

**ABSURDISM DEPICTED IN KAZUO ISHIGURO'S *NEVER
LET ME GO***

THESIS



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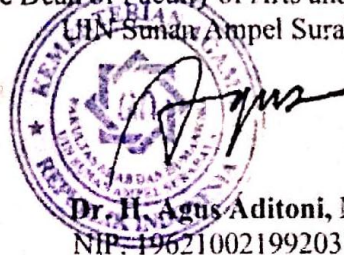
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Penulis

(Miftahul Fikri)

means that humans can form themselves according to their desire. Because of this reason, the human is never satisfied with his life, he always tries to get the good things in his life, and change those good things to form better, no matter if it would make his life better or even worse. All those efforts are to find and realize his life's existence. Dagnun (1990, p.17) states that “to exist means doing an action, becoming, and planning useful thing.” The human tendency is always to feel deficient; he has the desire to try something new in his life and seek every possibility. Those efforts are being made to gain a better experience. The essential character of humans is what we know as existence.

Human existence is said to be authentic when a human can choose and freely determine what and who he wants to become. Karl Jaspers (cited in Patil 1999, p.14) defines existentialism as the way of thought using which man seeks to become himself. It means that he believes in taking control of the individual's own life and existence. However, what happens when mere human existence looks meaningless and spread his presence is impossible? A human can feel that his life is just a heavy burden, and it seems absurd to keep going. According to Camus (cited in Lubcke 2003, p.80), humans live to die, and there is no other foundation for life. It means that life has no purpose, and it is absurd to keep searching for something that does not exist. A Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard (1985, p.10), explains that absurdism is a philosophy that states that all human efforts to find meaning life will finally fail because no such meaning exists. So, the point of absurdism is futility. However, it does not mean if suicide is a better choice, life must go on, and humans should embrace the absurd condition in his life. Camus

(cited in Foley, 2014, p.9) argued that humans should keep the absurd alive rather than attempt to suppress it through suicide. From his statement, it is evident that Camus rejected suicide, escape from the absurd in life is a wrong way. He suggested that humans should be continuing growth and receive the absurd life of an individual.

Moreover, Camus gives a solution to this condition, that human should revolt. According to Camus (cited in Neimneh & Madi, 2014, p.118), revolt is a happy acceptance of suffering and destructive behavior, against meaninglessness. Though sometimes human lose his hopes because he realizes that his life is absurd, he should show acceptance, because it is a part of his life. Camus (cited in Lewis, 2009, p.14) also states that revolt is the right protest against the absurd. It is the real, authentic value and morally accepted solution to the problem of absurdity and life's meaninglessness. It means doing a revolt. Someone has respected his life.

What the writer talks about absurdism can be found in the literature. According to Thomson, "Literature is not only a form of philosophy but also a form of imagination from the author thought" (Thomson, 2010, p.5). It can be concluded that literature is one form of philosophy and also a medium to expresses the author's idea. Then, by analyzing literature, someone can find a message that the author wants to deliver. Hudson (cited in Hardjana, 2005, p.12) states that literary work is an expression of what someone said, did, though, and felt about the side of life. So, both literature and philosophy discuss the human's life. Philosophy includes the fact of human life that evaluated its identity and

and Tommy. The story begins with a boarding school in England, named Hailsham. All of the students in this school are "clones" (not explicitly described how the process of cloning). The students are watched closely, and they are often told about the importance of producing art and being healthy. The teachers in Hailsham call them "special," but their life is not better than livestock. They have cared, their needs are filled, even their health is prioritized so that their internal organs can be used by an average human (non-clone) at someday. So, they are created to donate their vital organs for 'normal' humans, and after their donation, they will die young. However, that fact regarding their lives in the future never be told. Therefore, when they become adolescents, they start to wonder about many things that happen in their lives. They even try to reach that goal, though it will ultimately fail because no such intention exists. The result, all their efforts to reach their goal is futile. This crazy life is faced by the main characters of the novel.

Nevertheless, the students as human clones are treated like 'normal' students. They are taught general knowledge, and given superficial skills such as sport and producing arts. It seems meaningless because the teachers are conscious and understand the student's future, that their students will die young after finish the donation someday. The students will not go to work or build a household like an average human. The irrational treatment from Hailsham caused the three main character's life absurd.

Based on the previous explanation, it can be suggested that *Never Let Me Go* can be studied through absurdism. Besides, there are two other reasons why

was not considered anymore, and it is shown during the war. Through the war, there are so many innocent people die; children and women caused by another human, and for them who still alive, it left a profound misery. As if the human values that already believed were pointless. It caused a feeling that human life was purposeless, meaningless, and senseless (Kurniawan 1994, p.10).

Moreover, they start to consider the futility of their struggle in defending a life that leads only to death. This consciousness makes some writers and also philosophers to think about human problems a little more. Then, it inspires the appearance of some new theories such as absurdism, and Albert Camus is known as one of the originators of this idea.

Albert Camus is a France novelist. He was born and grew up in Constantin, Algeria. Many people know him as a writer rather than a philosopher. The content of his works is affected by the bitter experience of war. He produced some literature during World war II. In 1942, he wrote a novel *The Stranger* and published an essay *The Myth of Sisyphus* in the same year. Because of those two kinds of literature, he is called as one of the originators of Absurdism. Camus' whole life (1913-1960) is an enthusiastic struggle to seize the meaning of human existence because he believes that the life of a human is meaningless. The human whole being is absurd, as the suffering of the defenseless. Because pain is ridiculous, Camus rejects God's existence. He thinks that God does not give his assistance in human suffering, then it is better if he assumes that God does not exist. He believes in one's self to face pain (Prasetyo, 2002, p.8).

not argue that this condition as a punishment caused by a wrongful act or suffering, but it is a life lived by a human being. Human as Sisyphus who have each own stone.

Camus (1955, p. 47) also states his idea about human life when facing an absurdity: "Before encountering the absurd, the everyday man lives with aims, a concern for the future of justification but after the absurd, everything is upset." It means that absurd condition led human to disappointed, frustrated, despair, and other bad feelings because human's expectation does not match with reality. Conforming to Camus, the depressing existential problems of man, namely anguish, suffering, sickness, disease, death, anxiety, fear, uncertainty, all of which conspire to render human existence meaningless and opaque. "Living the absurd means a total lack of hope, a permanent rejection and a conscious dissatisfaction" (Lewis, 2009, p.13). Therefore, the absurd condition also makes human existence become meaningless.

Knowing that life without meaning is intolerable, the existentialists try to find the real meaning of human existence. As Albert Camus did, for him, the truly philosophical problem is about judging whether life is or is not worth living. Being unstable, confused, and suicidal could be a conclusion of living under violence, injustice, and cruelty. In that case, man is left up with nothing except looking for a way out. This exit may be fulfilled through having a wish to die, whether in killing or committing suicide, putting closure to all confusion and misery (Neimneh & Madi, 2014, p.118). Camus(1955, p.33) captured this central idea of his philosophy when he said "truly philosophical problem and that is

Suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy.” It means that the desire to knowing someone’s life is meaningful or not is the basis of philosophy. The consequence is that the daily actions and struggles of individuals are doubtful, cause it is determined by the question of whether those efforts are meaningful or not. Camus argues that many people died because they believe that life was not worth living (Lewis, 2009, p.11). Then the new question arises “Does its absurdity require someone to escape it through hope or suicide?” (Camus, 1995, p.7).

Camus rejects the idea that the absurd itself lead someone to suicide. It is represented by Sisyphus, who never commits suicide facing absurdity in his life. Camus thought that suicide is repudiation (Camus, 1995, p.37). Another choice is by doing religious solutions. Camus explicitly rejects this faith proposed by Kierkegaard, calling it “philosophical suicide.” Camus (cited in Foley, 2014, p.27) considers that Kierkegaardian philosophical suicide, a type of hope that could perhaps call “infinite” hope. Through the religious belief, human hung all his hopes, "infinite" hope. It causes humans to forget the reality that life is absurd and escape to seek peace. It can be said as an act of philosophical suicide because for Camus, this self-renunciation is no more than a renunciation of the individual' s ability to alleviate the extent of human suffering. As Camus (cited in Foley, 2014, p.22) stated through odd reasoning, starting from the absurd over the ruins of reason, in a closed universe limited to the human, they deify what crushes them and find a reason to hope in what impoverishes them. That forced hope is religious in all of them.

Camus (cited in Foley, 2014, p.9) argued that humans should keep the absurd alive rather than attempt to suppress it through philosophical suicide or destroy it through physical suicide. So, according to him, suicide is not a good solution; embrace the absurdity is the right way to the problem of the absurdism. Camus rejected suicide because he believes that suicide is a denial of the human condition, and it fails to satisfy the human desire for purpose. To be human is to continue living, which reveals conscious revolt. The idea that the absurd should be courageously embraced is the springboard of Camus' philosophy of revolt. According to Camus (cited in Lewis, 2009, p.14), revolt is the right protest against the absurd. It is the real, authentic value and morally accepted solution to the problem of absurdity and life's meaninglessness. Humans can find their life existence through revolt. As Camus (cited in Lewis, 2009, p.36) stated: It may be thought that suicide follows revolt – but wrongly. For it does not represent the logical outcome of revolt. Revolt gives life its value.

Revolt is defined as a refusal to accept the loss of human lives and an insistence on viewing death as a scandal (Raskin, 2001, p.159). According to Camus (cited in Neimneh & Madi, 2014, p.118), revolt is a happy acceptance of suffering and destructive behavior, against meaninglessness. So, by doing revolt, someone has respected his own life. Continuing life and never think to escape or even committing suicide though consciously that his life is absurd, experiencing and enjoying the suffering as human life. He also believes in his own self if he is doing revolt because it does not imply his hope in religious belief that makes self-destructive. Such as represented by Sisyphus, though knowing that his life is

passionately. For Camus, this happy acceptance of destiny can be categorized as revolt.

To face an absurd condition in his life, the human must revolt with his strength rather with something outside himself. It shows the human value that rejects divine authority; God or religion. Camus points out the ability of the individual itself, how he gives the impression, and the value of his absurd life. Humans should focus on their abilities like Sisyphus, who is stronger than the stone. For Camus (cited in Child & Fowler, 2006, p.79), the most important about human existence is enabled humanity to find happiness and peace of mind in an absurd universe. Even though the human is afraid to die, but he must live his life totality because the most important thing for Camus is life, as he said, the point is to live.

Doing revolt means faces the challenge in life. Revolt leads man to take both his freedom, but also its contradictions by deciding to live with passion and with only what he knows. Then Camus (1955, p.42) gives three consequences of the absurd, and they are; revolt, freedom, and passion. It is clear that, according to him, a human should doing revolt to the absurdity faced in life to get his freedom, and he should do it with his passion. Human faces the absurd life by receiving his fate without letting go. It means human respect his own life by living his life passionately. Human is also looking for the quality and quantity of the experience. Because revolt gives value to life so that revolt restores the freedom of existence.

So, through the Sisyphus story, the writer can conclude the concept of absurdism by Albert Camus. A figure of Sisyphus is the representation of the

the New criticism theory and analyzes Allie's absurdism in love in the novel using absurdism theory.

The second is the research conducted by students of Sunan Ampel University, too; she is Imas Bening Kamal Aisyah (2018). In her research "The Way Jacob Face His Absurd Life in *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children* by Ransom Riggs," she explains the way of the main character Jacob is facing the absurd life that makes him suffering and despair. Besides, she also describes Jacob's character and characterization using a new critical theory.

The last is the research conducted by Andre Ridwan Seplawan (2016), the students of Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta. In his research, "Tolerance reflected in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005): A Social approach. This research paper is about tolerance in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* novel (2005), which is analyzed using the Sociological Approach. The objective of this study is to find out how the condition of tolerance to human clones has a feeling for life.

Based on the explanation above, this study has a different object with the two other students of Sunan Ampel University, but it has a similar theory. The study combines the finding of the first and second research. It described the absurdity in the novel. It also studied how the main character faced absurd life. With the last study, this research has the same object that is a Novel by Kazuo Ishiguro *Never Let Me Go*, but it is analyzed using different theory, finally, the finding will not be the same. So, it is clear that this study is different from the three other studies above.

Camus (cited in Foley 2014, p.9) argued that humans should keep the absurd alive rather than attempt to suppress it through suicide. All characters show that they never try to escape or even commit suicide. Once they have accepted that their lives have no purpose, no destiny, but they free to behave the way we want to. Also, Camus (cited in Neimneh & Madi, 2014, p.118) defines the consequence of the absurd is a revolt, not suicide. Revolt is a happy acceptance of suffering and destructive behavior against meaninglessness. Though sometimes they lose their hopes, they still show acceptance. A man has to appreciate his own life by doing revolt. While revolt itself, in Camus's definition, is an acceptance against meaningless life. In this case, even though Kathy, Ruth, and Tommy recognize that their lives are meaningless as well, but they still accept it and keep going on their lives. As Camus says, "Being deprived of hope is not despairing" (Camus, 1995). Kathy, Ruth, and Tom have no specific purposes in their lives after knowing the truth. They realize that life is baseless, pointless, that they only live to die, they live to become a donor, and complete the donation.

The clones or students of Hailsham suffer much cruelty than other humans. Clones' acceptance that they are created only for organ donor transplantation makes the clones completely human. Even though we can conclude that the purpose of the students' existence is meaningless and pointless. Therefore, it makes their whole existence is absurd. Nevertheless, the characters show the confronting of mortality. They are reflecting an acceptance of their lives. They make great choices that happen in their lives. Though it is an unsatisfied ending, all characters try to make some sense of his existence before they die. It

deferral like their imagination, and things such as deferral have never existed; it is just only a rumor. Miss Emily reveals the whole truths that have never been revealed before. Furthermore, once again, the student's effort to reach their goal is futile.

Thus, the writer can conclude that the purpose of the students' existence is meaningless and pointless. Therefore, it makes their whole existence is absurd. Nevertheless, the characters show the confronting of mortality. They are reflecting an acceptance of their lives. They make great choices that happen in their lives. Though it is an unsatisfied ending, all characters try to make some sense of his existence before they die. It also supports that once a man has realized that life is meaningless, he will begin the rebellion or revolt itself. However, each of them has its way of facing absurdity. Kathy is happy about being a *carer*. Tommy expresses himself through arts, and Ruth keeps going her life as she likes. The fact that their lives are absurd, and they do rebellion proves that the absurdity is depicted in this novel, and all the ways characters do are their response and face absurdity itself.

