

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A.1 Background of the Research

Human beings shape their history through action because they possess freedom but are naturally limited by space and time. These limitations compel humans to create systems. Initially, these systems were intended to regulate human activities. However, systems create social determinism. Systems are measured by quality parameters that are ultimately called human civilization (Broder & Selous, 2016). This parameter contains conditions that are only suitable at a superficial level because progressive boundaries do not allow it to return to the quality that existed in the past. The original human condition, including the negative feelings and raw instincts experienced by humans, is repressed by the structure of human civilization. This repression leads to a reality that appears orderly but is fundamentally alienated from human nature.

According to Freud (1961), civilization requires the suppression of basic instincts, particularly aggression and sexuality, in order to maintain social order and cohesion. This suppression generates internal conflict and discontent, as individuals are caught between their instinctual desires and societal expectations (Freud, 1961). Marcuse (1955) expands on this by explaining that the "reality principle" imposed by civilization overrides the pleasure principle, which obstructs genuine fulfillment and happiness. What appears rational and civilized is, in fact, a system built on repression. This system eventually clashes with itself,

and behind the social order lies latent violence, not as a disruption, but as a product of the very structure intended to suppress it (Marcuse, 1955).

Many other aspects of life that are the real conditions of humans are placed under the surface of identity so that others do not know or, if they do, they will remain silent for reasons of individual privacy. The repetition of this condition is like a virus, invisible, known, conscious, and easily spread. Broder and Selous (2016) explains that this spread can be said to be an act of copying because it works on human instincts based on knowing.

The positive and negative sides of life are likened to the distance between the central side and the peripheral side (Broder & Selous, 2016). Distance is not in the sense of being separate because the conditions overlap and there is an act of covering up. The central side is experienced by formal, visible, and valuable civilizations. While the peripheral side is a minor phenomenon that is eliminated under the central one because it is obstructive and worthless. In fact, the reality is that this minor phenomenon is not discarded. On the contrary, it is preserved by being hidden with the central side. This is the virus that develops and repeats.

This central side functions as a surface or mask that conceals authentic human identity. This mask is constructed through modern rationality, which operates within a value-neutral framework, thereby displacing intrinsic human values to the periphery. Modern rationality, defined by logic and systematization, is actualized through discipline. As Foucault (1977) argues, discipline is not merely a method of control but a mechanism embedded in

societal structures that shapes individuals through surveillance, normalization, and internalized constraint. The parameter of individual discipline emerges in society as a reflection of human "quality," yet this quality is often accompanied by various forms of violence, both physical and psychological. These disciplinary mechanisms permeate daily life and extend into the realm of existential experience. In *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, Evelyn's story illustrates how disciplinary structures manifest subtly through expectation, conformity, and the fragmentation of identity. The film visually and narratively exposes how the rational order masks underlying chaos, leading to existential tension and emotional suppression consistent with Foucault's observations on the internalization of discipline and its link to systems of power (Foucault, 1977).

Existentialism is a philosophical movement that emphasizes individual existence, freedom, and choice. Central to existentialist thought, particularly as articulated by Jean-Paul Sartre, is the notion that existence precedes essence. This idea posits that individuals are not born with a predetermined purpose but instead must create their own meaning through actions and choices (Sartre, 1957). As Sartre famously stated, "man is condemned to be free," which encapsulates the weight of responsibility that accompanies freedom. This philosophy challenges traditional notions of fixed human nature, suggesting instead that individuals are responsible for defining their own lives in an indifferent universe (Heidegger, 1962). The implications of this perspective are

profound, as they invite individuals to confront the inherent absurdity of existence and the often-overwhelming burden of choice.

Sartre's existentialism is characterized by key concepts such as "bad faith," the idea that individuals often deceive themselves to escape the responsibility of freedom, and "authenticity," which refers to living in accordance with one's true self rather than societal expectations (Sartre, 1957). Bad faith manifests when individuals conform to external pressures, denying their freedom and responsibility in favour of societal norms. This act of self-deception prevents them from achieving authenticity, which Sartre argues is essential for a meaningful existence. By rejecting bad faith, individuals can embrace their freedom and the accompanying responsibility, allowing them to craft their own identities and purposes.

The five articles explore existential themes across various works. Pane and Adisaputra (2023) analyze individual freedom in *Ours*, focusing on characters rejecting societal norms. Meliala (2024) examines self-awareness and transformation in *BH*. Pastrana, Erwing, and Setyabudi (2023) delve into existential dilemmas in *The Professor* about love, death, and freedom. Oktiviani, Farlina, and Djohar (2023) explore existential anxieties in *The Worst Person in the World*. Toabnani (2023) analyzes nihilism and multiverse metaphors in *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, exploring the characters' search for meaning. These studies highlight the role of existentialism in understanding freedom, responsibility, and the human condition.

In the film "Everything Everywhere All at Once", Evelyn is a mother and wife who is trapped in a monotonous and stressful routine. When she is suddenly given the ability to access various versions of her life in different universes, she is confronted with various possibilities of life that never materialized. Evelyn sees what could have happened if she had made different decisions in the past—whether she would have become a successful movie star, a martial arts master, or lived a life without her family. Each version of her life reflects the choices she did not make and the opportunities she missed, making Evelyn question the meaning of every decision in her life.

During this adventure, Evelyn begins to question the purpose of her life and the essence of her existence. As she delves into these various worlds, big questions arise: Does her life have a deeper meaning? Are all her sacrifices worth it? Is there a purpose to all her seemingly futile struggles?

Starting from the problems faced by Evelyn in the film "Everything Everywhere All at Once", Evelyn's journey becomes a reflection of existential questions about "authenticity" and how one can live honestly with oneself amidst all possibilities and external pressures. In facing the reality that her life could have many versions, Evelyn learns to accept and love her simple and "ordinary" life, which becomes an embodiment of the existential concept of how humans can find true meaning in living life authentically, even when life seems to have no clear meaning.

## **A.2 Problem of the Research**

Based on the background research explained, this research proposes the main problems, as follows:

1. What symbols illustrate the search for the meaning of the main character's life?
2. How do the symbols reflect the existentialism?

## **A.3 Objective of the Research**

To delve deeper into the existential themes explored in "Everything Everywhere All at Once," this research aims to identify the specific elements that signify the main character's search for meaning in life, particularly focusing on Evelyn. By examining the character development and narrative structure, this study will explore how the film represents existential concepts such as the Consciousness, Freedom, Responsibility.

## **A.4 Significance of the Research**

In this study, there are theoretical and practical benefits. Theoretically this research can provide deeper insights into the concept of existentialism, particularly how this theme is integrated into the film's characters and plot. This can help viewers and readers understand how existentialist philosophy, which focuses on the search for the meaning of life, can be portrayed in popular media such as film. By exploring the elements that depict the search for meaning in the main character's life, this research can reveal the psychological and emotional

complexities of these characters. This allows for a more in-depth analysis of their motivations, dilemmas, and personal journeys.

Practically this research can contribute to the body of knowledge in film and literary studies, particularly in narrative and thematic analysis. It can also serve as a reference for further research related to the theme of existentialism in film or other literary works.

#### **A.5 Limitation of the Research**

This research will be limited to the analysis of the main character in the film as the central representation of the search for the meaning of life. Supporting characters will only be analysed to the extent that they influence the existential journey of the main character. Additionally, this research will use existential theory as the basis for the analysis. Concepts from other philosophical theories or psychological approaches will not be discussed, unless relevant to support existential analysis.

For the film plot, the analysis will be limited to scenes and storylines that are directly relevant to the theme of existentialism and the search for meaning. Plot elements that focus more on action or the visual effects of the multiverse that do not directly contribute to this theme will be ignored to maintain the depth of the analysis.

## A.6 Definition of Key Terms

1. Existentialism: A philosophical movement that emphasizes individual existence, freedom, and choice, asserting that individuals must create their own meaning in an indifferent universe (Sartre, 1957:5).
2. Existence Precedes Essence: A fundamental tenet of existentialism, particularly in Sartre's philosophy, which posits that individuals are not born with a predetermined purpose; instead, they must define their own essence through actions and choices (Sartre, 1957:5).
3. Bad Faith: A concept in Sartre's existentialism referring to the self-deception individuals engage in to escape the responsibility of their freedom and choices (Sartre, 1957:10).
4. Authenticity: The state of living in accordance with one's true self, rather than conforming to societal expectations or roles (Sartre, 1957:123).
5. The Other: A term used by Sartre to describe how individuals perceive and relate to others, highlighting the tension between self-identity and the influence of external perspectives (Sartre, 1957:44).
6. Multiverse: A theoretical framework in which multiple, parallel universes exist, each representing different possibilities and outcomes based on individual choices (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022).
7. Search for Meaning: The existential quest individuals undertake to find purpose and significance in their lives, often in the face of absurdity and chaos (Camus, 1942).

## **A.7 Organization of the Research**

Chapter I of this research contains a discussion of the introduction which consists of the research background, problem of the research, objective of the research, limitation of the research, significance of the research, definition of the key terms and the last is organization of the research report.

Chapter II consists of the review of literature and theoretical framework. This chapter deals with the theories that are relate and will use to analyse and review related research.

Chapter III deals with research methodology which consist of type of the research, data and source of the data, method of collecting data, technique of collecting data and the last is method of analyse the data.

Chapter IV is data analysis which consists of data description, data analysis and discussion. This chapter will elaborate and discuss further about the topic of the research specifically. The topic of this research that would be analyse is existentialism of the movie titled "Everything Everywhere All at Once".

Chapter V is a chapter of conclusion and suggestion. This final chapter aim to sum up the entire discussion and analysis. It consists of the conclusion of the whole research and few suggestions about the analysis.