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The Philosophy of Existentialism and its Effect on Contemporary Art

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Abstract

The twentieth century is the time that many cultural schools have appeared and the advent of different political, economic, and social developments world wide such as first and second communism war, cold war and, so on each had its effect. One of these schools of literature is the existentialism that could be described and examined through different aspects such as literature, theatre, cinema, and painting. Existentialism views the world in a special way and quests kind of human to human and his existential concept. In Existential philosophers' perspective, the most fundamental existing truth is human being and the human existence is separate and have precedence over its nature, despite the whole universe. Existentialism theories involve studying different ways of being and this special definition forms the backgrounds for all existentialism's theories and thoughts and this philosophy have a profound relation to modern art and literature and ties it to aesthetics contemplation. One of the successful instances of art and thought exchange in movie and philosophy is the connection between modern cinema and existentialism's thoughts. Thinking profoundly about the existence is the distinguishing feature of modern filmmakers and existentialism philosophers. The present study aimed to research on art and existentialism school through library data collection in a descriptive-analytical method. In the view point of existentialism thinkers, since the art action is one of early instances of human free activities, then it is also considered as one of the super modes of revealing of the what the world is about and based on this the existential approach to the art, the arts are classified based on their revealing nature.

Key words: Existentialism Philosophy, Contemporary Art, Literature, Cinema.

Introduction:

The concepts presented by the existentialism philosophy may not be modern and new but they are the main concepts of human being's life. These concepts and principles are as: existence prior to nature, commitment and responsibility, death and non-existence, anxiety, fear, leaving, freedom, and maintaining moral values. People in favour of existentialism concluded that human being is in the centre of creation and existence and from Heidegger perspective he is thrown to the world without wishing so. From existentialisms` perspective, human in this world and universe acquires his nature from behaviour, experience, and imitation through the environment and is responsible for his own existence and all other human beings and each human is the legislator for others. In relation to this very commitment and responsibility and in facing to death and non-existence, anxiety and fear is formed. On the other side of being thrown to world is the inevitable death and one-existence that escaping from it is impossible and the imagination and understanding human mortality is fearful and frightening. From existentialism point of view, the human is not only aware of his existence but also based on this existence he can choose to use his existence and relate himself to the world. The existentialism theories demand studying different methods of to be and this very especial definition forms all existentialism theories and thoughts` backgrounds and makes this philosophy have a profound and in frangible connection with modern art and literature and tie it to aesthetics contemplation. Present study examined the existentialism school and art in a descriptive- analytical method through library data collection.

Some Concepts of Existentialism Philosophy

1.The aim of rooting of existentialism in art is paying attention to what "exists", and the traditional philosophy was about abstract thoughts. They are interested in perceptible and objective situations such as human circumstances in his every day life and emotions such as loneliness, disappointment, fear, and anxiety of human deep in the material world. The existentialism philosophy results in kind of the Descartes, subjective, and dynamic philosophy that is in full agreement with the reality.

2. The precedence of "existence" over "nature": before the existentialism, the philosophy believed that the "nature" of human precede over his "existence" but the existentialism counter proved this claim. They give priority to the "to be" and "to exist" over the nature and the essence of human and pay attention first to the existence and then to the nature and they believe that this is the existence that make the human nature in different circumstances (as a brave or coward, worker or lazy, good or bad).

3. A responsible and free human: existentialism do not believe in the predetermined and forced fate. In their viewpoint, human is the artisan of the characteristics and features of his own "existence". He is responsible for his fate, his society, and his time and this is the reason for human freedom to guide himself and his surroundings by his will and wish direct the world; this issue of selection and decision making for the fate and future brings about the senses of anxiety, fear, and disappointment in human beings.

4. Nihilism: existentialisms believe that this world is empty and aimless and human, in this mortal and lawless world, is left without any guidance.

5. Negating innate: existentialisms believe that human is born without any innate quality, that is, there is nothing primary and innate in his essence to guide him and human is not effected by external or internal forces. Thus, human acquires his "nature" through behaviour, experience, and imitation from the environment in the world and from "the universe".

6. The literacy genres of existentialism, very skilfully have the capability to employ language and all literacy genres to create the works and express their thoughts; in this school, philosophy makes the literature bases and the authors are inspired by the philosophy and philosophers` theories to create their works. Existentialisms often introduce philosophy and psychological issues in the form of novels and plays.

The Subject and the Content of Existentialism Literature: in the works of this literacy style, there is usually disappointment, agitation and anxiety, sorrow and grief, futility and pessimism to the world and to the society. Existentialism attitude is a "regretful attitude to the past". Generally speaking, they give importance to tragic and sorrowful works as if this sorrow and grief is resulted from their fear from being trapped in death and non-existence.

Existentialism and Jean Paul Sartre

Existentialism is a philosophy about the "existence" and is considered as one of the most important western school of thoughts. Based on the recent discussions, to summarize its historical ground, it could be claimed that from the time "human" and the situation from his social circumstances have been the center of attention by the scholars, this very "arena of attention" have been changing constantly. In other words, any arena of attention is like a gate opened to the new method, space, and territory in way of understanding anthropological research. For example, since the main concern of bourgeois human in 18th century turned to a very close conflict of king and aristocracy for power and wealth, in the theoretical world the conflict was for human demystification from human and his perceptional- understanding world. In other words, what the bourgeoisies did to the theoretical world was introducing the deep political-social issue as the idea of "human departure from immaturity" on this fancy that if the "immature human" be encouraged to understand logical structure of rationality, recognition, and mind judgment and be assisted to step in the new phase of intellectual maturity and take the social-moral responsibility of his own in determining his lifestyle and fate, probably through social and political struggles, the he can fulfill the task of "departure from immaturity"(dependence to church and kingdom). But when in the 19th century, departure from immaturity was practically decoded and the characteristics of the bourgeois attitude was revealed then, the historical and social conditions replaced a new reality named "class awareness" with "departure from immaturity". Now, in the 19th century the dominate discourse among revolutionary scholars is "social struggle" and working class deliverance from social and economic exploitative structures. As it is seen, we are faced with a collection of historical evolutions that there is an undeniable fact in every level: imagining a better and more complete thought that represents the "human of the time". The imagination that has ever increasing eagerness to equip itself by understanding human world unknowns (internal or social) and thus it legitimizes and recognizes them.

Now because of this humanist and at the same time general validity, the "philosopher" of the 20th century gains social dignity. Especially a philosopher that based on social and material evolutions in his time (the time that most of moral and religious believes weakened) allocates his philosophy to the human`s ontological confusions of the present century. The confusions resulted from viewpoint of modern existentialism philosophy will be removed only when a new definition of "human" be created and Sartre did this job. The fact that the advocates of these school of thought consider themselves "humanist" or no is not our matter of concern. From our point of view, the fact that this philosophy considers human and

his position in the world (and even in some of his position looks for changes in world and way of thinking) is it good enough to be in the vast spectrum of the humanists. But the reason of selecting Jean Paul Sartre (1980-1905) as an instance of this school of thought is his fame and even the same weight that his name has with this school. But before starting any discussions, it must be mentioned that what we have as the "Sartre Existentialism" is the digest existential thought of Sartre and in fact is based on a book that has published about his discussions confirmed by his thoughts very carefully and cautiously, in order to defend his existentialism thoughts. Then it looks common that this book is empty of those controversial discussions. Those discussions that are in the "existence and non-existence" book, and maybe its most important discussion is the relation that Sartre sees among "freedom, the other, and sinfulness"; and finally the other point is that his existentialism philosophy owes to the famous "ontologist", Martin Heidegger, in many aspects; and now we are going to discus about Jean Paul Sartre. Sartre`s interpretation of Existentialism both defines a connection to "human originality" and implies the difference between existentialism humanistic and idealist humanistic of the 18th century, he considers the most important different in way of understanding "human conception". For instance, an existentialism person, contrary to the idealist one, believes that human beings were not born with a "pre-planed" nature. In other words, in Sartre`s point of view there is no human nature and he believes that human is what he makes out of himself. Sartre consider this principle, that is in fact is a "introverted" (it means that it refers to the very human),as the first principle of existentialism. He also believes that this principle relates to the mist fundamental idea of existentialism, the idea that says "existence precedes over nature". If based on existentialism`s idea, human in existence sense, be free from any nature and essence and do not have any predetermined fate, then this means that when he is born he has no "identity". That is his identity simultaneously and directly is formed through living, making decisions, and his choices suggesting that human beings as opposed to objects do not have a pre-planed and predetermined nature. To make a pair of scissors, as an example, first its scheme is made in the creator`s mind. That is the nature of scissors` existence was there before its existence. While we can not have such an attitude about human since, as it was mentioned before, in view point of existentialism human is what he makes from himself and, by chance, for this reason Sartre consider an artistic role for this kind of making. Now the question is that how does human make that existence identity? Sartre believes that human in his every single step for life act as a "schema". We consider human, before anything else, first as a "schema which lives in its introvert". "schema" means what the soul tries to get or fulfil and that refers to the existence of human that experiences things as "fulfilment" of wishes and dreams and is busy making his nature.

But in order that the human be able to make his own schema and identity, it is necessary to have freedom and ability to make decisions. Sartre believes that human have such freedom and ability to make decisions, but there is something in this freedom and ability that make human responsible: things such as "anxiety". He claims that human experiences anxiety when he knows that his choices are bond to others` rights. In this way, not only he chooses and determines his existence through lifestyle but also he is a lawmaker that chooses the human society through his choices. Such a person will not be able to scape from deep and full sense of responsibility. Undoubtedly, most people think that by doing a job, they are merely obliged and when they are asked: what would happen if all people do this? They will answer reluctantly "not all people do this". But in fact, they must always bear in mind that if all people do this what will happen? Any way, the point that Sartre get from existentialism's anxiety is the fact that our action and choices are considered as examples and role models, although we do not have any examples or

role models for knowing what to choose. Now, to describe this complicated situation and the resulted bitter feeling that apparently engaged human perforce, Sartre prefers to define it with term "relaxation". He basically believes that relaxation is accompanied with anxiety. The anxiety that- as we saw- appeared as the result of choosing and freedom. Thus, Sartre faces us to the other domain of "freedom". Based on that anxiety and its relation to freedom, he says: "if we truly accept that existence precedes over nature, then we can never justify the issue by resorting to God-given and ossified human nature". In other words, there is no force anymore, human is free, human is freedom. From one hand, we won`t find any orders or values that permissible our behaviours against us. Therefore, in the shining territory of the values, and not in behind, we can find excuses which is not against us. We are alone, without having an excuse. This sense is the same sentence I express by "human is doomed to freedom". Now here is the most famous sentence by Sartre: "human is doomed to freedom". Sartre's addressee is the modern human the "if it is not self-existence, then every thing is permissible" as Dostoevsky believes. The human who expels the self-existence (the God) from his life has no reliance for his values inside and outside of himself. But is this true in reality?! Although Sartre, sometimes, exaggerates, it seems that he does not insists on his words and very easily reforms or delicates his words by others words. For example, in his ups and downs on his examinations about sense of responsibility and the resulted anxiety and also its relation to the freedom, although the addressees are faced with the bitterness from this freedom, he tries to crave a pleasant image of his existentialism philosophy in the addressee's mind and represent the existentialism as the appropriate solution that contemporary human needs. Thus ambiguously but carefully applies the common terms and expressions (that in the terminology of idealistic literature have clear, familiar, and normal concepts) such as "ascension" and the "superior goal", but in existentialism interpretation, tries to over come pessimistic surface of his philosophy. The degree of his successful should be judged by the readers and their demands from his philosophy. For example, we faced with the Sartre who is able to, without refusing in creating misunderstanding for the addresses, announce that "human's existential" depends on perusing superior goals" and never doubt that such expressions can bring about a mindset for the addresses that his existentialism philosophy is ultimately considered for the human, " the predetermined human"; that is retracing "nature, essence, or human's nature" that Sartre has announced as null in the beginning of his discussions(Sartre, 1965). Sartre judges artist from two perspective: 1) from artistic works of his art and 2) from the artists' moral, lifestyle, and personal life and even his silence.

Sartre believes that artist is never forced to be frivolous and capricious, but because artists are very popular for people then their being careless would spread irresponsibility and that refers to the human`s responsibility. The existentialism artist seeks to prove himself, even if he works against the dominate current and this make the artist hardworking, anxious, belligerent, passionate, and dauntless. The existentialism artist contemplates about freedom and looks for the individual identity in the great industrial society and the unity they are looking for is the spiritual human unity. Sartre believes that the abstract art is the pure picture of the very artist and this is the concept that identifies the picture and penetrates in the colours and through creating disturbance in the colors, make us feel incurable pain, the pain that befalls the contemporary human. Giacometti shows an unreachable distance in his works in which human and objects relation is cut off and everything has depressed in the vacuum, the vacuum in which human are like subjective islands among world of objects. Sartre believes that Giacometti`s

paintings return human back to the time of creation, maybe this is the time that human finds out he is left alone and relaxed. Aesthetic existentialism looks for recognizing universe mystery and considers art`s goal in the advent of creativity. Existentialism believes that evil must be explored first and then be transformed, therefore, artist's responsibility is showing the evil. The motto of this school is showing for making transformation. It is clear that, by believing so the artist does not have right to show anything but badness and evil in order to explore disorganizations and transform them, something that is completely apparent in Kooning`s works. The world of an existentialism artist is like existence in the universe that is this world is my creator the same as I understand it and it is not just a mere position embracing my existence; and my concerns in the world is the representative of my existence, a prominent example of this thought is displayed in Matrix movie. The concerns of an existentialism artist is in a close relation with his choices but their common point in their philosophy is reminding their a existential human who tries to live in the light of thought, the though he can fulfil his plans, the plans in which he tries to make art close to the truth of the 20th century human in which anxiety, loneliness, disappointment, discourage, and moving toward indefinite target are shown; and from my point of view, the most prominent examples are those high and thin statues of Giacometti that created after meeting Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir(Sartre).

Existentialism and Pure Art:

Existentialism often due to its dramatic insight about existence and high exploitation of strong and attractive images on individuals' reactions toward different relations have a profound connection to the pure art. Camus and Sartre both were nominated for Nobel Laureates in Literature (but Sartre refused accepting). Kierkegaard is kind of literature that applied the assumed names and characters and other forms of indirect relation to come closer to our difficulties` content. Nietzsche, the German great author and artist published his symbolic narration based on a prophet by the title of "thus spoke Zarathustra" that is kind of philosophic play like Sartre`s nausea. Moreover, novels by Simone de Beauvoir describe a philosophical insight. Gabriel Marcel wrote philosophy in a profound thoughtful method and expressed the in the best way in 30 works. About our discussed philosophies, may be only Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, and Merleau-Ponty (1908-1916) are not in harmony to some degrees. However, if we separate Jaspers from others, others in the field of aesthetics with applying phenomenological methods with special dare created novel pictures and each believes that artists described what philosophers try to express. For example, Heidegger considers poets and Merleau-Ponty of visual art. As we will see, the influence of pure art on existentialism ideas is so powerful that we can take it as a literacy movement specially authors such as Dostoevsky and Kafka, playwrights like Beckett and Lonesco, and artists such as Giacometti and Picasso who are prominent instances of have existentialism properties. All of these authors who are dominate on commitment to the society and moral organizing consider it as the most appropriate expression for the indirect relations of their ideas. This expression suggested an eloquent move that conceals essence that the philosopher is an an author in order to make the reader unique by the characters of the literacy work. From this time, through getting some influence from some authors Kierkegaard could choose an assumed name and also wrote his demands and each of these transfer a defined attitude by equalizing to the characters and not exactly to the philosophers. Although Nietzsche questioned the religious beliefs in the "thus spoke Zarathustra", he could play the role of holy books of the prophets well.

In fact, Nietzsche`s selective words clearly define his fame and force a novel power to the mind. Sartre, Marcel, and Camus are able to create novels and plays in a similar form that in a realistic method, the fruit of their ideas is for an addresses who, at least for one moment, suspends his critical unkindness. It may be asked how Sartre answered that bourgeoisie can not guarantee one of his plays, without accepting thoughts that are unfaithful. This shows that art is capable of applying philosophy as method of lifestyle (Flynn, 2016, p.40).

Existentialist Philosophers, Art and Literacy Creation, and Modern Filmmakers

The Existentialism is a method of thought in philosophy, art, and literature that is as old as the oldest human`s thoughts. The most important supposition in existentialism is that human is free and this freedom gives him selecting power thus human is responsible about his behavior, speech, and thoughts. Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Dostoevsky, and Leo Tolstoy in the 19th century, Jean Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus, Martin Heidegger, Gabriel marcel, Karl jasper, Martin Buber, Rudulf Bultmann, Berdyaev, and Miguel de Unamuno in the 20th century were those authors and philosophers who had important role in forming existentialism discourse with different Humanist, Theist, Atheist, Jewish, and Christian tendencies.

From existentialism point of view, human does not have a historic nature, human like any other creature is a possible identity, not essentially, make himself and freely chooses from the possible biologic, historic, and cultural choices. The existential philosophy in the 20th century was introduced as a school of philosophy but it historic roots could be searched in a long time ago because the discussed issues in the existentialism philosophy are as old as human existence. The main objections of existentialisms from the philosophy which is the background of all their opinions and thoughts is the first factor that makes existentialism philosophy find a profound and unbreakable connection to art and modern literature. The concept of the philosophy as a systematic knowledge could be found in Gorge William Friedrich Hegel who considered his intellectual and philosophical system as the most complete one.

Hegel’s system was a turning point for those critics that existentialism`s thinkers had toward the philosophy tradition. Kierkegaard the Christian existentialist tries to find an appropriate relation between philosophy and Christian faith. He believes that philosophy can not be a substation for faith but it can assist human for having a moral and religious life. The ideal philosopher for Nietzsche is someone who shows that the enthusiasm for the truth resulted from the idealist tradition of German scientific- academic philosophy is fearful and weakening. Nietzsche`s philosophy addresses those who have the courage to reject slaves’ behavior, those who have courage to over come the obstacle on their way to achieving their great goals. Heidegger`s philosophy was an attempt to ask the existence and not gaining definitions and defined frameworks. He believed that great philosophers who claimed to build a philosophical system could never organize a coherent system.

Heidegger like Nietzsche and Kierkegaard objected to the German idealism tradition and considered the futile efforts of this tradition’s thinkers for proving their claims about presenting a systematic philosophy with objective and universal topics as something unsuccessful. The second factor for modern cinema`s connection with existentialism philosophy is the definitions presented by modern filmmakers and

existentialist scholars about human and his position in the world. Despite all disagreement that existentialists have about the concept of the existence especially human existence, the have an important belief and that is human does not have any stable nature given to him before. When Sartre says human has not been made like a machine, when Kierkegaard insists that existence can not be reduced to thinkers thought and Nietzsche`s thought on human toward human thought, all means that human existence is unfurnishing, never harming and constantly is changing. (Macquary, 1998, p.62).

The main characters of movies by filmmakers such as Bergamn, Tarkkovsky, Antonioni, Kurosawa, and Woody Allen could be taken as the typical specimen of descriptions by existentialism philosophers. Antonius Block in The Seventh Seal, Isaac Borg in the Wild Strawberries, Elizabeth Vlgr in Persona, Anna Vaster in the Silence, Thomas Erikson and Marta Jonas Persson in Winter Light, Alexander in Scarifies and are instances of modern human whose existence if full of doubt, anxiety and questions. The third reason for modern cinema's connection with existentialism philosophy is the common historical background that this cinema has with the existentialism philosophy. The characters in this movies are influenced by instability, unrest, and collapse that are the feature of the present time. They are alone and disappointed, and unable to understand the other one and create romantic relationships. Disability of the modern human in having deep romantic relationships makes love and faith to self-sacrifice difficult or sometimes impossible. The fourth reason that make existentialism familiar with art, literacy and artistic creation is the deep familiarity of most modern filmmakers with philosophy and literature. A list reminder of philosophers' connections with the art and the moviemakers with philosophy also help us in defining a modern artist, the artist that his eternal art is not merely because of the artistic talent but it of his because of self-awareness and latent thought in his work. Watching movies by filmmakers such as Bergamn, Tarkkovsky, Antonioni, Kurosawa, and Robert Bressn shows the material about the connection about movie and thought very beautifully. (Razavi, 2008, p.312).

Conclusion:

With the effect left by the existentialist, the human essence and existence that have turned to a tool since industry revolution and climbed in word wars 2 were eye caught by the common people and lawmakers, and equipped the people who did not have any appropriate words or expressions with new insight. What appeared in the highest pint of existentialism effect was the shout that was sensed more than before. This effect is not just limited to the time when existentialism thoughts were appeared but it is about all thoughts and social and artistic activities. Now it has been years that literature and movies on human, common human and not exploiter bourgeoisie is taken as a sumptuous art with high artistic value unless showing the power struggle by noble class in order to weakening their sprits and dreams; showing immaturity of wealth owner and those who are respectable and powerful just because of heritage and social identity. In the present works we see that the superior goals of subjects are in the family, humility, public happiness, maturity of getting rid of fancy wishes and such goals. These goals are pursued by the heroes how have not got to the perfections in all grounds and in fact there is not super hero yet. In todays scale in a play with highest artistic score, there is no a powerful super-human who makes the best decisions. If something similar exist, his dignity would go down with obstacles such as pangs of conscience and spoiling other`s rights. This is the delicate presence of the primary existentialism that is still present in works of great artists and sometime unconsciously in amateur artists.

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