

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### 2.1 Existentialism

Existentialism is commonly known by the 19<sup>th</sup> century Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), the German philosophers Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), Karl Jaspers (1883 - 1969) and Edmund Husserl, and writers like the Russian Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821 - 1881) and the Czech Franz Kafka (1883 - 1924). In the 1940s and 1950s, French existentialists such as Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), Albert Camus (1913 - 1960), and Simone de Beauvoir (1908 - 1986) wrote scholarly and fictional works that popularized existential themes, such as dread, boredom, alienation, the absurd, freedom, commitment and nothingness.

Existentialism came of age in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Along with Sartre, Camus, and Simone, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) is another influential and often overlooked French Existentialist of the period. In Mastin's article (2008) written that Sartre one of the few to have actually accepted being called an existentialist. *Being and Nothingness* (1943) is his most important work, and his novels and plays, including *Nausea* (1938) and *No Exit* (1944), helped to popularize the movement.

In Webber (2009), Camus also refused to be classified as an existentialist, in an interview in 1945, on the grounds that his thought had little if anything in common with Sartre's, though in his case Sartre had not said otherwise and he was concerned to counter only the media image of his work (Camus 1968: 345).

Sartre as the existentialist once stated "existence precedes essence" which is explained by Catalano (1974: 9):

Essence was viewed as the answer to the question of what a thing is; it was considered to be the basic nature, or "structure," of a thing. Thus, for many of scholastics, man is essentially a rational animal. Existence, on the other hand, answered the question whether a thing is; it was, for them, that fundamental act that causes a thing to be, independent of our thinking of it.

From Catalano's explanation above, the writer underlines word independent. Human being is independent which means all by himself. That statement is in accordance with Kaufmann statement about existentialism.

Kaufmann (1968: 12) writes about existentialism that,

"Existentialism", therefore, may be defined as the philosophical theory which holds that a further set of categories, governed by the norm of authenticity, is necessary to grasp human existence. To approach existentialism in this categorial way may seem to conceal what is often taken to be its "heart".

Kaufmann stated that authenticity governed existentialism. Authenticity is a term that individual's behavior is not affected by others but himself. Crowell adds in his explanation that "... this hammer is a good one if it instantiates what a hammer is supposed to be..." the term supposed to be can be the meaning of existence.

Crowell (2004) further states that "authenticity defines a condition on self-making". An individual create his personality by himself without intervention by

others so this individual can be an authentic human being. Supporting this idea, existentialism as quoted from *Oxford Dictionary* explained that:

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. The individual consciousness is paramount to the societal impact one may have and it is your reality that dictates the individual's actions, not anybody else's.

Coming up with the ideas that an individual dictates his own actions, Kierkegaard also stressed that individuals must choose their own way without the aid of universal, objective standards. Friedrich Nietzsche further contended that the individual must decide which situations are to count as moral situations. Jean Paul Sartre was the first prominent existentialist who adopts Kierkegaard's existentialism term as a self-description.

As written in his biography by Lowrie (1938) Soren Kierkegaard was born in Copenhagen in 1813 and died in 1855. He is known as an existentialist in his life. For Kierkegaard, the subjective thinker is infinitely involved in the problem of his own eternal happiness (Cochrane 1956: 24). By Kierkegaard's point of view, the writer underlines that a subjective human has his own responsibility for his happiness, for his own life. So human being can be called subjective since he makes his own decision without interfered by others, in shorts as self-description. Kierkegaard's implicit ontology or theology shows how it worked out in his attack upon objective philosophical (Cochrane 1956: 48)

From another source, existentialism is a movement to describe those who refuse to belong to any circle of thought, reject the state of anybody's beliefs or systems, and claim them to be superficial, academic and remote from life (Mastin,

2008). Shortly, existentialism as movement is a reaction against Rationalism, Empiricism and Positivism which are objective and tend to be in circle of other's thought. It asserts that people actually make decisions based on what has meaning to them, rather than what is rational.

Existentialism believes that individuals are entirely free and must take personal responsibility for themselves, although with this responsibility comes angst, a profound anguish or dread. It emphasizes action, freedom and decision as fundamental, and holds that the only way to rise above the essentially absurd condition of humanity which is characterized exercising individual's personal freedom and choice.

Sartre stated "At first (man) is nothing. Only afterward will he be something, and he himself will have made what he will be." In other words, man makes himself. Sartre believes that a human being has freedom to choose. Burnham (2010) writes that:

In Sartre's interpretation of this idea, consciousness is not to be identified with a thing (for example a mind, soul or brain), that is to say some kind of a repository of ideas and images of things. Rather, consciousness is nothing but a directedness towards things. Sartre found a nice way to sum up the notion of the intentional object: If I love her, I love her because she is lovable (Sartre 1970:4-5).

Following Sartre's idea, the writer figures out that "she" has features that makes her lovable. Her features such as her smile, her laugh, that maybe not lovable to anybody else but one or two men, it is because a man consciousness is needed. The man chooses whether something is interesting for him or not. It is kind of freedom to choose, not because the girl has a pretty smile so everyone must love her but the girl's smile is interesting for someone.

In other book, Sartre stated that all human existence is a passion, the famous *self-interest* being only one way freely chosen among others to realize this passion (1985: 25). From Sartre's idea above, it says that all people have passion that only can be understand from the subject point of view since it is a self-interest. For example, a woman maybe will not understand why a man has such a passion or what his passion is unless she knows him well. This condition called ethical implication.

Sartre's idea above is supported by Kierkegaard's as written in Panza and Gale (2008: 135), passionate people are inward because they strive to be and to exist as subjects and not as objects. From those two quotations, the writer concludes that human existence is a passion, passionate person is subjective, so human existence is a subjectivity. In their book, Panza and Gale add,

Passionate people take their very existence seriously. In cultivating their passion, they seek to develop their subjectivity, or existence as a subject. When you immerse yourself within subjectivity, you exhibit a deep sense of care about who you are, about the way in which you exist. You realize that you've been handed a gift — the power of self-determination — and you use it.

As Panza and Gale said that being subjective is caring about himself. It is a sense as a human being. Being subjective is not something bad because his sense of care about his existence creates an intensity in him, a level of depth not seen in people who simply go with the flow. That is why Panza and Gale stated that passionate people are purposeful.

For Sartre and the existentialists, facing the reality is an awakening experience. If you don't run and respond to it properly, it heightens your awareness of your own inevitable engagement in life: the degree to which your life is a choice

and the degree to which that choice is yours (2008: 163). Passionate people have their own chosen life that is why they are purposeful. The phrase “choice is yours” in the previous quotation can be called freedom. People are free to choose their own path in life. Back to Sartre’s existence precedes essence, a human being must define himself through his choices and actions.

Talking deeper about freedom and responsibility in existentialism, there is an article that talk about it:

The focus on freedom in existentialism is related to the limits of the responsibility one bears as a result of one's freedom: the relationship between freedom and responsibility is one of interdependency, and a clarification of freedom also clarifies that for which one is responsible. (Crowell, 2015)

Even though individual has freedom but his freedom is limited by others’. There is a responsibility to respect others’ freedom, so individual cannot divide freedom and responsibility because they are mutuality.

## **2.2 Positivism**

Positivism is a term that refers to a common philosophical theory around natural science about physical and human, through the applications of the methods and the extension of the results where the natural science has achieved its unrivaled position in the modern world. Scharff writes in his book that:

Positivism is now inherited through its last and most sophisticated version, namely, Logical Empiricism; and one generalization to be made about Logical Empiricism is that it embodies a sort of ultimate crystallization of two of positivism’s core features - namely, the promotion of a rigorously ”scientific” epistemology and a supreme self-confidence about its own objective, systematic, ahistorical outlook (1995: 2)

As stated in quotation above that positivism is a supreme self-confidence about its own objective, the writer underlines that positivism is objective contrast with existentialism. From the point of view of methodology the term 'positive' is known in opposing the traditional philosophy. In Priya (2015) the writer finds some of the characteristics of positivism, they are:

1. Science is the only valid knowledge.
2. Fact is the object of knowledge.
3. Philosophy does not possess a method which is different from science.
4. The task of philosophy is to find the general principles common to all sciences and to use these principles as guides to human conduct and as the basis of social organization.
5. Positivism denies intuition, prior reasoning, theological and metaphysical knowledge.

The characteristics above support the idea that positivism is based on the fact that happened in social life as the object of knowledge. So, positivism is a man's behavior influenced by others'.

Priya (2015) also writes that the interpretation of the world is based on human experience. It insists on the application of scientific method of natural sciences to the study of social world. In other words, experience does influence a human being.

Comte in Pickering (1993: 4) maintained that positivism systematized the whole range of human knowledge because of its keystone - a new science of society. Positive knowledge is based on experience and considers only real phenomena.

Comte, a France philosopher, did not deny the existence of unknown, but positivism was no way concerned with the supernatural. In Questia (2015) Chambliss has presented the essence of Comte's positivism in this following words, "positivism is not fatalistic, or optimistic or materialistic. It is concerned with the real, rather than fanciful, useful rather than all knowledge." Before the French revolution, Comte invented positivism which remains concerned with the questions about how things are in reality. Comte believes that people has reasons in act that caused by others.

Experience, reason, and other's behavior that influence human's behavior are external objects. As Copleston states in his book "The consciousness of the self as a reflectively apprehended centre and of definite external objects, a consciousness which grows with experience..." (1956: 74), it supports that positivism is objective.

### **2.3 Rationalism**

Rationalism or the Age of Reason is the belief that human beings can arrive at truth by using reason, rather than by relying on the authority of the past, on religious faith, or intuition. French philosopher Rene Descartes (1596-1650) is known as the "father of rationalism". Mondal (2015) writes in his article that:

With Descartes the philosophical tradition of realism, which dominated philosophical speculation from Thale to William of Occam, was first seriously challenged. For, until the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, it was nowhere seriously disputed that knowledge is knowledge of real objects. It is not the external world of real objects which is the starting point of modern philosophical speculation but the individual mind or experience.



As the writer discussed earlier about positivism, in rationalism, experience also influences human's acts. So, quotation above states that positivism and rationalism are similar. There is also one more rationalist that support Descartes' philosophy, as recorded in other reference texts, such as the 1740 edition of Dyche's and Pardon's New General English Dictionary, the 1755-1756 edition of Johnson's English Dictionary, and this entry from the 1828 edition of Webster's American Dictionary of the English Language, rationalist is one who proceeds in his certain disquisitions and practice wholly upon reason. – Bacon. (Vanzo, 2012)

Along with Bacon explanation about rationalism that proceeds something upon reason, there is an article wrote by Mondal (2015) rationalism means the thinking which is based on reason. Reason here comes from human's experience. Everything that people face in life is their experience that becomes their reason for being something. As example, a man experiencing changes in his life because he has reasons, and the reasons are his experiences with other.

Besides experience and reason that make rationalism is similar with positivism, Wittgenstein in Scheibe (2001: 25) has couched it in the pithy statements that the world divides into facts. That statement supports one of the characteristics of positivism that fact is the object of knowledge. Talk about knowledge, as written in Huenemann (2010: 3) that some of the similarities among the rationalists have to do with the ways in which it account for human knowledge. Knowledge here is got from human's experience. The writer gets three key words about positivism and rationalism, they are experience, reason, and fact.

Mastin (2008) writes that:

Kierkegaard saw rationality as a mechanism humans use to oppose their existential anxiety, their fear of being in the world. Sartre saw rationality as a form of bad faith, an attempt by the self to impose structure on a fundamentally irrational and random world of phenomena the other. This bad faith hinders us from finding meaning in freedom, and confines us within everyday experience.

Quotation above leads the writer in order to prove that rationalism absolutely opposes existentialism. This is from which this study is rooted.

## **2.4 Review of Previous Studies**

### **2.4.1 Existentialism and Samuel Beckett's Two Plays: Endgame and Happy Days**

This is a thesis about existentialism written by Tijen Tan for fulfilling the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English literature. The thesis carries out an analysis of the plays by Samuel Beckett, Endgame and Happy Days. It achieves this by exploring how the playwright's characterization, setting and use of language in these plays display his tendency to employ some existentialist concepts such as despair, anxiety and thrownness on the way to authenticity. This study argues that there are some similarities between Beckett's two plays and Existentialism, and some characters in both plays display the existentialist man who is looking for becoming an authentic man. In other words, although there are some differences, these plays show that Samuel Beckett's view of Existentialism is quite similar to the Sartrean view.

### **2.4.2 Existentialism in Franz Kafka's Metamorphosis**

Existentialism requires an individual to rise above the depressive conditions of humanity through personal articulation. The metamorphosis of Gregor allowed him to recognize the fact that he was being suppressed by society. His exterior form caused his family to question their own lifestyles and re-adapt, shunning that which was useless to them. Kafka's book, *Metamorphosis*, causes readers to question their own lives to this very day in regards to living with purpose and intent. Doing so may cause conflict as one fights against the will of society, but with it comes liberation and a whole new understanding of existentialism.

### **2.4.3 Shakespeare's Existentialism**

This thesis written by Charlotte Keys that undertakes a fundamental reappraisal of Shakespeare's existentialism. The drama of Shakespeare and existentialist philosophy, he contend, are equally fascinated by issues such as inwardness, authenticity, freedom, and self-becoming. In recent years, Shakespearean criticism has shied away from these fundamental existentialist concerns reflected in his drama, preferring to investigate the historical and cultural conditioning of human subjectivity. However, as this thesis argues, a failure to acknowledge and address the existential problems and intensities at the heart of Shakespeare's plays prevents a full appreciation of both the philosophical and the theatrical dimensions of his drama. This thesis treats Shakespeare as existentialism's prolific precursor, as a writer who experimented with existentialist

ideas in his own distinctive theatrical and poetic terms long before they were fully developed in the philosophical and literary terms of the twentieth century.

The introductory chapter of this thesis provides a preliminary sketch of existentialist thought and surveys the influence of existentialism on readings of Shakespeare. This paves the way for the second chapter, which offers a historical account of the inception of existentialist thought in the early modern period. By identifying existentialist concerns and ideas in the work of writers such as Montaigne, Pico, Raleigh, Bacon, Donne and others, the writer argues that an embryonic form of existentialism was beginning to emerge in the literary, philosophical and religious discourses of the Renaissance. The third chapter suggests that Shakespeare and modern existentialist thinkers share a deep interest in the creative fusion of fiction and philosophy as the most faithful means of articulating the existentialist immediacy of experience and the philosophical quandaries that existence as a human being entails. The subsequent three chapters explore the existentialist predicaments and problems dramatised in three Shakespearean tragedies. The writer's readings trace the broad trajectory of existentialist thought in these plays, firstly by looking at the ontological and subjective concerns of Hamlet, then by examining Shakespeare's treatment of ethics in Coriolanus, and finally by considering the existential resonance of the politics in King Lear.