

AN EXISTENTIALISM ANALYSIS OF CHEKHOV'S MAIN CHARACTERS SMIRNOV IN "THE BEAR", LOMOV IN "THE PROPOSAL" AND IVAN IN "A TRAGEDIAN IN SPITE OF HIMSELF"

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ABSTRACT

This study is attempted to analyze an existentialism of Chekhov's main characters Smirnov in "The Bear", Lomov in "The Proposal" and Ivan in "A Tragedian in Spite of Himself". The data are taken from the dialogues selected in the plays mentioned. There are two objectives of the study that are: to find how the main characters show their existence; and to reveal why the main characters doing so in the plays. Descriptive qualitative is applied as research method, while existentialism as the main theory and positivism and rationalism as the supporting theory. This Study found out how the main characters oppose positivism and rationalism by being subjective. Each character has their own way in showing their existence. As the result, every character has their own purposes to be existence. The purposes of the main characters are their own eternal happiness. In "The Bear" Smirnov is being stubborn because he wants to show his power as a landowner, in "The Proposal" Lomov is flaunting his wealth in order to propose Natalya, and Ivan is nagging to get sympathy from his friend.

Keywords: existentialism, positivism, rationalism

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.

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.

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.

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. The writer picks three Chekhov's plays. First is "the Bear" (1888). The main character is Smirnov. He is a loan shark that wants to collect money that Popova's deceased husband borrowed. Second is "the Proposal" (1890)

about a man who wants to propose. Lomov as the main character is about to propose his love, 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.

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.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Existentialism

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. 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.

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.

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. 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.

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.

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.

RESEARCH METHOD

The data used in the study are written in texts, so the writer conducts the study into a qualitative research because it is descriptive. In qualitative research, the data collected is in the form of words or pictures than numbers (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007: 28). In the study, the writer will do the analysis by using words and describe them through interpretation and explanation. By applying descriptive

qualitative method, the writer tries to analyze the existentialism in Chekhov's main characters Smirnov in "The Bear", Lomov in "The Proposal", and Ivan in "A Tragedian in Spite of Himself".

Source of Data

The writer takes the main data from an e-book entitled Plays by Chekhov, Second Series published by Medellin digital in 2007.

Data

The data are classified into two groups, main and additional data (Creswell, 2012: 45) the data of the study is the lines of the main characters. The writer focused in analyzing the lines of Smirnov in "The Bear", Lomov in "The Proposal" and Ivan in "A Tragedian in Spite of Himself". The additional data are positivism, rationalism and Sartre's existentialism.

Data Collection Technique

Data collecting is obtained from library researches in which the writer collects information from various sources such as: literary books, essays, critics, dictionaries, encyclopedia and online library. Some relevant theoretical books are used to support the understanding about literary theories.

Although the main source of the study is the plays themselves. The writer elaborates the lines of the main characters that are found in the plays. The writer also browses many online sources to find additional information that can be used to support the discussion on the main idea.

In addition, the collecting data method includes several steps such as intensive close reading, noting the data, underlining, extracting and analyzing data from the plays are chosen in doing this study to producing the result of this study.

ANALYSIS

Smirnov's Existentialism toward Popova in "The Bear"

"The Bear" by Anton Chekhov consists of three characters, they are Smirnov, Popova and Luka. At first, Smirnov as a landowner asks politely to Popova about her deceased husband's debt. Instead of giving the money, without feeling sorry, Popova tells Smirnov to come back tomorrow because she does not have any money that day. Smirnov gets annoyed and heats up. His dignity as a landowner is trampled. People who borrow money from him should be scared and pay the debt directly, but Popova. At this moment, Smirnov shows off his existence by opposing positivism and rationalism. As explained in the previous chapter, positivism and rationalism here are an individual's behavior affected by others while existentialism is independent.

SMIRNOV. *I have not the pleasure of being either your husband or your fiancé, so please don't make scenes. [Sits] I don't like it.*

...

SMIRNOV. *We'll fight it out! I'm not going to be insulted by anybody, and I don't care if you are a woman, one of the "softer sex," indeed! (Medellin, 2007: 96-98 my italic)*

For the quotation above, the writer applies Kierkegaard's statement in Cochrane (1956) that the subjective thinker is infinitely involved in the problem of his own eternal happiness. As in "I have not the pleasure of being either your husband or your fiancé" Smirnov decides himself whether it brings happiness for him or not, it clearly tells that Smirnov is a subjective thinker. Then in second sentence "...I'm not going to be insulted by anybody, and I don't care if you are a woman..." as Mastin (2008) states that 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, so from the sentence Smirnov uttered indicates that he is existentialist. Smirnov obviously does not care even if his opponent is a woman, he does not care about the gender as long as he is happy. It is supported by Smirnov's next lines "I'll bring her down like a chicken! I'm not a little boy or a sentimental puppy; I don't care about this..."

Lomov's Existentialism toward Natalya in "The Proposal"

"The Proposal" is a one-act play written by Anton Chekhov covered with his sense of humor. This play is about a man who wants to propose a girl. This man named Lomov. Lomov wants to propose Natalya who is a daughter of his neighbor, Chubukov. In order to get Natalya's heart, Lomov is supposed to tell his wealth and property he has.

LOMOV. *I assure you* that his lower jaw is shorter than the upper.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. Have you measured?

LOMOV. Yes. He's all right at following, of course, but if you want him to get hold of anything...

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. In the first place, our Squeezer is a thoroughbred animal, the son of Harness and Chisels, while there's no getting at the pedigree of your dog at all. ... He's old and as ugly as a worn-out cab-horse.

LOMOV. He is old, but *I wouldn't take five Squeezers for him.* ... (Medellin, 2007: 55 *my italic*)

From previous quotation, Lomov subjectively says "I assure you...", then Natalya argues and said "... He's old and as ugly as a worn-out cab-horse." Natalya's statements is not totally denied by Lomov when he says "He is old" but Lomov adds "but, I wouldn't take five Squeezers for him." It means he keeps looking down on Natalya's dog and does not listen to her explanation. Bacon in Vanzo (2012) stated that rationalism proceeds something upon reason, but Lomov clearly denies Natalya's reason which means he opposes rationalism.

Ivan's Existentialism toward Murashkin in "A Tragedian in Spite of Himself"

Ivan Ivanovitch Tolkachov is a husband, a father of a family. He is the main character of Chekhov's one act play entitled "A Tragedian in Spite of Himself" written in 1889. This play is about a husband who is tired of his own life. He comes to his friend, Murashkin, to borrow a revolver to kill himself. Ivan comes to Murashkin's house with hands full of things he bought. Ivan tells his friend about his tiring and monotonous life. Ivan opposes positivism and rationalism when nagging because his proud as a man is hurt.

In this play, Ivan does not oppose to someone like the two main characters previously mentioned, but to his own life instead.

TOLKACHOV. ... *You* can't protest. *You* are a husband, and the word husband when translated into the language of summer residents in the country means a dumb beast.... (Medellin, 2007: 107-109 *my italic*)

The quotation above is taken when Ivan starts telling Murashkin about his life from his point of view. In the plays, this part takes almost five pages. He tells in detail what he has been suffered so far. Ivan uses pronoun "you" when he tells Murashkin his story as in "...you spend the time between your office and your train, running about the town like a dog with your tongue hanging out..." Ivan positioning Murashkin as he by using pronoun "you" in his story.

For Kierkegaard in Cochrane (1956) the subjective thinker is infinitely involved in the problem of his own eternal happiness. In this case, Ivan positioning Murashkin to have a support from Murashkin so he agrees about what Ivan feels. When Ivan says "you spend the time" exactly means that "I spend the time" so as in "you lose your money" means that "I lose my money". Ivan even says clearly what he feels when he becomes a husband in "You can't protest. You are a husband, and the word husband when translated into the language of summer residents in the country means a dumb beast..." Ivan describes himself as a dumb beast. The sentence represents Ivan's feeling as a husband and he wants Murashkin feel it as well that is why Ivan uses pronoun "you".

Smirnov's Purpose in Showing Existentialism toward Popova in "The Bear"

Kierkegaard in Cochrane (1956) stated the subjective thinker is infinitely involved in the problem of his own eternal happiness. Along with Panza and Gale (2008: 135) that passionate people are purposeful, just like in "I shall jolly well stay here until she pays!" by Smirnov (Medellin, 2007: 89) in order to achieve his purpose which is his own happiness, Smirnov is being passionate in showing his power is landowner to get the debt paid. So in this case, Smirnov is being subjective and opposing positivism and rationalism for his pride as a landowner and get the debt paid.

Lomov's Purpose in Showing Existentialism toward Natalya in "The Proposal"

LOMOV. One moment ... this very minute. The fact is, *I've come to ask the hand of your daughter, Natalya Stepanovna, in marriage.* (Medellin, 2007; 41-42 *my italic*)

Absolutely Lomov comes there with a willing. What is his willing? The answer can be found from Lomov's line in italic above that he comes to ask the hand of Chubukov's daughter, Natalya Stepanovna, in marriage. Lomov wants to propose Natalya, his neighbor's daughter, which is why he wears such in evening dress and do such things only to impress Natalya and her family. This subjective side of Lomov is an existentialism. In this rate Lomov is being subjective and opposing positivism and rationalism to be able to marry Natalya.

Ivan's Purposes in Showing Existentialism toward Murashkin in "A Tragedian in Spite of Himself"

TOLKACHOV. ... And nobody has any sympathy for me, and everybody seems to think it's all as it should be. People even laugh. But understand, I am a living being and I want to live! This isn't farce, it's tragedy. I say, if you don't give me your revolver, you might at any rate sympathize.

MURASHKIN. I do sympathize.

TOLKACHOV. I see how much you sympathize. ... Good-bye. ... (Medellin, 2007: 110)

The quotation above shows the anti-climax of Ivan. After telling a long story about his life, he finally confesses that there is nobody who feels his pain such in "...And nobody has any sympathy for me, and everybody seems to think it's all as it should be. People even laugh..." However he adds his desperate willing that he wants to live. From the quotation, clearly says that he needs a sympathy at least. Ivan is absolutely looking for sympathy toward Murashkin by being subjective. As Kierkegaard in Cochrane (1956) stated the subjective thinker is infinitely involved in the problem of his own eternal happiness. Ivan's eternal happiness in his tiring life is at least gets a sympathy and people to share his pain. Ivan opposes positivism and rationalism in the story and being subjective with propose to get other people sympathy.

CONCLUSION

After finding and discussing about how the main characters of Chekhov's plays (Smirnov in "The Bear", Lomov in "The Proposal" and Ivan in "A Tragedian in Spite of himself") show their existence and why they do so in the previous chapter, the writer comes with a conclusion that when people want something they will definitely do everything even ignore or reject the fact in front of them and being subjective to achieve their own purposes.

In the previous chapter, the writer found out that Smirnov shows his existence by ignoring the fact that Popova does not have money and cannot pay the debt that day. When he want the debt to be paid it has to be paid that day. Lomov shows his existence by being subjective in telling how rich he is and flaunting his belongings towards Natalya and her family. And the last is Ivan who shows his existence by rejecting the reality and being subjective when nagging to his friend, Murashkin.

All the main characters are doing so because they have purposes. Their purposes are to achieve their eternal happiness. The writer will write down the eternal happiness of each character. Smirnov's eternal happiness is when he can show to people that he has power as a landowner. The debtors shall be intimidated by him and pay the debt on-time because his bold profile. Lomov's eternal happiness is to be able to propose Natalya, to get her heart and to be an appropriate fiancé for her. And Ivan's eternal happiness happens when he is be able to show his struggle in life.

Chekhov portrays people behavior in order to achieve their purposes into a play. Chekhov writes differently in each play based on daily life which can be happened to everyone. By applying Sartre's theory about existentialism, the writer is able to find out the eternal happiness of Chekhov's main characters in the plays.

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