

HUMAN IDENTITY IN THE EXISTENTIAL PHILOSOPHY OF SØREN KIERKEGAARD

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Abstract

Identity becomes a liquid discourse when attempting to examine humans in life. Human ideas, actions, and expressions confirm that there is fluidity. This research seeks to elaborate human identity into the existential philosophy of Soren Kierkegaard. The dimensions of fluidity and determination can lead humans to fragility. The methods used in this study is qualitative by performing descriptions, comparisons, and interpretations. The results of this study are that (1) human identity is in three regions of existence that exist within hermeneutic circles; (2) the discovery of human identity lies in the concept of repetition.

Keywords: *Identity, hermeneutic circles, repetition*

INTRODUCTION

Human identity in philosophical discourse can be debated in two views, first, being in a fixed, linear, and static motion. In the second view, identity exists in continuous, fluid, dynamic, and relax (Otsuka, 2018). Both views can be precise with their respective stances and with logical arguments, but when relevant to research on humans in life activity so that both need to be positioned clearly and firmly.

Understanding human identity in permanence can be precise when rationality is so sovereign and claims to want to formulate humans in patterns and formulations as in science for sure. A human being's identity is individually drawn out in its subjectivity to be in the same collective identity, uniform, and lead to permanent certainty. Rationalists such as Rene Descartes, Immanuel Kant, Hegel formulate human identity in their ideas, actions, and communications in rigid and logical forms of systems. The implication is that humans in the face of the future are no longer in a variety of possibilities, but rather in certainty. Subjectivity is waste because it is considered unscientific, illogical, private, emotional, and highly psychological. Objectivity becomes Idol because it is logical, systematic, and can be accounted for and verified scientifically (Bas & Isabelle 2008).

Human beings which are objectivities, then it can create formalities and a freeze. This formality and freeze in a narrow sense can be explained as an identity because the character can be captured, self-manifestation can be clearly formulated, and there is a definite self-formulation in the human self. Essence can be attached and found in living humans. In short, there is core permanence in identity.

This view clarifies the concept of identity but is histories. Human identity is mistaken for a monument in the form of a statue. When looking at the human being's status, the flow of time and place is frozen. The memory of the statue's connoisseurs can see the human self-frozen and,

Identification can be done. However, the point is that the frozen man is not a living human being. Living humans exist in a changing and fluid trajectory of time, place, and action. It's in fluidity. Man, according to Jean-Paul Sartre, finds its essence if it is no longer in the motion of life. That is, man can exist if he continues to move, change, dynamic, and act in the trajectory of time (Compaijen, 2016). The implication is that human identity is changing. This is where existentialism becomes an important idea to explain the human being's identity.

The problem of research is about human being's identity in the philosophy of life (*leben philosophie*) is understood in the philosophy of the existence of Søren Kierkegaard. He seeks to pull back on the vitality motion that man has in the possibilities that are precisely alluring and full of surprises here and now. They seek to get out of the negativity of the trappings of rationality thinking when formulating, idealizing humans in permanence. The proposed negativity departs from the basic understanding that change becomes inevitable, and man is in that change. Man exists in a liquid form of life (Bauman, 2005). That way, people's identities change and keep changing.

In this paper, I will seek to bridge the gap of the debate between rationalists and philosophy lebens in seeing and examining people who are in change. In this paper, the perspective used is the existential philosophy of Søren Kierkegaard.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The approach in this paper is qualitatively descriptive to elaborated using several methods such as, first, *verstehen* that is to understand the primary textual content of Kierkegaard's works. Second, the description is to give an idea of the situation of the third Kierkegaard thought period, compared to comparing Kierkegaard's thinking with some other philosopher's thoughts. Fifth, hermeneutics is an attempt to interpret texts with the situation of the times and irrelevant them to the great theme of writing (Bakker, 1984).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Change is an event that is present and associated with the philosophy of existence. Presence and changing become two things inherent in human existence as subjects that are position to participate in the motion of nature. Nature moves develop into a sign that there is a change, which then also creates civilization. The change, in a broad sense, is existence with a direct relationship between nature and human.

The philosophy of existence becomes a point of view that can be used for seeing the human self-change in finding its identity. Søren Kierkegaard is one of the philosophers of existence who delved into a human being's identity that was always overwhelmed by anxiety and suffering (agony). Kierkegaard's idea of existentialism became a counter-attack on it's rigid of human being's essentialism. Kierkegaard uses subjectivity in the philosophy of existence to see that man exists in three areas of existence: the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious.

Kierkegaard's thinking is in line with the realm of postmodernism. Colledge (2004) even referred to it as "postmodern Kierkegaard" due to a rejection of human being's formalities caged by objectivity and grand narratives. Kierkegaard's thoughts on Derrida's reading, especially in the book *Fear and Trembling* were the inspiration for his idea of deconstruction in postmodern

situations. Another thinker was John D. Caputo and Mark C. Taylor with the quasi-deconstructionist reading of Kierkegaard and then demonstrated their thought resistance to the ultra-essentialism of Western tradition. Caputo sums up his against essentialism like "the infinite appetite of a Hegel." (College, 2002).

Kierkegaard's philosophy of existence in this paper, I have elaborate to find out the position of self-identity in the dimensions of change. There are at least two keys issues in this paper, (1) what does human identity look like in the realm of Kierkegaard's existence?; (2) how can the philosophy of existence explain the change in human being's identity? For both of these two questions above, I will elaborate by placing the philosophy of existence as a framework for explaining the changing human identity. In this context, Human identity is not a sense of essentialism but the philosophy of existence. To overcome essentialism, Kierkegaard confirmed the establishment of the Sect Elea where is a rejection of the possibility of change. He wrote like this,

"When the Eleatic School denied the possibility of motion, Diogenes, as everybody knows, stepped forth as an opponent. He stepped forth literally, for he said not a word, but merely walked several times back and forth, thinking that thereby he had sufficiently refuted those philosophers."(Kierkegaard, 1983).

Kierkegaard stressed that in the motion of change, there are possibilities for better self-shaping. When compared to the Elea sect, Kierkegaard was less convinced that permanence could be the epicenter of the change. Parmenides, Zeno, and Melissos were followers of the Elea Sect's belief that reality was one and did not move. One is more in the form of a materialized subject singularity in the statute and can not divided. The point "Not Moving" indicates that the change for them is a shadow that does not affect the permanence in humans. This thought of the Elea Sect is dialectic of Herakleitos's thinking that thinks that change is always there in life, even life itself is change. The idea of Heracleitus change is *panta rhei kai uden menei* (everything flows and nothing stays constantly). A change like a person who will never touch the same water on the flowing river water(Lind, 2007).

The debate between the Mazhab of the Elea and Herakleitos then continued by Kierkegaard in his reflections on the three regions of human existence as flows aesthetic, ethical, and religious. Kierkegaard argues there are three areas of existence or stages of life that are aesthetic (the aesthetic), ethical (the ethical), and religious (the religious). These three regions of existence have been classified by Kierkegaard because these three existences are human ways of being in the world (modes of being-in-the-world). These three regions of existence have been classified by Kierkegaard because these three existences are human ways of being in the world. Kierkegaard also mentioned the stages of life because for him so that people do not get stuck for good in a specific area of existence, but instead can enter the next stage's (Tjaya, 2010: 88). The uniqueness of Kierkegaard's philosophy of existence is the subjectivity of the three regions of existence which is referred to as the idea of forming a future identity that is about concept of repetition.

THE EXISTENTIAL PHILOSOPHY OF SOREN KIERKEGAARD

The aesthetic stage reveals human living situations that are in the mood, the search for pleasure, the temptation of sensuality, and sexual lust. Don Juan is the personification at this stage (Søren

Kierkegaard & Thomte, 2013). Kierkegaard in *Either/Or* regards Don Juan's sensual prowess as a temptation. He revealed it thus, "he loves not one but all, that is to say, he seduces all" (Kierkegaard, 1940). The aesthetic stage will end in a situation of despair because people do not want to tie themselves to a specific moral standard. Anxiety and anxiety will move people to understand and need norms.

Kierkegaard (1944: 153-165) in "Either/Or" summarizes five aesthetic ways of life: (1) seeing health as the ultimate good; (2) consider the purpose and satisfaction of life on wealth, honor, and position; (3) seeing the meaning of life is in a relatively external situation due to the absence of establishment; (4) struggle to satisfy one's taste in pleasure; and (5) every aesthetic way of life is despair. The most civilized aesthetically human being's way of life is despair itself (Thomte, 1949: 34-35). The ethical stage marks a person to live within a certain standard of value and is no longer overpowered by mood and determined by enjoyment alone. Individuals are required to obey the law or disappear in the verdict (Kierkegaard, 1940).

Living on an ethical level is transforming a lifestyle that was started aesthetically to ethical. The change of the aesthetic stage to the ethic phase seems to be qualitative because it is characterization by a willingness to abandon the satisfaction of its temporary sexual appetite and enter into the official status of a quality marriage by accepting all forms of obligation (Hadiwiyono, 1980). At this point, Kierkegaard wants to convey that human identity that was arranged by pleasure, and then the situation creates anxiety (angst) and suffering (agony). (Kierkegaard & Eichler, 1991). The restlessness and suffering mark and move the subject to arrive at the ethical stage.

According to Kierkegaard, a religious stage is a form of personal connection and direct responsibility to God. There are two steps in that spiritual phase: (1) infinite surrender; (2) the gesture of faith in an everlasting and absolute relationship. Infinite resignation is the disconnection of the mundane (Kierkegaard, 1983: 65). It gives peace but contains no faith. Therefore, anyone who does not have infinite surrender then he has not reached the faith. Kierkegaard exemplifies Abraham to describe someone who is on a religious stage.

The moment of the psycho-religious change of a person named Abraham becomes a paradoxical situation, a move to the end with a faithful decision to give up a beloved son (Isaac) but to be sacrificed to the divine will by killing him with a knife. Kierkegaard's chosen change presents a paradoxical situation: loss at once gets the blessing of God's help (Gultom,2016).

REPETITION AND IDENTITY

According to Kierkegaard (1843), Repetition is a metaphysical process that is continuously strived for which the endpoint is to find identity in a form of continuous practice. Kierkegaard's philosophy of existence delved into the subject process of finding his identity parallel to the subject's motion while experiencing all three stages of existence. However, the three stages of existence are not understood as the steps that a person must live by starting from the aesthetic stage to the ethical stage and ending on the last rung of the religious stage. Those three stages for Kierkegaard are hermeneutic gestures that are not always sequential, but more circumstance. Subjects may undergo an ethical stage ahead of the aesthetic stage. This is because of environmental factors, strict rules during a person's development, or the law.

The way repetition work to shape human self-identity is and repetition through narratives and metaphors. The narrative meant by Kierkegaard is that if one can initiate an ethical commitment, by answering one question, what kind of ethical identity do I choose today to then be able to form an identity in the future? From here, the narrative becomes a choice of stories from the experiences of someone who has experienced suffering, disappointment, or even cat trophy in the past, but does not turn himself into weak, disillusioned, and leads to nihilism. The narrative was chosen by the subject to heal itself in the past, and then chose a typical strong, resilient, moral, and faithful character. These character values then become narratives repeated by the subject in mind and also performed in the form of ethical actions. The goal is to be self-identity formed because it is trained continuously both in the form of cogito and in the form of action.

Subjects in past events to make man return to his subjectivity. The repetition is linked to a recollection that is a gesture of self-change. Both become subjective memories of past events that shape the personalities of the present. At this point, repetition and recollections as subjective history work to rebuke the inner and remind one not to fall on ethical human dilemmas. Rep points at the ethical stage, for Kierkegaard can be exemplified in the figure of Sokrates (Lippitt, 2017). Sokrates as the ideal prototype of the people of Athens was later found guilty of two charges: (1) Asebeia (lack of respect for the gods of Athens); (2) moral destruction because it pollutes the minds of young men with elenchus methods. Sokrates as a man who is on an ethical stage acts obedient to the law and does not want to escape. Sokrates, for Kierkegaard, was a tragic hero; law-abiding then vanished in law (Fulkerson, 2013).

The way repetition work on metaphors is to imagine an ideal form of self that can be realized in reality. That is, there is a form of eternity in the subject's imagination to form his ideal identity. At this stage, that ideal can be exemplified in Abraham. As a figure of believers, Abraham was a believer and obedient to God's command. However, faith and obedience invite God to test it. Abraham was confused and had a religious dilemma, but obeyed God or disbelieved in God. And whosoever disbelieves in Allah, he will not be able to do so, and he will not be able to do so. Abraham's paradoxical story is finally solved with an angelic edge when Abraham's dagger nearly pierces Isaac's heart.

The metaphor that can be obtained from Abraham's story is that to find an identity, one needs to think that the achievement must have suffered many trials and not always ended happily (Hall, 2003). The subject imagines determining the ideal figure that can set an example for his life. At this point, the metaphor means it is at the stage where humans need to be aware of the challenges that are paradoxical situations. However, imagination makes the human mind liquid, because he sees the possibilities to live other by seeing the potential in him.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

According to the philosophy of Soren Kierkegaard's Human identity existence is overwhelmed by anxiety and suffering (agony). Self-identity is in a fluid, changing, paradoxical situation. Kierkegaard's philosophy of existence became a counter-attack on the rigidity of essentialism about human identity. Kierkegaard uses subjectivity to explain that a human being's identity is within three areas of existence: aesthetically, ethically, and religiously. The recommendation from philosophy of existence be able to works through repetition that to explain changes in human being's identity with narratives and metaphors in the trajectory of time.

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