

THE CHARACTERISTIC OF EXISTENTIALISM IN MAIN CHARACTER OF BISSOONDATH'S *THE CAGE*

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Abstract

This thesis discussed literary work entitled *The Cage*, written by Neil Bissondath's. The novel is selected because it carries the issue or the problem that always happens in daily life. It applies the issue about existentialism. In existentialism, the meaning of someone life is really important. The aim of the research is to describe the way of existentialism that portrayed in the short story *The Cage*. The writer applies psychological approach and existentialism theory to answer the research problem. Existentialism stressed the special character of personal, subjective experience and it insisted on the freedom and autonomy of the individual. As individuals we all have the freedom to choose our own path and that is what life is all about. The short story is portray Yalom's existentialism characteristics consist of Meaninglessness, Existential Isolation, Death, and Freedom that would be discussed further in followed chapters. The research used library research since the analysis emphasized the qualitative method of research. This research shows the characteristic of existentialism by Irvin Yalom seen in Neil Bissoondath's *The Cage*. In *The Cage* the individual meaning of life was given by religion or by social rule. The social pressure is created by the family. The main character wanted to be free by defining her own freedom as individual not bounded with any rule. The findings are include conversation and quotation inside the short story.

Key words: Existentialism, psychology, Irvin Yalom's existentialism

INTRODUCTION

Means that human choice would define our life forward. Here, described that human is a creature that full of choice to determine their life and it is our duty to pick what is the best of our life in the future. Here, also described that actually human not bounded. A fundamental of human choice lies in their hand not in others. The best individual is the one who struggles for his life. Decisions made by individual are not without consequences (Adiyanto & Febrianto, 2020),(Ulfa et al., 2016).

Sartre (Wantoro & Priandika, n.d.) declares, "it places the human being at the center of its attention and the apex of its value hierarchy". He believes that individual's freedom is of utmost importance. Sartre (Lina & Setiyanto, 2021),(Roger S. Pressman, 2012) insists: The ultimate value, the goal of our endeavors, should be the fostering of the freedom of the individual, by which he means the enhancement of his or her concrete possibilities of choices. The creative freedom, he implies, should not be sacrificed to any higher value, whether it be the class of the Marxists or the God of the religious believers. Human is seeking the meaning of life. In an ideal world, most reasonable people will want to live a life of pleasure, positive engagement, and meaning (Aminatun et al., 2019). However, throughout life we often have to make tough choices between what is right and what is

profitable or between what is meaningful and what is pleasurable. The tough choices people make are more likely to reveal more of their core values and basic life orientation (Ahdan et al., 2020),(Febrian & Fadly, 2021). Existential philosophy is concerned with the kind of existence we have, as opposed to the kind of existence had by rocks, plants, and animals. Many existential philosophers reserve the very word “existence” for the way in which we exist, using “being” as the more general term to capture the existence that rocks, plants, animals and humans have in common. (Afrianto & Inayati, 2016),(Schrape, 2018).

Central themes of existential thought therefore include the reliability of our everyday views of ourselves and other people, the relation between objective facts and subjective experience, the significance of the temporality and mortality of life, the basic nature of relationships between people, and the role of society in the structure of the individual. (Webber,2010:19) According to Heidegger (2000:34) the most fundamental philosophical question is: ‘Why is there something rather than nothing?’ We do not actually know the answer to this question, but it remains a fundamental question to ask ourselves if we are going to be serious about examining human living from scratch. life. Philosophers show such questioning to be necessary in order to become a self reflective human being. Doubts about the meaning of life are the beginning of all philosophy. Doubt and wonder enable us to rediscover the miracle of being.

The Cage is a fictional memoir of a young Japanese woman who leaves her tyrannical father's home only to suffer "a sickness of the soul" in distant Canada. *The Cage*, another story told in the first person, represents an even bolder imaginative leap, but one that is no less convincing. A Japanese girl rebels against the stifling constraints of male-dominated Japanese culture, but rebellion turns out to be a more complicated affair than she has bargained for - tradition weighs more heavily, her feelings are more ambivalent, she comes to understand her family more clearly. In the end she accepts defeat; but she doesn't pretend it is anything other than defeat. Nor is the sense of alienation that runs through them some rarefied metaphysical condition. It is the product of history and geography, of clashing cultures and political violence. The men and women he writes about are, as often as not, alienated in the literal sense of being aliens.

Japanese society has always had strict rules. The pressure created by these rules is huge, and it directly acts upon the individual, sometimes leading to isolation, and even alienation. The writer will begin the study of Bissoondath's fiction with an analysis of how Japanese society relentlessly attempts to ‘mould’ individuals, shaping them in its own image. This social pressure is divided into some branches that the writer is going to analyze: the first one is the pressure created by the family. Then it is important to understand how women and children are the main victims because they are vulnerable figures with very small importance in the family circle. They are enclosed in a patriarchal society. So the first piece of the puzzle deals with the family as a micro society which contributes to the development of this pressure that crushes the individual. The family has a great role to play in the creation of isolation, so it becomes one of the main actors of social pressure since the family is a social organism. In certain cases, it is a huge devouring monster that keeps eating the vitality and the individuality of its members. Here, the writer tries to give more understanding about human struggle to devine their existance. The existential being is a self conscious, free, and autonomous individual. The main character is conscious of this freedom, which may lead her to feelings of independence or loneliness. Being existence is not easy. In *The Cage* the individual meaning of life was given by religion or by social rule.

Here, the main character wanted to be free by defining their own freedom as individual not bounded with any rule.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The writer uses the psychological approach as the approach to guides the writer finish this research. According to the original words, psychology derived from the Greek; *Psyche*, which means soul, and *logos* means science. So psychology literally means the science of life. Talking about the life, firstly to distinguish between life and soul. Lives is the physical power which depends on the physical life and cause bodily actions (organic behavior) that is caused by the action learning process, for example; instincts, reflexes, lust and so on. If physical death, then death is precisely his life. While the soul is the spiritual life that is abstract, and drives and regulator for all personal actions (personal behavior) of higher animals and humans. According to Stangor about psychological term as followed;

Psychologists study the behavior of both humans and animals, and the main purpose of this research is to help us understand people and to improve the quality of human lives. The results of psychological research are relevant to problems such as learning and memory, homelessness, psychological disorders, family instability, and aggressive behavior and violence. (Stangor,2004;234)

It means that psychology is the science that studies about behavior of open and closed on human as individuals or group members. As open behavior is the psychomotor of human which is includes the way of human moving. Meanwhile , in close behavior covered include human thinking, belief and forth. In other words, psychology not only studying human mind also characteristic which constructed in many ways. Psychology is a knowledge that studies human behavior, both as individuals and in relation to its environment. Behavior is a behavior that is visible and invisible, the behavior of the conscious and the unconscious. It can be seen that the definition of psychology as the study of behavior. By the very nature of human behavior was very knowledgeable, experienced and done all that is human behavior. Since human waking up to sleep again met by a variety of human behavior.

Existentialism Theory

The word 'to exist' is derived from the Latin word *ex-sistere*, which means to stand out or emerge (Samsudin et al., 2019),(Muzakkir & Botutihe, 2020). It thus implies the negation of nothingness. It suggests that a thing now stands out from nothing. To exist is to have a place in the real world and therefore, concreteness is asserted. Existence is concrete and particular. On the other hand, essence is abstract and universal. In existentialism, the meaning of someone life is really important. Being exist in the world human must struggle to overcome the various form of alienation from world, one another, and oneself. This is prevailing trend that being exist on the problems concrete human beings encounter in their life(Booch et al., 1998). They prefer to understand the concrete man and his problems, without isolating him/her from his/her social, political and cultural contexts. According to Sartre in Flynn state that;

'The fundamental choice man makes and gives direction to his life, is made by reflecting his previous life up to present. In other words we've already made our choice implicitly'. (Flynn, 2006:12)

Means that human choice would devine human life forward., it is described that human is a creature that full of choice to determine their life and it is our duty to pick what is the best of human life in the future. Here, also described that actually human not bounded. A fundamental of human choice lies in their hand not in others. The best individual is the one who struggles for their life. Decisions made by individual are not without consequences.

Existentialism Characteristics

Yalom identified four basic conflicts that drive human behavior to the question of existentialism. It is important however, to understand what is meant by “conflict” within the context of existential psychotherapy as he argues that;

“The existential position emphasizes a different kind of basic conflict: neither a conflict with suppressed instinctual strivings nor one with internalized significant adults, but instead a conflict that flows from the individual’s confrontation with the givens of existence.” (Yalom,2008;8)

Here described that the question of individual existence might come from inner conflict between a person and surrounding or even them. Through the questioning process, individuals gain a deeper awareness of themselves. Awareness may be conscious or unconscious, but anxiety results. One’s behavior (both healthy and unhealthy) represents the actions taken in order to mitigate these core existential givens. Yalom referred to these givens of existence as “ultimate concerns”.

METHOD

In chapter four, the writer will analyze data find to the answer of the questions stated in the research question. Through the concepts that have been described in the theoretical framework, the writer analyzes about Christian Values as seen in the character of Peter, Susan, Edmund, Lucy, Aslan, Mr Tumnus and Mr Beaver in CS Lewis novel *The Chronicles of Narnia: The lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* using Brian Edgar theory in 2007. The writer also applied library and qualitative research in collecting the data and information about Christian Values that can help the writer. And Christian Values is influence of encourase, behaviour, action and inspire. Method is the way used by the researcher to do analysis. In conducting the research, the researcher needs methodology to find some data that are needed to write. Methodology is generally a guideline for solving a problem, with specific components such as phases, tasks, methods, techniques and tools. So, based on that theory, methodology is one of the important parts in doing a research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Women in Japanese Family Role

Family has bigger role in Bissoondath’s *The Cage* causing existential problem of Michi’s character. It is important to give further understanding about how Japanese society has always had strict rules. The pressure created by these rules is huge, and it directly acts upon the individual, sometimes leading to isolation, and even alienation. This social pressure is divided into some branches that the writer is going to analyze: the first one is the pressure created by the family. Then it is important to understand how women and

children are the main victims because they are vulnerable figures with very small importance in the family circle.

They [Japanese family] are enclosed in a patriarchal society. Means that, women and is considered as a micro in society which contributes to the development of this pressure that crushes the individual. also adds that the family has a great role to play in the creation of isolation. So, it becomes one of the main actors of social pressure since the family is a social organism. In certain cases, it is a huge devouring monster that keeps eating the vitality and the individuality of its members Means that as the member of family women is pushed and tied to be what family wanted and sometimes it causing them to pursue their own freedom.

The Characteristic of Existentialism in Main Character seen in Bissoondath's *The Cage*

The writer will begin the study of Bissoondath's *The Cage*. Along the story, women and children described as a product of family. Family has bigger role to determine what is suitable for them in future not by their own choice. Here, the writer tries to give more understanding about human struggle to devine their existance. The existential being is a self conscious, free, and autonomous individual. The main character is conscious of this freedom, which may lead her to feelings of independence or loneliness. Being existence is not easy. In *The Cage* the individual meaning of life was given by religion or by social rule. Here, the main character wanted to be free by defining their own freedom as individual not bounded with any rule.

As Japanese woman, Michi who comes to Canada to study English and returns home, undergoing a process of change and struggle for selfhood where women have traditionally been denied any kind of individuality. Here as Japanese who live in Canada increase main character feeling of meaninglessness. She feels trapped in the situation. The clash between family traditions and place of her living make her feel so lost. Especially, her family tied her to know another livelihood beyond the "family glasses".

CONCLUSION

the writer concludes that Michi is in existential isolation. Michi grows up in the four partitions of a patriarchal Japanese way of life which imposes its restrictive values on every girl while in the identify of tradition. Michi is suffers duplicity of life, discovers the chaotic absurdity of her situation. This sense of aloneness is quite different from that of interpersonal isolation. Her freedom is in fact a passive one. She is exist but her voice to choice is not available (KENDRA, 2015),(Rido, 2020). From the very beginning the protagonist makes it clear that chaos springs from her inability to understand her absurd situation

Next, the writer concludes that Michi suffer the 'death' from inside. Michi is dying for freedom. Her death of freedom overwhelming herself. She is caged by her family traditions and at some point if she did not leave she would end up dead, lying on the floor of her cage. As human beings, Michi seemly feels that she would only gradually become capable of such questioning. She believed that people are vegetative to start out with, not taking much notice of the meaning of anything at first.

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