

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents a general description on the present study as the background of the study, statements of the problem, objectives of the study, scope and limitation of the study, and significances of the study.

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Human does exist. He lives his life, follows his path and does everything in life to live. The action he chooses in fact to determine his fate. Corbett (1985) in his article once states:

Human is an individual which is unique and independent. His destiny is his own, his choices are his own to make, and he should make the choices that are right for him. It is singular individuality, in fact, that allows him to exist at all since there are no general rules applied.

Otherwise, certain persons who are unaware of their values that they have their own freedom to choose path in living life, and who are not conscious to freely choose the path they follow, cannot be said to exist.

In etymology, exist is from an old French, existence, means the state of being; existing; or occurring; beinghood, and as the antonym of existence is nothingness. Existence precedes essence. The individuals independently acting and being responsible, conscious being “existence” rather than what labels, roles, stereotypes, definitions, or other preconceived categories the individuals fit “essence”. Jean Paul Sartre was the first prominent existentialist who adopted Kierkegaard’s existentialism term as a self-description.

Furthermore in Webber explained about “existence precedes essence” that:

The slogan expresses two related ideas: that individuals do not have natures or essences that determine their behavior and that there is no such thing as human nature or a human essence. A person ‘first exists: he materialises in the world, encounters himself, and only afterwards defines himself’ (2009: 8).

Webber portrays Sartre’s idea about existentialism which adopted from Kierkegaard that existentialism is a self-description term. Based on Webber, Sartre defines a human being existence can defines himself.

Jean Paul Sartre is a French philosopher who focused on existence or known as existentialism. Mastin (2008) states in his article that Sartre's Existentialism is “existence is prior to essence” and “man is condemned to be free”. Sartre believes that a human being is free from any thoughts, any rules, any powers and the one who can sets his behavior is himself.

In Sartre’s book *Existentialism and Humanism* that reviewed by Yale University Press (2012) that Sartre rejects what he calls deterministic excuses and claims that people must take responsibility for their behavior. For Sartre, individuals are responsible for their own choices because they constantly live with existential dread and anxiety. Simply, he wants to tell that people are free to have their own choices, but their freedom comes with responsibility.

Existentialists oppose definitions of human beings as primarily rational, and, therefore, oppose positivism and rationalism. Existentialism asserts that people actually make decisions based on subjective meaning rather than pure rationality. The reason of rejection is focus on the feelings of dread and anxiety that people feel in facing other’s speculation about them.

Meanwhile, Rationalism is a movement where people make decision based on reason why the opponent doing so, just like bilateral. French philosopher Rene Descartes fundamental axiom as written in Mondal's article (2015) was: "I think therefore I am". Having rejected everything except this one axiom, he then sought to erect an entire philosophy upon this one certain truth. He regards intuition and deduction as the most certain routes to knowledge.

Furthermore, there is positivism that supports rationalism. Some of the characteristics of positivism which support rationalism are the object of knowledge and positivism denies intuition, prior reasoning, theological and metaphysical knowledge. Priya writes in her essay (2015) that:

Auguste Comte used positivism as a weapon against the negative philosophy prevalent before the French Revolution. That negative philosophy was more concerned with emotional than practical questions. Comte regarded such speculations as negative, since it was neither constructive nor practical. As an alternative, Comte invented 'positivism' which remains concerned with the questions about how things are in reality.

Along with Sartre's explanation above, Mill states that positivism is not very widely known what they represent, but it is understood that they represent something (2005: 2). The writer takes a note from those two quotations that positivism is representing things eventhough not sure what exactly the things are. It means that positivism is objective and cannot stand alone.

After providing a short explanation about positivism and rationalism above, the writer underlines that existentialism tends to be subjective otherwise positivism and rationalism tend to be objective. In the other words, existentialism movement definitely opposes positivism and rationalism.

In this study the writer takes some Chekhov's plays as the objects to be analyzed. Chekhov was the first famous writer in Russia to emerge from his class (Whyman, 2008:5). Chekhov's plays signature are primarily on mood and characters. Showing that they could be more important than the plots, this is one of the reasons why the writer decides to analyze only the main characters. The stories of Chekhov's plays are specific, most of them are one act since he focused on the characters of the plays.

Anton Pavlovich Chekhov is a Russian writer who recognized in leading playwright of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. He began writing plays and publishing his stories in the thick journals in 1888. Since then his writing style influenced of the major Russian realists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Chekhov wrote many playwrights which provide a natural social life and ordinary events that bring a deep meaning.

...philosophical analysis, in a way which went far beyond what most of his contemporaries offered for the stage. Thus, for example, relationships between the male and female protagonists in *The Proposal* (1888–89) and in *The Bear* (1888) presage the farcical elements in the relationship... (Whyman, 2008:45).

Chekhov started writing play since 1888. As Whyman stated above, the philosophical analysis of Chekhov plays are interesting so the writer decides to analyze three plays by him start from 1888, and two years later, 1889 and 1890. Those three plays as stated above are "the Bear" (1888), "the Proposal" (1889), and "a Tragedian in Spite of Himself" (1890).

The writer picks three Chekhov's plays. First is "the Bear" (1888) which is about a man with unexpected feeling. The main character is Smirnov. He is a loan

shark that wants to collect money that Popova's deceased husband borrowed. Unfortunately Popova doesn't have any money that time so conflict happens and Smirnov shows his existence as a powerful landowner by staying there until he gets his money. Second is "the Proposal" (1890) about a man who wants to propose. Lomov as the main character is about to propose his love but happens to have conflict and some unwanted conditions. In the play, Lomov shows his existence as a capable and rich man in front of the girl he wants to marry with, and the third is "a Tragedian in Spite of Himself" (1889) about a nagging husband. The main character, Ivan, meets his friend asking to borrow a gun and nagging about his wife because his existence as a husband means nothing to his wife. These plays contain common problem in daily life. Besides, they have main characters that have similar attitudes in dealing with problems, so it is easy to the writer to analyze them. They are kinds of overacting and opposing the positive and rational condition when facing problems.

Even though the opposition of positivism and rationalism on the main characters as philosophical analysis is really interesting to be reviewed. Especially, when the main characters in the plays become overacting by small accident. The writer has the main reason by analyzing these plays. That is the writer cannot find yet any articles, thesis, or essays that analyze about an existentialism of Chekhov's Main Characters Smirnov in "the Bear", Lomov in "the Proposal" and Ivan in "a Tragedian in Spite of Himself". So it attracts the writer to analyze it.

## **1.2 Statements of the Problem**

Based on the background of the study, the writer make the statements of the problem:

1.2.1 How do the main characters show their existence in the plays?

1.2.2 Why do the main characters show their existence in the plays?

## **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives in this study:

1.3.1 To analyze how the main characters show their existence in the plays.

1.3.2 To analyze why the main characters show their existence in the plays.

## **1.4 Scope and Limitation of the Study**

In this study the writer gives the scope and limitation to discuss. As the topic suggests, the writer attempts to reveal an existentialism of Chekhov's plays. Therefore, it is limited to analyze the main characters only, such as Smirnov in "the Bear", Lomov in "the Proposal" and Ivan in "a Tragedian in Spite of Himself".

The writer uses the main characters lines in the plays as the scope and applies Paul Jean Sartre theory of Existentialism that oppose to positivism and rationalism in this study.

### **1.5 Significances of the Study**

The writer hopes the study about analyzing an existentialism of Chekhov's main characters will be useful and give some contributions to English department, i.e.:

- 1.5.1 For teachers and teacher researches, the finding of the research will inform them about the existentialism in Chekhov's plays main characters and give them ideas to do a deeper research of Chekhov's main characters existentialism.
- 1.5.2 For the students, the finding of the research will be their source and reference in analyzing literary works.
- 1.5.3 For the readers, it can inform them the subjective side of Chekhov's main characters.