

## **Chapter II**

### **Review of Related Literature**

The analysis on Camus' The Stranger is based on the Literary approach. The writer uses one of the streams of thought in the Literary approach that is Existentialism itself (Brooks, **1967**, 11) in which the discussion about it will be concentrated in four major themes that are used in the analysis.

Existentialism is a term used to name a certain philosophical attitudes and doctrine that have come into prominence since World War I, particularly in Germany and France. Existentialism occurred as a reaction against all view, which tends to regard man as if he were a thing, that he is only an assortment of function and reactions (Stumpf, 1962,448). There are different views among the existentialist in seeing the meaning of existence. Hence, there is no single strict definition on the word existentialism. What all

the philosophers had in common was a concern about existence, the conditions and equality of the existing human individual.

There are two classes of existentialism. The first is the one that sees man in his horizontal relationship in the world, and the other one sees man in his vertical relationship up to God. The former is known as atheistic or secular existentialism and the latter as Christian existentialism (Roberts, 1957,7).

The famous Christian existentialist is Kierkegaard. According to him, to exist is to bring out ourselves in an engagement with freedom and fill it. It means that man has to make his own existence in the world and fill his freedom with his own action and also be responsible for whatever he has done. Moreover, Kierkegaard classifies man's life into three stage that is aesthetic stage, ethical stage, and the highest is religious stage. To exist, he says is to have a personal choice or to commit himself toward God. Man can choose the stage he wants to be. But according to him. man can find the meaning of his life only in his relationship with God, which means that he is in the highest stage of man's life. Even man has freedom in his life, he also has a responsibility toward God in the final judgment.

Since the thesis writer discusses about Camus, who is an Atheist, she focuses on the atheistic existentialism. Talking about Atheistic Existentialism, Existentialism is seen as a revolt, rebellion, or dissatisfaction against the suffering in human's life. They began to find out whether God exists or not and start to use their reason as an answer that if God does not help them in their suffering, it is better in they consider that God does not exist. To clarify, this statement, the thesis writer has to set back to Nietzsche assertion that "God is dead' (Hamersma, 1984,81). Nietzsche is not an Existentialist but his thinking

occupies a central place among the Existentialist thinkers. He says that man has to be a superman and has to help himself. Atheistic Existentialist, who is led by Sartre, sees that man is free and he is responsible for himself because there is no authoritative guidance for man. Sartre's famous classical formula of the basic principle of existentialism is "existence precedes essence", and that makes human beings different from things. It means that man exist first in the world find the meaning of his existence afterward. By the time man exists in the world, he still does not know what he has been there for. Sartre clarifies his explanation by giving comparison between man and a paper knife. The maker of a knife knows what he is going to make. The knife has a certain purpose and dues to a certain process before it exists. Therefore, it means that "essence precedes existence" is applied to that knife. On the contrary, human being exists first then he or she gives meaning to his existence. It means that "man is condemned to be free" (Wolff, 1973, 158). The word "condemned" here means that because man is free, he is responsible for whatever he does in his life. Man exists first, emerges in the world and define himself afterwards because there is no God standing in relation to man. Man has to create himself (Kaufmann, 1956,428). This statement has deep implication to human existence that it becomes the basic themes of Atheistic Existentialism. Those themes are Atheism, Freedom of Choice, Responsibility, and Anxiety and Death.

## **2.1. Atheism**

According to Heidegger, the intellectual rejection of belief in God is merely a consequence, not a cause, of the fundamental revolution that has been taking place (Roberts, 1957, 183). For Sartre, Atheism comes as a result of his basic formula

"existence precedes essence", and in order to be able to understand this statement the reader has to go back to previous explanation. When one thinks of God as the creator, he understands that when God creates something, God knows precisely what he is creating. God makes man according to a procedure and a conception, and so do artisans produces a paper knife. The maker of the paper knife knows what the purpose of making that thing is, and It means that the paper knife has already had "essence" before it exists. For human beings, to say that existence precedes essence means, says Sartre, is that first he must exist, confront his self, emerge in the world and define his self afterwards.

According to Sartre, man does not have "human nature", a nature that is found in every man and a definite conception by God. By having "human nature" means that all men posses the same essence, same fundamental qualities, and same definition or conception of men. It means that their essence precedes their existence. Therefore, Sartre turns all this around by taking Atheism seriously. He believed that if there is no God, there is no given human nature precisely because there is no God to have a conception of it. There is no God stands in relation to man the way the artisan stands in relation to the knife.

Moreover, Sartre also criticizes religion for trying to make men as masses who lost their identities. Religion bases the unity of mankind upon the fact that human being is created by a God. He regards it as an attempt to treat "humanity" as an entity or an object with a given essence, thus to escape freedom and responsibility, which means loosing the essence of human being (Roberts, 1957,213). Camus also adopts the same idea, and latter in the analysis Camus clearly states his opinion about God and religion, in this case Christianity, through Mersault. Camus' rejection to believe in God appears in Mersault's

attitude toward God. In his conversation with the Magistrate and the Chaplain in jail, it is shown clearly that he does not believe God. In fact, he also states that religious people, like the chaplain, are living a meaningless life.

## **2.2. Freedom of Choice**

If there is no God who creates man the way an artisan creates a paper knife, then, there is no "human nature". Everybody does not have a fixed nature. He must create his own nature. Atheistic existentialism sees that man is free and he is responsible for himself. Man is simply what he makes of himself; therefore each man can make himself anything he wishes. In the process of making himself, man must choose, must make decisions without any authoritative guide. Only the person involved in a situation and condition has the best understanding upon the situation, therefore, man has to create his own values.

Sartre does not and need not deny any respect in which man is "made" as a thing in the world, by heredity, childhood experiences, habits, family, class, nation, or culture. These physical, biological, and psychological factors constitute man's situation, but still he can project what he wants, or makes actions aimed at a goal, whether it can be reached or not. This situation puts every man in possession of himself as he is, and places the entire responsibility for his existence upon his shoulder (Kaufmann, 1956, 291). Even to choose not to choose is a choice and it determines what kind of man a person wants to be, or the meaning of his life.

Through Mersault the reader can see the picture of a man who knows what he wants or does not want. Mersault is a man who has his own consideration and values that

he uses to determine his actions. In this case Mersault uses his Freedom of choice and he knows that it gives meaning to his life and makes him happy.

### **2.3. Responsibility**

Because man is what he makes of himself, he has no one to blame for what he is except himself. It is not only man creates himself, but also that man is responsible for what he is. Therefore, human beings should have commitment and responsibility. Man is responsible even for his passions, because even his feelings are formed by his deeds (Kaufmann, 1956,295). It means that there is nothing forcing him from behind or to behave in any given way, or a precise pattern pushing him into the future. Because individuals are free to choose their own path, they must accept the risk and responsibility of following their commitment wherever it leads even to death (Kaufmann, 1956,291).

According to Sartre, one has to "make" his own existence. In that process, man must choose, without any universal guidance. Man has to follow his own standard, his own "moral". Once he chooses, he has to responsible for his choices, means he cannot blame anything else but himself

Mersault in The Stranger is the man with commitment and responsibility of what he had done or chosen. Even when facing death penalty, he refuses to lie. In his trial, Mersault faces choices whether to deceive himself and say what the jury want to hear, or to tell his true feelings and thoughts, and he decides not to lie since according to Sartre lying is self-deception and causes someone to loose his "essence".

## 2.4. Anxiety and Death

Sartre sees anxiety and death as a confrontation with the fact of freedom or our “unmade future”. Anxiety, according to Martin Heidegger, leads to the individual’s confrontation with the impossibility of finding ultimate justification for the choices he must make and the continuous awareness of one’s own future death.

Moreover, Sartre says that man must accept the fact of his alienation from the rest of the world (Kaufmann, 1956,292). It is an undeniable fact, since there is always a discrepancy between the reality that exists out there and the reality created by an individual in his mind. What actually happens in everyday life most of the time contradicts and denies one’s wishes and dreams, therefore one always lives a life marked by never ending conflicts and finds himself in the middle of this tug-of war between two opposing forces.

V.E. Frankl, in his book, Man’s Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy about existential analysis says that this existential frustration emerges from conflicts between various values in other words, from moral conflicts. Whenever one is confronted with an inescapable and unavoidable situation, just then is one given a last chance to fulfil the deepest meaning, the meaning of suffering. For what matters above all is the attitude a man takes toward suffering, the attitude in which he takes his suffering upon himself. The man’s main concern is not to gain pleasure or to avoid pain but rather to see a meaning in his life. That is why man is even ready to suffer on the condition, to be sure that his suffering has a meaning, by finding meaning even in suffering.

The last discussion is about Mersault finding his existence when he is facing death. In his thought just after he gets his death penalty, we can find Camus’ idea that in

realizing death one can find his own existence. In this part we can find the difference of Camus' thought about anxiety and death with that of other existentialists. Camus believes that life is absurd or meaningless, so in making choices and facing death man has less anxiety than what Sartre believes. Through the analysis Mersault can be seen as giving the meaning or essence to his life, which is the quality of the existentialist.