context in which moral choice must be made. This balance is reflected in the Qur'an:

> "And that there is not for man except that [good] for which he strives. And that his effort will be seen—then he will be recompensed for it with the fullest recompense. And that to your Lord is the finality." *(Q.S. Al-Najm: 39–42)*

> "And you do not will except that Allah wills. Indeed, Allah is ever Knowing and Wise." *(Q.S. Al-Insān: 76:30)*

Scholars like Harun Nasution[28] interpret these verses as an affirmation of both divine will and human freedom—emphasizing that human choices occur within the scope of divine permission. In this framework, humans are not passive recipients of fate, but moral agents whose efforts are recognized, judged, and rewarded by God. This theological foundation culminates in the Islamic conception of humanity's ontological and moral journey. Ali Shari'ati articulates that human beings move through two existential levels: *basyar* and *insan*. A *basyar* is a biological human—a being that merely exists, defined by fixed physical characteristics and instinctual patterns. In contrast, an *insan* represents a moral and spiritual human—a being who

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[23] Suseno Frans Magnis, *Menalar Tuhan*. P. 93.

[24] Sartre Jean P, *Existentialism Is Humanism*. P. 23-34

[25] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness; A Phenomenological Essay On Ontology*. P. 197.

[26] Anggrayni et al., "Filsafat Eksistensialisme Dalam Perspektif Islam." P. 23-24.

[27] Muslih M Kholid, *Worldview Islam: Pembahasan Tentang Konsep-Konsep Penting Dalam Islam*. P. 194.

[28] Nasution, *Islam Rasional*. P. 23.

strives for perfection, truth, and divine proximity. This movement from *basyar* to *insan* is not automatic; it requires struggle, ethical growth, and the use of freedom to rise beyond determinism. However, Shari'ati [29] also warns of four "prisons" that obstruct human development: the prison of nature, the prison of history, the prison of society, and the prison of the ego. To reach *insan* status, one must liberate the self from these constraints, not through rebellion against God, but through sincere submission and moral effort. The following diagram visualizes the Islamic view of divine will, human freedom, and the ontological path from *basyar* to *insan*:
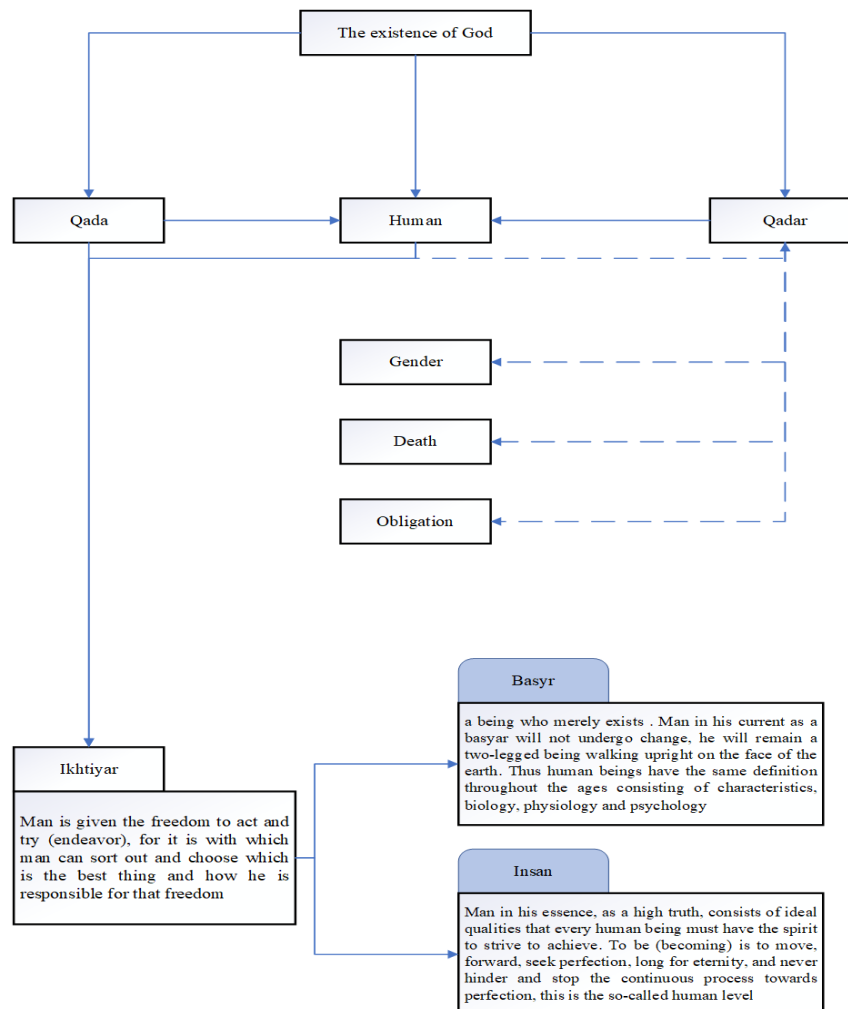

Figure 2. The Islamic model of freedom and divine will

Human beings are created within the framework of qada' and qadar, with freedom (ikhtiyar) to act and choose. This freedom entails responsibility and the potential to rise from the state of basyar (biological existence) to insan (moral and spiritual perfection). Thus, Sartre's concept of freedom demands the rejection of God to secure absolute autonomy, leading to a solitary and burdensome sense of self-creation. Islam, by contrast, grounds freedom in divine will, viewing it as a trust that enables human beings to fulfill their moral purpose. Rather than negating transcendence, Islam affirms it as the source of meaningful freedom—one that is guided, purposeful, and accountable.

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[29] Syari'ati Ali, *Tugas Cendekiawan Muslim*. P. 63-64

4. Moral Implications

In Islamic thought, freedom is never detached from moral responsibility.[30] Human beings are indeed granted the ability to choose, but this choice must be exercised within the boundaries of ethical principles and divine guidance. Freedom in Islam is not absolute, but is governed by the teachings of Allah, the laws of the *Shari'ah*, and the moral duty to serve the common good. This freedom is always accompanied by accountability, where each individual must ultimately answer to God for their actions. The moral dimension of Islamic freedom is rooted in human rationality (*'aql*), which is believed to be naturally inclined toward virtue. Islamic ethics view reason and revelation as complementary sources of guidance. According to Ibn Miskawaih, moral actions arise from rational reflection and the freedom to choose, but they must always be subjected to personal responsibility.[31] True freedom, from this perspective, leads to *sa'ādah* (happiness or ultimate well-being), which is achieved through obedience to God and the alignment of personal choices with divine values.[32]

Nonetheless, Islamic scholars acknowledge that human freedom is shaped by certain limiting conditions—such as ignorance, coercion, incapacity, or lack of opportunity.[33] These constraints do not negate responsibility, but they influence how it is judged. In a social context, freedom must be balanced with the principles of justice (*'adl*) and concern for others. Ibn Miskawaih and Raghib al-Isfahani both emphasize that ethical behavior must account for both individual integrity and communal harmony.[34] Islam rejects moral egoism, instead calling for an integration of spiritual values and social solidarity. Sartre, by contrast, begins with the premise that freedom is the foundation of human existence. For him, freedom precedes morality; it is the very condition that makes moral evaluation possible. Every action, thought, and behavior defines the individual's essence. However, this view gives rise to moral conflict when freedom encounters others. The existence of another human being, as Sartre argues, limits personal autonomy. Each person becomes both subject and object—defining themselves while being defined by others. This tension generates conflict, domination, and alienation.

In Sartre's moral framework, there are no transcendent moral standards. There is no external authority—religious or otherwise—that determines right or wrong. Morality is entirely subjective, created through individual choice. This radical freedom demands total self-accountability: the individual must bear all consequences of their actions, even when acting without guidance. While this promotes authenticity, it also produces isolation and moral relativism. Sartre's rejection of God is central to his ethical system. Divine authority is seen as an illusion that limits freedom. In a world without God, humans must invent their own values, and live with the weight of that invention. The moral implication is clear: there are no ready-made truths; humans must create, and bear, their own meaning. This existential burden is at

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[30] Muhmidayeli, "KEBEBASAN DAN TANGGUNGJAWAB MORAL: Analisis Filosofis Pencarian Pembenaran Nilai Moral Dalam Kaitannya Dengan Normativitas Agama." P. 240.

[31] Ibn Miskawaih, *Tahzib Al-Akhlaq*. P. 36.

[32] Juwaini et al., "Ibn Miskawaih's Ethical Philosophy and Its Relevance to Moral Education in Indonesian Secondary Schools."

[33] Taylor, "Introduction; Intrinsic Value." P. 296.

[34] Juwaini et al., "Ibn Miskawaih's Ethical Philosophy and Its Relevance to Moral Education in Indonesian Secondary Schools."

once empowering and distressing.

In contrast, Islam grounds moral responsibility in a theistic framework. Freedom is not a rejection of divine authority, but a means to fulfill it. While Sartre sees God as a threat to authenticity, Islam sees God as the ultimate source of guidance, justice, and meaning. Where Sartre views human relationships as sites of conflict and constraint, Islam envisions them as opportunities for *ta'āwun* (cooperation), *'adl* (justice), and *rahmah* (compassion). The moral implications of these two paradigms are profound. Sartre's existentialism provides a powerful defense of individual autonomy, but it struggles to offer a stable foundation for communal ethics or transcendent moral obligation. Islam, meanwhile, integrates personal freedom with social and divine responsibility, offering a holistic framework in which freedom is both meaningful and accountable.

Conclusion

This study has examined two fundamentally different paradigms of human freedom: Sartre's atheistic existentialism and the Islamic concept of *tawhid*. Through a philosophical comparison, it becomes clear that while Sartre's framework offers a radical defense of human autonomy, it also leaves the individual vulnerable to existential isolation, moral relativism, and social tension. His rejection of divine essence grants human beings the full burden of creating meaning and bearing total responsibility for their choices, yet this freedom is marked by anxiety, instability, and conflict—especially in relation to others. Islam, by contrast, offers a theological and ethical framework in which freedom is not diminished by divine sovereignty, but made meaningful through it. Freedom in Islam is framed as a trust (*amanah*)—granted by God, guided by reason (*'aql*) and revelation (*wahy*), and directed toward moral and spiritual fulfillment. The concept of *ikhtiyar*, integrated within the realities of *qada'* and *qadar*, affirms human agency while preserving the transcendence of divine will. Rather than fostering alienation, this view situates human freedom within a web of accountability—to God, to self, to others, and to society.

The comparison also reveals that Islamic thought, as reflected in the ideas of Al-Farabi, Ibn Miskawaih, Fakhruddin al-Razi, and Ali Shari'ati, provides a layered and progressive understanding of human existence. The movement from *basyar* to *insan* captures not only the ontological elevation of the human being, but also the ethical imperative to strive beyond material determinism. This teleological orientation is absent in Sartre's account, where self-creation lacks reference to any metaphysical end. In conclusion, Sartre's existentialism articulates the profound depth of human freedom, but Islam offers the necessary moral and metaphysical grounding for its proper use. *Tawhid* does not negate freedom—it redefines it as purposeful, accountable, and oriented toward the good. In a time when questions of freedom, ethics, and meaning are increasingly fragmented, the integration of spiritual responsibility and philosophical reasoning—such as that offered in Islamic thought—remains essential to building a coherent and humane understanding of what it truly means to be free.

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